

Cambridgeshire Memories and Reflections

by

Mike Petty

Dedicated to Cambridge's first librarian,
John Pink
its greatest Chronicler, Charles Henry Cooper
and their great creation

The Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library

June 2016

Memories with Mike Petty

Visit Mike's website at www.cambridgeshirehistory.com/MikePetty for free advice on researching Cambridgeshire and the Fens. Email: mikepetty13a@gmail.com

Thanks for all those wonderful memories

MEMORIES are about looking back and now it is my time to reflect on some of my writings in the News over the years.

It was more than 20 years ago that I was asked to stand in for Rodney Tibber's History Roundtable feature. Having already spent 20 years exploring the material held in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge's central library I knew there was much that could be shared. My first article appeared on June 30, 1984. It was the story of witchcraft at Haverhill in 1916, the most was about the living conditions in Swavesey as recorded by James Bowd in September 1889.

By then the News had launched a series of weekly titles and from February 1965 my Looking Back articles started to appear regularly. One in July 1986 featured the memories of an Irish labourer building the runways at Wicken airfield in 1943.

But the Cambridgeshire Collection was more than just books: from August 1986 to October 1988 I featured the various engravers who had depicted the area since the 1660s. These were followed later by nearly two years of similar articles about the region's photographers, once more drawing on its extensive holdings.

In between there were 100 Stories from a Year based on topics that the News had reported in what was then its 100th year. A centenary book, Cambridge in Pictures 1888-1988, combined images from the Collection with some of the News' photographs from the 1960s. Memory Lane, Cambridge, Memory Lane: Dy and Vanishing Cambridgeshire followed.

Meanwhile I recycled some of the articles in weekly broadcasts on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire which, with regular talks to groups, resulted in the 'Librarian of the Year' award. Strangely I've just rediscovered the report of the Westminster presentation when researching my Looking Back column for 25 years ago!

By then it was getting difficult to think of things to write about, but the answer was obvious. Old and new items arrived daily at the Collection, why not reflect on the recent acquisitions and the



people who'd given them? Thus the weeks from November 1992 to May 1996 were filled.

But by then my professional involvement with the Cambridgeshire Collection was coming to an end. I'd started a new series inspired by one of its thousands of playbills for performances at the Theatre Royal on Newmarket Road. This was headed 'Mr Pickwick's first visit to Cambridge'. So I took the view that if he had really visited - and he must have done because it said so on a piece of paper and everything written on paper must be true! - then he would have kept a scrapbook about the people he'd met. For the next 750 weeks I can that really

be over 14 years! I turned the pages of Pickwick's Cambridge Scrapbook, 1838.

At first I could draw on that remarkable collection of material amassed since before Charles Dickens himself lectured in the Guildhall. But then Lion Yard Library closed for refurbishment, a process that should have taken weeks and indeed took years. Unable to access its resources, I needed to discover another source of first-hand accounts of local life in the 1830s. I found it on the internet. The myriad of websites, some of which are freely available, do indeed allow one to read a vast amount of Cambridgeshire publications. But I know that there are many, many more that are not online.

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the original files of the News' papers (despised you know where), working and copying information I had not remembered seeing elsewhere.

And then there was this weekly Memories page. This has relied on the letters you've written and the folk I've met at talks. I am privileged to have been able to share your recollections through the pages of our local newspaper. To find some of the old articles filed away in scrapbooks is always rewarding. But most moving of all has been to attend funerals where some of the last words said about a former correspondent have mentioned something from my columns.

You may not have cut and kept all, or any, of those thousands of articles and snippets. But you can still read, search and download them. For as my thanks for all your assistance over the last 50 years I have placed them all on the world-wide-web. Google 'Internet Archive' and search 'Mike Petty Cambridge'.

However, I know so many of us do not use the internet. But there is still the telephone, the post and the voice. Please still drop me a line or give me a ring. I'll help if I can.

And, of course, the paper edition of the Cambridge News will continue to reflect reminiscences of our area. I will continue to read them with great interest, safe in the knowledge that any little errors are not now of my making!

Looking Back by Mike Petty

Thatcher spells out vision for Europe

FROM THE NEWS 1990
At the Kingsgarden conference at St Catharine's College, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher spelled out her vision for the future of Europe. Britain and Germany did not yet see eye-to-eye on this and she was not ready to withdraw all our troops. News should continue to have nuclear weapons based there. German Chancellor, Dr Helmut Kohl said he would press for faster progress towards political union.

Village perfect for us says elderly group

FROM THE NEWS 1985
Fifty tenagers of Lode were all friends at school 90 years ago.
"I think the oldest people in Cambridgeshire live in Lode. It is a quiet out-of-the-way village with very little development, just right for a peaceful life," said Hepthorn Wells, who at 97 is the oldest. Billy Harvey, 96, still enjoys a pint at the Cow and Horse while Elizabeth Potts is 96. Maud Tuck 92 and Philipp Cornwell is aged just 95.

Banks cope better with heavy rainfall

FROM THE NEWS 1940
During the last winter they had been through four serious floods, and had not had the gale winds they'd had in other years. The sluice keeper at Denver had never seen the water go through as fast as it had this year. But the banks are much stronger now than at any time within the memory of living man. H.G. Martin told the Ouse Catchment Board.

Well-known cyclist is badly hurt in fall

FROM THE NEWS 1915
AG Markham, the well-known Cambridge cyclist, met with a serious accident. He was riding a cycle along Victoria Road and while about to pass some horses ridden by soldiers, when one of the animals shied and, backing into Mr Markham, knocked him on to the tarmac. The result was he was badly thrown, dislocating his shoulder.



Reflecting our Cambridge past



ROLLING BACK THE YEARS: Left, Mike in 1998 with Roy Burgess of Cottingham who prepared old films taken by 'Uncle David'. Above, the illustrations feature ran from 1966-68.

This file contains the text of various series of articles published in the Cambridge Evening News and Cambridge Weekly News. Each was illustrated by photographs or engravings. These are omitted from this text but copies can be supplied if required.

It will be apparent that this file would benefit from editing and there are inevitably various errors. However I believe it contains a great deal of information not previously available in one place and which you might find of use.

There are over 2,150 pages. Do not print them all. But do search by any name, place or word and download anything of interest.

Please make what use of it you may. Kindly remember where it came from. Contact me if I can help

Mike Petty
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June 2016.

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Cambridgeshire Memories and Reflections by Mike Petty

Introduction

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June 2016

Memories:

*Looking back on aspects of Cambridgeshire,
Past and Present.*

A series of weekly articles in the Cambridge News,

Memories February 1997 to December 2014, compiled by Mike Petty

A series of weekly articles in the Cambridge Evening News featuring memories from all sorts of people on all sorts of Cambridgeshire topics

Note:

This text is a mixture of the text sent to the editor of the Cambridge News (complete with various instructions) and copies of the actual articles as published.

There are a few missing articles: 1998 Oct 29, 1998 Dec 24, 1998 Dec 31, 2002 Dec 11 & 25, 2006 Dec 6

Memories 1997 in one sequence

Memories no.1: 19th February 1997

Memories is a weekly column written by local historian and lecturer Mike Petty. Each week he will look in depth at an item mentioned in his *Looking Back* column which appears each weekday on Page 7 and features news which appeared in the *News* 100, 75, 50 and 25 years ago.

Today he sets the scene with a general look at 1897, 1922, 1947 and 1972.

In *Nothing New*, at the bottom of the page, he will show how issues making the news headlines today have reared their head in the past.

He also wants YOUR memories and pictures. Write to Mike Petty, Memories, Cambridge Evening News, Winship Road, Milton, Cambridge CB4 6PP

THE story so far ... **1897**

Queen Victoria was nearing the celebration of her Diamond Jubilee and throughout the country people were planning how best to mark the event; her reign had brought tremendous inventions — electricity, motor cars, telegram, telephone and efficient post office —but in latter years agricultural depression due to bad winters and wet summers and the arrival of cheap American grain -imports led many farmers to switch from corn production to cattle farming.

Prime Minister was the Marquis of Salisbury.

Local MPs were Sir Robert Uniacke Uniacke Penrose Fitzgerald (Cambridge), Walter Greene (Cambs West), Harry McCalmont (Cambs East) & Richard Jebb & Sir John Eldon Gorst (university).

Cambridge was making progress with its new sewage scheme — though this was attracting great complaints; there was agitation for a new railway station to be built on part of Coldham's Common and a new bridge near Abbey Road — echoing the Victoria Bridge opened a few years earlier. Despite all this Chesterton residents voted 3-1 against proposals for an amalgamation with Cambridge.

Blizzards swept the country — causing a death at Saffron Walden, but allowing skating matches at Littleport, though the thaw saw widespread flooding and the bursting of the banks of the river Nene at March.

1922

King George V was king.

Prime Minister was David Lloyd George, local MPs were Sir Eric Geddes (Cambridge), E S Montagu (Cambridgeshire) and J.F. Rawlinson and Sir J Larmer for the university.

Headlines: Influenza was sweeping the country with 804 deaths in one week alone, and Foot and Mouth disease was wiping out cattle.

Locally the deaths were announced of Ephraim Gautrey, seed grower and merchant of Cottenham, Mrs Moyes of the Lion Hotel, Cambridge, E P Frost the Squire of West Wrattling, and inventor of an early flying machine, musician Hague Ingram and Ernest Shackleton who died in South Georgia during his fourth expedition to the Antarctic.

Proposals for a new bridge over the Cam at Chesterton were once more opposed and a new motor ambulance was provided for townspeople.

1947

King George VI was king.

Prime Minister was Clement Atlee, local MPs were A L Symonds (Cambridge), A E Stubbs (Cambridgeshire) — both Labour and K W M Pickhorn and H W Harris (university).

Headlines: a strike by road haulage workers was causing shortages of food.

The coal industry had been nationalised on January 1 but was meeting opposition from unions and prompting a fuel crisis with electricity cuts threatening the jobs of 2,500 Pye Radio employees. It all added to the misery of a prolonged spell of freezing weather with 4ft snowdrifts at Longstanton.

Experimental new one-way traffic schemes introduced for two weeks in Sidney Street, St John's Street and Trinity Street linking with the established system in Market Street and Petty Cury proved successful.

Cambridge's worst ever fog blanketed the city on January 21 with bus conductors walking at the front of their vehicles to guide them back to their garages.

The deaths were announced of Ernest Terah Hooley, one-time High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire and owner of Papworth Hall died — from multi-millionaire to convict, his life was crowded with more spectacular and romantic incidents than any melodrama, and Col Louis Tebbutt a county councillor for 47 years

1972

Queen Elizabeth II reigns.

Prime Minister was Edward Heath, local MPs were David Lane (Cambridge) and Francis Pym (Cambridgeshire) — the university no longer had its own MPs.

Headlines: The miners strike had led to a state of emergency with power blackouts, industry was working a three-day week and householders were asked to heat only one room.

Britain joined the EEC and unemployment rose above a million.

Abroad: The Tokyo Winter Olympics began, America intensified its bombing campaign in North Vietnam and Queen Elizabeth, the retired luxury liner, was ravaged by fire in Hong Kong harbour.

Locally: Work was progressing on the Lion Yard car park and shoppers paying 10p to park in Queen Anne were offered a 3.5p bus trip to city centre in a trial scheme.

An inquiry opened into a proposed Western bypass – the M11

Petty Cury became the first pedestrian precinct and a city councillor dined in the street.

The first twin screen cinema — ABC 1 and ABC 2 were opened in St Andrew's Street by Mayor Jean Barker.

NOTHING NEW

Detective work can pinpoint locations

THE report in Saturday's News that Sherlock Holmes was once more prowling the streets of Cambridge recalls that there were at least two of Conan Doyle's stories with a Cambridge setting.

In one, *The Missing Three Quarter*, the great detective endeavours, without success, to locate a disappearing undergraduate rugger player in time for the Varsity match.

Such is the detail supplied by Dr Watson that it is possible to locate the very inn that Holmes stayed at, the shop from which he hired his bicycle and the route that he followed in his pursuit of the elusive sportsman.

Having explored Oakington, Waterbeach, Cherry Hinton and Coldham's Lane the mystery is finally solved in ... see next week's *Memories*.

Memories by Mike Petty, 25th February 1997

Memories of the Day

February 24th

1897

LIBERAL MEETING IN ROMSEY TOWN

Mr Wisbey referred to the roads question. They had been defeated but the authorities had seen that Romsey Town people were a force to be reckoned with. Hitherto they had been looked upon as a naughty dog, always barking and making a noise but without any bite. (Laughter).

Mr Quinney referring to the sewage scheme said he applied for work and was told by the engineer that they did not want men who understood the work as they would know too much if things went wrong. (Laughter).

1922

A GROCER & HIS WIFE s separation order granted within a year of marriage.

Unpleasantness occurred a few weeks after marriage. In July she purchased a motor cycle combination for £119. When she asked him to take her for a ride he struck her on the jaw.

Husband said it was his wife's suggestion that he should have a sum of money and the motorcycle combination and go away from her up North again

1947

CHRISTMAS DAY OFFENCES s

A London company secretary who left his Chrysler car on King's Parade during the night of Christmas Eve and the morning of Christmas day was summonsed for obstruction and for leaving it without lights. PC Tasker spoke of getting a hurricane lamp from the police station and attaching it to the car to warn other traffic. He was fined 10/- in the first case and 20/- in the second

1972

UNIVERSITY WAGE TALKS

Cambridge University members of the National Union of Public Employees are planning a large-scale membership drive in the University. Their Secretary said today that a claim by the union for a £20 basic weekly wage for manual & ancillary staff in universities would not apply to Cambridge workers. Meanwhile Melbourn Discount Warehouse offered a Hotpoint Twin-tub washing machine for £108 - £12 less than recommended price - but more than five times their weekly wage

February 25th

1897 HAVERHILL CURCH ORGAN

The contract for the new organ for Haverhill parish church has been placed in the hands of Messrs Miller & sons, Cambridge. The construction of the organ will be specially arranged to keep the view of the stained glass window perfectly clear which necessitates part of the organ being a considerable distance from the main portion, and which has been specially arranged for by the builders

1922

ELY CORONER'S WARNING.

"I have told people repeatedly at inquests that they had far better buy an old orange box to use as a cot than let children sleep with their parents. People are very apt to smother them unconsciously". The mother said it was not a really strong child for it had a wheezing cold since birth on January 15th. She fed it on bread slops and the breast generally. The weight of the child was below average being 6lbs 3ozs against the usual weight of 7lbs for a girl, 8lbs for a boy. Death was due to natural causes

1947

ANOTHER BLOW FOR HOUSEWIVES

Housewives are dealt yet another blow today. Cambridge University & Town Waterworks Company will reluctantly be compelled to close down the water softening plant at Cherry Hinton. Cambridge's water will then be about twice its present hardness. There have been drastic reductions in the coal required to evaporate the brine at the salt works in Cheshire. Mr Philip Porteous, managing director of the company told a reporter "The Government takes the view that water softening is one of those amenities without which we can manage in times of crisis, but we appreciate only too well the difficulties of the housewife in these days of soap rationing"

1972

CAMBRIDGE TOWNSCAPE

The visual quality of New Square is totally spoiled at present by its use as a car park., When new multi-storey car parks are built in the Fitzroy—Burleigh area however the square will be returned to grass and will once again be a valuable part of the Cambridge townscape"

February 26th

1897

LITTLEPORT EJECTMENT

The clerk to the Ely Guardians applied for the removal of Tabitha Camm, an eccentric old woman aged 72 years who is living in a tumbled—down old hovel in Littleport-Fen. The place was filthy in the extreme. She has lived there all her life and she tenaciously sticks to it. PC King said the walls were tumbling down and the bricks had no mortar between them. The rain penetrated and soot and dirt covered the place. The lady is independent in every sense of the word and would-be sympathisers are quickly ordered to decamp

1922

THE RENDEVOUS CINEMA, Hertford Street

"All next week. Super attraction! Mary Pickford can no more grow up than Peter Pan & that is why her latest production "Through the back doors" is just the type of charming picture you will want to see ... the kind that made her famous ... brimful of heart interest ... intensely effective. Special music programme. Perfect projection. Warm & comfortable"

1947

FALCON CLUB ARSON CHARGE

Between 60 and 70 persons were in an upstairs room when the Falcon Club was alleged to have been maliciously fired by a former member. Company Officer James Myden of the N.F.S. spoke of receiving a fire call at 9.21 pm. The structure of the staircase was of dry matchwood and it would have burst into flame in about another ten minutes. A former committee member said "I did it out of spite" ... some of the members had not been kind because "I was not dressed as well as them"

1972

REGENT STREET BLOCKED BY STUDENT PROTEST

Undergraduates at Downing college today continued a 24-hour occupation of the dining hall despite a warning that violent protest could close the college for the rest of this term. They are protesting against the expulsion of two undergraduates and the rustication of a third for their part in sending an obscene leaflet to Downing College dons and undergraduates. A march last night by more than 500 students blocked Regent Street for more than an hour with demonstrators seated in the road outside the college

February 27th

1897

GUILDHALL FLOOR

The Guildhall floor has become so unsafe that when a ball is held in the large room the most elaborate precautions have to be taken to support the beams in the ceiling of the Free Library beneath. This shoring-up process costs something like 30/- each time and is a sheer waste of money

1922

ANOTHER VILLAGE HALL.

Long-felt want supplied in Great Shelford. The hall is a converted army hut built on the public recreation ground. Great Shelford was to be congratulated in that its ex-Servicemen had joined with the Women's Friendly League to build the hall, a result which was eminently satisfactory for the village. If the ex-servicemen were prepared to pull together for the places where they lived there was a great future for the country

1947

MORE CAMBRIDGE RENTS CUT

Mrs Thurlborn of 29 Victoria Road rented a bedroom and sitting-room at £1.15.0 a week in December. It included gas and electricity and she and her husband had the use of the coal shed. Recently a cold water basin had been put in. Her landlord told the Tribunal he paid

£1.10.0 a week rent for the house. He wanted the rooms for his family as he, his wife and two children, the elder aged nearly five all slept in the same room. The rent was reduced to £1.5.0

1972

SWITCH TAKES CONCORDE WORK AWAY FROM CITY

Production of the noses of the Concorde supersonic airliner, which was planned to be in Cambridge, has been taken away by the British Aircraft Corporation. All the research and development work on the nose has been done by Marshall's at Cambridge airport. The senior shop steward is to see the Cambridge MP, Mr David Lane, to try to get the decision reversed

February 28th

1897

ADVERTISING TROLLEY

To let: a large advertising trolley to parade the principal streets of Cambridge. For terms & particulars apply Cambridge & District Advertising and Bill Posting co (ltd) Downing House, Regent St, Cambridge

1922

HOUSING ITEMS

Cambridge Town Council Housing Committee ,,,,,, approve the lay-out proposed of thirty houses next Milton Road and Union Road with white brick facings,, solid walls & slated roofs,, The windows to be sash ones with larger squares of glass

1947

DRIVING BAN ON CAR DEALER

Twelve months' disqualification from driving was amongst the penalties imposed on a "freelance motor dealer" against whom there were four summonses. The first was for driving a motor truck at a dangerous speed in Victoria Avenue (50 mph), the second for exceeding the permitted speed for that class of vehicle, the third for driving without third party insurance in force and the fourth for driving without a current driving licence. When spoken to defendant told police "I am afraid I was over the limit" but claimed he had the vehicle in full control. His brakes were perfect and he could have stopped if necessary. He was fined a total of £10.10.0

1972

CITY HOME SOLD FOR £23,000

A four-bedroomed detached house at 35 Luard Road, Cambridge was sold for £23,000 at an auction sale in the city. The house, built in 1937, includes three-quarter of an acre of gardens with 36 bearing peach trees. The lawn is big enough for tennis and the house has been described as being in the most sought-after residential situation in Cambridge

MEMORIES by Mike Petty March 4th 1997

LOOKING BACK REVISITED : NEW SQUARE CAR PARK

New Square was built in stages, the southern side constructed between 1829 and 1830, the east in 1834 and the north in 1835. It was constructed as an open-sided square like the college courts and looked out onto a large grassed area, linking with Christ's Pieces to provide a green walkway to the newly growing developments in Fitzroy and Burleigh Streets.

But as Cambridge entered the motor age so there came demand for parking places. Proposals to take a strip of Christ's Pieces for a bus station and car park at Drummer Street caused great controversy but went ahead nonetheless. Then in 1929 eyes were turned to New Square, readers asking the Cambridge Daily News to lead an attack against the proposals. No so. Looking back on the Drummer street protest the editor reflected that "Now it is all over body seems one penny the worse. The only fault is that Drummer Street was not big enough. Hence the need for further accommodation". Others however felt that Butt Green would be a better site and the discussion was joined.

Eventually however in March 1932 the paper could report that "With only the avenue of trees which bisects it to suggest that almost recently it was a green island of pastures, New Square car park, a wide expanse of concrete was opened by the Mayoress". The car containing the Mayoral party broke a band of pale blue ribbons stretched across the entrance and immediately afterwards, braving the heavy rain, Mrs Raynes declared the car park open and hoped it would be profitable to the town and bring about less congested streets and police courts.

Over 260 cars took advantage of the new facility over the Easter holiday but soon they were joined by a less welcome visitor a caravan.

Times however change and it became a goal to return the car park back to grass. The hopes expressed in 1972 came to fruition in June 1983 and Cambridge regained an area of open space once surrendered to the motor car.

READERS ASK

Did you attend the Cambridgeshire High School for Boys in 1971-72? If so do you remember Tim Farley who now lives in the USA? He has made contact via the Internet and is trying to locate a school chum from that period who name is NIGEL MELLOR. He believes the family came from Coton and that Nigel may be in the Stoke on Trent area. Can you help put him in touch? Write to Mike Petty at the News

Was your grandmother a swans down worker? If so what did she do? A reader searching through the 1891 census enumerators returns for the village of QUY had found several references to this trade being carried out by elderly ladies. What was it, how was it organised. Write to Mike Petty at the News

Last week I mentioned an arson attack on the FALCON CLUB, in Falcon Yard, Cambridge. A reader has asked for more information about the club. Were you a member, how long did it continue? Write to Mike Petty at the News

READERS ANSWER

In July 1942 German bombers made one of their raids on Cambridge and caused extensive damage in the Bridge Street area, the Union Society building being hit. German propaganda claimed that Cambridge had been badly damaged with fires raging and clouds of smoke trailing far beyond the city, and that later reconnaissance had shown that flames had become wholesale conflagrations.

Not so said the fire watchers, it was all lies.

But now A.E. Impey of Earith feels that what the Germans may have witnessed was the effects of the smoke machines which previous readers had remembered around Cambridge. Certainly when enemy planes approached the strategically manufacturing area of Luton such "Smokies" were fire up and large fans blew the smoke over the town, hiding the factories

from the planes above. Sometimes however high winds blew the smoke away from the town and at other times they made it so dark that schoolchildren were unable to see to study.

Donald Flory recalls similar devices near his house in Bexley Heath, Kent which were set off to block out the River Thames and prevent the bombers following the river route to London. The burners were about six feet in height, the chimney being about a foot and a half in diameter with a cap to spread the smoke on top. They were placed between 12 to 15 feet apart, each reservoir filled with crude diesel oil by the Army's Pioneer Corps. They burned throughout the night with a low pitched humming noise until the fuel ran out. He includes a drawing of the burner. [DRAWING ATTACHED]

Mr Flory has memories too of the horrible smell they made, making it quite impossible to keep any window open, even during the hot weather.

Patrick Mills writes to say he saw one near the Rolls Royce plant in Derby but do you remember them in this area. Write to Mike Petty at the News

SAME OLD NEWS

Reports that East Cambridgeshire District Council have introduced a new system for recycling refuse call to mind a proposal in Cambridge in July 1911 when the Town Council proposed requiring landlords and householders to provide metal dustbins for the reception of domestic rubbish. Currently "Old boxes, tubs and baskets almost anything that will hold the refuse without better more than half of it leak out of its numerous holes, chinks and crevices - are pressed into service, with the result that our streets periodically present an appearance more picturesque than pleasing. Some of the crazy old wrecks that decorate the edges of the pavements are worse than eyesores, they are outrages"

However some councillors were not sure it would be a good idea. Ungrateful tenants would "use them as substitutes for wheelbarrows, coal scuttles, or even for the purpose of giving the baby its bath!"

I trust this is not a problem East Cambs will encounter

TRACKING HOLMES (from last weeks "Memories")

From Coldham's Lane the trail turned hard to the right, back in the direction of town; the road took a sweep to the south of Cambridge and continued in the opposite direction to that in which we started. There stood a lonely rustic cottage ... Vicarage Farm, Trumpington, now disappeared from the maps ... or was it - you track down the "Missing Three Quarter" in your local library and work it out for yourself.

MEMORIES by Mike Petty, 11th March 1997

MAIN PHOTO FEATURE: CAMBRIDGE IN FLAMES NB: PICTURE SHOWS CAMBRIDGE HIDDEN IN SMOKE BUT IT WAS TAKEN 1903 - AND IS NOT WAR-TIME

In July 1942 German bombers made one of their raids on Cambridge and caused extensive damage in the Bridge Street area, the Union Society building being hit. German propaganda claimed that Cambridge had been badly damaged with fires raging and clouds of smoke trailing far beyond the city, and that later reconnaissance had shown that flames had become wholesale conflagrations.

Not so said the fire watchers, it was all lies.

But now A.E. Impey of Earith feels that what the Germans may have witnessed was the effects of the smoke machines which previous readers had remembered around Cambridge. Certainly when enemy planes approached the strategically manufacturing area of Luton such "Smokies" were fired up and large fans blew the smoke over the town, hiding the factories from the planes above. Sometimes however high winds blew the smoke away from the town and at other times they made it so dark that schoolchildren were unable to see to study.

Donald Flory recalls similar devices near his house in Bexley Heath, Kent which were set off to block out the River Thames and prevent the bombers following the river route to London. The burners were about six feet in height, the chimney being about a foot and a half in diameter with a cap to spread the smoke on top. They were placed between 12 to 15 feet apart, each reservoir filled with crude diesel oil by the Army's Pioneer Corps. They burned throughout the night with a low pitched humming noise until the fuel ran out. He includes a drawing of the burner. [DRAWING ATTACHED]

Mr Flory has memories too of the horrible smell they made, making it quite impossible to keep any window open, even during the hotweather.

Patrick Mills writes to say he saw one near the Rolls Royce plant in Derby but do you remember them in this area. Write to Mike Petty at the News

SAME OLD NEWS (not quite!)

A community paper such as the News always contains announcements of matches, matches and despatches but few can have been as dramatic as that recorded in its predecessor, the "Cambridge Chronicle" in June 1768 when reporting the inquest on an Oakington horsekeeper who had hanged himself. "As it did not appear to the coroner's jury that he was disordered in his senses ... he was accordingly buried in a cross-way, with a stake drove through his body".

READERS ASK

Do you remember the penny? M.B.Wallis of King Street, Cambridge, recalls when her entire pocket money was just 2d. Half of it could be spent - perhaps on a currant bun or doughnut from the baker's van which stopped by the back gate whilst the horse had his horse bag or on an ounce of sweets which soon stuck to their white paper cornet once they were out of the jar, or lemon sherbet or liquorice bootlaces or ...

The other half went into the money box with its stiff lid though the savings had to be supplemented handsomely before a B.S.A. bicycle with its back-pedal brake (it was safer) could be bought for £5.10.0 in 1933 to go to school on.

Strangely though in those days it didn't occur to parents to get children to buy their own socks, school dinners or busfares and so learn to know the value of money. It was a lesson that had to be learned once she was at work and bringing home the princely sum of 7/- a week!

WHAT DID YOU BUY WITH YOUR POCKET MONEY, WRITE TO MIKE PETTY AT THE NEWS

READERS ASK :

Colonel Louis Tebbutt who died in 1947 was a well-known member of county society, a sportsman holding a record for long-distance skating on the fens and a director of the Barrington cement works. In 1913 he gave to the Cambridgeshire Beekeepers Association a beautifully carved wooden trophy in the form of a hive which has been keenly competed for ever since. But what connection did the Colonel have with Honey, did he ever keep bees. The Association who are now researching their history would love to know, and would also appreciate other memories of the early days of beekeeping.

WRITE TO MIKE PETTY AT THE NEWS

ITEMS BELOW CAN BE USED IF THERE is SPACE; IF NOT USED I WILL INCLUDE THEM NEXT WEEK ... UNTIL NEEDED

REEVES' TALES

For many years Albert Edgar Reeve and his son Frank compiled notes and scrapbooks of little-known aspects of Cambridge's history which they shared through the pages of this newspaper. Now I share again some of Reeves' tales

College dinners in Victorian times

" During the quarter of an hour preceding 4pm students come flooding into their colleges to prepare for dinner. Undergraduates are not admitted within the screen until the fellows & fellow-commoners are assembled. Tables are supplied with an abundance of plain joints, vegetables & beer and ale ad libitum besides which soup, pastry & cheese are brought in for an extra charge. But the crowd, confusion & indifferent serving makes the hall dinner resemble steamboat meals". - C.A. Bristed. "Five year in an English University". 1857

THAT WAS THE YEAR : 1397

In 1397 during the reign of Richard II the Cambridge Council decreed that if any one elected to any office be rebellious or non-obediant to the mayor he should forfeit £10, half to the use of the mayor & half to the commonalty"

MEMORIES 18th March 1997, by Mike Petty

MAIN PHOTO FEATURE: READERS WRITE PHOTO IS OF FALCON CLUB FOOTBALL TEAM 1948/49 AND HAS BEEN SENT IN BY MR K.F. MALTBY 105 ARBURY ROAD, CAMBRIDGE CB4 2JD. RETURN TO MIKE PETTY FOR RETURN TO HIM

In "Memories" on 4th March I asked for information on the Falcon Club off Petty Cury, Cambridge. This brought back happy memories for Mrs J. Jenner of Bourn who writes: "My friend Betty and myself were in the A.T.S. stationed on Donkey Common (now Parkside swimming pool) in 1947. Our boyfriends, later our husbands, were members of the Falcon Club and enrolled us and paid our first monthly subscription. The cards were dark blue with a Falcon in the centre with the words Falcon Club, Falcon Yard, Cambridge underneath"

Another member was Mr K.F. Maltby of Arbury Road, Cambridge. He recalls that the main club was over MacFisheries shop in Petty Cury with the entrance in Falcon Yard. Almost next door was the British Legion Club which Falcon members used for Old Tyme Dancing Instruction with Mr & Mrs Caddick, They had a Football Team with fixtures against Pest Control and the Cambridgeshire Technical College and he includes a snap of team members taken in 1948/49. Some members formed a cycling section and on one occasion, on a trip to Biggleswade, the group included a 4-seater bicycle hired from a shop in King Street.

The Club was formed during the war and catered for people who were evacuated to Cambridge with their companies and, as it had its own laundry was a great help for people living in digs. It closed down in 1949 or thereabouts.

So plenty of memories here - do you remember the wartime huts on Donkey's Common, were you in a factory which was evacuated to Cambridge, do you recognise anybody in the photo. And just what was the A.T.S., were you a member and what was your role in wartime Cambridgeshire

WRITE TO MIKE PETTY AT THE NEWS

READERS WRITE

"It has been 25 years since I last saw or spoke to Tim so you can imagine my surprise when my mother phoned me after reading your article in the Cambridge Evening News ("Memories 4th March). I would very much like to get in contact with Tim again ..." So writes Nigel Mellor following our appeal on behalf of a long-lost friend in the USA to put them in touch. Another success for the News.

SAME OLD NEWS

A community paper such as the News always contains announcements of matches, hatches and despatches but few can have been as dramatic as that recorded in its predecessor, the "Cambridge Chronicle" of June 1768 when reporting the inquest on an Oakington horsekeeper who had hanged himself. "As it did not appear to the coroner's jury that he was disordered in his senses ... he was accordingly buried in a cross-way, with a stake drove through his body". Burial by the roadside was common for suicide victims and the stake was thought to prevent the ghost from rising according to Robert Halliday in the Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society for 1995 (available in the Cambridgeshire Collection)

THAT WAS THE YEAR: 1397

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REEVE'S TALES :

From the notes of A.E. & F.A. Reeve comes this comment on student fashions in 1788 when a pamphlet entitled "Remarks on the Enormous Expense in the Education of Young Men in the University of Cambridge" urged "That the dress of Undergraduates be taken into most serious Consideration : Being in its present state Indecent, Expensive and Effeminate"

MEMORIES by Mike Petty, 25th March 1997

MAIN PHOTO STORY: READERS WRITE

The 50th anniversary of the 1947 fen floods has generated many memories but one of the aspects of the story not generally recounted however is the soldier's tale. Ken Jay, now of Brentwood, was stationed at Colchester barracks expecting to spend the weekend celebrating his cousin's wedding to a G.I., American soldier. Instead he found himself on a lorry heading for the fens. Eventually they stopped and one of the soldiers shouted to an elderly woman asking where they were. "The last place on God's earth", she replied, "Southery".

It looked like a scene from the First World War as high sandbagged walls stretched along the side of the main A10 road from Littleport, holding back the advance, not of German troops, but of water which had surged across the fen following a breach in the bank of the River Wissey. It was then a race to see which could rise faster, the flood water or the sandbagged barrier which was holding it back.

But before long the soldiers were once more packed into trucks and sent off to Earith where the river bank had burst. Eventually they arrived at a small railway station, Bluntisham, and boarded a train that took them a few hundred yards along the track and across a bridge over the swollen river. Although it was the darkest of nights the scene was brilliantly illuminated by searchlights by whose glare men were labouring with yet more sandbags.

The British troops were ably assisted by German prisoners of war and a new word passed into the soldiers' vocabulary. For when work had to cease the shouted command "Halt" was echoed by the Germans in what sounded like "Shtoppen" so "stoppen" it became.

Together they were assisting in a completely new kind of military operation. The breach in the bank of the Gt Ouse was so large that the only way to check the rush of water was to construct a dam around the gap, and the only things big and heavy enough were amphibious army personnel carriers, known as Beavers. It became "Operation Neptune"

Ken heard the throbbing of their engines coming up the river, running along the line of an osier bank. Then when the tank-like Beavers were positioned across the gap he was amongst those rushing on board with large rolls of Submarine netting. This was unwound into the water and covered by tarpaulins and on to this was stacked up yet more clay bags. As day broke they were still labouring, though the Germans who had been working the previous day as well, were by now becoming a little rebellious. Eventually reinforcements arrived and with it the order "stoppen".

Fifty years later Ken learned that his work on the sandbag wall at Southery had been in vain as a culvert had burst under the road blowing it apart. And some felt that the "Neptune" operation was also an unnecessary failure as water seeped under the Beavers. But both were most gallant attempts to fight that oldest of the fenman's enemy, flooding and both gave the hope that the land would one day be reclaimed from the water

SAME OLD NEWS

The reports that people in Littleport are seeking to have their railway station relocated nearer the village brought to my mind that when the line to Kings Lynn was opened in 1849 and brought Littleport into the railway age the residents rejoiced in the excitement of seeing the first train packed with dignitaries from Lynn and Ely travelling through their village at the outrageous speed of 15 mph in coaches painted a chocolate colour and decorated with Union Jacks. According to one tale many people who were attending a funeral due to take place just before the train was scheduled to arrive did so with one eye on the clock, hoping the parson would not go on too long. In the event they were able to get away, rush out of the bottom gate of the churchyard, tear down Station Road and get there just in time to cheer the train on its way.

READERS WRITE

Mrs Barbara Wootton has sent a snap of Abnett's hairdresser's shop in St Neots. There, as Barbara Gilbert, she started work in 1940, biking four miles from her home in Roxton, Bedfordshire. She worked from 9am to 7pm earning, as a 14 year-old, the princely sum of 5/- a week, rising to 7/6 in the second year and then up to 10/-

She remembers Arthur Abnett who did the gentleman's hairdressing side of the business, Gwen his wife and their son Brian. After Mr Abnett died it was taken over by Jimmy Mosca. Barbara remembers it as a happy establishment - proved by the memories she still treasures

Memories by Mike Petty 3rd April 1997

The other evening I was walking along Trinity Street when I met a veritable convoy of Cambridge's latest manifestation of bicycle transport - the cycle-pulled rickshaw. Surely this is something new.

Not so. Pictures in the Cambridgeshire Collection indicate that a very similar mode of transport was often seen in Cambridge 80 years ago. Harry Newell of Trumpington was the proprietor of a cycle shop and when his father was confined to a wheelchair Harry devised a

means of attaching it to his bike and together they travelled far and wide, even on one occasion visiting London. When his father died Harry would take the bicycle and chair on outings organised for the village children and would give them rides as part of the entertainment

Another exponent of this form of travel was Dr Thomas Brooks Bumpsted who died in 1917. Formerly a medical practitioner in Petty Cury Cambridge, where he became well known to all, he took early retirement and lived the life of a country gentleman at Trumpington. He married an Italian lady of the noble family of Doria whose diamonds, which were heirlooms, were long remembered by those who saw them.

Failing eyesight restricted his shooting and international travel but he could get around locally in a cycle-towed wheelchair, propelled by his faithful servant Wynhall

But two other pictures reveal an extension of this idea. The problem with bicycle-power is that it takes an amount of effort by the peddler. From Littleport comes a modification - a rickshaw pulled by motorbike. Who was it, when was it - do you remember something similar - or any other interesting versions of cycle-power - write to Mike Petty at the News

(PICTURES SCANNED: Harry Newell with the bicycle-pulled wheelchair which he built to take his father on expeditions and a motorcycle rickshaw from the Littleport area about 1900. Credit Cambridgeshire Collection)

Readers Write

"I remember the Folk Museum when it was the White Horse Inn. When I was about 10 years old my father brought me in from Over, where we lived, on his motor bike and sidecar and we parked in the yard of the White Horse Inn. I remember it well, the old stable with a cart, a one legged pet chicken called Peg and an old cat which looked as though it had been made up from bits of other cats, but very friendly. The publican was named Hay.

"Reginald Lambert started the Folk Museum and one day he said to my father 'There is a window at the back which I cannot account for' My father suggested there may be a hidden room, I was there when my father and Reg walked up the stairs tapping the wall, and sure enough, at the top of the stairs they found something though nothing was visible in the plaster. Reg with the help of an odd job man knocked down the wall and they found an empty room which had been sealed up. It was fairly clean with just one wooden chair standing in the middle of the room. It was very strange and very cold. Reg couldn't find out why the room had been sealed" - Joan Summers, Newnham. Have you had a similar discovery - write to Mike Petty at the News

"I lived in a detached house on Shelford Road, Trumpington, which had an underground concrete air raid shelter built in the back garden underneath a rockery. It was made of solid concrete, a small tunnel inserted on one wall and a metal meat safe on a shelf. I stored a lot of wine in bottles and demi-johns down there in a temperature of about 45 degrees both summer and winter" - Kathleen Paul, Hauxton. Do you have memories of air-raid shelters - write to Mike Petty at the News

"In 1947 Wilburton fens were flooded like a sea. Victims were sent clothes etc from Canada. They were shared among the needy and with the rest they had a jumble sale. I remember buying a large winter coat, but to my surprise it had six layers of material. Quite a find in those days with clothing coupons in force and £1 weekly for housekeeping. The top layer was a thick plaid with which I covered a small easy chair. The next layer made curtains for my kitchen window. The lining made cushion covers. There was a wadding padding which I stuffed the cushions. The rest I used for brass cleaning. Not bad for a few pence and no coupons!" - Mrs I.M. Gothard, Wilburton

"I was most interested in the "Looking Back" feature of 24th March 1922 suggesting Nyasaland tobacco planting had prospects as my father was one of the first white people to grow tobacco there in 1926! Father flew out to Africa and in 1926 bought 60 acres at Kasungu which he worked with the help of African villagers. It was virgin soil and the bricks were made of mud and water 'on site'. Our house was also built by father of anything to hand - I can picture it still - I was four years old" - Lavena Hawes^

Readers ask

"I find it surprising that there were still German prisoners of war during the floods, nearly two years after the end of the war in Europe. Were they kept as a useful labour force or a bargaining counter? And roughly when were the last repatriated" - answers to Mike Petty at the News

Memories by Mike Petty, 10th April 1997

The News had hardly hit the doormat before people were remembering the huts on Donkeys Common, where Mill Road meets Parker's Piece in Cambridge, which housed members of the A.T.S. during the Second World War. Mrs Joyce Taylor of Stretham was one of the Auxiliary Territorial Service girls who occupied them. She was working in army stores at Thompson's Lane, Gwydir Street and Brickfields munitions factory (more details please) whilst Mrs J. Jenner of Bourn worked on tanks, scout cars and Bren gun carriers at the A.T.S. depot just past the Golden Hind on Milton Road, Cambridge.

Joyce recalls there were 12 girls plus a Corporal to each of the wooden huts. She remembers the billets as being quite warm - just as well for although out of bounds to male soldiers were not properly secure - one Easter Sunday morning she awoke to find her clothes had been stolen overnight.

This would have proved an embarrassment to women such as Dorothy Perry of Cambridge one of the A.T.S. Provost, or Military Police. They patrolled the streets in pairs to try and keep things in order also going to the dances at the Dorothy and the Labour Hall off East Road - strictly in the line of duty. She has sent a picture of herself and colleague Hazel Tilly in Emmanuel Street, Cambridge in 1944

When the A.T.S. left Donkey Common in 1948 squatters moved in by night, turning the army huts into temporary homes as Cambridge struggled to cope with the post-war housing problems. Finally they were demolished but not only the memory lived on - as Fred Chapman of Sawston can testify • his garden shed is made up with parts from one of them, as he helped with the demolition of the huts in the early 1950s.

By complete co-incidence another letter arrived recalling memories of living in old wartime huts - but these were from the First World War. Mrs Violet Brown of Meadowlands lived for about four years in the buildings of the First Eastern General Hospital on the site of what is now the University Library. They were pressed into use to house homeless people and some were finally sold off as chicken sheds.

The huts had a long corridor down the middle and the old wards were divided into five homes with kitchen, living room, bedroom and spare room. There was a communal wash house and toilets. The estate was served by horse and cart coalmen, grocer, fruit and veg seller and, in summer, by a tricycle selling Eldorado ice cream whilst Mr Ley had a general store just inside the gates from Burrell's Walk.

Mrs Brown wishes she had some photographs to help her recall more of what were "good days". Fortunately the Cambridgeshire Collection has several dozen, one of which I feature here and copies of others have been sent to her

READERS WRITE

On another vaguely military theme do you remember when Soham Grammar School Army Cadets went ball-room dancing in their Army boots at Ely High School for Girls. I do and so does Janice Clarke (nee Parr) who would like to invite schoolgirls from the September 1958 intake for a reunion in May. If you've not had your invitation please contact Mrs Christine London (Lem) at 18 St David's Road, Southsea, Hants, PO5 1QN

It is a little-known fact that King Charles is buried in Stretham churchyard - as is his wife. Not the King Charles of course but a one-time owner of the "Royal Oak" pub. Do you know of more eccentric, famous or notorious folk who are commemorated in local churches or churchyards? If so Ian Wilkes of 20 Park Drive, Romford, Essex RM1 4LH would like to hear from you in connection with a new book he is writing - and so should I

Did you get your pinta from Keith Wright's dairy at Fenstanton - or more importantly do you have pictures of the old dairy or any of their lorries. If so Jean Ding of Grove Cottage, 28 Bell Lane, Fenstanton, PE18 9JX would appreciate the opportunity of copying them for an exhibition to be held at Fenstanton United Reformed Church on 5th April. Other snaps of old Fenstanton would be welcome - to join those you can see at her display during the afternoon.

PHOTOS SCANNED ON DISK : the shop and news agent at the First Eastern General Hospital - as remembered by Mrs Brown (pic from Cambs Coll) and 2 A.T.S. Provosts in Emmanuel Street, Cambridge in 1944 - from Mrs Perry

MEMORIES by Mike Petty 15th April 1997

"More damage was caused to University buildings in last week's November 5th riots than was caused by enemy action throughout the war".

This was the headline of the undergraduate newspaper "Varsity" on 13th November 1948 over a story recalling how the interior of the Senate House was severely damaged by an explosive charge and about 70 panes of glass broken. In addition three motor vehicles were damaged and four constables and at least four civilians were injured. Two constable's helmets had been returned anonymously to the Police Station during the week.

This seems hardly the date to record university rag incidents but was prompted by a letter recently received from Bob Constable of New South Wales, whose mother lives in Cambridge. It reads "During a recent visit to Cambridge I was browsing in Heffer's Bookshop when I came across "Images of Cambridge" and to my amazement found a photograph of myself as a student taking part in a rag in 1952". When prompted to recall further incidents he confessed that his stockings kept falling down since his fiancée drew the line at providing him with a suspender belt!

The Police Constable that the student Constable was annoying has also been identified. He is Robin Martin of Histon who recognised his old collar number - 135. He had joined the Cambridge Police in August 1951 and must have been in some trepidation at such a potentially explosive occasion,

But who were the other people. Just to remind you it was on Cambridge Market Hill in November 1952, a crisp sunny morning. Drivers into Cambridge were stopped by a stern-faced "policeman" (somewhat younger than PC Martin) and not allowed to pass until a contribution had been exacted for the Poppy Day appeal. Traffic was so congested that bus passengers got off and walked, accosted by half-naked natives, sheikhs, Ruritanian generals and undergraduates carrying chamber pots. Others were attempting to ease traffic congestion by using a decrepit and unlikely-looking steam roller to lay a "spine relief road" with wallpaper.

Perhaps you purchased one of the harem of captive Girton girls (one marked 'slightly soiled, price reduced') who were auctioned for prices ranging from 3d to one shilling, or were threatened by a man with a foaming shaving brush,

If so you will, not remember, because such things were commonplace at Rag Day. But perhaps the photograph will jog your memory. Write to Mike Petty at the News

Dorothy Perry has recalled other memories of a policeman's lot in wartime. "Some American servicemen were selling home made whisky and would meet in the Mitre Pub. It was affecting the soldiers' eyes if they drank it. A civilian police-woman, Nellie Noakes, used to dress as an old lady and sit in the pubs to find out about this. She was a good police-woman and tried out her disguises on the A.T.S. Provosts before going out. She should have a statue set up for her". Do you have memories of Americans in wartime? Write to Mike Petty at the News

"The account of the World War I huts on the University Library site has taken me back many years. I visited the huts when working as a call-boy for the old London and North Eastern Railway about 1927. A railway Goods Guard lived on the site and had to be called. A wooden veranda ran in front of each row of huts. It creaked noisily when I walked on it. I was very unpopular when I woke all his neighbours as well

As a call-boy I worked from midnight to Sam. Those eight hours were spent cycling round Cambridge with a list of names, addresses and calling times. There was no tea break. I used to eat anything I had in shop doorways. All the street lights were out by 11pm and some nights were pitch black. My biggest danger was falling asleep on my cycle - something I managed to do twice" - A. Mansfield, Cambridge, Did you have an unusual job - write to Mike Petty at the News

"I was most interested in the "Looking Back" feature of 24th March 1922 suggesting Nyasaland tobacco planting had prospects as my father was one of the first white people to grow tobacco there in 1926! Father flew out to Africa and in 1926 bought 60 acres at Kasungu which he worked with the help of African villagers. It was virgin soil and the bricks were made of mud and water 'on site'. Our house was also built by father of anything to hand - I can picture it still - I was four years old" - Lavena Hawes, Cambridge

Readers ask

"I find it surprising that there were still German prisoners of war during the floods, nearly two years after the end of the war in Europe. Were they kept as a useful labour force or a bargaining counter? And roughly when were the last repatriated" - answers to Mike Petty at the News

FROM THE NOTES OF A.E. & F.A. REEVE

About 1790 two well-known Cambridge characters were Paris a bookseller and Jackson, a bookbinder. Both were remarkably corpulent but never ate bread. Instead they indulged in meat, poultry and fish. One day when walking a few miles from home, being hungry, they entered a public house where the only provision available was a clod of beef weighing about

14 lbs which had been in salt a day or two. This they consumed, aided by buttered potatoes and pickles. Upon the landlord telling of this the two ever afterwards were called the Cambridge clods - from "Granfields Remarkable Persons", 1819

How many recognise this most unusual picture of an area now dramatically different. Kathleen Goode has written of her memories of the Correspondence College, a terrace of red brick buildings where she had an office on the ground floor. She has a great interest in the various chimney pots in Cambridge streets, but will not have seen these pots from this angle. The picture was taken from the top of the spire of the Cambridge Catholic Church about 1890 and looks down Gonville Place to the junction with Mill Road and the open space of Donkey Common, where we now know army huts were built during the war and the Parkside Swimming Pool now stands.

The picture is part of a panorama which stretches from Downing College across Parkers Piece and Fenners cricket ground to the newly constructed Mill Road railway bridge. It was taken by Scott and Wilkinson, then newly arrived in Cambridge who had their shop in St Andrew's Street, near the New Theatre. This print survives in Downing College but did they take their panoramic camera to other vantage points - if they looked north from the Catholic spire, did they also turn around and look down Hills Road? If you can help write to Mike Petty at the News

MEMORIES by Mike Petty 22nd April 1997

Recently I joined the Mayor, Coun. John Durrant/ on a visit to St Luke's school, Cambridge as part of the process of judging for this years "Trubshaw Prize", the award instituted for research into various aspects of the history of Cambridge

I never cease to be amazed at what schools and their pupils can do with material they find in the Cambridgeshire Collection. There were many old pictures of Market Hill but they were complemented with the children's own interpretations, analysis and surveys - even quizzing stall-holders on their views and passing their comments on to the City Council - what better opportunity than directly to the Mayor himself

But there was yet more to their study. As well as researching the Market they had also turned their attention to the area much nearer to their school in French's Road, nestling in the shadow of the old windmill which is now the centrepiece for a diverse range of businesses. Part of that history involved speaking with old residents and recording their comments. In 1991 they had interviewed Mr & Mrs French and taped their Memories.

"You know the Corn Exchange in Cambridge, well that was a corn market. All the different corn merchants and millers from all around Cambridgeshire used to have stands, like a desk - like your school desk, but high. It had a sloping desk and the lid lifted up, and the front had a little sort of table part sticking out on the front where you used to put all your samples. And when you went to the market you would take a sample of flour, middlings, bran, and then all the different wheat, barley, oats, all those things in little bags, stitched up bags made of cotton calico, and you would fold the top all round and set it there so they could see the corn, and feel it. And the farmers all used to come to the market and bring their sample of wheat and they'd go round all the different millers seeing who'd give them the best price.

"And then Christmas, at the last market of the year we always used to have a real good bit of fun there because we'd start the market off normally at half-past-two and about half-past-three somebody'd let a firework off. Bangers, mind you, bangers and rockets. We didn't have any fancy, pretty ones. And they used to light a rocket on one of the stands down the end of the corn market, put a match to it and it used to go right down the whole length of it and bash into

the wall. All the young men used to have a bit of fun there and they'd throw the samples about as well, get a sample of flour and throw it right across. They used to get their suits covered in flour.

"There isn't a corn market any more. Taking samples and dealing, it's all gone. I mean the farmer just rings the miller up and says have you got so many sacks of wheat and the miller turns round and says right I'll send a lorry for it, and it's all bulk. About the fifties it started to die out and then the Corn Exchange was closed down" (I believe in 1965)

I have never found a description of activity in the Corn Exchange before - but thanks to the work of St Luke's children this important aspect of local life has now been recorded. Perhaps you can add to it. Incidentally this forms just one small part of one panel - well done St Luke's, and good luck in the Trubshaw competition.

Meanwhile Morley Memorial School is nearing its 100th birthday and would like to research its history. So if you used to go to Morley and have memories you can share please write to Michael Porter and David Gibson of year 5 at Morley School, Blinco Grove, Cambridge CB1 4TX

READERS WRITE

Memories of bicycle-towed bathchairs ("Memories" 8th April) have come in from Miss Foreman of Sturton Street, Cambridge. She writes that her two of her aunts used one on trips around Cambridgeshire. On one occasion as they struggled up the long hill before Royston the chair came adrift, ran backwards and deposited the elderly aunt in the ditch!

Mrs J. Gill of North Arbury recognised her grandfather and uncle, (Harry Newell) in the photograph, which was one she had never seen before. Flo Larkin of Milton has also ordered copies for her family album and is now seeking a picture to recall memories for her husband, Percy. He was born 80 years ago at the Old Jolly Brewers public house in Union Road, Cambridge. If you can help write to Mike Petty at the News

Can you help with another enquiry, from Judith Butcher of Cambridge over something that has been niggling her? She writes "I find it surprising that there were still German prisoners of war during the 1947 floods, nearly two years after the end of the war-in Europe. Were they kept as a useful labour force or a bargaining counter? And roughly when were the last repatriated"

I know there was a camp at Trumpington and they issued their own 1025 Company newspaper (though I have never seen one). In August 1947 I believe some extra 1,300 prisoners and British staff were transferred there from Radwinter and in April 1948 four British girls joined the cast of a play, performed in German, before the prisoners went home in June. But further information please to Mike Petty at the News

Memories by Mike Petty 29th April 1997

Weekly News reader Mrs Breen of St Neots found memories flooding back when she saw a picture of Grantchester Mill in one of my recent "Pickwick" articles. For her Grandfather used to work there until the traumatic day in 1928 when disaster struck.

It was about 4.30pm on Tuesday 30th October when one of the mill hands filled the oil-engine which worked the machinery when water power was low. A few moments later the room was full of smoke so dense he could not re-enter and this suddenly burst into flames.

Men attempting to fight the fire were beaten back and forced out of the building, leaving their coats and bicycles behind to be consumed by the flames.

Within half an hour two Cambridge fire engines were on the site. They experienced difficulties getting their big Dennis pump working but were soon pouring water from the mill pond over the blazing building, flames now shooting through the windows and the road blocked by the heat.

From everywhere people flocked to watch, cars jammed back towards Trumpington and into Grantchester, hundreds of cyclists arrived from Cambridge, held back by fireman's ladders across the road to act as barriers. Whilst some strove to help firemen, others lamented that they had left their cameras behind. Not so photographer Ted Mott from Trumpington who captured the scene.

It was all too obvious that the battle to save the 13th-century structure was already lost. First the wooden grain hoist on the front of the machine fell with a tremendous crash, blocking the road, then sections of roof gave way, the cracking of red-hot tiles when reached by water reminding some of machine-gun fire. About 200 gallons of petrol were stored in tanks beneath the mill and great efforts were made to prevent this exploding, though at 6.30 a great bang from the Trumpington side indicated that a paraffin tank had burst. By 7.15 ladders could be placed against the walls and soon afterwards firemen could enter for the first-time.

Meanwhile sparks and ashes were showering into the sky to drop in Newnham and to cause motorists to flee from the danger of their cars igniting.

By next morning the mill presented a forlorn spectacle; charred woodwork, twisted heaps of machinery - much of it newly installed and of the most modern pattern - collapsed walls and the stench of smoke told the tale of what had happened. Maize wheat and other grain inside the sack room was still red hot. The mill cat and her kitten had perished in the inferno and onlookers reported hearing the squeal of rats who suffered the same fate

The damage was reckoned at over £15,000 but the loss of such an ancient structure - thought to be that featured in Chaucer's "The Reeve's Tale" was complete. No longer would visitors echo William Wordsworth's sentiments from "Prelude" - "Beside the pleasant Mill at Trumpington, I laughed with Chaucer in the hawthorn shade", and Mrs Breen's Grandad Keates had to look for other employment

Village magazines can be marvellous methods of spreading memories of the history of the locality. The Dry Drayton Newsletter is an excellent example carrying regular contributions from Sid Martin, who at aged 86 has known the village from his schooldays. He has been encouraged to dredge into his fund of memories to recall the people and places he knew when young - including that most important of institutions, the post office and general store.

Sid remembers when it housed the only telephone in the village and was kept by Fanny Walker and her brother Fred, who was the postman. He always rode a lady's cycle which he said was easier to mount and dismount. Fred married the village school teacher and when she died he married her sister. When his second wife also died, Fred married Janet Scambler and they lived in one of the two cottages they owned on Pump Green. When Fred died Janet took over the post round, but she distributed the letters from an old pram.

Nowadays water comes from taps - do you remember when you had to pump it up for yourself?

Another contributor, disguised by the penman "Dryton" (but doubtless known to real locals), recalls the walk to school, a good mile from home. The journey could be long but seldom tedious as there were queen bumble-bees, March hares and large black slugs four-inches long to observe en route. Sometimes there might be a lift to be hitched in a passing tumbrel cart, the driver enjoying the company and the children's' chatter. Sometimes they would whip a top all the way to school and at other times trundle a hoop. These could be obtained from the local refuse tip (a disused pond). The rim of a bicycle wheel was ideal for the purpose and a short stick would push it along quite effortlessly. In those days there was no traffic to avoid; it would not be recommended along the Huntingdon Road today!

Memories of those long-past days are displayed behind the cash tills in the Tesco at Bar Hill - which Sid remembers when it was just open fields. They are large blow-ups of pictures from the Cambridgeshire Collection - an excellent way of recalling days past and bringing history to life.

IF YOU ARE SEEKING A PICTURE TO REVIVE A MEMORY visit the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library or write to Mike Petty at the News

READERS WRITE

Mrs A. Pluck has happy memories of the old Festival Theatre on Newmarket Road, Cambridge, where her husband used to work back-stage. She was able to go behind the scenes and meet many of the actors, some of whom became big stars. She particularly recalls a play called "Love on the Dole" and Kent Walton who took a very good part. She was sad when the Theatre had to close and hopes that it may one day be revived again

DID YOU USED TO GO TO THE FESTIVAL, or were you involved in Amateur Dramatics in days past - write to Mike Petty at the News

MEMORIES 6th May 1997 by Mike Petty

I was opening the Ely Museum the other day (as one does when one writes for the "News") when somebody started talking politics.

There could surely be no political disagreement over the brilliant new Ely Museum with its recreation of the actual cells in which villains were imprisoned - and complete with original graffiti depicting the convict ships which were to carry some to their banishment on the other side of the world or the gallows which were to transport others beyond earthly woes.

By co- incidence I met a relation of the Littleport rioters at Mildenhall the other evening and he will now be visiting the Old Gaol in Market Street, Ely, to see whether his ancestor added his own name to those scratched on the walls. It is open each day except Monday, 10.30-4.30

But the politics under debate revolved around a small broach containing a portrait of a candidate and inscribed "Vote for Morrison-Bell". So who I was asked was he?

According to his campaign literature in the Cambridgeshire Collection you should vote for E.W. Morrison-Bell because he prefers taxing the Foreigner to taxing You, believes that British Work should be kept for British Workmen and is opposed to Socialism, and the loss of individual liberty which would ensue from the tyranny of State officialdom.

He was a Conservative candidate who stood against Liberal the Hon E.S. Montagu in the West Cambridgeshire constituency at the Parliamentary Election of January 1910 and lost by 505 votes. Perhaps Montagu had the better party organisation and certainly he managed to

appeal to the younger element of the population if the snap of the goat-powered campaign cart is any guide - was this the forerunner of the 'Battle Bus'?

The election returned a Liberal government but was followed by another in December that year by which time Morrison-Bell had given up. Jack Overhill remembered the December contest in the Saxon Street area of Cambridge, "Nearly eight years old, I went out early with the blue-and-buff ribbons of the Liberal Party pinned on my jacket. Voting fever was high and I exchanged jeers with political rivals sporting the pink-and-white colours of the Tory party".

His two clarion calls "Pink and White - I hate the sight" and "Blue-and buff - I love the stuff" soon got him into trouble with boys supporting the rival party. But he loyally cheered the cart-horses decked with the Liberal colours and booed those bearing the colours of the Tories and in between chanted

"Vote, vote vote for Mr Buckmaster,
Turn old Paget out of town,
For Bucky is the man
And we'll have him if we can,
If we only put our shoulders to the wheel",

Buckmaster lost. It all left a lasting impression on Jack. What are your earliest election memories, Write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories of the German Prisoner-of-War Camp at Trumpington have been flooding in. George Blows of Queen Edith's Way, Cambridge, remembers how St Columba's church organised a committee to befriend the Germans, One of the leading members was A.S. Harris who worked at the "Cambridge Daily News".

He understood their problems for he had been a P.O.W. in Germany in the 1914-18 war and spoke the language. He helped the Germans obtain an old flat bed printing press and with his assistance the prisoners published a camp news sheet for the 1025 people accommodated there. The P.O.W.s also made toys which they sold to camp staff or gave to people who had helped them

By the time the war was over many German cities had been badly damaged, others were in Russian hands and many prisoners who had no family left to go home to elected to stay in England. This is true of one such ex-inmate of the Trumpington camp who now lives in Cherry Hinton. He remembers the Nissen huts, near the old Plant Breeding Institute, which accommodated about 60 people in bunks and where everyone spoke German. From there they were taken out in lorries to work on local farms under an English foreman and to help build a new camp at Bourn.

He may have been escorted by Albert Ablett who served in the Royal Pioneer Corps and now lives in Akeman Street, Cambridge.

For he was one of the English soldiers who took the German prisoners to work on the Bourn camp, and conveyed them to their work in the fields. He also helped guard the camp gate morning and night, though by then there was no hostility and both were young men who had served their country and were anxious to get on with their lives away from military discipline.

They both met and married local girls, one at a Guildhall dance, the other in the Red Cow nearby and both share memories of the hardship of post-war life in Cambridge

Josel Jakobs was one German who came to Cambridgeshire before the war ended - in fact he dropped in by parachute, landing in a field at Warboys in January 1941. There he met Charlie Baldock, Harry Coulson and fish shop owner Harry Godfrey, They were pleased to see him - though the feeling was not reciprocated. For Charlie and his friends were members of the Home Guard and Josel ended up in the Tower of London, where he was shot as a spy.

The story is one of many memories in "Warboys at War 1939/45" compiled by Harold Shelton of 38 Jubilee Avenue, Warboys, PE17 2RT. Harold is anxious to hear from others who can add to his record and assist in his quest to ensure the story of those who fought for their country from country airfields is not forgotten

Are you researching some aspect of Cambridgeshire history; write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories 13th May 1997, by Mike Petty

"An undergrad. hailing from Cheddar
Found his nose getting redder and redder.
For the whisky he drank would have floated a tank! -
He didn't leave much for his 'bedder'"

The limerick was written in January 1922 and featured in one of eight albums full of similar nonsense rhymes which were found on a Cambridge market stall. All were entitled "Soltises sans sagesse" (foolishness without wisdom) and compiled by "Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego"

The mystery sent the buyer, Ruth Jacques of East Road, Cambridge off on a hunt to discover the originators. There was a name in each of the albums - E.H.L. Jennings, with an address in Bournemouth, but that approach drew a blank. There were some clues in the drawings which accompany the poems. One showed a street which might be King's Parade - in the background the name "The Bull." could be seen on an inn sign. Only an insider would know that there was a hotel of that name alongside King's College.

Then a flower seller recognised the Jennings name - and one thing led to another. Slowly it became clear. The words had been written by Harold - then a 19 year-old undergraduate reading modern languages at King's College who enjoyed the work of Edward Lear. The sketches had been made by his twelve-year old sister Peggy -who was to go on to the Royal College of Art, whilst "Abednego" was the baby of the trio, Bridget, then nine, who was in her turn to gain a place at Girton College. Much later Harold had moved back to Cambridge and died in 1986, whilst Peggy still lives here.

But what, I wonder, drove the undergraduate to drink. Perhaps the answer lies in another of the limericks, dated 4th May 1922 - and in the events of the year before

"There once was a freshman from. Merton,
Who loathed anything with a skirt on;
But his views he revised (and who would be surprised?)
When he'd visited Newnham and Girton!"

For in 1921 Cambridge University and its undergraduates were in turmoil. Plans had been announced to allow women to gain the reward of a Cambridge University degree should they sit and pass the same examinations as the male students. It all became a heated debate, and when the decision was agreed led to the burning of the gates of Newnham college and a colossal mock funeral marking "The death of the Varsity" with the corpse of the last male undergraduate being borne on a bier surrounded by aged mourners whose long grey beards dragged in the dust.

Yet the whole issue had also been debated in May 1897. Then undergraduates urged the Senate (the University's ruling body) to reject the proposals with a petition containing over 2,100 signatures, followed by a mass meeting at which only 138 undergrads supported the plans, whilst 1,083 rejected them.

When the day of the voting came special trains were run to and from London to bring Graduates in for the occasion and the Senate House where the vote was to be held was besieged. Dons were bombarded with fireworks, rockets being fired into the building through the windows whilst others "skied" over the roof of the University Library alongside.

When the results of the vote were announced however, and it was seen that the women's cause had been lost by nearly three to one, the massed ranks of students cheered wildly - and pelted the Senate House windows with fireworks, eggs and oranges as the mob on King's Parade forced themselves through the Senate House gates and over the sacred grass

An effigy of a Girton student on a bicycle which had been suspended, from the window of a house on the corner of Trinity Street was ripped down - bringing part of the balcony of the house with it. The figure lost her head and hands and showed what it was made of. It was rushed away and on the Market Hill appeared on the top of a cab, an excited mass of undergraduates surging below.

The cabby struggled frantically, for about a dozen men were soon in the cab, on the top and on the horse. After some persuasion the horse was taken out and with about a score of men tugging at the shafts the cab with the remains of the figure, the bicycle and the cabby on top proceeded on a journey around the town, accompanied by horn blowing, wooden rattles and the discordant noises from human throats.

Yet, said the newspaper, the demonstrations were kept within bounds - but things got much more lively next day!

Press comments on the actual vote was much more severe, "The decision shows a small-mindedness which is utterly discreditable in a body charged with public responsibilities. After this vote it is more than ever apparent that we must look for University reform", said the "Daily Chronicle". The student magazine "Granta" saw things differently: "We have won a great victory at great loss of energy. We have won peace. The big threshing will do much to recommend a Women's University to the authorities at Newnham and Girton. They will not risk another threshing by raising an agitation similar to the last one".

Yet the issue was raised again in 1947 - and that time they won.

Ruth Jacques would like to see the limericks published. If you think you can help write to Mike Petty at the News and I will pass your letters on

READERS WRITE

Mrs Coker of Chesterton recalls the Grantchester Mill fire of 1928 ("Memories" 29th April). "I can remember the incident as if it was yesterday. I was only young at the time - about eight years old. We lived at Newnham and the blaze could be seen there. To a young girl it was quite a sensation, not realizing the danger of it all"

Ken Ward of Ontario, Canada, has appealed to readers for assistance in reviving his memories of Romsey School, Cambridge, between 1940 and 1941 - in particular for any photographs of the time. The head was a Mr Elbourne - from whom he got the cane for mucking about - whilst Mr Stearn was the art master, and there was a Miss Gunn. Ken was there when the

brick wall between the girls and boys playground was taken down. He also recollects that on Coldham's Common there was an aircraft crash dump where bits of planes were stacked and this was something of a magnet for lads at the time, although it was patrolled by RAF police their dogs.

If you can help Keith would like to hear from you - and so would I. Please write to Mike Petty at the News

Do you recall a visit to Ely RAF Hospital by the King and Queen during the war years? There is a half-remembered feeling that either on the day before or the day after the visit - which was of course kept secret at the time - a German fighter flew down Lynn Road, Ely, machine gunning everything in sight at precisely the time the Royal entourage had been due to travel that road. Is it true - does anybody know? Write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories 20 May 1997 by Mike Petty

Local historian Michael Bentinck, who has so ably recorded the story of those who fought the enemy, the climate, the conditions and the hard labour in the Far East during the Second World War as now turned his attention to another group of largely unrecorded warriors - the Women's Land Army

E.M. Barraud was one of the first to enlist on the first day of war. She was then working in London as an Insurance Clerk on a wage of £5 a week and with the promise of a pension at the end of it. Instead she filled in a form in the National Service Handbook and found herself accepted in the new Army, her battleground the fields around her home at Eversden.

In the early hours of Monday, September 11th 1939 her employer led her out to his orchard to start picking Monarch plums. "There he left me with a completely uncontrollable ladder, two cob baskets to pick into and a bundle of empty half-sieves. I felt more alone, lost, desolate and incompetent than ever in my life before. I nearly killed myself lugging the ladder about. It seemed to have an overwhelming desire to lie down on the ground, and when I did manage to coax it into position, as soon as I set a foot on the bottom round, it lurched sickeningly, with ominous cracking and creaking of branches. In my complete ignorance and working alone, I did not discover for a week that it was a local custom to knock off for half an hour at ten o'clock for lunch & when I found out I hadn't the courage to tell the truth and claim my money for those extra half hours"

Soon however she looked forward to sitting in the cart lodge on upturned fruit baskets to eat her sandwiches, drink welcome hot tea from a thermos, talk scandal and curse the weather with the other workers.

She learned new skills - handling a farm horse, pitching sheaves in the fields, milking cows - "every fresh job meant a fresh set of unused muscles to break in, till I began to think I should never come to the end of the possible pain". Summing up her first experience she could only conclude that if anybody had realised just how utterly ignorant and inept she was she would never have survived. But she lasted and enjoyed her war work, sharing her experiences with readers of the "Manchester Guardian" and later publishing them in the book "Set my hand upon the plough"

But there must be more memories of Land Army girls than this. Gill Rushworth certainly discovered some when she interviewed three ex landgirls at Swaffham Bulbeck in November 1988. They recalled the hardships: "There was sugar beet - it wouldn't come out of the ground, we used to have to kick it, to pick it up", "We used to pull it out of the ground,, and used to bang two together, then used to lay them in a row one way and then when you

came back you'd got to lay the others in another row. Then you went back and had like a scythe affair and chop the tops off and put them in a pile. Your gloves were wet through, your trousers were wet, stayed wet all day, it's no wonder we've all got rheumatics"

"We had some laughs though. We had some fun. Although the first few mornings after you started you couldn't get out of bed; you used to fall out. Then when we used to have a bath you hadn't got to be proud - it used to be sometimes three in a bath. Then you wanted to turn round and have your back washed and you all had to stand up and turn round and sit down again and have your back washed. And it were queuing up for the toilets. Sometimes they were there for half an hour"

Sometimes they worked alongside Prisoners of War. I worked down at Sid Day's potato picking with the Italians. They were quite nice to work with really" "The Germans were good workers, but the Ities were a bit lazy". "Ah but they were a bit more gentlemanly. And they used to make things - these Italians - these wooden things. Like a bif-bat, they had chickens on them and they had strings down and a weight, and when they moved the thing, the chickens used to pick the corn off"

Occasionally the girls helped in the heavy work of digging bog oaks out of the fen ground,; the ancient trees exposed as new deep ditches were dug in the attempt to bring previously undrained fen land under cultivation,, "We used to have to find where they were and then they'd get a tractor with a chain on to hoist them out. And then they used to lay them on the side of the road"

Land Army girls from Manchester were engaged in such work in Burwell Fen in 1942 when news spread that the King and Queen were to visit to see the work which was so essential to keep the nation fed. Photographs record the moment when Manchester farm workers met the Queen of England - the present Queen Mother

These and the few recorded memories are too little testimony to the work of the Land Army girls. If you can add to our knowledge, and assist Michael Bentinck in his history, please write to Mike Petty at the News and I will pass them on

In last week's "Memories" I mentioned some suggestion that there had been a Royal visit to the R.A.F. hospital at Ely which coincided with a German raid. A local newspaper of 24th January 1941 has two items side by side., The first reads "Britain's latest and most beautifully equipped RAF Hospital, brought into service only a few months ago compete with the finest equipment that medical science can devise, received a surprise visit on Saturday afternoon from Their Majesties the King and Queen. Their Majesties arrived at the Hospital about an hour and a half behind schedule"

The second "A quiet little East Anglian village was machine gunned one afternoon this week by a low-flying German plane. Stacks and houses were sprayed with tracer bullets. One of them went through the window of a farm house, smashed the back of a chair and ended up by setting alight the rug in front of the fire. Mr Jack Cranwell stamped on the flames started by the bullet and put them out". Records published after the war give the date as Saturday 18th January - the day of the Royal visit - and the village as Lt Thetford, just down the road from Ely (Ely Standard 24 January 1941 p5)

MEMORIES 28th May 1997, by Mike Petty

My memories of history lessons in Stretham village school are practically non existent - except for the man who came one day and asked for his dinosaur back. When it had been first, discovered in the local gravel pit the experts thought they knew what it was and only took bits

pieces for their museum. Then they had another look and realised it was something new, and had to come around the children to ask if anybody had any bones or bits they'd give Cambridge University, Some did - some remain around the village

Our local dinosaur came back to life on Wednesday evening last week when the school staged a village history in music and drama which was simply magnificent. The children from youngest to oldest sang newly-written songs which told the history of England - as seen through local eyes. Poppies were laid in memory of the lads whose names are inscribed on the panels of the church screen in front of which the children paid their tribute. Each child lived the parts they played. They sang of fires and floods, of the church clock by whose tick the world has changed - and of our dinosaur, the oldest thing our village has to offer history.

They also stressed that if the village is to have a future then it is up to them to build on the foundations of the past and recreate the village spirit which saw us cope with all the other Invasions and disasters which have made our communities what they are. But to understand that past we all need the memories of those who helped shape that history - so keep those letters coming in.,

Mrs S. Doggett from Histon has memories of something which happened before she was born. Amongst her family photographs is a postcard showing her father-in-law, Frederick Doggett, in the ruins of a chaff-making factory at Littleport after a fire In June 1906. The Cambridge Independent Press reported the Incident in which several thousand pounds worth of property was destroyed at Fyfe's factory near the railway station. The blaze, which started late at night was blamed on a tramp seeking shelter there, for the fire occurred away from the machinery of the boiler house. Despite the prompt attention of the Littleport fire brigade, whose steam fire engine performed efficiently, there was nothing they could do to arrest the flames. The photograph shows the large cylinders which were used for cooking the hay straw by steam pressure, but what was the process all about, what did they do with the final product. It was obviously important for the factory rebuilt, only to burn down again ten years later. If you can help write to Mike Petty at the News

Cambridge college porters are reputed to know everything, but Richard Lloyd from Emmanuel College has sought the solution to something puzzling the best brains of the college. Recent renovation work at the shops in St Andrew's street has resulted in the removal of the sign for the fashion shop "Vogue". Now revealed is an older sign saying "A, Beckley, Milliner and Draper". So when were they there? Research through the files of Spalding's Directory shows the shop trading between 1911 and 1935.

An advertisement in the programme of the Royal Show when it to Cambridge in 1922 shows they specialised in millinery, hosiery, lingerie and summer frocks - something about which I little. Did you ever shop there - or do you remember any of the other ladies outfitters, like George Stace or "The Silk Shop" opened by Gordon Thoday in 1932.

Thoday recorded his memories of early days as a shop worker in 1921 and being handed a green folder entitled "Rules for employees" outlining various offences for which staff could be fined. They included "For not being in business at the appointed time, or leaving before all is straightened, fine 6d." "For losing the sale of any article without first calling the attention of buyer or shop walker, fine 6d" and "For gossiping or laughing together in business hours (customers are liable to suppose that laughing and gossiping concerns them), fine 1/-". Do you have memories of the draconian or amusing side of shop work - what time did you have to start, how long did you work in the evening? Write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories of school days at Romsey School during the war have come in from a number of readers, following the appeal by Ken Ward of Ontario in a recent "Memories". Patrick Mills

of Cambridge particularly members Miss Gunn, a good teacher who used to tell stories to distract and calm the children whilst they sat in the underground air raid shelters on the other side of Coleridge Road. He had to listen attentively and be able to repeat the story afterwards. Colin Reed of Quy was a friend of our Canadian correspondent and recalls the large concrete pipes which were stood on end and filled with chalk to prevent enemy aircraft landing on Coldham's Common, the anti-aircraft guns near Marshall's airport and how children had to wear gum shields to protect their mouths when the guns opened up. The scrap dump on the Common is also recalled by R. Brownlie of Royston who remembers how scrap metal from crashed aircraft were brought on "Queen Mary" long loaders from the crash site and that it was eventually loaded on to goods wagons at Barnwell junction railway station. He hopes to visit Ontario shortly and may meet up and share memories face to face. Thank you for all the letters, they will be passed on

Memories 3rd June 1997, by Mike Petty

The announcement of the impending closure of the ABC Cinema in Regent Street, Cambridge, formerly known as the Regal, has brought memories of several readers,

Reg Wood of Saffron Walden was actually there on its opening morning in April 1937 when Cambridge's new purpose-built cinema rose from the ashes of the old Castle Hotel which had burned down three years earlier. The opening film he recalls was "Swingtime" with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and he queued with his girlfriend for two hours to get in.

They were impressed by the multi-floral carpets, the beige curtain splashed with autumn leaves and by the mighty Compton organ with its illuminated console, the swelling music played by Cecil Atkinson filling the building. They were also impressed with the silver coloured Souvenir Programme they were given which explained the latest technology they had installed and outlined the forthcoming programmes.

Perhaps Reg unknowingly found himself sitting alongside another "News" reader, Miss Daphne Foreman of Sturton Street who knew it in the post-war days when as a young office worker she went with friends for a satisfying weekly evening out. Like Reg she remembers having to queue down the passage beside the cinema and into Downing Place, shuffling forward each time the Commissionaire, resplendent in black and gold uniform called out the newly vacated places: "two seats at 1/6 and one at 2/3" -causing some heart-searching as to whether to go in then or wait, until a block of seats came up together. Often she finally got in half-way through the film and had to see it round to the point she'd come in at.

If you did get in at the start there would be the supporting film, then the Pearl and Dean advertisements before the lights came up for the interval - and with them the cinema organ. Then out would come the usherettes with chocolates or ice-cream - and later with air-fresheners spraying the aisles liberally. And when the film had finished everybody stood, the tip-up seats pressing against the backs of their legs, for the National Anthem.

Then it was out to the fresh air of a Cambridge evening for an Espresso coffee and fairy cake at Snaxs, the first of the coffee snack bars, a few doors away from the cinema.

Before the war the Regal staged Sunday night celebrity concerts which included top artistes including Paul Robson and Myra Hess the pianist, who Reg remembers seeing. Others will recall the great days of the early 1960s when touring groups of pop stars used it as their venue, and more crowds queued to see Adam Faith, The Rolling Stones, Cliff Richard or The Beatles - to see them, but not to hear for as one reviewer recorded in 1960 "screaming

teenagers sparsely mixed with incredulous and slightly-dazed parents ... the show was deplorably uninteresting but the audience gave a magnificent performance".

Now soon, it seems, all this will be just memories.

READERS WRITE

When Keith Ward of Canada sought your assistance in reviving memories of his schooldays at Romsey School during the war he stirred many reminiscences. Patrick Mills of Chartfield Road thinks he actually remembers him. Both he and Colin Reed of Quy share the recollections of the aircraft crash dump near Coldham's Common which, unofficially, provided youngsters with sledges to ride down the butts in the winter snow - and where children used to upset the Home Guard training activities. Dad's Army might have been a match for any invading enemy but local boys knew the common's ditches and hedges far better!

R.B. Brownlie, now of Royston, was one of the crash crews of RAF 54 Maintenance Unit which brought the wrecked aircraft to the site in long low loaders and arranged for major salvageable sections to be transported back to the manufacturers or specified repair units. He was billeted with a Mr & Mrs Breadman of 463 Newmarket Road and was extremely well looked after - apart from being harried by schoolboys!

The letters are en route to Canada.

Aviation historian Michael Bowyer asks for your help. In Cambridge cemetery is a long row of graves commemorating some of 169 airmen whose planes crashed when returning from a raid over Berlin in December 1943 on one of the most disastrous nights of the war. One Lancaster came down in a field near Hardwick which had in 1911 become one of the world's earliest military airfields. During army manoeuvres of September 1912 it was used by some of the greatest early aviators including Geoffrey de Havilland. The story of that airfield is now becoming clear, what is lacking are any pictures of early flights from Hardwick. Other memories of the early days of aviation would also be welcome. If you can help Michael Bowyer in his research please write to me at the News and I will pass the information on to him

Mike Lawrence of Royston has sent me a copy of an excellent history of the Prisoner of War camp there, published by the Friends of Royston Museum in 1991. It is full of details of camp life, the barbed wire fences and look-out towers, the burial of one inmate in a coffin draped with a swastika which caused local women to throw stones at the cortege. There is an account of a break-out when the prisoner made his bid for freedom by hitching a lift in a passing lorry. Sadly for him it was an Army lorry and he was delivered straight to the police station. The author is anxious to add to his knowledge and would like to hear from anybody involved In Camp 29 Royston West, especially any Italian prisoners-of-war. Write to Mike Petty at the News and I will pass your letters on.

MEMORIES, by Mike Petty 10th June 1997

The mention of Miss Annie Beckley's ladies fashion shop in St Andrews Street, Cambridge, whose name-sign has just been revealed after fifty years, has prompted many memories,

Peggy Miller of Orwell used to accompany her mother on shopping trips in the 1920s and 1930s and Beckley's was one shop she did not mind visiting. She was not interested in the clothes but sat on the carpeted floor in front of a large blazing fire and played with the large

fussy cat. She remembers Miss Beckley as a gentle, welcoming lady who would have been quite at home in a Jane Austen novel.

Mrs Dora Chown of Cambridge remembers buying good quality lingerie and silk stockings there – 2/11 a pair, and continued to patronise it after Miss Beckley retired in 1935 and the shop became "Vogue", run by Mark Harris and his wife. But it was from "Modiste", which was run by Joe and Les Harris, that she purchased her honeymoon outfit.

Reg Wood of Saffron Maiden has marvellous memories of other fashion shops like Separates in Petty Cury & Heyworth's who moved from Burleigh street to Sidney Street in the shop later occupied by Goads, But he recalls that the one shop that catered for domestic servants was Lavenders on the corner of Kings Parade, and Bene't Street. They stocked the print, morning frocks and black, brown, and blue afternoon frocks with white and coffee coloured cuffs and aprons - and the white starched aprons for morning wear.

One shop everybody remembers was George Stace in Petty Cury. Peggy bought ribbon and buttons there, and was served by Miss Kent, an upright, dignified, friendly lady. Dora bought gloves there (though for winter wear it had to be the fur-backed gloves from Coats at 19s.11d) and Reg, well he, being a gentleman, preferred Marks and Spencer where nothing cost more than 5s. - or at least it didn't in the 1930s.

There were bargains to be had at Stace's in July 1951 when the shop closed down, "It had come", said the "News" "to stand in the mind of the shopping public for good, solid, middle class trade. It was not necessarily a smart one, but it met the needs of a definite section of the community. It catered excellently for the matron and for the moderately well-to-do family of both town and county". Its closure was a serious blow to its customers, many of whom had shopped there confidently for many years. As one lady commented "My mother bought her wedding dress there, and I bought mine. My daughter's wedding dress came from there and I was hoping my granddaughter's would be bought there too, in due course,"

What shops do you remember - do you have any of their old billheads - write to Mike Petty at the News

PHOTO: THE HEIGHT OF EDWARDIAN FASHION: George Stace's ladies dress shop about 1910; credit Cambridgeshire Collection

PHOTO STORY NO.2: ARCADE

The announcement last week of the proposals to give Cambridge a "Grand Arcade", based around Robert Sayle's shop in St Andrew's Street prompts memories of that other "Arcade", the one just at the back of Sayle's shop. When the new (present) Corn Exchange was opened in 1875 Cambridge had to decide what to do with the old one, which stood on the junction of Corn Exchange Street, Downing Street and St Tibbs Row - the site of the present Holiday Inn.

For a while it was used as a shopping centre and then In 1884 Ernie Hayward converted it into a variety music hall which became famed for the excellent variety entertainments given there. It closed in 1895, its demise brought about by a very hard frost which prompted other entrepreneurs to flood an area of Lingay Fen and install electric lighting. The novelty of skating by floodlight emptied the Arcade, a Marie Lloyd concert had to be cancelled and the venture closed down. It was subsequently used as a garage and demolished in 1951.

This is not to be confused with the Marcade, an indoor market on East Road where they claimed you could shop in comfort, undercover in the warm at varied stalls. It opened in 1972 and was destroyed by fire in 1975, only to reopen and continue until 1981

Let us hope neither fate befalls this new manifestation of an old idea.

READERS WRITE

Can you help a Milton reader reinforce her husband's memories? The search is on for a photograph of the Jolly Brewers public house In Union Road, Cambridge. If you can assist please write to Mike Petty at, the News. Do you have memories of a favourite pub -write to Mike Petty at the News

Mike Lawrence of Royston has sent me a copy of an excellent history of the Prisoner of War camp there, published by the Friends of Royston Museum in 1991. It is full of details of camp life, the barbed wire fences and look-out towers, the burial of one inmate. In a coffin draped with a swastika which cause local women to throw stones at the cortege. There is an account of a break-out when the prisoner made his bid for freedom by hitching a lift in a passing lorry. Sadly for him it was an Army lorry and he was delivered straight to the police station. The author is anxious to add to his knowledge and would like to hear from anybody involved In Camp 29 Royston West, especially any Italian prisoners-of-war. Write to Mike Petty at the News and I will pass your letters on.

Mrs P. Zupan of Trumpington has also added to my knowledge of Prisoners-of -war with a true story of romance which blossomed between an English girl and a German prisoner at Whittlesford camp. It appears that love could overcome barbed wire and a bicycle span a separation of over 40 miles. It was true love too for the romance survived over 50 years of marriage.

MEMORIES, by Mike Petty 17 June 1997

The heavy rains may have done something to ease the water shortage but when reading through the files of the "News" of 75 years ago it is obvious that the problem is not new.

On 14th June 1922 the paper was reporting on the pros and cons of a joint water scheme for the Ely area being aired at a public inquiry. A principal feature was the stout opposition to the scheme put up by a number of local parishes, mainly on the grounds that they had an ample supply from their village pumps, though one conceded that perhaps they would welcome piped water but not the cost of providing it.

The Medical Officer for the area gave evidence on the need of the scheme. Over the previous four years there had been 17 cases of typhoid and 41 of diphtheria due to polluted water. He pointed out that of all the pumps he had examined only two were satisfactory, the rest were highly contaminated with organic matter. This was dismissed Mr Everitt of Wilburton as being "Tommy rot" for the people there, where they had wells, lived to far greater age than those in the towns where they had water supply.

The view of the people of Lt Downham had been made plain at the recent parish council, when the candidates who supported the scheme were "bowled clean out by three to one". Downham people did not want the scheme and would not have it if they could help it. At Littleport however the position was more supportive for the majority of the inhabitants drank water from the River Ouse - and Ely emptied its sewage into that river making it totally unfit for drinking purposes - absolutely stagnant and putrid.

Mr Darby of Sutton pointed out that the principal water supply came not from wells, but from rain-water tanks - but the Medical Officer replied none of these were sufficient to hold more than a week's supply, forcing people to wells and pumps when their own supply ran out. It would not be so bad if the pump were not so stiff, but it could go hard and people had their methods of pumping. Some found it was easier to push the handle down to its lowest point

and then lean over it and force the water out by a short series of downward thrusts, whilst others would raise the handle to its highest point and then jerk it down to nose level, both hands clasped over the handle.

Sometimes the man of the house would collect the water on his way to work, carrying it home again with the heavy palls swinging from broad wooden yolks, or perhaps filling a two-wheeled water cart which he left for his wife or children to fetch a little later.

If you wanted a complete roll call of the village then Monday was the best day to watch the pump. From six o'clock in the morning onwards there would be an almost incessant squeaking and rattling as one after the other they came along to get the water for the weekly wash. One of the compensations in pumping was that it was a sociable business; in half an hour at the pump you could see almost everybody, hear all the news & more than all the scandal.

Village life would never be the same again if piped water were supplied!

.....

Following my appeal for old billheads last week Mr A, Bates of Cambridge has sent a copy of a bill from A. Wehrle & sons of 29 Sidney Street, Cambridge, dated September 1892 when John Sharp purchased a watch worth £4.10.0. He put £1.0.0 down and paid the balance off in nine instalments varying from four shillings to £1.2.0. All In all he ended up paying £5.0.0 for his £4.10.0 watch.

Mrs Janet Daniels of Pemberton Terrace had an interesting find under the floorboards of her house. It was a credit note from Robert Sayle made out to a previous owner, Mrs Gerald Currie In 1911. It was to a forgotten item of apparel, camisoles (about which I know very little!). Because the credit note is somewhat plain I have copied a more ornate bill from the Cambridgeshire Collection (date uncertain)

READERS WRITE

Can you help Bury St Edmunds Cathedral? The Director of their Friends organisation is trying to locate Mrs Joyce Pugh who left there to move to Cambridge in 1964. She was an artist of a number of fine pictures published as Christmas cards in the 1960's. They would like to reproduce one again. It is an evocation of the arrival at the Abbey of Edward I and Queen Eleanor about 1300. If you know the artist or the whereabouts of the painting they would love to hear from you. Write to Mike Petty at the News and I will pass your letter on

Charles Barnard of Foxton remembers the early days of the Regal cinema. He writes: "At the rear of the cinema was a cycle store where we could leave our bikes in safety for 2d or 3d. On the way home we used to stop at a fish and chip shop opposite the "Unicorn" in Trumpington which I believe was kept by a gentleman by the name of Burbridge. As he was almost ready for closing he often piled us extra chips on and we finished out supper off with a bottle of Wadsworth's minerals. The fish and chips cost 5d and the mineral 3d"

MEMORIES by Mike Petty, 24th June 1997

Just 100 years ago this week the country was celebrating a great Royal Occasion - the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Inevitably the Cambridge Daily News looked back on the events of a long and glorious reign,

Over the previous 60 years the number of University students had doubled and despite great growth in college accommodation many were still lodged out in the town. New courses and departments including the museums on the Downing site and the Botanic Garden in

Trumpington Street had been established. Students no longer needed to be adherents to the doctrines of the Church of England, Fellows no longer celibate and relations with the town had greatly improved.

The town of Cambridge itself had changed out of all recognition, with massive housing expansion, new churches - including the recently-completed Catholic Church. The railway had arrived in 1845, but due to University pressure the station had been built amidst open fields - now disappearing under houses.

There had been dramatic change in the town centre following the reconstruction of Market Hill after a fire in 1849 which had threatened the entire central area, the building of a new Corn Exchange and the new buildings of Gonville and Caius College amongst others.

Cambridge had gained supplies of gas, water and electric light, benefited by the arrival of telegraph, telephone and tram - and even sewage was being laid on to clean up the polluted River Cam.

Outside Cambridge lay the independent settlement of Chesterton, still obstinately separate despite the town's blandishments. Elsewhere in the rural county the open-field system - with strips in each field - had been swept away by Enclosure and for a while agriculture had prospered. But there had been hardships too and many farmers had faced ruin. Now land which had previously grown wheat was devoted to plum, apple and pear trees supplying the Metropolitan markets of the great towns.

One person who had lived through those changes was Daisy Chapman who had attended Victoria's coronation feast on Parkers Piece in 1838 and in 1897 she was presented with a certificate by the Mayor, Horace Darwin.

Horace (youngest son of Charles Darwin) & himself a graduate of the University had a flair for instrument design at a time when the University's newly opened scientific departments were pushing at the frontiers of knowledge. In 1881 he established the Cambridge Scientific Instrument Company which prospered and diversified into world-wide markets - the forerunner of the modern "Cambridge Phenomenon".

One of Darwin's early apprentices was W.G. Pye who went on to work at the Cavendish Laboratory and then establish the firm which carried his name. This too diversified and pioneered many advances and developments, including of course radio, a side of the business developed by Charles Orr Stanley. Now his grandson is endeavouring to record something of their achievements.

This attracted the attention of Mrs S. Proctor of Milton for her father was indirectly involved in one element of their pioneering work. She writes "I was particularly interested in the fact that Pye installed the first radio controls in Camtax taxis. This was because my father, Mr Percy Crisp, was featured in an article with a photograph about this and I am hoping that you may be able to trace this for me. It was around the spring of 1947"

In fact it was on the 9th August 1947 that the "News" could headline "Cambridge leads the way", reporting how Pye Telecommunications VHF radio telephone equipment had been installed in 12 Cambridge taxicabs. Each car carried a transmitter and receiver, a control unit, loudspeaker and rod antenna. "The sets are a marvel of compactness and the loud-speaker and control are housed in the glove pocket. The set - an 11-Inch cube - is mounted in the boot". Initial tests showed that satisfactory results could be obtained over a 10-mile range.

It was the first such experiment in Britain, and possibly, enthused the Company, in the world. Certainly the Americans had nothing like it. But "News" readers knew better. Within a week or two P.B. Harvey was writing to his parents in Cavendish Avenue, Cambridge from HMS

Sheffield. He had just left Montreal Canada where this type of public service had been in regular use for some time.

Now any readers who have further information on this, or other memories, papers or material relating to early developments of Pye can help a new biography of the company's boss, C.O. Stanley. Please write to Mike Petty at the News and I will pass the Information on.

(PICTURES : card presented to Daisy Chapman to commemorate Jubilee and a choice of either the cutting CDN 9 Aug 1947, or one of two views of Camtax Taxis near the Round Church)

READERS WRITE

Mrs Peg Bullen of Cambridge writes, "In answer to your appeal in the C.D.N. I well remember the "Jolly Brewers" public house in Union Road, Cambridge. My father, Mr H. Porter, used to go there on Saturday evenings in the summer. My brother and I were sometimes taken for a lemonade - I think we had to sit on a wall. I remember in the week-day we used to go to Miss Sadler's shop with a half penny and take ages to buy some sweets. Then there was the bread shop and the Muffin Man. I used to get dad's Woodbine 3d from Wilsons. They were such happy days. Sorry to carry on by there are so many memories of those days before the war"

Mrs Christine Newman of Chesterton writes, "I lived near this unforgettable shop in Victoria Road, Cambridge, from 1926 until 1939 & then when I came to live in Old Chesterton I found an identical one. These shops were called "Boynton and Wright" and were owned by two sisters. They were wonderful haberdashery shops & they sold just about anything a woman could possibly need. Dusters, tea towels, yards of elastic, ribbons, tape and lace, handkerchiefs, corsets, needles, vests, aprons. You think of it & they had it. One of the interesting things about the shop was when you paid the price was often something three farthings. We never-got the farthing change, instead we were given a pack of pins. I think they closed in the 1950's.

MEMORIES 1st July 1997, by Mike Petty

On 27th June 1972 the Cambridge Evening News carried a picture reminiscent of the war. For it showed the rubble that, was Alexandra Street as the bulldozers moved in on Petty Cury and the streets behind to make a clearance as part, of the Lion Yard scheme - proudly proclaimed as the "biggest redevelopment scheme yet in England, if we omit the blitzed cities".

The old streets swept away in the 1970s had for the most part themselves been rebuilt about a hundred years earlier to make smart addresses for organisations such as the Bell Telephone Company, the Cambridge Street Tramways Company and the YMCA, which, I believe played a significant role in the entertainment scene - your Memories welcome please.

Today many of the Lion Yard units are empty and proposals are in hand for a second remodelling with new shops and an eating area on the little-known open space of the roof-top Heidelberg gardens - named after Cambridge's twin-town in Germany, although German action never caused such widespread destruction of the town centre as city planners.

Of course in 1939 nobody knew what impact the War would have. One thing was certain: civilians would be hurt. So school children were scrambled out of towns to the safety of the countryside. As a child from Bethnal Green School recorded; "In London the streets are very stuffy, and supposing a gas-bomb were dropped by a German plane the gas would hang about

for a long time, but in Littleport it, would disappear into the open fenland", So his school learned to live with Littleport people, and Littleport people had to adapt to living with Londoners.

Many of the evacuees into the area around Ely were Jewish and great arrangements were put, in place so that they could continue to live their lives in as normal a way as possible. Their presence had a worrying effect on some local people. In February 1941 a Sutton girl claimed that she had heard Lord Haw Haw promise that "every village on the Isle of Ely would be smashed for taking Jewish refugees"

Now some of the Jewish Evacuees' stories have been published by Soham Village College in a booklet entitled "Furriners"

Norman Leff, a retired chartered accountant, records his memories. "On Friday morning, 1st September 1939, I kissed my mother goodbye before going off to school to be evacuated. My mother kissed me quite cheerfully when I left home, but when I returned because I had forgotten something, my mother was crying. I left again carrying a kit bag and gas mask over my shoulder. It was generally believed that London would be obliterated as soon as the war started, so it was not surprising my mother cried - and so many other mothers cried. Perhaps that Friday should be called Cryday.

"We trooped off to Liverpool Street Station and time later arrived at Isleham. We were taken to the village school and awaited "adoption" by our future foster parents. We soon became adept at "scrimping", stealing apples, pears and plums. It was easy. All we had to do was flick and twist and the fruit was on its way to our mouths'

Being Londoners they thought village people odd. "Islehamites spoke rather strangely and we used to mimic them. After all we were the sophisticated Londoners from those high class slums and cobbled streets of the capital city, I think the locals were a little bemused. A horde of Londoners had descended on them, Jewish Londoners no less. One impression was that, never having seen Jews, they thought we had horns growing out of our heads
"To our surprise we found that anyone from outside Isleham was referred to as a "furriner".
Imagine what they thought of Londoners from more than five miles away - "B ----- furriners"

Not all the youngsters stayed. Many returned home preferring to be bombed out in London than to die of boredom in the fens. Some suffered just that fate.

Michael Rouse at Soham Village College is anxious to add to his record of Jewish evacuees in that area. Write to Mike Petty at the News and I will pass your letters on.

Mrs Wendy Maskell recalls memories of Romsey School, Cambridge. She writes "I was there from 1940 to 1944 and can remember taking my gas mask to school each day, together with my "Oxo" tin containing rations in case of prolonged air raids. As soon as the Air Raid Siren sounded we were marched in orderly lines across Coleridge Road and into the underground shelters opposite the school. I can still recall the dank smell of these shelters. Our teachers would keep up our spirits by leading us in singing old favourites such as "John Brown's Body" and "Ten Green Bottles". This used to drown out the sound of aircraft overhead. I vividly remember the afternoon the German bombs fell on Mill Road Railway Bridge and people living "under the bridge" lost their homes. This brought the war very close!"
But there were happy memories of playground games: marbles, jinks, three balls and skipping. Romsey girls had their own rhymes to accompany the skips.

One favourite was:

"Mary Ann at the pawnshop door.

Baby in her arms and a parcel on the floor.

She asked ten-and-six but they only gave her four
So she knocked the handle off the pawnshop door!"

What rhymes did you sing : write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories, by Mike Petty 8th July 1997

July 3rd 1922 was a day possibly unique in England. For that was the day on which the Duke of York unveiled a War Memorial that was not there at the end of Station Road in Cambridge.

The date was booked, the dignitaries arranged, the crowds assembled. All that was needed was good weather. But 3rd July 1922 brought heavy rain and fierce wind, flapping the canvas covering of the yet-to-be unveiled figure underneath.

Unbeknown to the crowds there was another factor threatening the success of the event. The bronze figure, destined to stand on the plinth was not in fact there.

It had been designed by a Canadian sculptor, Tait Mackenzie and modelled in his studio at the University of Pennsylvania. The inspiration for the head was an Undergraduate of Christ's College, Kenneth Hamilton, and although MacKenzie had over a year to complete it he found he could just not capture the right expression on the face of a private soldier in full kit on his triumphal return after the war.

As time slipped away he confined himself to his studio, living like a hermit until finally he achieved what he sought. But then disaster struck. For the ship that was to bring the mould over to England had to search around for additional cargo and arrived too late for the bronze to be cast.

Thus it was that a plaster copy, painted to look like bronze was erected, and covered with a tarpaulin. The wind threatened to chafe the covering against the figure and the rain threatened to dissolve the plaster before the eyes of the crowd.

In the event it all passed off with appropriate solemnity and dignity. Then at 4 o'clock on the morning of 11th July 1922 a lorry drew up at the corner of Station Road. It had come from the foundry in Thames Ditton. Mr Kett and ten of his men were waiting and by the time that people were alert to the fact the impostor had been removed and the real figure securely fixed in position. By ten o'clock the scaffolding had been removed and the "Homecoming" was finally in place

For a short while the two figures had stood side by side. They were not identical twins for, having seen the plaster figure in place, Tait McKenzie had made slight modifications to its successor. And as far as I know nobody took any pictures of the change-over taking place

READERS WRITE

Charles Barnard of Foxton writes.

"My wife and I have a wooden coat hanger which bears the following on both sides: 'F. Suttle, Ladies and Gents tailor, 133 Fitzroy Street & 50 Regent Street'. I am sure that some of your readers must remember these shops but I cannot, although I have known these two streets for almost 70 years since I was nine years old. Does anyone know too when this business closed down?

Also written on the hanger in ink with what looks like one of those old nib pens is the name H. Osbourn. It would be most interesting if anyone has a clue as to whom this person was. My wife and I have no Idea how we came by it, only we have had It a long time"

This seemed too interesting a query to resist so when I was in the Cambridgeshire Collection I did a little digging. According the Spalding's Street Directories Suttles were at 133 Fitzroy Street until about 1922. But then they moved further down the street where they continued until the Second World War. They advertised in the second edition of Conybeare's "Rides around Cambridge", published 1902 when they offered lounge suits from 35/- or the latest in ladles coats and skirts from £1.10.0. It might seem a little pricey but - as they emphasised in Westrope's Year Book for Cottenham and area in 1909: "It Is better to be out of pocket than to be out of fashion, nobody minds who you are, so long as, you mind what you wear. A badly cut coat will blight a man in mid career"

Obviously this applied to Harold Osbourn who lived at 57 Humberstone Road until 1920 or thereabouts. But who he was and what he did I rely on others to tell us

Peter Prime of Ely writes of his memories of Pye chief C.O.Stanley, or, as he was known on the shop floor "the old man".

"I started work at Pye in the early fifties as an apprentice. I was fortunate to have started in the research department at a time of many achievements. The under-water camera which found the Comet, the development of the zoom lens, and of course work on t.v. sets. I can remember being sent into Cambridge to buy wood grain wallpaper to stick on to cabinets to enable C.O. to decide which grains would be used on the new sets. I think they call it "market research" now.

I would like to tell you a little about C.O. An elderly Irish lady worked as a cleaner. One day she bought a bed - because it was a bargain - for her son in Ireland, but she did not know how she could get it to him. One of the draughtsmen said 'When you see C.O. ask him if he will send it in one of the articulated box vans that go to Larne'. Some days later C.O. came though with some of the managers. The lady went straight up to him and said 'I have a bed to go to Ireland, will you sent it for me?' He said 'I will see'. The draughtsman was hiding behind his board and we were all 'very busy". A van was sent to collect the bed. It was packed in the despatch department, and sent to Ireland - at no cost to the lady. This was the sort of man C.O. was.

When I was working on the head of a record player called "The Black Box" the tool was not working very well, and I was not happy. As I worked a voice behind me said 'How is it going'. I replied 'not too good' - or words to that effect. The voice then said 'I think I have come at the wrong time'. On turning round C.O. stood there. He patted me on the shoulder, and walked away with a big grin on his face.

I am sure you will receive many letters about this gentleman"

MEMORIES, by Mike Petty 15th July 1997

The appeal for memories of the early days of Pye Radio has encouraged various readers to put pen to paper

Peter Prime of Ely writes of his memories of Pye chief C.O.Stanley, or, as he was known on the shop floor "the old man".

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Phyllis Cook of Montague Road, Cambridge recounts a sidelight on Pye's wartime work; she writes :

"There is a lane running at the back of the houses in Chesterton Road and Montague Road. Its original purpose was for ponies and traps used by residents of Chesterton Road. At this time the war was still on and according to reports German spies were everywhere. My father was taking his evening walk out into the lane, up Haig Road and Cam Road (which were turned into Elizabeth Way) with a stop at the Fleur de Lys pub for a drink and a chat with the boys to put the world right. This evening as he stepped into the lane there stood a man on a box with a curious telephone in his hand which he was speaking into. Do father retraced his steps to the front and made his way up the road to St Regis (headquarters of Civil Defence - more memories please) where a police constable was posted every night to report a German spy in the lane. Next day a policeman called to report that it was just Pye testing a new radio for cars. Father was quite disappointed"

READERS WRITE

"I lived in the village of Newton when a child and our first water supply was connected in November 1952. Previous to that we fetched out daily water two buckets a day from the pump which was shared with twelve other residents in the road. At the rear of our house we had a large rain water butt which caught rainwater from the rood by a downpipe which had a stocking over the end to catch any debris. When the mains was eventually connected we had one cold water tap per house" - A. Bates, Cambridge

Miss Marion Bavey of Cambridge has written an interesting letter about Romsey School in wartime and memories of her teachers. One (perhaps best not named) found the best way to deal with unruly boys was to roar at them: "You horrible little boy, I'll wipe the floor with you; you're not worth finding in a dustbin!" Wendy Maskell also remembers that this teacher had a habit of swinging her glasses round and round as she taught and the children would watch fascinated to see if she would drop them. On one memorable day they broke and flew across the classroom. Something else for the dustbin, perhaps!

One reader writes: "I remember the church in Trinity Street, Cambridge, built over the pavement, one had to walk under the tower. It stood on two gigantic pedestals, the tower since demolished". This proves the longevity of Cambridge folk - for the church and its tower was knocked down over 130 years ago!

Memories 22nd July 1997, by Mike Petty

Cambridgeshire's wayside railway stations seem unlikely places for tales of strife. Many stand deserted, forgotten remnants of a transportation system that once saw excitement only when the steam train would chuff to a halt whilst farm produce was loaded for transport to markets far away.

Not all stations have led a dull existence, One's mind obviously turns to the wartime excitement at Soham where an ammunition train-caught fire and only the heroism of the driver, guard and signalman combined to detach a burning waggon and drag it far enough from the village to prevent adjacent trucks exploding, There are pictures of that disaster and people remember it,

Yet just 50 years ago there was another and very similar incident which is seldom remembered just a few miles away, between Six Mile Bottom and Fulbourn. Once more it involved burning bombs and the heroism, of railwayman.

On 23rd July 1947 a special goods train pulled by two engines in tandem was en route from Barham in Norfolk to Barry Docks. There was an escort of R.A.F. personnel for it included 40 open wooden wagons packed with old mustard gas bombs due to be dumped in the sea. It was always a hazardous assignment, especially with steam locomotives where sparks from the engines could easily be wafted on to the open bombs. But it was just part of the job

As they passed Six Mile Bottom station Driver Frederick Smart noticed one waggon was on fire, He alerted Fireman Alfred Chandler on the second engine and the train was stopped, Chandler jumped down and uncoupled the burning waggon from the rear part of the train, The engines then continued for 50 to 60 yards, stopped and disconnected the blazing bomb-load, steaming off to safety with the rest.

Then they halted and Firemen Chandler and Dougland Westland dashed back attempting to extinguish the flames using buckets of water from the engine. Only later were they told that putting water on burning mustard gas bombs was not really advisable!

The RAF escort convinced them that discretion was the better part of valour and they all scarpered just in time. As an eye-witness reported there was a sudden "woosh" and a burst of flame which shot fifty feet into the air. Poisonous fumes spread over a range of fifty or sixty yards, contaminating the surrounding area.

Members of the Cambridge National Fire Service were soon on the scene and seven of them ended up at Addenbrooke's suffering from burns.

The heroism of the four Cambridge railwaymen, drivers Frederick Smart and William Thorburn and firemen Douglas Westland and Alfred Chandler, was recognised by the award of the London and North Eastern Railway Medal for their acts of gallantry which, according to the citation were "equivalent to those recognised by the award of the George Cross in cases connected with current enemy action"

Other stations themselves have been the scene of battles as communities fight either to establish or to keep that facility

Take Oakington - pictured here in 1923. The previous year it had been estimated that 60,000 tons of fruit were despatched by rail from Cambridgeshire, over half from stations on the line between Cambridge and St Ives.

No matter how many stations there were some still wanted more. Cottenham fruit growers were so convinced of the benefit of rail freight that in the 1890s they fought for their own light railway linking the village to the station at Oakington. The battle was unsuccessful. Chivers Factory, established alongside Histon station gave a great amount of trade to the railway and in 1907 nearly 15,000 tons of fruit and jam were dispatched. Their workers travelled to and from the factory by train in the early part of the century - though in uncushioned compartments, presumably in case their clothes might have been sticky with jam and jelly making and spoil more luxurious facilities.

As the century progressed, and road transport developed, the viability of the railway lines was called into question. The War gave a revival of prosperity with the airbase at Oakington but it was short-lived. Dr Beeching swung his axe and on 3rd October 1970 the final scheduled passenger train made its 30 minute journey from St Ives to Cambridge. Or did it?

Rail enthusiasts still plan for a reopened service but if their dreams for their future are uncertain, their enthusiasm for the past is undiminished. On 16th August there is to be a celebration of the 150th anniversary of the St Ives to Cambridge railway in the Free Church Centre, Market Hill, St Ives from 10 am to 4pm. Organiser Brian Smith of 53 Elm Close, Huntingdon or Nick Dibben of the Railway Development Society (Huntingdon 495101 evenings) would welcome additional memorabilia and all are welcome on the day, admission just 50p.

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One knows of the importance of Duxford airfield both before and during the Second World War and of the daring exploits of its pilots. Yet just 25 years ago there were plans for a Borstal on the site, and it was thought the old airfield would be derelict for many years to come. Now all that has changed and the Queen will shortly be opening the latest extension to the Duxford Museum.

But do you have Memories of Duxford airfield which can add to the history books. Did you see the first Spitfire to fly from there in July 1938, or curse the RAF as German bombers swooped once more to attack it, driving you to duck into your shelter, or under the table? Write to Mike Petty at the "News"

Did you help make tanks in your village hall?

I have been told something which seems unbelievable. Apparently during the war people used to gather in village halls throughout Cambridgeshire to assemble tank radios, Pye's van made regular deliveries of components and later collected the finished articles. Is this true? I am told there is even a snap of some of this activity - do you have any? Write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories 29th July 1997, by Mike Petty

The crowds who flock to Duxford to witness the opening of the new American hanger will be following a well-worn path. In July 1935 they were planning for another Royal Visit and were catering for motorists with car parks for 30,000 vehicles. Even then although admission for spectators was free there was a car park charge of 2/6. All roads were sign-posted by the R.A.C. and motorists were advised to arrive early.

Then it was King George V who was visiting as part of his Jubilee review of the Royal Air Force. It was to be his second airfield that day for the first part of the review took place at Mildenhall. This gave time for the visitors to arrive and to listen to the Mildenhall happenings relayed over loudspeakers.

As visitors enjoyed their packed lunches officials dined in one of the hangers where one of the country's latest aircraft - a Gloster G 37 single-seated fighter was displayed. Here naval officers in their blue and gold uniforms and with swords swinging at their sides mixed with top brass from the Army and Royal Air Force and the occasional big wig from overseas in colourful flowing robes

The Queen arrived from London by train to Harston station. She & King George V who joined guests for dinner in the Officers Mess where they were served the normal officers menu. The Mess itself was bedecked with flowers and decorated with paintings especially borrowed from the Tate Gallery for the occasion & even the furniture was decorated in the Jubilee colours of blue, silver & maroon.

Then it was outside to watch twenty squadrons flying past in procession the Heavy bombers at 96 miles an hour, the light bombers at 115 mph whilst the fighters roared past at a staggering 160 miles an hour

Included in the display were the Vickers G.P. Biplane, the Bristol type 130 troop carrier capable of transporting 24 fully-armed soldiers, the Hanley Page H.P.51 which could carry 10 stretchers when in ambulance mode, or 30 fighting troops and the Pterodactyl V, a two-seater fighter fitted with Rolls-Royce "Goshawk" engines but which lacked a tail - giving the rear-gunner unlimited range.

At the special Empire Air Days of the 1930s crowds flocked to the show - including Mr W.S. Nightingale who was driving one of his family's lorries delivering 12 tons of beer from the Star Brewery in Newmarket Road, Cambridge, to revive thirsty spectators. He recollects watching a Wellington bomber and a Spitfire take off together, and was amazed at how steeply the Spitfire ascended. He also recalls giving a lift back to Cambridge from some lads off the base - only to find they had lightened his load by four bottles of beer en route. William Ketteridge witnessed a Hurricane producing a wonderful display of its abilities before landing right in front of the crowds, but with its wheels up.

So many memories both happy and sad are generated by Duxford, making it a wonderful place to visit and explore, and pay tribute to those brave souls who actually take off and fly the things.

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Parkside indoor swimming pool in Cambridge, described at its opening in 1963 as the finest in the country, is now closed. It will reopen in new and improved form. It had cost £250,000 and been a long time coining

In 1857 there had been an ambitious scheme to provide a concert hall, lecture room, ball room, hotel, restaurant and two swimming pools, (one first-class, the other second), in one building. This was planned for the corner of Jesus Lane and Bridge Street in Cambridge. It came to nothing. Then in 1863 the Roman Bath Company opened a swimming bath just around the corner in Jesus Lane. It was 56 feet by 22 feet and had special opening hours for ladies, but failed due to lack of support. The elaborate entrance still stands

In May 1888 there was an announcement of the formation of a Public Swimming Bath Company for the Town and University which would provide large bath, 70 by 30 ft, available

at all seasons of the year, with well-fitting dressing rooms. A good site had been earmarked near the New Theatre in St Andrew's Street. It came to nothing.

Then in 1935 it was announced that plans for a palatial swimming stadium were approaching completion. A site on Parkside was earmarked. It would have a pool 100 ft by 42ft and would have a glass screen in the tea room to allow patrons to watch the bathers. It did not materialise. Two years later two privately owned syndicates announced plans for indoor baths - they suffered similar fate.

Then in April 1963 the Parkside Pool opened. Now it has closed and we await the new version of what has been a long ideal

READERS WRITE

Derrick Mallows of Lt Eversden writes: "In the early 1950s the villages of Great & Little Eversden had an annual visit by a man who was in the business of digging horseradish roots for trade purposes. I understand that he was called Bill, that he cycled everywhere and came from the fens. For years I have been hoping to find a photo of him to add to my collection of old village photos of the locality. I am staging an exhibition of old photographs in the village hall at Gt Eversden on October 25th and 26th and would love to include a picture of Bill in it." If you can add to Derrick's truly marvellous collection of over 3,000 items please contact him at 4 Wheelers Way, Lt Eversden, CB3 7HF - or write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories 5th August 1997, by Mike Petty

MAIN PICTURE STORY - THRESHING SCENE AT SOHAM

John Flack of Harston has kindly sent me his memories of rural life about 1925 when he was eight years old

"I often think of my childhood days on the farm and they bring a broad smile across my face in my reclining years. I loved to be on the farm with Mr Bob whose dad was the boss. We were waiting for the threshing tackle to arrive. I ran home to have my tea. I told my mum the thresher is coming, she said "What that horrible thing again humming all day, dusty old thing, I hope its not here long"

I thought I could hear the chuff-chuff of the engine so I ran down the lane and I could see the smoke, then the engine very slowly appearing round the bend. I ran to meet it. The tackle had just left another farm with the drum team to visit Mr Barnwell's. The train of tackle was so long Jim could not get it all round into the lane as it was so narrow, so he stopped on the side of the road and took the drum only and the rest of the tackle could be pulled with horses.

People came out of their garden gates to see what was going on. The drum had to be set to stand level because of the rotary sieves for grading the corn and that would take time

In the morning I was there like a shot. I could see Jim preparing to start up the engine. He was on a ladder taking a sort of lid off the engine chimney spout placed there as a damper during the night. He then replaced it with a spark catcher, a dome shaped cage, to stop sparks setting fire to the dry straw. He took off a tarpaulin sheet he had put over the working parts of the engine and stoked the fire to get up steam. The he had to oil the working parts of the engine while his mate was uncovering and oiling the drum

Bob was dressing Nelly ready for the cart, old Joe and Charlie were ready on the straw stack, Mr Hugh and his mate on the corn stack. When all was ready Jim warned everybody that he was about to start by pipping the engine's whistle, then a pause, and one more pip and away as Jim's mate put the first sheaf through the beaters

Bob's job was to check the corn as it flowed into the sacks, he kept putting his hand under the stream of corn to check the grade of each sack as some grains were damaged and some small - that went for chicken feed, the wholesome grain for milling into flour or seed. When the sack was full it weighed about eighteen stone. He put the sack on a lifter, turned a handle and with a sound of click-click-click it lifted the sack to cart height and the man on the cart put it in place.

After a while Jim began to nod off for a second or two. Jim's mate was watching, he could see Jim nodding and put an uncut sheave through the beaters, uncut means he did not cut the string, and that made the old engine jump and CHUFF-CHUFF-CHUFF violently. Jim just held up his hand, he knew, his mate had a giggle

Now I am older I often think of Bob and Mr Barnwell and what good men they were. They have long passed away, but the memories still remain, and I hope this is a tribute to them"

MORE SUCH MEMORIES WOULD BE WELCOME

SECOND PHOTO STORY - TRAVELLING TRADESMEN; PICTURE IS TRAVELLING TRADER IN SAXON STREET, OFF LENSFIELD ROAD, CAMBRIDGE IN 1950 's;
acknowledge Cambs Collection

Mr A. Bates of Cambridge has written his memories of life in Newton in the 1950s when they hardly ever needed to leave the village for supplies.

Groceries were ordered on Thursday and delivered on Saturdays by Jackson's store at Fowlmere, who also delivered bread and cake twice a week. Robert Brown was an oilman, supplying all needs while H.J. Ellis from Harston and Shelford came with meat twice a week. Fish came either fried and with chips from Wrens or fresh from a Mr Cambridge of Foxton. Creamax supplied ice cream between May and September whilst Mr Rogers delivered milk in the evenings on his bicycle which had two cans on the front. Sometimes a muffin man would come through the village with a tray of muffins on his head

He adds "If we needed rabbits we would watch for the local gamekeeper going by with them on a bar of his bicycle and periodically a rag and bone man would call to buy the rabbit skins"

**DO YOU REMEMBER THE MUFFIN MAN OR OTHER TRAVELLING TRADESMEN,
WRITE TO MIKE PETTY AT THE NEWS**

READERS WRITE:

Mrs V. Small of 41 Faldo Road, Bedford MK42 0EH is trying to track down her family. In particular she is seeking anything about William Moore who had the Greyhound Pub in London Road, Gt Shelford about 1851. Nobody will remember him but what about the pub? If you can help write to Mrs Small.

IF YOU NEED HELP WRITE TO MIKE PETTY AT THE NEWS - it is wonderful what our readers do know!

MEMORIES by Mike Petty 12th August 1997

PICTURE STORY NO.1: WICKEN POSTMAN

Something over 100 years ago an entomologist named J.W. Tutt undertook a journey to Wicken Fen and published his "Random recollections" in 1891. This little-known book was lent to me last week by a "News" reader.

But it is not the insects which attracted my eye, it was the postman. Tutt arrived at Wicken via Fordham station and an uncomfortable journey across country by-roads. On arrival he found comfortable lodgings in a village inn.

"How quiet it was after London, hardly a sound until I heard a whistle up the street. I later found that there was a Post Office in the street at a little shop from which the letters were collected every day at 5pm, but as the thirty houses were scattered over a street some half a mile long, the postman after emptying the letter box blew his whistle as he went along to inform those people who had letters to post that he was ready to convey their letters to Soham if they were not too lazy to bring them to him.

The postman, who lived at Soham, started from there about seven a.m. and reached Wicken at eight, his Wicken delivery occupying perhaps an hour owing to the scattered position of the houses. Then he went on to Upware, still deeper in the fens, where the delivery was finished shortly after mid-day. There was no time to go back to Soham, then, quite a two hours' walk, and return to collect the letters, so the postman must stay at Upware.

Now Upware consists essentially of one important house styled "Five miles from anywhere". As it is a pub, and the postman is a teetotaler, a little diplomacy must have been necessary in the first instance for that postman to be allowed to spend every afternoon of his life in that pub, but he has managed the business and waits until at four p.m. the whistle sounds, the people stand along the road with their letters, and the journey back to Soham via Wicken begins, the day's tedious and monotonous work ending at about seven in the evening"

But there was another side to Wicken life he had not appreciated. One Sunday morning his landlady came into his room with a pile of letters with the remark "Ninepence, sir". "Ninepence! What for?" "Eight letters and two post cards sir - there's no post on Sunday and the boy that goes into Soham charges a penny each for letters and a halfpenny for postcards". The lad, it transpired was a grandson of hers - but then virtually everybody in Wicken in those days was related to one another - or so he claimed!

PICTURE STORY NO.2: CAMBRIDGESHIRE REGIMENT MARCH-PAST

READERS WRITE

Various readers have memories of Mildenhall & Duxford airfields.

Mr H. Bye of Ely was present at the Silver Jubilee Air Review at Mildenhall in 1935. He saw the Royal party arrive and watched the flypast led by two Handley Page Heyfords. It was a grand sight to see them all take off and get into formation, he recalls.

H.J.R. Sheldrick of Swaffham Prior was stationed at Duxford from 1936-1938 with 19 squadron and then posted to 66 squadron. He recollected that there was only one aircraft in the hangar, a Bristol Bullfighter dual controlled trainer. Later the squadron was equipped with Gloster Gauntlets. 66 Squadron had a Cambridge blue flash tapering along the fuselage and its badge was a rampant rattlesnake with the insignia "You have been warned"

G.E. Davis of Cambridge was at Duxford in 1938 when the first Spitfire was issued to Squadron Leader Cozens of 19 Squadron. He worked in the parachute section and packed Douglas Bader's chute.

Len Baynes from Stapleford was part of the 1st Battalion of the Cambridgeshire Regiment who was posted to R.A.F Duxford to protect the station at the start of the war. The territorial regiment had, in theory, been trained in the use of the Bren gun, but there was only one gun for the entire company, and that could not be spared. So they arrived with 1914-vintage Lee-Enfield rifles and ammunition which had been manufactured in 1917.

The airmen were not keen to share their accommodation with common soldiers so the lads dossed down on the floor of the church hall, Next morning they were issued with half-a-dozen Lewis guns, a most complicated piece of equipment, and only one tattered manual. Although they managed to dismantle it - after four hours of concentrated cursing - it took far longer to put it back together again. By the time they'd learned which end the bullets were meant to come out of it was time to take up their positions on sand-bagged gun emplacements around the perimeter of the base, and hope the Luftwaffe would never find them.

He was soon transferred back to Cambridge where he was billeted with a policeman's family in City Road. The cookhouse was in Zion Baptist church. Here he realised that the air force cooks had been on a different level from the army. His first pudding was smothered with a bright orange semi-transparent custard, made from custard powder and water, no milk or sugar; it was bitter and uneatable. But they were to have much worse later on. Perhaps Len is amongst the members of the Cambridgeshire Regiment parading on Parker's Piece in a picture sent in by Michael Bentinck. If you can identify the occasion or recognise yourself please let me know.

Mr A.A. Brotchie of Cambridge writes:

"Your story about the mustard gas incident in July 1947 brought back memories. I was stationed at Newmarket Road Fire Station and saw the results of the mustard gas on the crew that attended. Company Officer Jim Hyden was by far the worst of the casualties that night. I saw him next day in Addenbrooke's and saw the large blisters on his back. My visit coincided with him being interviewed by several high ranking Army Officers seeing first hand the effects of the gas on human beings. Others from the National Fire Service local division who were at Six Mike Bottom that night were Divisional Officer Gibson, Column Officer Kidd, and Firemen Wolfe, Gatward, Watson & Gyles. The fire appliance took several hours to be stripped and decontaminated, supervised by R.A.F. personnel."

MEMORIES, 19th August 1997, by Mike Petty

My postbag this week has brought a very mixed bag of memories.

From Charles Sharp comes recollections of the Chesterton area of Cambridge, prompted by news of an impending redevelopment at the junction of High Street and Union Lane. For he was born in one of a group of almshouses on that site, woefully primitive with none of the architectural embellishments which characterised later Victorian almshouses. The one on the corner backed against an even older property in Union Lane, reckoned to be the oldest occupied dwelling in Chesterton.

There was an awful outside privy and a solitary standpipe but the Sharps were privileged - for they had use of the lavatories at the Premier Dance Hall, until recently Hallen's motor car showroom.

The Premier earned a reputation as the most popular social function venues of the pre-war days attracting undergraduates, including a certain Kim Philby and his crowd. But as a young lad Charles's bottom played an important part in its success, for he was plonked down on a woollen blanket and hauled at speed up and down the floor to produce the high gloss finish for which the ballroom was famous. His dad used to say then when he stoked the boiler during the war years he could sometimes hear ghostly laughter of revellers of the past.

By co-incidence that same area also features in a series of war-time cuttings from October 1942 when an exercise was held to test the efficiency of the Cambridge Air Raid Precautions. Over a three-hour period all civil defence personnel were engaged in a test of their readiness

to cope with attack. The wardens in various areas lit smoke-bombs to indicate the dropping of incendiaries - but the fire-watchers failed to notice them, at least not until thunder-flashes were set off to add a realist touch to the events, when they turned out in good order complete with tin hats and stirrup pumps.

A Cambridge Daily News reporter went out in search of "incidents", and found one at the corner of Chesterton High Street and Union Lane. He heard the warden blowing his whistle to indicate the landing of incendiaries - but nobody took any notice. Later as he wandered along Haig Road and De Freville Avenue he found the streets lined with fire-guards and fire-fighters standing around with nothing to do.

Meanwhile on the Histon Road a party of schoolboys spent the whole evening suffering from "fractures" or "severe bleeding" without being spotted by anybody. In the end they got fed up and decided to go home and succumb to their "wounds"

As was to be expected the mock attack was busiest in the town centre where police had a busy time directing traffic away from roads "blocked" by high-explosives whilst ambulances screeched through the night and literally scores of pumps were called out to fight pretend fires.

But it was all too real for dancers taking part in a ballet performance at the Arts Theatre when the smoke from a mock incendiary lighted near the stage door swept through the wings and on to the stage/ nearly choking them - but the show still went on.

Tony Cater from Christchurch in Dorset has written with memories of real air raids whilst he worked for Pye. At one time he had the job of spraying a number of loud speaker fittings with a special yellow paint which would turn green in the event of a gas attack. It was through these speakers that the message would be broadcast "It is now blackout time, all windows must be closed and blinds drawn". On one occasion he was passing the office window of L.W. Jones, the works manager when he saw some of the protective sandbags were on fire. A voice called out "Boy, help me put this out". It was C.O. Stanley who had banged his pipe out and nearly burned his factory down in the process. In the event the catastrophe was averted and Pye's went on with their war effort

However strenuous war service was it was easy compared to what some people did before. A.C. Gillett from Ten Mile Bank, Littleport remembers the hardships of farmwork in that area of the fens pre-war. Much was "piece" work, a certain price per acre.

"I remember 1939 singling beet at 10s. an acre. A wet day was a lost day (no pay). On a small family farm at 15 I had 100 pigs & 9 bullocks in the yards to feed twice a day, prepare and carry potatoes (to steam), 10 stones sacks of meal, water to carry by a pair of yokes & pails, straw for litter and hay, mangolds to clean and grind by hand, chaff to fill and carry, cotton and linseed cake to break by a hand machine for the cattle."

But the worst work was helping to harvest sugar beet: "wet, snow, frost in the fields, no rubber gloves those days & every beet had to be picked up, knock off the dirt, laid neatly out in rows to chop off with a hand hook, thrown into heaps to be forked into carts and taken to the river to tip into barges to go to Ely beet factory"

He was pleased enough to join the RAF as aircrew and end up as a Warrant Officer flying in Wellington and Halifax aircraft, well above the mud of the fens .

What a small world! In "Memories" on 24th June I mentioned how Pye 's claim to have installed the world's first radio-telephones in taxis in 1947 was disproved by a Cambridge

man who wrote home to his mum from Canada. Peter Harvey was that man and now lives in Ely. He writes to say he has searched for the cutting in vain -but a copy is in the post

SHARE YOUR MEMORIES, SHARE YOUR ENQUIRIES - write to Mike Petty at the News

MEMORIES, 26th August 1997, by Mike Petty

PICTURE STORY ONE: FEN DITTON FERRY

Carol Senior of Cambridge writes: "I have been collecting postcards for about three years now & I recently bought one that I would like your advice on. It is a view of "The Plough Tea Gardens", with either a bridge or a ferry collapsed in the river and lots of people gathered to lend a hand. It doesn't actually say any location on the front of the card but it is franked 5th July 1905. I believe it to be what is now the "Plough" pub at Fen Ditton, but can find no mention of a ferry there or an incident concerning one".

Indeed there was a ferry, known as the "Red Grind" because of its bright colour, which operating across the river from the Plough. It was the usual platform-type structure with handrails and operated along a chain which was winched from the Plough side.

Tragedy occurred on 10th June 1905, during the popular May Bumps which attracted hundreds of spectators to watch the rowers in action. After the last race people flocked to board the Ferry that would take them across the Cam to and from the Plough at Fen Ditton for a refreshing drink

On the third trip the craft was packed with its maximum of 22 passengers but as it was about three yards out two undergraduates ran down the Plough lawn and jumped on board. This caused the ferry to lurch and those on board moved to the other end to counter the movement. But the weight was too much and the ferry overturned, snapping its chain.

Immediately there was panic. Wooden chairs were thrown into the river for some to cling to, men jumped and dived to help. Frank Skinner, who operated the chain, pushed off in his boat to assist but so many drowning hands grabbed at it that this too was overturned and Skinner joined those struggling in the water. Other Fen Ditton men shoved off from the banks in their black fishing boats and rescued many, but some were trapped underneath the ferry and three young women died after their clothing became entangled in the chain. One was due to be married; she was buried in her wedding dress.

The ferry continued to be used in summer months and during licensing hours, especially on Sunday evenings when people would stroll down the tow path from Chesterton and cross the river for a drink. As a former landlord, Kerry Pipe, later recalled his life would be constantly disrupted by somebody calling for the ferry -reasonable when the pub was open, but annoying at other times, especially when he was having his breakfast!

Then in March 1961 tragedy struck again, this time during the University Lent Bumps. Leonard Butler was winch man at the time and recalled that the ferry was overloaded as undergraduates had pushed him aside and jumped on board. They were singing and rocking the craft from side to side until eventually it shipped water and gradually settled on the river bed.

At first everyone cheered at the fun but then hundred of people on the bank fell silent as they realised what was happening. As bodies drifted down the river dozens of people jumped in

fully clothed to the rescue. People were dragged to the bank and taken to the pub to await medical assistance,

Mercifully nobody was drowned, though the man who was collecting fares on the ferry was pulled down to the river bed by the weight of coins in his pockets. He - and some of the cash, was saved, but he died shortly afterwards of pneumonia.

It was one accident too many and the ferry was withdrawn. For there had been an even earlier incident, largely forgotten. During the Cambridge Amateur Town Regatta in August 1883 the ferry had overturned trapping a man and boy under its rails. Although it had been quickly lifted by bystanders and both were released, the man became trapped again before he could be pulled from the water and had drowned,

READERS WRITE

E. Badcock of Cambridge confesses to an old crime, in the hope that it may assist the young historians of Morley Memorial School.

"It may have been in 1927 or 1928 that the following 'jape' was perpetrated. Time and memory have blurred the exact period. A friend and I conceived the brilliant idea of muffling the school bell, thereby causing confusion and consternation.

"The bell, housed in its lofty open-sided cage at the highest point of the school building was a very tempting target for catapults and sundry other missiles, even air-gun pellets. A piece of thick felt and a length of twine were all that was necessary for effectively silencing the clapper. The ascent to the bell cage was not very difficult even in the darkness. Stout drainage pipes, flat areas of roofing and slopes presented little difficulty. The task was performed quickly and efficiently, much to our glee. The resultant uproar next day may be imagined. "In a more than usually solemn general assembly the perpetrators were invited to step forward and confess to the outrage. Dire punishment was threatened, even expulsion. The whole school would be punished. Nobody owned up"

Now he has. What a wicked lot you older generation were - surely there was nothing so wicked perpetrated elsewhere? Or do the misdeeds of the youngsters of today pale into insignificance. Write to Mike Petty now and confess all

PHOTO PICTURE 2: CAMBRIDGE POLICE

Claud Archer of St Albans Road, Cambridge has sent in a photo of the police who were dedicated to suppress such delinquency back in the 1920s. Many are wearing medals, some seem to be in motorcycle uniform. Do you recognise anybody - did you ever receive a cuff around the ear from a bobby for doing something you didn't ought to. Own up now.

MEMORIES, 2nd September 1997, by Mike Petty

Nothing evokes more response than discussions about the old Petty Cury, Cambridge. People remember the small streets that ran off it in the days before the Lion Yard redevelopment devastated Falcon Yard and Alexandra Street.

And inevitably they remember the shop associated with it. MacFisheries, the Civic Restaurant, The Lion Hotel, George Stace milliners, Heffer's bookshop. The older residents might add Hallack and Bond, and Beales the chemist.

But somehow there is one name that often gets overlooked, that of Boots the Chemist. Yet Boots this week celebrates 100 years of trading from Petty Cury, making it probably the

oldest business to have traded continuously in the street - though I am sure somebody will come up with another.

Nobody would have known about its centenary were it not for the fact that 100 years ago the Company decided to place an advertisement in the Cambridge Daily News and its sister title, the Cambridge Weekly News.

It read: "When the students return to Cambridge they will find a change in the well-known establishment of Boots, cash chemists. Hitherto we have supplied chiefly Pure Drugs, Perfumes, Toilet Articles etc - not having room for other business at Market Hill".

The solution was to construct "most commodious new premises" at 31 Petty Cury where they could "supply our patrons with a larger variety of articles, as in our great establishments at Nottingham, Lincoln and elsewhere.

This included those necessities for students who required stationery, text books and note books, "Fellows" who want "the expensive range of books that good fellows need (at Discount prices)", brushes for artists, travelling bags for travellers, sermon paper for clergymen and strengthening embrocations for athletes.

They ran the advertisement in the Cambridge Weekly News on the 27th August, which paper the week before had published a small advert relating to the old premises on Market Hill with no mention of the new shop then being fitted out. Quite when they set up there is less certain, but certainly they were trading in Market Hill in 1895, but are not shown in the 1891 directory.

The business seems to have flourished for in the 1930s their premises were rebuilt as part of the massive development of new shop, which brought in Woolworth, Marks and Spencer and The Dorothy. Boots expanded again in 1958 and the 1980s

But such an established part of the Cambridge shopping scene has featured little in the local histories - so what are your memories

Incidentally another of the old favourites mentioned above would have been 50 years old this year. Keep your eyes on my "Looking Back" column to see if you can guess which one it was?

PICTURE STORY NO.2: BRIDGE STREET

Twenty-five years ago the developer's axe was lifted from another area of central Cambridge. It was at the end of August 1972 that the announcement was made that the historic frontage of 10-16 Bridge Street, near the junction with Round Church Street, was to be restored. It was a triumph for preservationists for behind the facade was a crumbling pile of masonry, described by a city alderman as "virtually a rubbish heap". A "News" reporter called it "a group of tumbled-down buildings" which "could be dismantled by a couple of five year-olds using toy hammers".

Indecision had dated back to 1968 when the City Council had sought to knock down the buildings, but been frustrated when the County Planners stepped in to enforce a new planning law which prevented demolition without Government consent. The debate rumbled on. Thus the news in August 1972 of a scheme which would preserve the historic frontage whilst developing at the back was welcomed. But Cambridge being Cambridge it was another three years before work started and not until April 1977 that Cambridge Mayor, Coun Bob Wright opened the £1.3 million development. He praised the care and skill of the architects, said it was an outstanding example of how a new building could be fitted into its environment and

was quoted as saying "If only the architects had been involved at Lion Yard then things might have turned out differently".

READERS WRITE

Mrs V. Rumbleow of Cherry Hinton writes: "I was very interested to see in "Memories" of 19th August the photograph of Union Lane, Chesterton. The child is myself, aged about two years. I am looking through the railings of The Premier Dance Hall with my grandmother. I myself lived with my family in one of the four houses behind me. On the same side of the road was a public house named The Wheatsheaf and the one on the High Street fronting Union Lane was The Haymakers"

Ron Weaver of St Ives recalls his days at RAF Duxford in 1938 with B Flight, 66 Fighter Squadron. They were equipped with Gloucester Gauntlets when he was posted as an AC1 Fitters Mate. He was there when the Squadron received their first Spitfire and detailed to the fuel bowser to record the amount of fuel issued

Don Challis of Foxton and R.P. Buckle of Cambridge both recall the muffin man, named as Mr Craske from George IV Street, Cambridge. He used to walk around with a tray on his head, ringing a bell and calling out "Muffins". He went to Foxton by train and Don recalls that he wore a special cap to accommodate the tray of muffins which were covered with green baize. He also knew the Foxton fish man, Mr Cambridge, who commonly known as "Cutty" and had a whelk stall at local fairs - perhaps you remember him.

Just to complete the picture Mr Buckle identifies the travelling trader in my photograph as Fred Blake who had a fruit and veg shop in East Road, but cannot recall the name of the man who used to sell rabbits from a pale for sixpence and on his next visit buy back the skin for a penny. And what was the real name of "Spiv" who used to sell chocolate from a basket on Parkers Piece?

If you can help or if you need help write to Mike Petty at the News.

MEMORIES 9th September 1997, by Mike Petty

The tragic news from Paris of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, had people everywhere glued to their radios and televisions as the story developed, hour on hour. But it was to newspapers they turned for information they could digest at their own pace, and read again and again.

The process of news gathering in these days of satellite and fax is greatly different from that available when in 1936 the world became aware of the deteriorating health of King George V, then at Sandringham House, Norfolk

As news came through 50 journalists left their offices and made their way to deepest Norfolk. The Feathers Hotel at Dersingham became their headquarters, and the only means by which they could send their stories to an anxiously waiting world was by that inn's one telephone, which stood on a bracket in a candle-lit cupboard, and by the one kiosk outside the quaint stone cottage that was the Post Office.

It was essential to increase the telephone capacity and engineers from Cambridge were called into action. A hurried conference was arranged of engineering, telephone, telegraph and traffic officers and work began immediately on providing additional circuits.

An urgent request went out to the Stores Department in Birmingham, but at that time the roads were blocked with snow and impassable. Back went a message that impassable or not a lorry with the cable had to be got through and a driver departed into the snowdrifts en route to Kings Lynn. He arrived two hours before dawn on the Monday morning. Eager hands seized the cable and soon there were six telephones working from the Feathers Hotel.

Ninety journalists now crowded into the inn; there were telephones in the smoke-room and telephones in the corridor. At Dersingham Post Office teleprinters were installed. The only illumination was oil lamps and there was no power. But soon the postmistress' parlour had been cleared of its sofa, settee and ornaments, electricity was installed and the room was ablaze with light and throbbing and humming apparatus.

Tens of thousands of words were sent from the village by telephone and telegraph to newspapers throughout the country and around the world.

On Monday night another bulletin was issued. It was flashed to London and within a few minutes an uncountable multitude of listeners heard the hushed voice of Mr Stuart Hibberd broadcast the message: "The King's life moves peacefully to a close".

Meanwhile Post Office engineers were continuing to work frantically. Four and a half miles of additional aerial cable had arrived. It was laid on hedgerow tops, tied up to trees or electric light poles and looped over cottage roofs while residents gaped at the sweating workmen. By the light of motor-car headlamps and acetylene flares the work went on.

Then in the last minutes of a dying day came the news that King George V was dead. That news was flashed around the world, in one seventh of a second it had encircled the globe. Before the sentence announcing the King's death had been completed by the announcer it was already known in Africa and Australia, America and the Arctic.

For the Telephone Engineers work had just started. They realised that the peak demand would be on the Thursday when the funeral procession would leave Sandringham for the Royal Station at Wolferton. Still more telephones were provided. At King's Lynn four picture telegraph circuits were installed and press photographers built a darkroom in readiness for developing their pictures.

The volume of postal, telegraph and telephone traffic at Sandringham and Buckingham Palace surpassed all previous records and the cables that zig-zagged across the roof-tops worked perfectly.

Then on the Thursday morning King George V left Sandringham for the last time. The morning was bright with sunshine and the crisp grass glittered with hoar frost as without pomp or pageantry the simple cortege passed, the coffin on a gun carriage. It was the farewell of the country people to their beloved squire.

As the train carrying the coffin made its way south, through Cambridgeshire, people lined the track in reverence to bid their last good-byes.

Photographers dashed to Kings Lynn to send their images. Pictures were developed, printed and telegraphed to London, within three minutes of their arrival. Seconds later they had been received in London, minutes later they had been wirelessly to the ends of the earth.

At The Feathers in Dersingham reporters from every country in the world occupied the thirteen available telephones. In one corner a Japanese journalist dictated his story, in the corridor a reporter covering 1,500 newspapers in the United States waited his turn for a vacant phone.

Now the attention of the world turned to London for the funeral. The journalists departed, and the telephone engineers started the long job of disconnecting cables, rewinding wire on to drums, returning items to stores in preparation for the next emergency.

Then it was their turn to rest, content that they had played their part in a nation's grief - and aware that their contribution would probably never be appreciated.

DO YOU HAVE MEMORIES OF ROYAL MEETINGS, DID YOU SPOT QUEEN MARY AS SHE VISITED CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUE SHOPS - OR GIVE HER A LIFT WHEN HER CAR BROKE DOWN - one man did; write to Mike Petty at the News

MEMORIES, 16th September 1997, by Mike Petty

PICTURE STORY NO.1:

In January 1934 Queen Mary came shopping in Cambridge. There was nothing particularly newsworthy about that for such was the fame of the local antique shops that she had made the similar journey from Sandringham just three weeks earlier.

This time she was to visit Messrs Collins and Clark of Regent Street. Sidney Clark was an old friend who had personally negotiated sales on behalf of his firm with both Queen Mary and the King. Here she purchased several pieces of Chelsea china, two 200-year-old pin-pricked English pictures and a box containing four Waterford glass decanters.

She then moved down to Roger Roe's business premises in St Andrew's Street where she obtained several pieces of Worcester porcelain, a bezique cabinet and a combined work and musical box. Mr Roe commented that; "We have been patronised by Royalty before, but this is the greatest honour done to the firm during its long experience". He had been in business in Cambridge for 55 years and his father and grandfather had traded here, and at Ipswich for 50 years before that.

Such shopping was obviously thirsty work and Her Majesty popped in to the "Copper Kettle" cafe on King's Parade where she chatted to the manageress, Mrs Marsh, widow of Richard Marsh of Shelford, for years the King's trainer. Having partaken of light refreshments Queen Mary made her way to the car, waving to undergraduates who were standing on the little wall outside King's college, before departing.

An interesting day for Cambridge folk, certainly, but surely not one to make International headlines.

But there had been something which made it special. For as Queen Mary had been making her way in the Royal limousine from Sandringham the vehicle had broken down, not once but twice. On the second occasion she was parked by the road side near the Slap Up public house at Waterbeach.

Percy Titmous, district manager for Messrs Worthing, was driving his wife to Ely when he saw a car with two chauffeurs bending over the bonnet. Gallantly he turned his car around and asked whether he could be of service.

Thus it was, as an American paper reported; "Queen Mary Thumbs Ride as Auto Quits", beginning "Percy Titmous, who works for a brewery, drove into town Monday morning with her majesty, Queen Mary, riding in his little automobile. The townspeople stared in amazement from the side-walks"

Having deposited his Royal passenger from his Morris Ten, Percy tried to make good his escape, fighting shy of publicity. But news spread rapidly and soon pressmen, news agencies and even film-companies were hot on his trail.

The stricken limousine was towed to King and Harper's garage where an overheating radiator was diagnosed. Another car was quickly dispatched to take the Queen to Exning, where she lunched with Mrs Featherstonhaugh and where she was met by one of her own cars sent from Sandringham to convey her, and her new treasures, back home

As for Percy, he was quoted as saying "Every citizen ought to share with me a feeling of intense pride that Her Majesty was willing to entrust her safety in the hands of an unknown commoner, That is, I think, a remarkable thing".

PICTURE STORY 2: TRAFFIC LIGHTS

A recent correspondent in the "News" has suggested that in order to test the impact of proposed new traffic lights on the corner of Fen Causeway; two policemen should be placed there on point duty, letting vehicles through at regular intervals

Police on point duty used to be regular sight in Cambridge. There are various pictures showing them on duty at the end of Market Street and Petty Cury in the days when traffic went both ways down that narrow thoroughfare

It was in September 1929 that the first traffic lights appeared in Cambridge. The Co~Ordiplex Traffic Control system, more commonly known as the robot policeman, came into operation at the busy Northampton Street and Chesterton Lane junction. This was a radical new invention and motorists had to be instructed in the meaning of the red, amber and green lights. It was hoped that the new system would save police time, but -according to some accounts - it had the reverse effect. It was said that instead of having one policeman on point duty they then needed two. One to sort out the accidents, the other to control the crowds of onlookers flocking to watch the new illuminations I

CAN YOU HELP

Travelling Light, Channel 4's history travel programme is planning its new series. Last time their intrepid duo "Tim and Him" travelled from the Scillies to Shetlands, visiting places of historic interest and riding on fun forms of transport - including a steam car. So if you can suggest interesting spots or drive a 1920s fire engine ~ or something similar - they would like to hear from you. Contact Tim Grundy, Hamilton tv., PO box 16, Buxton, Derbyshire

If your name is Jacobs you might be related to Frederick Jacobs, born in Stetchworth in 1808 and later an innkeeper and carrier at Ely - making regular journeys to Newmarket, St Ives and Sutton. If so P. Jacobs of 14 Minchinton Close, Norton sub Hamdon, Somerset, TA14 6SX would love to hear from you

READERS WRITE

F.M. Coker writes from Chesterton to sing the praises of Haverhill - which he says is a charming place which hasn't changed its image over all these years. He particularly remembers the heavy tweed jackets made by Gurteens for whom he used to work many years ago

MEMORIES, 23rd September 1997, by Mike Petty

Police sergeant Anthony Rae of Lancashire Constabulary H.Q., Button, Preston, has written to the News in connection with a new memorial planned to honour every police officer killed on duty.

On 4th June 1930 the Cambridge headlines were full of tragedy; three Cambridge men were dead. An undergraduate, his tutor and Detective-Sergeant Francis Willis

The undergraduate was always eccentric, he had a reputation for being clever and was reading history at King's college. He also played the drums in a jazz band and had hired a grand piano which he kept in his room. Unlike most of his college he wasn't rich or famous, he hadn't been to Eton, and he didn't have the finance to maintain the lifestyle he adopted. He wore garish sweaters and plus-fours, claimed to be a Russian prince and ran up debts.

He also stole a pistol, teamed up with a friend from Fitzwilliam, changed his name and spent the merry month of May touring Cambridgeshire pubs in a second-hand car. When the money ran out they traded the car for a motorbike and set off for London where they found excitement, glamour and company in the flat of a girl named Madge. She worked in a nightclub, had a heart of gold and seemed used to strange young men popping in for a while. By the end of the weekend she knew these two were different. They obviously had money problems and had written to Cambridge for clothes they could pawn. They also had guns. When they went to collect the parcel of clothes they found two men waiting who invited the runaways to return to Cambridge. Their escort were fellow undergrads - after all there was nothing that a little chat could not sort out.

When they arrived in Cambridge the Kingsman met his tutor in Trumpington Street. The two strolled off to sort things out over a glass of sherry in rooms in the Gibbs building beside the Chapel. A third figure followed. During their friendly chat a knock came at the door. The plain-clothed policeman had just started to read out his warrant when the first of five shots rang out, hitting him in the shoulder.

When the gunfire ceased Prof A.F. Wollaston, a distinguished explorer, lay dead and Detective-Sergeant Francis Wallis had been fatally wounded. The final shot had ended the life of the undergraduate who committed suicide.

It was a very bleak day in Cambridge's history and one which needs to be commemorated on the memorial now being planned.

PHOTO PICTURE NO.2: BOOTS

In 1942 Ramey & Muspratt, the Cambridge photographers, took pictures of the interior of a branch of Boots the chemist, which I think may have been the one in Petty Cury. As both Reg Wood of Saffron Walden and John Howes of Stapleford have told me this shop had two entrances, the other one being in Market Hill. Reg particularly remembers that when you went in there you could look up at the ceiling which was all mirrors in dark wooden frames, whilst John recalls that it was a fun place to shop - because it had a revolving door. In the centre where the two sections met was a large circular area which housed the Boots Booklovers library and was topped by a circular glass dome.

Several people have chided me about forgetting to mention Lyons Tea Shop in Petty Cury - though some even remember the Maypole and the Home and Colonial Stores - whatever happened to them.

READERS WRITE

Charles Barnard of Foxton writes with regard to Queen Mary. He met her, but not in Cambridge. It was early in 1940 when he was working in a Bomb Disposal Section stationed

in Bristol. One night a German plane dropped 6 bombs in the park at Badminton, none of which exploded. Queen Mary had apparently been evacuated there where she was staying with the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort. Charles and seven others went out to deal with the bombs, which had gone down into the ground some five or six feet. It took almost a week to dig them out and make them safe. When the job was complete Queen Mary came, with the Duke and Duchess, to see what the excitement had been about. Charles remembers that it had been very hard and very hot work and they were all anticipating how much they would get for a "drink" from the Duke - but sadly it appears the Duke had very deep pockets! They did however have their picture taken with the Queen - which would surely have been reward enough, only he never saw the result!

Whilst on bombs I have heard tell how two naughty local schoolboys found the fin of an old bomb which had dropped from a lorry. They managed to bury it in the garden of a nearby house, and then pretend it must have fallen during a raid - causing considerable concern to resident and bomb disposal experts alike. I will mention no names - unless the prankster likes to identify himself.

And while we are on memories of long ago and far away Jessie Hicks has written from St Austell in Cornwall with memories of her Land Army days there. She had enlisted in Sheffield, in 1943, was put on a train and arrived in a foreign country where she could not understand the Cornish dialect, and they couldn't understand her. She recalls having to take one of the cart horses to the blacksmiths to be shod, a distance of 3 or 4 miles through a maze of Cornish country lanes - a nightmare journey with no sign posts anywhere. Surely it couldn't have been so difficult in Cambridgeshire

Patrick Mills of Cambridge wrote some weeks ago following my memories of the Arcade; the old Corn Exchange which stood on the site of the Holiday Inn in Downing Street, Cambridge. He believes that there had been a riot at a theatrical performance as a result of which a number of undergraduates had been arrested. They were tried at a special court to avoid the possibility of any student being detained overnight, which would have made it impossible for him to have a career in such institutions as the Indian Civil Service. I believe I have some recollection of something similar having taken place at the New Theatre – can you help us both

MEMORIES, 30th September 1997, by Mike Petty

PICTURE STORY NO.1 : BRIDGE STREET READERS WRITE

Mr G. Murfett of Cliveden Close, Cambridge writes: "Your picture of P.A. Allin's shop and works, on the corner of Bridge Street, Cambridge, brought back some very pleasant memories for me.

I started my apprenticeship there in 1935. There were three bothers, Bert who was our boss, Edgar who ran the garage and cycle side, and Sid who ran the electrical departments. Bert Allin was the best boss I ever had. Allin's were at that time the largest plumbing, heating, electrical and garage etc firm in Cambridge.

"They also had a tin smith, Jack Lark, who made cooking utensils and repaired them for the colleges. We used to clean the old ones out to prepare them and the new ones we used to polish the tin lining with silver sand, when we were slack.

"They also had a cycle mechanic named Joe. He would build cycle frames as well as repair them. When I first started there they had an electroplating works on the top floor. We used to cut the solder of old sheet lead we had taken off college roofs and lead pipes, melt it down,

add pure tin and make our own solder. I learned many things there, I was bronze welding brass tail pieces to short lengths of copper tube before I was 15 years old.

"I had a five year bound apprenticeship which was a legal document, signed by your father and the boss, binding both parties for five years. The wages were also set out in it. They should have been 6s. for the first year, then 7s/6d. 10s., 15s., 19s.6d, but mine was altered by agreement to 10s. a week for so many years, then increased"

I hope to feature further extracts from Mr Murfett's letter in other weeks.

The picture of Bridge Street in the 1930s also shows petrol pumps standing by the side of the street - an innovation being urged by the Mayor of Cambridge in October 1922 and resisted because of the fears of what undergraduates would do to them on rag days. The idea of such pumps beside busy central streets seems most strange nowadays. Do you remember filling up at other road-side pumps. Surely there must have been some sticky moments - write to Mike Petty at the News

PICTURE STORY NO.2: COMPUTERS

The news that Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates has offered Cambridge University another £12 million for computer research ("News" 25th Sept) comes almost 50 years to the day after the Cambridge Daily News broke the store of the development of a "brain" capable of answering 1,000 questions in a minute which was in course of construction in the University Mathematical Laboratory. Work had been going on for a year under the leadership of Dr H.V. Wilkes, director of the laboratory and a wartime radar research expert.

The "brain", officially known as "Edsac" - electronic delay storage automatic calculator - would when finally completed consist of 16 metal tubes full of mercury and some eight racks containing between 1,000 and 1,500 valves,

Questions would be fed in on a punched tape and the answer delivered by teleprinter. It was hoped to complete it within a year. Ramsey and Muspratt photographed the apparatus in 1949.

Such is Cambridge that when I showed a cutting from the "News" of 3rd October 1947 to a group of computer experts in the University Combination Room, one of their number could claim to have been involved in its early development

ANOTHER INSIGHT INTO THE KING'S COLLEGE MURDER, 1930

Barton Holister, Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge has written adding a new insight into the incident at King's college in June 1930 which led to the death of police detective sergeant Willis.

He recounts a story told him in 1966 by Superintendent Bill Ainsworth, then a senior officer in Cambridge police.

In 1930 Ainsworth had been a young constable at the Cambridge police station when he was instructed to accompany Segt Willis to witness the interview of an undergraduate who was under suspicion of theft.

The two offices strolled along Petty Cury and St Mary's Passage en route to King's college. As they passed the door way of Gt St Mary's church a rather distraught man emerged and called out to PC Ainsworth. A wedding was about to take place in the church and one of the bellringers had failed to arrive.

Naturally Mr Ainsworth pointed out that although he was an experienced bellringer he was on duty and not able to help. However Segt Willis felt sympathy for the young couple about to wed and encouraged him to help out with the peal, commenting that he would be able to interview the King's undergraduate on his own, together with the man's Tutor.

So Ainsworth did take part in ringing the peal and the Sergeant proceeded on his own to the Tutor's set in the Gibbs building, where he and the Tutor were both murdered and the student committed suicide

Bill Ainsworth always felt fortunate that due to the coincidence of the bell ringer emerging from the church and meeting himself and the Sergeant, his own life was obviously saved

Patrick Mills of Cambridge wrote some weeks ago following my memories of the Arcade, the old Corn Exchange which stood on the site of the Holiday Inn in Downing Street, Cambridge. He believes that there had been a riot at a theatrical performance as a result of which a number of undergraduates had been arrested. They were tried at a special court to avoid the possibility of any student being detained overnight, which would have made it impossible for him to have a career in such institutions as the Indian Civil Service. I believe I have some recollection of something similar having taken place at the New Theatre - can you help us both

MEMORIES, by Mike Petty 7th October 1997

PICTURE STORY NO.1: MARKET HILL

Now that the lecture season is well underway I have been wearing out my maps trying to locate such diverse places at Kimbolton Castle, Hemingford Grey Reading Room, Girton W.I. Hall and - most puzzlingly, Sturton Street chapel.

Surely, though, it is not possible to lose your way in central Cambridge, which (of course) has not changed in hundreds of years.

However the picture, taken about 65 years ago may prove a puzzle to many. If I add the clue that it shows the old Shire Hall then it will only add to the confusion.

But this is the heart of Cambridge, Market Hill, looking across to P.O. Sennitt's shop beside the lane which led to the Cabman's shelter and the old Guildhall with its arches and clock. That building had been erected in 1747 as the Shire Hall, centre for county government, with the town Guildhall behind it, connected by a bridge. When in 1842 the County administration was moved to a new building on Castle Hill the Town Council moved into the front offices, blocking in the open archways where traders had previously erected their stalls.

Just 100 years ago Cambridge Councillors were hatching grand ideas for new offices, with a grandiose plan being drawn up for a new and larger Guildhall. These proposals could be said to have caused a stink, but not so bad a stink as the sewerage system which was then being installed. Ratepayers revolted and told the elected members that they would not sanction grand new offices until the drains were fixed first.

In the event the rebuilding scheme was shelved until 1932 when plans by C. Cowles-Voysey for the present Guildhall met with more protest. But this time councillors were adamant and they were helped by the dangerous condition of the canopy which extended from the front of the building. The canopy was removed in 1933 - its old site marked by the white line just below the centre windows seen in this photograph

It was taken by the late Clement Williamson who worked as a photographer for the University School of Agriculture and is one of a number of glass slides sent in by his son, Jack Williamson of Argyle Street, Cambridge, which record unusual viewpoints of an area in the heart of Cambridge which has now changed dramatically

DO YOU HAVE FAMILY SNAPS THAT FILL GAPS IN OUR HISTORY - send them to Mike Petty at the News

ANOTHER INSIGHT INTO THE KING'S COLLEGE MURDER, 1930

Darton Holister, Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge has written adding a new insight into the incident at King's college in June 1930 which led to the death of police detective sergeant Willis ("Memories 23rd Sept).

He recounts a story told him in 1966 by Superintendent Bill Ainsworth, then a senior officer in Cambridge police. In 1930 Ainsworth had been a young constable at the Cambridge police station when he was instructed to accompany Segt Willis to witness the interview of an undergraduate who was under suspicion of theft.

The two officers strolled along Petty Cury, past the Guildhall and down St Mary's Passage en route to King's college. As they approached the doorway of Gt St Mary's church a rather distraught man emerged and called out to PC Ainsworth for assistance. A wedding was about to take place in the church and one of the bellringers had failed to arrive.

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So Ainsworth stopped to take part in ringing the peal and the Sergeant proceeded on his own to the Tutor's set in the Gibbs building, where he and the Tutor were both murdered and the student committed suicide

Ainsworth always felt fortunate that his own life may have been saved by the chance meeting, his own bellringing skills, and the kind-heartedness of Police Detective Sergeant Francis Willis

PICTURE STORY NO.2: banjo player

When I spoke to a meeting of Cambridge Business and professional Club the other week one of the members was reminiscing about an old Cambridge character who played the banjo, lived in the St Andrew's Street area and sold newspapers. He was known as -"Dave".

The Cambridgeshire Collection has a photograph taken by Matthew Mason of one such musician - can anybody tell me if this is the same chap, or if not who he might be.

DO YOU REMEMBER "CHARACTERS" in your town or village - write to Mike Petty at the News

READERS WRITE

Mrs P. Rolph from Quy writes:

"I would be four years of age when my sister Amy married Walter Bull who worked for a Mr Winship at Milton. They brought the house no.31 Cam Road, next door to a Mrs Keens sweet shop. I was eight when I was allowed to go on the late afternoon buses to Cambridge. I'd go via New Square, James Street, over to Auckland Road. P. Hawkings had the bakery at the Common end. I'd go over the river for a penny and along the Ferry Path. My sister's was just four houses up on the left. On the corner of Montague Road was Mr Cousins' butcher. I used

to walk through a kind of alley way to old Chesterton for fish and potato scallops. The potatoes were dipped in the batter & fried, delicious. I'm now coming up for 80 years.

MEMORIES, by Mike Petty, 16th October 1997

Ely Horticultural Society is celebrating what they believe to be their 80th birthday and so the other evening, after dinner, we looked back to the events of 1917 and the incidents which would have been influencing the minds of those who founded that society.

Chief amongst all would have been the casualties of war - so many local men paying the supreme price; one Soham family had send five sons to the front, by October 1917 four of them were dead, the other a Prisoner of War,

Ely was playing its part in restoring the shattered bodies of those wounded on the battlefields. A VAD hospital had been established in the Theological College and in 1917 40 wounded soldiers had enjoyed a peaceful Christmas there.

But as more and more men were needed for the front and Volunteers grew fewer, compulsion had been imposed with Military Tribunals appointed to decide who could stay and who must go. Farmers denuded of male workers turned instead to women, and to German Prisoners of War, based in Ely Infectious Diseases Hospital.

But other Germans were not far away, in fact just above the roof of the Cathedral, as Zeppelins raided, bringing destruction to the fenland countryside. Ely councillors considered placing a gun on Cherry Hill and agreed to give the warning by sounding the jam factory hooter.

Amazingly one of the gathering had actually seen Zeppelins and remembers one being attacked as it raided the area, Local newspaper accounts are patchy, but there is no doubt that bombs were dropped at Soham fen in August 1916, and pieces of a wrecked Zeppelin were being sold off there in October that year.

Ely was playing its part in the aerial war with a Royal Flying Corps stores depot in the city and aircraft regularly flew in to collect parts. Sometimes they were forced into emergency landings and one which came down between the Bedford Rivers had to be collected and brought back by barge.

Other wartime memories have come via Allan Motts whose Grandfather was in October 1917 experiencing the destruction that could be wrought by planes. He was in the unlimited mud of Passchendale. His diary records "Our first night here was to put it mildly trying! Four times between sunset and sunrise we were visited by Jerry bombing planes and each time they wreaked havoc, killing and wounding men by the dozen, as they could not fail to do in so thickly a populated area.

"On October 26th the first detachment went into the line, halting first at Irish Farm before starting on the dreaded Duck Walk. A more damnable place one could not picture, the whole way along the earth was pitted with shell holes, some half full of muddy water, and others smoking from recent explosions, for as we scrambled along the duck boards the ground belched flame and smoke to the accompaniment of ear splitting shell burst. Many of our party never reached the line, they were either carried back on stretcher or lay there to have their bodies, from which the souls had fled, further torn by the incessant bombardment".

Allan, of 192 Miller Way, Brampton, has recently discovered his grandad's most graphic handwritten journal and is hoping that it can be published

Harry Bye, of Ely, has written of more pleasant memories of aircraft for in October 1934 he was at Mildenhall RAF aerodrome watching Jim Mollison and Amy Johnson fly their new Comet aircraft direct from the De Havilland works at Hatfield so as to be ready for the International Air Race to Australia. He did not sleep too well on the evening of 20th October as traffic was thundering ceaselessly past his farmhouse near Shippea Hill, so he and two friends set off at 5am to bike to Mildenhall to see the first of the planes take off. 56 years later he was in Melbourne when he met a man who had witnessed the winning Comet arrive there, three days after leaving Suffolk. Another chap had been in India and seen the planes stop over for refuelling - and just to make the world seem even smaller he remarked that he had a niece who ran a grocery and flower shop in the Cambridgeshire fens, at Whittlesey,

PICTURE STORY NO.2: SWAFFHAM CHAPEL READERS WRITE

Alan Wyatt from Landbeach writes following my recent "Memories" of postal deliveries around Wicken and Upware. Further along the road in Swaffham Fen is a small chapel, used just once a year for Harvest Thanksgiving services. Beside it used to stand a tin hut. This hut had been built by Tommy Hood, a postman, who used to pass his days at Upware before returning to collect the letters and take them back to Soham. In it he would repair boots and shoes and later undertake basic radio repairs. The hut was removed about 18 months ago, a little piece of local now disappeared

Incidentally just down the road on the way towards Swaffham there stands an ordinary-looking white post on the edge of a field. In August 1940 when the concrete road was laid through the fen this post was driven into the underlying clay until its top was flush with the surface of the soil. It now stands five feet above the surface of the field - an indication of just how the fen has eroded in 40 years.

Do you know similar examples of little-known aspects of local history - write to Mike Petty at the, News

Mr D. Traylen of Cottenham writes: "I have in my possession a bottle of beer with the name J. & J.E. Phillips Ltd of Royston which was unearthed at the rear of my property on Newmarket Road. Can you give me any idea of when and where this Company existed?"

Answers please to Mike Petty at the News

MEMORIES, 23rd October 1997, by Mike Petty

This morning I took my usual walk to fetch the papers - the long way round. Along Mill Drove and down the edge of the field as the sun was starting to break through the early morning mist. Then across the stile into the meadow with its undulations marking the old ridge-and-furrow cultivation. The field was a complete sea of silver, shimmering in the sunlight - each blade of grass covered with cobwebs. On the hedges the last of the blackberries were wrapped in their silver strands.

Then, standing white amongst the silver grass was a mushroom. As I turned towards it I found myself walking up a rainbow as the sun's rays reflected the water on the cobwebbed grass, forming a path which led back up the field. When I stepped off the path, the rainbow followed me. It was a truly magical experience.

75 years ago others were experiencing miracles - the sound of voices and music coming through the air as the beginning of broadcasting transformed peoples' lives.

Pye, the Cambridge instrument company, began marketing a series of receivers and the Cambridge Daily News published a regular column giving instructions in this form of wireless communication. Wireless amateurs who were not owner-occupiers soon discovered that their landlords objected to them putting up aerials - the fixing of masts or poles to private houses could damage brickwork and an efficient lightning arrester would need to be fitted.

But the technology was expanding so rapidly that the paper urged people to wait for a while to see how matters would develop and so avoid disappointment and save money. By all accounts - they claimed in September 1922 - It may not be necessary to have aerials at all - any ordinary electric light installation or gas pipe could be used, or failing that a wire garden fence, or even a pair of knitting needles. "All this remains to be proved, and just as it took a long while to perfect the Invention of the gramophone, so we must expect it to be with wireless developments"

On 20th October 1922 the Cambridge and District Wireless Society members gathered at the Liberal Club, Downing Street, to hear a wireless concert broadcast from the transmitting station of Mr H.W. Taylor of Camden House. Sadly the receiving set would not function; two further sets of reputable make were acquired, but again neither worked. At about 9pm however Mr Taylor's voice was heard on the loud speaker and for about half-an-hour gramophone selections were received, but the reception was by no means the success it should have been and several people left early. Urgent steps were being taken to locate the mysterious fault which had blanked out the signals and prevented people enjoying to the full their first taste of the magic of music through the air.

WHAT ARE YOUR MEMORIES OF WIRELESS, did you own a crystal set -and what about the accumulators - write to Mike Petty at the News

READERS WRITE

Alan Wyatt from Landbeach writes following my recent "Memories" of postal deliveries around Wicken and Upware. Just off the road in Swaffham Fen is a small chapel, used just once a year for Harvest Thanksgiving services. Beside it used to stand a tin hut. This hut had been built by Tommy Hood, a postman, who used to pass his days at Upware before returning to collect the letters and take them back to Soham. In it he would repair boots and shoes and later undertake basic radio repairs. The hut was removed about 18 months ago, a little piece of local history now disappeared

Incidentally just down the road on the way towards Swaffham there stands an ordinary-looking white post on the edge of a field. In August 1940 when the concrete road was laid through the fen this post was driven into the underlying clay until its top was flush with the surface of the soil. It now stands five feet above the surface of the field - an indication of just how the fen has eroded in 40 years.

Do you know similar examples of little-known aspects of local history - write to Mike Petty at the News

Mr Sid Martin of Langdon House, Cambridge recollects another form of entertainment; he writes: "When the Regal Cinema was built in 1937 there was a lot of unemployed men about and jobs were scarce. The firm who built the cinema wanted to test its upper storey for weight and the best way to do this was to get 2-300 men to go up and sit on the seats. Now if you were unemployed you got about 5s. a day and these men were to get 2s.6d as it only took 1-2 hours. But on a week day this meant they would have to lose a day's unemployment pay, so to overcome the problem the men were allowed to do it on a Sunday - no loss of pay as it was not a working day, but they got the extra 2s.6d. Now I lived in the country and was not able to go. I would like to know if anyone is still around who can remember or did this job?"

MEMORIES, by Mike Petty, 30th October 1997

FAREWELL TO THE FAIR?

The centuries-old fair at Ely is facing the future with some trepidation, having moved from its traditional home on the Market Place and finding that its fortune has declined.

Such institutions have played an important part in the life of our county and Ely can trace its fair back to before 1135 when King Henry I granted a charter permitting a fair to be held for seven days at the Feast of St Etheldreda in June. So important was it that it was suppressed for a time in the C13 as it was interfering with the profit of the Westminster Fair and later the date was switched from June to October.

It was then a trading fair and at one time necklaces, known as St Audrey's lace, were sold which by the 17th century had become symbolic of the cheap and gaudy finery found at such fairs, giving to the language the word "tawdry"

Ely was not alone in its fairs. Cambridge held one of the greatest trading fairs in all Europe on its Stourbridge Common, and retains its Midsummer Fair, with its crockery stalls a continuing reminder of its trading heritage.

Another was held at St Ives and 100 years ago the Cambridge Daily News visited its Michaelmas Fair it commented on the great crowds of people who flocked into the town. "They came by the railway station, in many a slap-up conveyance and every shade of vehicle".

In those days Monday was looked upon as the principal business day and the streets around the Market were full of horses for sale, with side streets being used as exercise yards, allowing sellers to demonstrate the speed of their animals. Sheep and cattle were shown in the Market and the Pavement was crowded with shows and stalls.

Here you could shoot rifles at glass balls kept moving by water, see an armless lady do all sorts of things with her feet, get your portrait for 2d or invest your money in sweets, toys, nuts, cakes or hot peas. There were swings and steam roundabouts of galloping horses in the Broadway, vendors of cheap jewellery and needed even a dentist who would attend to your teeth.

But at St Ives in October 1897 there was a special attraction. Mr G. Dawston, pork and sausage maker, was exhibiting his new sausage-making machine, driven by one of Crossley's splendid gas engines.

People in those days tramped for miles to visit fairs or village feasts and if they arrived foot-sore might patronise a stall such as that operated by W. White Robinson on Market Hill, Cambridge. There one might purchase Pallister's shoes or Waterproof K boots. Rosemary Leach of Hemingford Grey has lent a photograph of his stall, taken by Valentine Blanchard, which shows something of his expense range - and makes one wonder how he managed to transport it all! Do you remember local fairs - write to Mike Petty at the News

Various people will have memories of another local institution - the St Ives Sand and Gravel Company which Harold Shelton has been tracing back to two brothers, Alfred and Chilli Everdell who in 1918 bought two ex-service buses which they converted to lorries to convey sand and gravel from Johnny Emmerson's pits - provided they extracted the material. The company flourished and were joined by Ted Greenwood and by Stan Darby with whom they merged in the early 1960s. In trying to piece together the development of the company and

the people who worked for them Harold has gathered many reminiscences but would welcome more memories. He can be contacted at 38 Jubilee Avenue, Warboys, PE17 2RT
READERS WRITE

W.J. Hudson is a native of the Potteries and is intrigued by the names of houses in the Sturton Street area of Cambridge, which remind him of his home area. For example Hanley House, which he believes was built by a potter who travelled up to sell his goods in Cambridge market. Hanley was one of the Pottery towns & now the commercial centre of Stoke on Trent and nearby Etunia and Cobridge Villas carry the names of districts of Stoke. He believes there used to be a row of cottages opposite Hanley House which also carried a Potteries name - do you remember what? If you can help write to Mike Petty at the News

Next week sees Guy Fawkes Night when all sorts of excitement used to perpetrated by undergraduates in Cambridge streets. If you have memories to share write to Mike Petty at the News

MEMORIES, by Mike Petty, 6th November 1997

Bonfire night was celebrated, said the Cambridge Chronicle newspaper of 1786, in the usual manner, with squibs, crackers, rioting and mischief to the personal injury of many and the great danger of the inhabitants in general. The paper warned that any person let off fireworks in any public street would forfeit 20s, or be committed to the House of Correction to hard labour for one month.

But despite the official disapproval of the authorities people have continued to celebrate. In 1856 both St Neots and St Ives demonstrated their usual fireworks and noise, though the latter had no bonfires leading to the comment that "St Iveans seem to be tired of the mummeries of that usual demonstration".

Not so Cambridge for though there had been some evidence that "the regular manifestations of detestations of popery and popish plots - by punching each other's heads and blacking each other's eyes - was dying", being in 1850 only exercised by a few shop boys and Barnwell brats following in the wake of a half-dozen gownsmen or kicking a policeman or two, by 1859 the event was back to its full furore.

The paper reported how a party of undergraduates walked arm-in-arm along the principal streets with defiant expressions on their countenances and their sleeve turned up as if ready for battle. Being a Saturday night there were a large number of country lads in town and the Boys of Barnwell and other "scum" who generally visited the centre on that night made as dirty a mob as one would chose to set eyes on.

At first feelings were expressed in groaning or shouting, but soon some Barnwellians of larger growth, joined the mob. Skirmishes occurred, sticks were used by both parties, stones thrown by younger boys hit heads of both sides as well as neighbouring window panes. The most serious affray was in St John's Street where an undergraduate had his arm broken and an innocent passer-by - a Sunday school teacher - was attacked and taken to hospital.

By 10 o'clock the University proctors had intervened to send the undergraduates back to their colleges but roughs continued to prowl the streets, attacking any students they came across. It was all part of the normal celebration of Guy Fawkes Night.

But what of the Guy himself.

The reporter in 1860 recalled the Guy of former years - a figure dressed in modern but seedy clothes, supported on the back of a donkey, his arms outstretched to denote the intensity of

the torture he had undergone, the gloved hands bearing brimstone matches spread out fanwise to show his diabolical intent; his face red and apoplectic with eyes fixed and expressionless and his complexion heightened by a large white frill and gigantic paper collar

Bonfires were not confined to Bonfire night nor were bonfires the only thing set alight. Cambridge students took great delight in setting fire to anything they could find - the fittings from the underground toilets on Market Hill, shutters from shops or fences round gardens being favourite targets. Indeed so much damage was done at one rag in 1905 that the University ended up paying some £200 compensation

But the most notorious bonfire night was that of 1948 when the headlines of the student newspaper "Varsity" proclaimed "Bonfire damage worse than enemy action during war". The interior of the Senate House was severely damaged by an explosive charge and 70 panes of glass broken. The priceless medieval windows of Kings' College chapel narrowly escaped destruction. Rockets were aimed at the Guildhall clock, scores of fireworks thrown and smoke bombs tossed down the underground toilets. In Sidney Street a van was seized and with a cry of "Up with his back wheels" was lifted into the air, rolled backwards and forwards and then pushed, over on to its side, causing considerable damage which was not fully covered by the driver's insurance whose business was badly lit with the van laid up. Students subscribed to a fund to pay for the damage. Two other vehicles were also attacked.

Some 2,000 people had been out on the streets, including a number of women undergraduates but military authorities had banned RAF personnel and American servicemen from entering Cambridge.

After a number of more peaceful 5ths violence again erupted in 1959 when youths poured oil on the water of Market Hill fountain and set it on fire. Meanwhile a continuous barrage of squibs and bangers interspersed with heavier explosions from larger, home-made fireworks, kept the crowds constantly on the move, though nearly everybody was caught by a squib and many people's clothes were scorched and burnt.

The terror of bonfire night continued into the 1960s with students banned from the town centre and the police warning townspeople to stay away but sanity was restored in the 1970s with the Cambridge Round Table organising a firework spectacular on Cambridge United's ground in 1973 and the City Council following this initiative with the now traditional celebrations on Midsummer Common, uniting Town and Gown on what was previously a night of conflict and battle

DO YOU HAVE MEMORIES OF 5TH - write to Mike Petty at the News

READERS WRITE

Edward Hall from Lt Eversden writes: "You asked for memories of wireless. My mother had a Cossor radio during the war. She would take out the valves and clean them. The wireless used a large dry battery and an accumulator which was charged up once a week for 6d.

Miss Daphne Foreman of Cambridge recalls how her father made their first wireless set in about 1937. The cabinet was made from wood left over from their poultry house and covered with green silk material taken from an old article of underwear belonging to her mother something she took great delight in telling visitors, to her mother's embarrassment. It had two knobs, one of which selected the three stations, National, Regional and Midland. The aerial wire was stretched the length of the garden

During the war she remembers every Sunday evening listening to the National Anthems of the countries which had fallen to the Nazis and their number grew every week. Her father used to accompany the Palm Court Orchestra on his violin

MEMORIES, 13th November 1997, by Mike Petty

The Last Post plays, the Standards dip, the wreaths are laid and the country honours those who did not grow not old.

For many however the names of those "we shall remember" read out at Armistice services in villages throughout Cambridgeshire are merely names, people we never knew. To a dwindling band of elderly men and women however they were comrades in arms - but who remembers those who fought and survived.

One who does is Dennis Poulter of Sawston who as a fit young Royal Marine served on landing craft guns on D-Day and was seriously wounded on the Dutch Island of Walcheren. He has a photograph of himself, gravely ill, being shipped back home on a stretcher.

Now he has produced a most remarkable record of the other men and women from Sawston who played their part in conflicts from 1919 to 1945. Page after page after page of photographs depict those who saw action both at home and abroad.

They include the exploits of women warriors - Kezia Keeler who, like Patsy Hancock and Gracie King joined the WRAP in 1918 and whose four sons fought in the Second War, Land Army girl Gwen Murray, WRNS Betty Whiting or Dorothy Wright who worked in the Entertainments National Service Association in Italy in India

There is graphic detail of those Sawstonians who were killed, including Sidney Matthews who spent Christmas 1944 near the small village of Kreuzrath inside Germany. On Christmas Eve they heard German soldiers start to sing carols to the accompaniment of a harmonium. Memories were awakened of the Christmas fraternisation of the First World War when opposing troops met in No Mans Land. Not so in 1944 - compass bearings were taken on the singers and an artillery barrage reminded them that Christmas Eve was no time for Peace and Goodwill.

Then a few days later Matthews was helping to lay an anti-tank mine field when there came an explosion. Out of 2,400 anti-tank grenades, 2,350 had detonated. The natural reaction was to send for stretcher-bearers but a quick walk around the area established that there were no survivors. 47 men had perished. There was nothing to do but collect up the bodies, write letters of condolence and lay more mines.

There is a letter sent by the Air Ministry (Casualty Branch) confirming the death of an airman, his fate revealed by a captured German document. Peter Mitchell had been navigator on a Mosquito aircraft over Belgium when it was shot down. The crew of two had been killed, their burial place was at that time unknown. Dennis Poulter has tracked it down to a plot in Heverlee War Cemetery. The aircraft had been shot down on 24th February 1944, the news of his fate was contained in a letter dated 16th March 1945 - over a year later

With details of the Home Guard and newspaper stories recalling happier incidents between 1919 and 1945 Dennis Poulter has produced a record worthy of the sacrifice made by those who did not return and those who came back to restart their lives. "The story of a village : Sawston 1919-1945" is only available from Sawston Book Shop, Morley's Place, Sawston for £8.50 plus L2.50

FEW VILLAGES HAVE SUCH A RECORD, share your memories with Mike Petty at the News

More memories of the county in wartime will be stirred by another publication, "Cambridgeshire's airfields in the second world war" by Graham Smith (Countryside books, 11.95). From Alconbury to Wyton there are details of raids and characters, both RAF and USAAF and of the civilians who lived and farmed beneath their shadows

READERS WRITE

Mike Richardson writes to recall his part in bonfire night 1961. Then a lad of 15 he was determined to celebrate in central Cambridge - though the area was out of bounds to undergraduates and servicemen. He found it was blocked off to civilians too. The surveillance camera at Drummer Street watched that area, police with their Black Marias cordoned off all other approaches. Finally some 100 15-year olds were escorted by Special Constables down Silver Street and along Queen's Road. One of their number - dubbed "The professor", a wizard at chemistry, had brought his own contribution to the celebrations in the form of a home-made firework which illuminated the whole area. In the sudden blackness which followed the lads scattered, and the night seemed full of the sound of fire engines

PICTURE: CAMBRIDGE'S LAST THATCHED COTTAGE

The quaint thatched cottage seems to nestle under the shadow of a country church tower - a symbol of old-England at risk both from war and from fireworks. But this one stood just off Park Street, Cambridge and the tower is that of St John's college chapel. Mr G Murfett of Cambridge remembers when it was nearly destroyed by fire. A plumber who was soldering a pipe with a blowtorch accidentally set the thatch alight and only prompt action by the fire brigade saved the day. It was finally demolished in 1972

MEMORIES, 20 November 1997, by Mike Petty

READERS WRITE

PICTURE: TRUMPINGTON HIGH STREET when Marjorie Swann was a girl

Mrs Marjorie Swann, now aged 97 and living at Boscombe near Bournemouth writes:

"My friends in Cambridge recently sent me cuttings from the Cambridge Evening News regarding the Coach and Horses at Trumpington, and I thought the following memories might interest you

My mother and father moved from Kent to manage this pub - a tied house owned by the Pemberton family - in 1900, when I was about three months old. My father died in 1909 and my mother stayed on as landlady until 1929. Her name was Alice Maude Howard.

I have wonderful memories of living in the old building. It was originally a coaching inn where coaches stopped for refreshment and fresh horses en route to London. In the garden remained a stepping stone to help ladies in long dresses mount the coach. Inside the lovely old doors were thick and solid. American visitors to the Pembertons were always brought to be shown around.

We were always in competition with other pubs in the village - the Red Lion, Unicorn, Tally Ho, Green Man and Volunteer. We were open all day but had to close at 10pm. Anyone wanting to drink for a further hour crossed the road to the Volunteer which was open till 11pm. Monday was especially busy as farmers drove down and from Cambridge market. They

would go into the Tap Room and put a poker into the big open fire to warm it before putting it into their ale. Spittoons were much in evidence.

As there were so many pubs in the village there was great competition for trade. It was the one with the best billiard table or best games that attracted most customers. In our yard we had a big bowling alley. Balls were sent rolling down an incline to knock other smaller balls over. "Devil amongst the Tailors" it was called. Our lawn was a miniature golf course. The Tap Room had the usual darts and I used to play records on a big machine with a trumpet on it with a customer winding it up.

George, a regular customer, always wore hob nailed boots and used them for his special trick. He spread a box of live matches on the brick floor and danced on them in the boots! Blind Jo came once a week with his barrel organ and sometimes a German would bring his dancing bear

The gardens were a delight. The kitchen garden, adjoining Trumpington Hall Park, was huge with big solid high walls all around. There were ash trees and walnut trees and walnuts were sold in the bar for about 20 a penny. There were hens galore. I had the task of collecting the eggs from all over the place and they too were sold. We always lost one egg. One of the hens would go into the men's toilet to sit on the seat and lay her egg. At night the hens roosted on perches in a large hen house. The yard was full of pig sties. Sally and her lovely piglets were my favourites. Mother used to mix their food with 'old ale' to keep them happy.

Children from the village used to come to play with my brother and I as we had such a lovely big home. Candles were needed to light our way to the very primitive outside toilets. We used to hear the horse and cart come to empty them very early in the morning when we were still in bed.

Twelve soldiers were billeted with us during the 1914-18 war, by which time I was a pupil at the Higher Grade School, now Parkside Community College. Buses were few. I walked or begged a lift on a cart.

I loved my days at the 'Coach and Horses'. My memories of it are as vivid as ever. How different the world was then!

Rita Williams from Cambridge writes:

"I was very interested in your recent article about W. White Robinson and his shoe stall on Cambridge market. He was my great-grandfather. My grandfather kept a fruit & veg shop on the corner of Leeke Street on Newmarket Road.

On Sundays he sold winkles which came from Brightlingsea by rail - alive in a sack. They were then washed and boiled in a large coal saucepan on a gas ring in the back yard. The gas lead was a long rubber hose that pushed onto a small tap on the gas stove – today's safety experts would have a fit.

PICTURE STORY NO.2: banjo player

When I spoke to a meeting of Cambridge Business and professional Club the other week one of the members was reminiscing about an old Cambridge character who played the banjo, lived in the St Andrew's Street area and sold newspapers. He was known as "Dave". The Cambridgeshire Collection has a photograph taken by Matthew Mason of one such musician - can anybody tell me if this is the same chap, or if not who he might be.

DO YOU REMEMBER "CHARACTERS" in your town or village - write to Mike Petty at the News

MEMORIES, 27 November 1997 by Mike Petty

For most of us this will just be another Thursday. For thousands of Americans in Cambridgeshire however it is "Thanksgiving", commemorating the Pilgrim Fathers' first harvest in their New World in 1621.

The links between Cambridgeshire and America are very tangible and the University can claim to have educated probably 70 of the pioneers. John Harvard a student of Emmanuel College joined the early settlers and left his estate and library to a new place of superior education being established at Newtown. The college was called after him, and Newtown renamed Cambridge in 1638.

200 years later more local people were joining the trail to America. In 1832 six families from Willingham left for Liverpool and the ship to their new life; they were joined by six other people from Over. Each family received a sum of money from the parish to cover their expenses. Another 11 people were Westward bound from Haddenham.

Once gold was discovered in California the pressure to desert the harsh life of 1850's Cambridgeshire was almost irresistible. The Cambridge Chronicle of 1851 commented that "several families have emigrated to America, forced from their homes by the depressed state of the times and the low price given for agricultural produce".

Soham held a public meeting to consider raising money to aid the emigrants in 1851 - but there was another inducement in the form of Mormon Missionaries who had converted various of the good folk of Soham to their beliefs. In April 1853 anti-Mormon preacher A. Hepburn launched a crusade against their teachings before moving on to continue his fight in Cambridge and Sawston.

The Second World War saw Cambridgeshire's towns and villages welcoming American servicemen, both coloured and white, into their public houses and dance halls, and whilst their military story has been well told there is less on record about the impact they made on rural communities before they went home.

In July 1949 in the middle of the Berlin air lift crisis that the US Air Force announced that two American Medium Bomber groups were flying to bases in England "for a short period of temporary duty". By 1952 the base at Mildenhall was described as an "untidy and rambling oases of the American Way of Life. A huge and vulgar military anachronism set in the wild and monotonous Suffolk countryside. They have their own library (whose facilities can today show ours a thing or two!), grocery stores and barbers shops, their canteen or P.X. complete with flashy murals and a juke box"

But the G.I.'s longed to get away. "Educational Transport", known as the 'passion wagon' brought them to Cambridge. They flocked to pubs such as the Baron of Beef or Pickerel where - in 1952 - American style cocktail bars, recorded music and attractive barmaids were provided.

One American told a reporter "Sure I like Cambridge. You can always get a woman here if you want one, and give her a meal. When I see a pretty girl I take her round the waist and say 'Hi, baby, how's your life?' and by that time she likes me too much to go away". Another was feeling low "Because of one of your undergraduates I met in a pub invited me up to his room

and I lost £15 playing him poker! And after that do you know, he pinched my girl. She didn't want me after she found I hadn't got any money"

All that was 45 years ago, perhaps things have changed - but do you have MEMORIES OF THE AMERICANS, at war or peace - write to Mike Petty at the News

READERS WRITE

Robert Thurley of Cambridge writes:

"The other day I was looking at an old copy of the C.E.N. when I spotted a paragraph about the local character "Spiv". Many of us oldies well remember him, especially the older sporting fraternity. He used to traverse Parker's Piece with his oval wicker basket dispensing chocolate and sweets, always with a great deal of humour"

Rita Williams from Cambridge writes:

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Memories of the county in wartime will be stirred by a new publication, "Cambridgeshire's airfields in the second world war" by Graham Smith (Countryside books, 11.95). From Alconbury to Wyton there are details of raids and characters, both RAF and USAAF and of the civilians who lived and farmed beneath the shadows of their wings

MEMORIES, by Mike Petty, 4th December 1997

SAME OLD NEWS

The announcement that the old Festival Theatre in Newmarket Road, Cambridge may be converted for use by the Cambridge Buddhists indicates a change of use for the building first constructed as the Theatre Royal.

But it has had similar use in the past. Build in 1814 it was used for 63 years as a theatre, seeing visits by most of the leading actors of the day. In May 1875 the Theatre was hired for a month to stage the mission of American evangelist D.E. Moody. This led to the establishment of a Ragged School in New Street which functioned for some years. By 1878 the Theatre was disused and sold by auction. It was bought by Mr Robert Sayle for £1875, but when he learned that a number of University students had hoped to obtain it for a Mission Hall and had collected £1650 for that purpose he sold them the building at that price requesting that the £225 extra he had paid should be considered his subscription towards their welfare work.

Posters were set up all over town announcing that the Theatre Royal, Barnwell, would reopen under entirely new management. When the audience arrived they found that instead of a play they were offered a prayer meeting. Various speakers expressed satisfaction that the building had been converted from a house of the Devil to a house of God.

The stage had been cleared of scenery and scriptural texts had been placed in from of the boxes and about the building.

The Mission flourished, attracting many young people who might otherwise have been walking the streets with nothing to do. It closed in 1920 and six years later the building was converted back to a theatre and renamed the Festival. This had a successful period, a period of decline and, most recently a period of disuse. Now it appears it may have a new role, catering for yet another audience

One person who knew the area at that time was Ida Redhouse, then Ida Everett, who has written to me from Maxey near Peterborough, with her memories and a photograph of her sister.

Ida was born in Walnut Tree Avenue, Cambridge 95 years ago. The Avenue used to run from the River to Newmarket Road & was demolished when Elizabeth Bridge was developed. She attended the Occupation Road Infants' School from 1907 to 1911 but encloses a battered old school group picture of an ever earlier period. Taken in 1888 it shows her sister Blanche in the front row. Ida herself remembers teachers Kate, Florrie and Nellie, besides Miss Beamiss who was very formidable. Florrie was the daughter of Wards the bakers of Newmarket Road

Yet more memories have come from Archie Rickwood, now of 29 Alton Gardens, Southend who recalls the back streets of Cambridge and seeing women wearing men's caps coming from the "Jug and Bottle" department of pubs with giant jugs of beer. But he himself grew up in Ely, where his grandfather started a shop called the "Old Curiosity Shop" selling curios and antiques to visitors.

Archie's father was lessee of the Ely markets and fairs and the lad got to know some of the characters who traded from them. One sold cough medicine and would start by talking in a cracked, croaky voice "My name is Percy Gasines. I have attended this and other markets for thirty two years bringing the benefit of my wide experience to you, the people. This mixture - a physic but a veritable elixir and aphrodisiac. I can only show you in the short time available for me the wonderful effect it has upon throat and voice". He would then take a dessert spoonful of the labelled bottle and having swallowed it would speak in a resounding bass baritone to further extol the virtues of the liquid which he would sell by knocking it down from £1 a bottle to not 15 shillings, not 10 shillings, nor five shilling but half a crown a bottle. Having quickly sold out he would be found in the bar of the Woolpack to prepare for a similar performance when the speech was just that little bit slurred

Archie attended Ely Cathedral Choir School where discipline was strict with "lock up" times which meant they had to be indoors by seven in winter. In cold months naughty choristers used to urinate on the mammoth "Turtle" coke heating stoves in the cathedral, which produced a diabolical aroma (a good trick too for the exhaust pipe of the engine which operated the generator at the cinema). The headmaster in those days had been a Chaplain in the Guards and was dead nuts on high standards from the "snivelling little guttersnipes" under his charge.

Perhaps that had an impact on Archie for he later served in the Grenadier Guards before joining Southend Police - and becoming part of their Police Singers. Now he has produced his "Memories of an ordinary man" which he sells for £10.00

READERS WRITE:

Mr E. Gray from Littleport writes: "I am 85 years old. We farmed near the Hundred Foot Bank at Welney and had to take the cattle and horses over the Suspension Bridge and across the Washes. If we had hay season on the Washes we bailed the hay and carted it to where some ropes which were strung across the river; using pulleys we hauled the bails across the river and down to the farm on the other side of the bank at Mr Wilken's Pymoor Hill Farm. Believe me it was some job!"

Dennis Poulter asks if you can help him with some research into wartime Pie clubs. These were arranged to supplement the rations of agricultural workers gathering in the harvest and were organised by the Women's Voluntary Service. Delivering food direct to the field meant that time was saved and workers fed with minimum disruption and loss of working hours. Do you recall the scheme?

Roger Cowern of Oadby, Leicestershire is researching wartime German espionage penetration of Britain. He is seeking further details of the Dutchman, Jan Willen Ter Braak who was found dead in an air raid shelter near Christ's Pieces, Cambridge. In his rooms was found a radio transmitter - but was it tuned to Germany, or Russia?

IF YOU REMEMBER THIS OR OTHER SPY STORIES WRITE TO MIKE PETTY AT THE NEWS

MEMORIES, 11th December 1997 by Mike Petty

Mention of Mormon missionaries in the fens in the 1850s ("Memories" 27 NGV) have been amplified by Margaret Oldfield of Whittlesey, near Peterborough

During her family researches she has discovered a journal kept by Elizabeth Lidia Fovargue who was baptised at Doddington church in September 1828. When she was 18 years old Lidia visited the bar-room of a local public house to hear a new form of preacher, Elder Cope, one of the Latterday Saints.

Although the young girl was quickly converted she found her parents ardently opposed but, defying them, attended the meetings regularly. When in June 1850 she was baptized by John Wayman in Mr Blenches pond her parents were furious and turned her out of the house so she found work at March, then moved to London. The agonies of her family can only be imagined, though Lidia records that when she finally let them know of her whereabouts they fell into a rage, begging her to return.

Instead she married another Mormon, James Smith, quietly - inviting none of her friends and only confessing to her family after the event. Picking up her courage she took new husband to meet the fenfolk before returning to Lewisham, giving away their furniture and setting off for Liverpool and the long overland trek to Salt Lake City. It was a life of hardship and children and when her husband died in 1874 she was left with five kiddies, poor health and not a dollar to her name. The promised land was not overflowing with milk and honey.

Mrs Peggy Cowell of Milton has more recent memories of Americans.

She writes: "In 1943 I started school at Chesterton Secondary Modern (as it was then called). In my first year a party was arranged for 50 1st year girls to entertain 50 G.I.s from Duxford - each girl was accompanied by her mother!

The girls and the Americans each picked a name out of a hat. I picked 'her daughter Kitty', so I had to find 'Old Mother Riley'. I found my other half, he hadn't a clue who he was looking for (How many of us would today?). My American's name was Donald M. Shane who was 19 years old and came from Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Don was shy and quiet and said how much he missed home. It was a really good evening and my mother invited Don to come home to tea. He jumped at it and this became more and more regular until we were his home from home and received lovely letters from his mum, dad and sister. She sent me my first pair of nylon stockings (something I had only read about). They were marvellous and lasted for ages and ages. Don really became like a second brother to me.

One of Don's friends invited him to Sheffield on a blind date where he met and fell in love with Gwen, who he brought to meet his second family. They were eventually married and spent their honeymoon at our home in Cambridge.

Don decided to stay on in the Army/Airforce and did tours of duty in Bedfordshire, Germany and Spain. His last posting was in Virginia, USA

I didn't see him any more after he left Europe, but we kept in contact by letter. After 15 years Gwen came back to see her family in Sheffield – and us. I suddenly stood in Cambridge station in fear and trepidation, would we recognise each other, would we get on together. All of a sudden the train pulled in, there she was hanging out of the window calling me – and the 15 years just flew away. She came back every other year and each trip would spend a week with us, one year bringing her daughter Christine.

A year last September I had a phone call from Gwen. I was expecting her to say she would be with us any day - but she was at Heathrow, waiting for her flight home. Don had been taken very ill. He never recovered and died in the October.

Gwen always said to me you never think of Don as he was then - you always see that 19 year-old G.I. and I suppose I did. We shared all their happy times - seen their children and grand children grow up, and them ours. We also shared their sadness when their youngest son was killed in a terrible car crash on the Freeway.

I hope my memories will be of some help to you. I have never put them down on paper"

READERS WRITE

Reg Wood of Saffron Walden remembers the Cambridge Festival Theatre and its Restaurant with facilities for dining on the roof whose very popular head waiter was called Toni.

The Theatre was, he recalls, mostly in green with a series of steps leading up to the stage. The gallery was very dingy with wooden forms covered with leatherette, its entrance down a narrow passage from Wellington Street with wooden stairs. In the latter end of the 1930s it was redecorated and painted red and yellow, but it still retained the dark green curtains. Winston Churchill's daughter Sarah played at the Festival for a short season. She married Vic Oliver the comedian just afterwards.

The last time Reg went to the Festival Theatre was just after the war started to see George Bernard Shaw's "You never can tell". "My girl friends (later my wife) had never seen a Shaw play so we went. Of course buses stopped running after dark in the early part of the war and we couldn't afford a taxi, so we walked back to Chaucer Road where she was living at the time and then I had to walk over Coe Fen to Newnham, where I lived. I doubt if anyone would do it these days. Let's hope the Festival can reopen as a Theatre. It's so much part of the real Cambridge".

MEMORIES 18th December 1997, by Mike Petty

The announcement in the News on 10th December that Cambridge University have agreed to allow Raleigh bicycle company to produce a "University of Cambridge" bicycle range prompted some memories of other local bikes.

Delving back into the material in the Cambridgeshire Collection I have unearthed one or two examples - perhaps you can add more.

John Howes of Regent Street were building boneshakers in 1868 after seeing one in an exhibition in Paris. He started his own "Granta" cycle company in 1890 and by in 1909 was using fittings manufactured by the Birmingham Small Arms Company, thereby enabling them to guarantee absolute reliability for machines ranging in price from 10 guineas to £20. Certainly they were able to quote endorsements from numerous local dignitaries, including the Vice Chancellor of the University, A.W. Streane of Grantchester Vicarage and F.J. Foakes-Jackson of Jesus College who testified that he had bought one of their Granta bicycles in May of 1899 and covered 1,500 trouble free miles by that October.

For those who wanted an easier form of transport Howes offered a Granta Motor Bicycle with a 3 1/2 h.p. motor for 50 guineas.

One of their competitors was G.H. Whitehead of Cottenham with his "Senior Wrangler" cycles offering ladies machines from nine guineas and custom-built trailers to tow behind them. They too could build motor bikes to order. Another were Townsends who made their "Cycleries" bikes in Norfolk Street about 1895.

Robert Taylor of Soham who is said to have been one of the pioneers of the machine. When about 18 years old he had built a tricycle that could be propelled by the rider. Later he came upon a woodcut published in the "Illustrated London News" which depicted a man riding on two wheels. Local folk laughed at the idea but the young man persisted. He made two very light wheels of wood with wooden spokes and an iron rim. Pieces of old iron were fashioned into the main frame - the front fork alone weighing ten pounds. It was completed in 1868 and two years later he rode it to London where it created a sensation.

All that is a long time ago. But it is not so very far back that you could get a bicycle for free in Cambridge. The author Jack Trevor Story recorded in one of his novels how, as a lad in the 1930s, he had left his bike outside a shop, only to find on his return that it had disappeared. But no it hadn't. It had merely crossed the street and changed colour. Jack jumped on and biked off

But it was in October 1993 that Cambridge City Council launched its "Green Bikes" scheme stationing dozens of restored cycles at racks strategically placed around the city.-The idea was that they could be borrowed, ridden and returned. It was a brilliant scheme that half worked. The bikes were borrowed. The mystery is what happened to them. Did you ever see one - do you even have one?

WRITE TO MIKE PETTY at the News with your cycling memories

SPY STORIES

Further details have come to light following the request from Roger Cown of Oadby, Leicestershire for information on wartime German espionage penetration of Britain. Thomas Potts, a junior reporter at the Cambridge Daily News for some of the war years recorded his memories in an article some 20 years ago.

He recalled that there were two German spies based in the Cambridge area between 1940 and 1941. One was a Finn, Caroli, who landed by parachute north of Oxford in September 1940 and was arrested by the British within a few hours. He escaped in January 1941 and set out for Germany on a motor bike. He got as far as Ely when the bike let him down and he was recaptured. The Germans were allowed to know that Caroli's radio transmitter was at Cambridge railway station left-luggage office. They send another spy to collect it (unfortunately for them he was actually working for the British)

But, apparently unknown to the British, there was another spy working in Cambridge. His name was Jan Ter Braak and he too was thought to have parachuted in. He got himself an

office in Rose Crescent where he could be heard tapping away at night. His radio was equipped with a Morse key but the neighbours thought he was using a typewriter - which would have accorded with his cover as a Free Dutch journalist.

There is even a claim that he arranged for an air raid to be launched on Cambridge on 25th February 1941. By now people were suspicious and his lodgings in St Barnabas Road were raided by police. Knowing the game was up he shot himself in an air raid shelter on Christ's Pieces. Or did he?

There must be more to be learned about wartime spies in Cambridgeshire, of people who dropped in by parachute and were rounded up before they could do mischief. Can you add to the story?

READERS WRITE

Flight Sergeant Frank Raeman from Belgium seeks your help in tracing the friends or family of the late Flying Officer Michael Donaldson who was shot down by Luftwaffe fighters whilst escorting Mitchell bombers to the power station in Langerbrugge in Belgium on 10th June 1943.

If you can help write to Mike Petty and I will forward your letter

MEMORIES, 24th December 1997 by Mike Petty

Christmas day in the workhouse - the traditional images of Victorian times are conjured up at this time of year.

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So how was it celebrated in the area just 100 years ago?

1897 was a white Christmas. Frost which had set in Christmas Eve ensured that and on the great day itself there was skating to be enjoyed on the specially flooded meadows at Grantchester. But on Boxing Day the thaw set in and proposed skating matches at Littleport had to be abandoned.

For those in Cambridge workhouse, Mill Road, festivities started early on Christmas morning with the receipt of a Christmas letter and, following service in the chapel, the noon-day dinner was served in the dining hall with an abundant supply of roast pork, beef, mutton and plum pudding. In the afternoon inmates received gifts of tobacco, snuff, tea, cake, oranges, sweets and beer and when tea time came they were regaled with half a pound of plum cake. In 1897 there was a Christmas tree for the children, strewn with gifts, admirably decorated by Miss Hosegood. Other decorations adorned the chapel, dining hall and sick wards. When it was all combined with a visit from the Mayor all agreed it had been the brightest day of the year.

Just along the road at Chesterton the poor were allowed the treat of leaving the Workhouse to attend Christmas service in church or chapel before returning to a meal of equal splendour to their Cambridge neighbours. Following a bread-and-butter tea inmates adjourned to the Girls' school which had been set up as a concert room and where an amusing farce "Petticoat Perfidy" was performed by the Misses Cullum and Mrs M. Marshall.

Out at Newmarket the regulation workhouse meals were replaced for the day by an abundance of seasonable fare. During the morning there was a distribution of gifts including tobacco and snuff and packets of tea with 3d bits in them. In the afternoon the Master's organette was brought into action and the day concluded with songs and recitations by the children, "musical chairs" and other games and dancing.

There were gifts for inmates - scarves and cuffs for the boys and girls donated by Mrs John Hammond, motto-cards to hang by the beds of those in hospital wards from Miss Seaber, woollen wraps for the old women from Mrs Payne, hoops and skipping ropes from Mrs Westley and of course an abundance of oranges, tea, snuff and tobacco

Twenty-five years later, 1922, saw things had changed somewhat. The weather then was windy and showery, discouraging people from venturing from in front of their fire - though for those who had the inclination there was football to be watched at Cambridge Town Football Club on Christmas day, with even an excursion train to take dedicated fans down to London to watch Tottenham Hotspurs. And there was the traditional Christmas day swim for those hardy souls willing to brave the water.

Mill Road workhouse had been transformed with paper flowers, Chinese lanterns and fairy lights decorating the main parts of the building. On Christmas Eve the children hung up their stockings and found next morning that Santa had not forgotten to call. There were sausages for breakfast, cakes for tea and a dinner-time menu which echoed that of 25 years before. In the Children's home, Ross Street, Cambridge, the 21 children indulged themselves in making a noise. The wail of trumpets, the squeak of whistles and the grunt of mouth-organs came from everywhere at once. It was somewhat quieter in the Cambridge Church Army Home, Willow Walk, where the men passed their time singing, playing round games, chess, dominoes and draughts - after the traditional Christmas dinner of roast pork and plum pudding.

As for the children at Addenbrooke's Hospital they found their wards decorated with balloons, fairy lights, holly and mistletoe. Excitement knew no bounds when Father Christmas himself arrived - though not by chimney, not by door, but by window. Then there were the other wards, whose names will evoke memories for many.

Griffith Ward had horse-shoes as symbols of good luck. In Hatton Ward a large stethoscope hung in the centre of the room along with rows of Chinese lanterns and even a miniature artificial lake. Then there were Victoria and Albert Wards, Hope and Coliglon - where Dr Searle, dressed as Father Christmas carved the turkey and Dr Scales and his daughters provided the music.

One is missing. The one that was a long way to go, where black cats and red lights were the distinctive decorative features that Christmas. Beside the fireside sat a full-size figure of a witch and on the piano was a wonderful pussy which lit up at night. Many will not need to be reminded that this ward was Tipperary.

Do you have memories of Christmas in hospital or infirmary? What presents did you find under your Christmas tree, or in the toes of your stockings? Why not sit down after the turkey and write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories 1998 in one sequence

Memories, 1st January 1998, by Mike Petty

Seventy-five years ago as the Old Year 1922 made way to the New Year 1923 some seven hundred people made their way to Parker's Piece in Cambridge to witness the revival of a hundred-old tradition many had feared dead.

The custom dated back to 1820 when Isaiah Deck, a chemist on King's Parade, having supped

with some friends, crossed the street to the space in front of King's college gate just before midnight and, on the stroke of twelve, let off a rocket, after which the party drank each other's health in punch.

It became a regular event which was continued by his son Arthur who added to the spectacle in 1853 by using two rockets, one for the Old and one for the New Year.

By 1900 as the new millenium dawned throughout Cambridge all forms of entertainment both public and private stopped. Hundreds of people headed for Kings Parade and as the Nineteenth-century got into its last quarter of an hour the crowd in front of Deck's the chemist grew even larger. Finally the door opened and the hero of the hour emerged.

Alderman Arthur Deck was one of the grand old men of Cambridge. He had been a town councillor for nearly 50 years, he was and an enthusiastic balloonist - but most importantly he was the Rocket Man.

As King's clock struck the first chime of midnight a rocket whizzed up into the night sky and everybody waited for the distant explosion and the pretty coloured lights that would follow. Then before the clock had finished striking up went the second. The Twentieth Century had now officially arrived in Cambridge. It was welcomed with much shaking of hands and exchanging of good wishes, with the singing of Auld Lang Syne and rousing cheers.

Then all adjourned to Deck's back parlour where steaming punch was ladled out with unsparing hand and the Alderman's health was drunk time and time again.

Arthur Deck saw the start of 1908, but not its conclusion; his rockets continued until 1913, then Dora - the Defence of the Realm Act - forbade them for the duration of the First World War.

In December 1919 those Cambridge people looking forward to a general return to pre-war conditions at the festive season were disappointed to learn that there would be no rockets to signal the New Year. Mr Deck junior explained that sometimes the rocket sticks had caused damage when they fell and - perhaps more significantly - the crowd had been rowdy - things not to be tolerated in those days. So he had decided that his father's custom must not be his. It seems a pity said the paper - "There are many loses we could submit to with less regret than the loss of the rockets and the abandonment of a celebration which was based on good fellowship". It was the end of a chapter, but not the end of the story.

In 1922 the custom was revived in response to continued pressure. But it was thought no longer safe to use Kings Parade for the launch and the ceremony transferred to Parkers Piece. Midnight found a thousand people assembled to watch the rockets which were set up opposite Regent Terrace

A minute before twelve there was a whiz and 1922 was borne away in a shower of sparks and coloured light. For a space there was silence, then on the stroke of twelve from the Catholic Church - whiz and 1923 had come.

As the smoke cleared away somebody started playing "Auld Lang Syne" on a cornet, spectators took up the words and the rousing strains of the song echoed into the night. It was followed by the National Anthem and everybody went home, or back to their parties, confident that the New Year had been properly launched.

But it was not quite the same, numbers dropped off and people found other attractions in the town on New Years Eve. So it was that 1929 arrived underrated by any rockets and one of the most celebrated of Cambridge customs fizzled out.

Perhaps it could be resurrected in time for the next New Century

READERS WRITE:

Helen Seeley of Cambridge writes : "I was looking through an old Jarrold's Pictorial Series book on Cambridge and was interested to see that there were iron railings round King's College, presumably taken down for the war effort in the Second World War"

In fact the heavy railings in front of King's - identical to those which still stand around the Senate House - were removed in 1927 as part of a plan to improve the appearance of the area. They were replaced with lighter railings until a low wall in memory of the Rev Septimus Philpotts was erected in 1932. During the Second war various Cambridge railings were removed and melted down though an exemption was granted to more historic ones

Memories 8th January 1998 by Mike Petty

LOOKING back on the stories of January 1973, I find that one of the items in the news was beef.

In those days it was not BSE, nor the safety of beef on the bone, but the price being demanded by butchers and others.

Cambridge housewives had been warned in May 1972 of steep prices in meat prices because of increasing prices in wholesale markets. Mr A.C. Finbow, area manager of J.H. Dewhurst, who had 10 city branches, said rump steak would probably have to go up from the present 75p per pound to 78p.

By January 6, 1973 the rising price of beef was again hitting the headlines, though one supermarket was keeping the price down to 94p a lb for home-produced rump steak. Argentine rump steaks were around 65p a lb, with topside at 45p against English topside at 60p a lb.

Roger Purvey, the Tesco manager, thought that prices had to ease off. "People are buying more lamb instead of beef."

Housewives were indeed resisting the increases which it was claimed were due to a reduced supply of home-killed beef, declining supplies from Ireland and the increased pull of the continental market.

But nobody was quite sure, so Ted Heath's Government had set up an inquiry to discover just what was pushing the prices so high.

Now the restrictions on the sale of beef on the bone have added to the problems and people say that meat does not taste like it used to.

Old photographs show vast amounts of meat hanging up outside butchers' shops during the Christmas period.

In 1904 one correspondent to the Cambridge newspapers recalled how Cambridge used to have a show night when almost everyone went out into the streets to see how the shopkeepers had striven to make the best possible display of their wares.

Above all the butchers and poulterers' exhibited huge quantities of the carcasses of prime beef and poultry. But in their endeavours to outdo one another the butchers killed more meat than they could sell and losses eventually caused Show Night to be abandoned.

There was another consideration - some people regarded the exhibition of so many carcasses as barbarous and "unworthy of 19-century civilisation".

But other photographs, such as those of Burwell taken by Dorothy Grainger, showed the custom continued. Ken Isaacson of Soham has recorded in his *A life in the Meat Trade*", how, in the 1920s, his father would go to the Smithfield Fat Stock Show to buy fat cattle for his Christmas trade - cattle weighing 17 to 18 cwt with backs as wide as old-fashioned kitchen tables.

A day or two later the cattle would arrive at Soham station to be led through the village to the butcher's shop. Here they would be brushed, combed, sprayed with water, bedecked with ribbons and rosettes before they were displayed in front of the shop. Everybody used to turn out to see their Christmas joint on the hoof saying "cut my joint off this one Ernie - about eighteen to twenty pounds of rib and a stone of fat".

It would be slaughtered at the shop and delivered on Christmas Eve either by pony cart or carrier bicycle overloaded with the heads of turkey and geese hanging almost down to the level of the road.

And if grateful customers plied the butcher's boy with mince pies or home made wines then it all made for a merry time - provided the pony at least stayed sober enough to see the road home.

Do you remember Christmas meat displays? Write to Mike Petty at the News

READERS WRITE

AN anonymous correspondent has sent a cutting of the obituary of Eddie Chapman, war-time spy.

Eddie was a successful criminal — until he was caught and found himself imprisoned in Jersey when the Germans invaded the Channel Islands. They suggested he carry out sabotage in Britain and on December 20, 1942, Chapman, codenamed "Fritzchen", was parachuted down near Ely with the mission to blow up the De Havilland factory where the Mosquito fighter-bomber was being built.

Instead he phoned Wisbech police station. Once he had convinced them he was a genuine spy he became a British double agent with many wartime adventures before returning, post-war to his original trade as safe-breaker.

He published *The Eddie Chapman Story*, which was made into a film, appeared on BBC TV's *Underworld* series in 1994 and died in December last year. Any more spy stories welcome.

Memories 15th January 1998

THE headline news of the tornadoes which struck Selsey last week will have brought back memories of the storms which swept across the country in October, 1987.

But there have, of course, been others. Perhaps the greatest storm ever to have hit Cambridge occurred on November 26, 1703, when, according to contemporary chronicles, "Part of King's College Chapel fell down, part of Katharine's Hall's (St Catharine's college) New Chapel was damnified; Fifteen Stacks of chimnies fell down into St John's colledge, without hurting any Body, but Two or Three miraculously escaped. "St Peter's Colledge was much damnify'd, and a Stack of Chimnies fell into the Vice-Chancellor's Chamber, but was so far from hurting that he was not awaken'd by it".

1925 was another year of wild weather, when in February a terrific gale swept the country with Cambridge bearing the brunt of hurricane-force winds, trees were uprooted, shop windows broken, cyclists blown off their bikes and the canvas roof torn off a car driving along Huntingdon Road.

In an incident similar to that echoing that of last week near Barway, a goods shed at Sawston railway station was blown on to the railway track and hit by the London train, which had to stop at Shelford station to remove portions of corrugated iron from the engine. Then it ran into a hut at Trumpington which had been blown across the line.

Just in case history is going to repeat itself further, if 1925 is any guide we can expect exceptionally hot weather in May, with thunderstorms sending giant hailstones which cause great damage, to be followed two days later with a three-hour thunderstorm, with lightning killing cattle and striking the church spire at Buckworth. June had seen temperatures of 82 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade, soaring to 86 degrees in July but combined with 13 days of rain - and more to come in August. The year will then end with exceptional frost and snow in November, though with a thaw by Christmas. You have been warned.

Mention of the various German spies around during the Second World War has prompted Dr Neville Silverston of Cambridge to send me a photograph of the Bottisham and District Home Guard, which was taken in front of Anglesey Abbey.

One of their tasks was to keep watch out for suspicious characters. Their colleagues from Babraham were responsible in June, 1940, for rounding up the crew of a crashed German plane, thought to be among the very first prisoners to have been taken by the Home Guard. By July, 1941, Home Guard activity was hotting up, especially following the arrest of a one-legged man from Chichester who was found with a German wireless transmitting set in his rooms in Victoria Road, Cambridge.

He claimed it had been "liberated" from a crashed German plane which had come down in Sussex. While his trial was awaited (though not, apparently reported due to wartime censorship) there were headlines of the execution at the Tower of London of a German secret service agent who had been dropped by parachute in the Home Counties area. He carried with him a transmitter, a large sum of English money and rations - including a German sausage. His spying activities had been terminated by a Home Guard unit.

Then, one night at the end of July, 1941, a car failed to stop at a Home Guard checkpoint just outside Cambridge.

The sentry on duty cried "Halt, who goes there", then, when that had no effect "Halt or I fire". As the car continued to roar away he took aim.

The bullet passed through the bodywork of the car, through the seat and into the body of the driver, a 23-year old lieutenant in the Army Intelligence Corps. In the passenger seat was a 16-year-old Perse schoolgirl. They had been for a quiet drive in the countryside after a visit to the cinema.

The driver died from a bullet wound in the chest. Now a television company making a documentary about Home Guard activity is seeking to make contact with anybody who can give them further details.

If you can help, please write to Jeremy Williams at Laurel Productions, 116-118 Grafton Road, London, NWS 4BA (0171267 9399).

And, of course, if you have memories of Home Guard activities around here, please share them with Mike Petty at the *News*.

Memories 22nd January 1988

MARJORIE LOUKES of Cherry Hinton seeks help in identifying the location of a painting by her late husband, Donald, some 35 years ago.

The turret in the background looks something like the bandstand on the top of what used to be Laurie and McConnal's in Fitzroy Street.

One who certainly knows the area is 80-year-old Mr H A Palmer, of Cambridge, who has written sharing his memories of the streets around Newmarket Road, Cambridge, where his grandfather, Thomas Thickpenny Cash, had a cobbler's shop, making and repairing boots and shoes for Thressels in Bradwell Court. Behind their business premises, which were between Abbey Church and a newsagents shop, there was an old wooden building which housed two deep wells. There was also a passage running level with the shop between Abbey Street and Coldham's Lane called "Back o' Barnwell". He also remembers a tradition of this time of year - the costermongers' barrow race run on Boxing Day until, I believe, 1912. His Grandfather was the official timekeeper.

Jim Richardson, of Cherry Hinton, has occasion to recall the Christmas of 1944, for he was in Eindhoven, Holland, enduring more than two feet of snow. The next year, however, it was a complete change of location and temperature, for he was on duty with the RAF in India, sweating in heat of 140 degrees in the shade. While there, he was admitted to hospital and awoke one morning to find his locker containing something that had not been there the night before: a little slipper bag containing razor blades, soap, a shaving stick and writing paper. With them was a note: "Don't forget to write home." It was only when one of his mates found a diary they realised it was Christmas Day, and the Ward Sister had prepared little gifts for her patients. Jim always looks back on that present as the best ever. It was not the price or the size that counted, but the thought. That sister was, to him, an angel on earth.

Brian Humphreys, of Mawson Road, Cambridge, is tracking down his family tree. He is seeking a photograph of the Newmarket Volunteer Fire Brigade which included its captain and founder, Robert Simpkin Jacob, who died in April, 1894. Can you help?

Eagle-eyed *News* reader Richard Cox, of Quy, has sent in names of all the members of the Bottisham Home Guard - and also spotted that technological gremlins caused last week's picture to be printed back to front - causing all of Bottisham's defenders to appear improperly dressed, with their caps tilted the wrong way. The names, together with the original picture, by Stearns of Cambridge, will be deposited in the Cambridgeshire Collection.

In July, 1940, the main worries of the Home Guard, then known as the LDV (Local Defence Volunteers or, according to your inclination, Lousy Dirty and Verminous or Look Duck and Vanish) were spies and lights at night. At Dullingham, reports came in that red, green, yellow and other types of light were being shown and so they set out to investigate.

They identified the source of the lights as being from Devil's Ditch between Wood Ditton and Stetchworth and, in conjunction with members of the Regular Army, staked out the area. All remained in ambush, perfectly silent until 4am, when they noticed one of their number was missing. He was eventually found at the bottom of the ditch, having lost his footing and rolled over and over down the slope. Despite his discomfort, he had obeyed orders and maintained perfectly still. His heroism was unrewarded, no spies showed, no lights seen. There is a picture in the Cambridge Antiquarian Society's collection, housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection, of a military installation dug into the Devil's Ditch at Reach. I have heard various accounts of its actual purpose. Can you put the record straight?

Memories 29th January 1998

ON SATURDAY night I joined members of the Thriplow Society for an evening of mystery, music and memories.

The mystery part of the proceedings involved solving two of the cases that confronted Sherlock Holmes in Cambridge. One, *The Missing Three Quarter*, was straightforward enough for Dr Watson does state quite clearly that it took place in and around Cambridge, and the only mystery was if there could be any way to bring Holmes into Thriplow itself.

The second, *The Three Students*, was more problematic as the scandal is so great that Watson declines even to indicate which of the University cities is the venue for the action, although he does assign it a date, and it is possible to place Holmes in Cambridge at that particular time

The musical part of the proceedings was far more entertaining, at least to me, as I'd given the lecture several times before. Village resident David Gibson, dressed in appropriate period garb, delivered a fine rendition of a number of contemporary songs, with the audience joining in the choruses.

Add a fine buffet supper and it made it an evening to add to the memory. Yet such entertainment was once part of normal village life, as Sheila Andrews has recalled in a recent booklet.

In the 1930s very few people had a wireless or wind-up gramophone. But there was the Band of Hope on Monday evenings where young and old joined in, usually with a magic lantern show given by "Uncle David and Aunt Flossie". Then, every other Tuesday, there was the Girls' Guild, where they were taught craft and sewing. On alternate Thursday afternoons the Women's Meeting would hear readings from such works as *Anne of Green Gables*.

Meanwhile, in the Reading Room, the young men of the village would gather for cards and billiards. When you added whist drives and dances, garden fetes and Sunday school treats, it becomes apparent that there were plenty of things to do even in quiet villages in the days before television.

Steps Back in Time, by Sheila Andrews, is available from Shirley Wittering of 24a Middle Street, Thriplow, SG8 7RD for £3 plus 50p postage

- Lorna Delanoy and other enthusiasts at the Farmland Museum, formerly based in her back garden at Haddenham and now ensconced in the more palatial setting of Denny Abbey, have been searching for more than 20 years for a "horse works" This device, working through a series of gears, was adapted to operate such machines as elevators, cake breakers and the like down on the farm, using "horse power" rather than manpower.

A few months ago one was discovered under an elder tree in a farmyard at Sutton, less than two mile away from the old site of the museum. What's more it had been supplied by another nearby firm, Whiting Camps of Wilburton, in the 1920s and not used for more than half a century. With the assistance of museum helpers and a capable tractor driver, the monster machine was lifted and transported to Denny, where it will be restored for when the museum reopens in March.

Now the appeal is on for anybody who has experience of operating a horse works - as well as a very docile horse. If you can help, please phone the Curator of the Farmland Museum on (01223) 860988

- Horsepower of another type is always in the new. As discussions continue to rumble on about Cambridge traffic problems, it is interesting to glance back to a cartoon in the *Cambridge Daily News* c just 50 years ago. Some things, apparently, never change!
- The role of the Willingham Home Guard in apprehending a German spy has been told by Nigel West in the *Telegraph Sunday Magazine* in January 1980.

When Wulf Schmidt jumped from a Heinkel in September 1940, he had a wireless set an instructions to make his way to London. His arrival in the Fens went unnoticed, he buried his parachute spent the night in a hedge and, nursing a bruise ankle, headed towards the sound of a church clock. He stopped on the village green to bathe his ankle in the village pump and continued down the street to find breakfast. At the Connie Mills grocery shop h bought something to eat, before moving on to the newsagent to do what every Fenman does - buy copy of *The Times*. He then found himself escorted by a very obliging local to The Three Tuns where he was introduced to the licensee, who just happened to be commander of the Home Guard unit!

Memories 5th February 1998 by Mike Petty

Recent newspaper stories of the problems over the high speed rail link to the Channel tunnel come just 25 years after Aerospace Minister Michael Heseltine announced the cancellation of the Hover-train project

The project had been launched with great excitement in 1970 and engineers began erecting a number of huge concrete beams on pylons on the only site in the country that was suitable between the two Bedford Rivers at Earith.

Only here could they find the 20-mile straight length they needed to develop the technology that would whisk people at 300mph and put Edinburgh a mere hour away from London. It would be the ideal way to provide a high-speed rail service for the 47-mile link between London and the projected new airport at Maplin.

Conservationists however were appalled. "A monster of steel and concrete will now drive an ugly path along the haunt of snipe and redshank," complained naturalist John Humphreys.

Others thought back to the problems which had faced the early railway pioneers as they laid their metal tracks across the unstable fenland. Their doubts were reinforced in August 1970 when one of the large concrete beams destined to carry the train above the boggy fen collapsed.

Slowly, however, the track grew and the Hovertrain set in place on it. It was to run on a cushion of air produced by powerful fans and propelled by powerful linear motors.

By 1971, the experimental hover-train was in motion, and before Christmas it had reached the staggering speed of 12mph. By the following August they were up to 72 mph and permission was sought to extend the track. By January 1973 speeds were up to 106 mph.

"Faster than a sportscar," commented the *News*, even though this represented only about one third of its proposed full power. The Japanese were expressing interest in this British "Concorde of terra firma". The Government, however, were withholding the funds needed to extend the track beyond its one-mile length

By the end of 1972 local MPs and councils were urging the Government to make a quick decision on the project's future. It came in mid-February 1973 - it was to be scrapped and parts sold off to other companies. An arrangement had been made with Hawker Siddeley to develop the linear motor and British Rail had agreed to continue development of the magnetic suspension system.

The decision brought uproar in Parliament with complaints of short-sightedness, lack of initiative and incompetence.

Workers of Tracked Hovercraft, the company which had been set up in 1967 to develop this innovative new technology, were bundled out of their Ditton Walk offices in Cambridge within 36 hours of the announcement of the cancellation.

But not everyone was upset, for the Earith site was dismantled and the fens went back to their isolated peace.

With the approach of the Millennium, many communities are planning ways in which they can commemorate the event and leave some lasting record of their area.

Now the Open University has produced some suggestions for those considering the options. Some of them require detailed research in county record offices in an attempt to reconstruct the life and times of 1851, others encourage the more elderly members of the community to record their memories of childhood in the 1930s. However, there is another suggestion which will, in fact, fill a much larger gap in the story of the county.

Many homes will include a beaker, mug, newspaper supplement or other souvenir of the Coronation of 1953. Various places even produced their own guides to the celebrations they organised at that time, so that the great day itself could be commemorated.

But there is far less record of life in the community in 1953. The Cambridgeshire county guide gives a glimpse of some villages - how at Thriplow, the Winter Egg Farm had large brooder houses well-filled with chicks and at Litlington pigs from A C Playle's herds of pedigree large black pigs lived out in the open most of the year.

But what was life like for you? Do you have memories of life in the forgotten 1950s? And would you like a copy of the Open University's guide to Millennium projects? Write to Mike Petty at the *News*, Winship Road, Milton, Cambridge, CB4 6PP.

Memories 12th February 1998

Cambridge University students found themselves under the spotlight this week in 1973 with the publication of a report by the University's High Steward, Lord Devlin.

He had been called in after student disturbances in February 1972 when 600 undergraduates had occupied the Old Schools - the University administrative offices - in protest at plans to reform examinations.

This prolonged occupation was followed by the convening of the University's Court of Discipline, held in Cambridge Guildhall, which had to be protected by large numbers of police called in to support the University's Proctors.

It degenerated into a shouting match with obscenities both shouted and spelled out on cards held up in front of the judicial panel. Ten students who were protesting outside the Court were themselves arrested and ended up being fined more than those convicted for the original sittings.

Lord Devlin's report gave advice on how any future demonstrations should be handled and also advocated greater student participation in university government. This report, too, proved controversial and led to further protests and occupation of the Lady Mitchell Hall in Sidgwick Avenue. Smoke canisters and thunder-flashes were let off as counter-demonstrators arrived.

One thousand marched to the Old Schools when the sit-in ended, but when the proposals for a greater student say in University affairs were instituted, they were met with student apathy. The most famous student protest of modern times was in 1970 when 1,000 undergraduates, opposed to a promotion for holidays in Greece being held at the Garden House Hotel, clashed with police who made a truncheon charge against the mob before invoking the Riot Act. At the trial that followed, Judge Melford Stevenson passed deterrent sentences of between five and 18 months in prison on six students.

In Victorian times things could be different - as a story from February 21, 1898, illustrates. The ending of the Lent bumping races was an excuse for a celebration at Emmanuel College. Students bombarded the college facade with fireworks, then they set out to start a bonfire. Raiding the college rooms, they broke down doors which were flung on the blaze. The remainder of the woodwork soon followed, to be supplemented by anything else which would burn.

Around the bonfire, the wild spirits performed a war dance while a number of men clad in evening dress leapt through the flames and smoke. The excesses continued until midnight. But this was not a riot, merely the young gentlemen having a fling - boys will be boys, you know.

FREQUENT victims of student excess were the drivers of hansom cabs. Indeed the original "Chariot of Fire" was one of these horse-drawn cabs which was commandeered by students who then set it on fire, leaving the terrified horse to gallop round Market Hill pulling the blazing vehicle behind it.

Although the cabmen were always compensated for their loss, their lives could often be hard. In various towns there were cabmen's shelters so they could keep warm while waiting for their fares. One of these has been discovered and renovated at Hitchin but I believe there may have been one behind the old Guildhall in Cambridge. Does anybody remember it? Were there others in the area? If you know please write to me, Mike Petty, at the *News*.

A television programme this week will be examining the life and times of Oswald Mosley and his black shirts during the 1930s. Mosley visited Cambridge on various occasions. Do you remember the Fascist rallies and the counter-demonstrations? If so please write to me with your memories.

Reg Wood from Saffron Walden, however, recalls more peaceful pursuits. He lived in Bourn from 1916 to 1932. In that village they had a Reading Room and the Victoria Rooms. Then, in 1922, villagers got together and bought an ex-Army hospital hut which they erected in Caxton End. It provided a home for the Men's Club with billiards, cards and newspapers. The most popular events were social evenings organised by the local Labour Party, which engaged a band and visiting artistes from Cambridge including Brian Stubbings and George Papworth and then* marionettes.

The big event of the year was the village feast when C. Manning's Fair visited Bourn with roundabouts, swings, coconut shies and a rock stall. During the Second World War part of the hut was used as a factory with a weekly cinema show in the other half. Like Sheila Andrews from Thriplow (*Memories, January 29*) Reg, also recalls the visits from Uncle David and Aunt Flossie with their magic lantern shows.

They obviously made a big impact on village life.

Memories 19th February 1998, by Mike Petty

ENOCH POWELL, who died recently, and Oswald Mosley, the subject of revived interest because of a television drama, both shared the same platform at Cambridge - albeit at different times. For, like thousands of others they addressed various meetings at the Cambridge Union Society.

Enoch Powell spoke there in 1979 in a debate which also featured Edward Heath and David Steel. Mosley was there in April, 1960, speaking to the University's Conservative Association - and had a jelly slapped in his face by a demonstrating undergraduate.

More serious opposition had occurred at a meeting of the University Labour Club at the Cambridge Guildhall in May, 1927, when, as Labour MP for Smethwick, Mosley had been howled down by some 300 undergraduates.

Even the chairman, Dr Alex Wood, found some difficulty making himself heard in a meeting billed as debating the Trades Union Bill. The room was packed with supporters of the Conservative Party, dismissed by Mosley as "a lot of congenital worms". When challenged to "go to Moscow", Mosley replied: "I am not taking my orders either from Moscow or Rome, but from the British working-class". The meeting broke up in uproar and the whiff of stink bombs as Mosley succeeded in making his escape from a group determined to "rag" him and the contingent of police at the back of the hall had difficulty in containing a noisy, but not vicious gathering. It was all reported fully in the *Cambridge Daily News*.

However, when Mosley returned to Cambridge in March, 1935, to dine at the University Arms he was met by demonstrators from the University Socialist Society and Labour Club. An anti-Fascist demonstration was held on Parker's Piece with speeches by John Cornford and Maurice Dobb among others. They had the support of the representatives of the Cambridge Labour, Communist and Anti-war parties.

The rally was followed by a torchlight parade of some 200 demonstrators who round the gates across the entrance to the hotel closed and several police lined up before them.

In October, 1936, Mosley was expected back for the dinner of the Cambridge University branch of the British Union of Fascists and National Socialists at the Dorothy Cafe. Concern about disruption prompted the university proctors to issue a strong warning to undergraduates to stay away and police mounted an elaborate operation with officers positioned in adjoining shop doorways and plain-clothes officers patrolling the streets.

The evening passed off without incident. Mosley himself was not able to be present. He sent instead the director of propaganda of the British Union of Fascists, a certain William Joyce, later to become known in Cambridge and elsewhere as Hitler's "Lord Haw Haw", whose radio broadcasts, *Germany Calling*, were intended to spread alarm among the Allies during the Second World War.

Throughout the war, people who tuned in to Haw Haw's broadcasts were horrified to hear local places and activities reported, wondering: "How did he know that?" Newspapers were restricted in what they could report in an effort to prevent information reaching the enemy. Thus it seems perhaps odd that at the end of May, 1944, the *Cambridge Daily News* was reporting in considerable detail the dedication of a new Military Cemetery at Madingley. It told how high-ranking officers of the American and British armies were present along with representatives of the town and university, British Legion and WVS.

The cemetery, set on the brow of a hill with typical English rural background, was profusely decorated with flowers for the ceremony.

Between the rows of simple white crosses were planted scores of little flags - Union flags and Stars and Stripes. Centrepiece of the service was a small grass mound from which flew the American flag, for this was a homage to the American heroes of the war - those who had fought and died.

General Eisenhower, Allied Com-mander-in-Chief, issued an Order of the Day stressing how "We of the United Nations must live and work together to win back a better world, secure and free for all men everywhere".

A flight of three Flying Fortresses flew over, on their way back to local bases, the roar of their engines drowning the words of the chaplain and even during the Silence which followed the dedication the drone of planes could be heard.

Yet while all this was happening the main news story was not the dedication of a cemetery but the impending invasion of Europe.

The main activity was not in East Anglia, but on the south coast of England, where men waited in invasion barges for D-Day. Was it, I wonder, a deliberate ploy to get people looking the wrong way and give the invaders the best possible chance of secrecy, diverting the prying eyes of Haw Haw and his sympathisers?

In early March, 1948, Madingley cemetery was again in the news. Then it was being closed while hundreds of bodies were exhumed to be returned to the United States and hundreds more transferred in from other American cemeteries, then being closed.

Later it reopened and was rededicated, one of the most beautiful parts of England, a foreign field forever America.

Memories 26th February 1998

Recently I joined members of Addenbrooke's Trust "Empress pub group" for one of their regular lunches where Ted Cash reminisced about the Newmarket Road area of Cambridge, which has known for over 80 years.

He was able to recite the names of the 14 pubs which once served the needs of the local residents with landlords like Charlie Swan who would ensure that none of his customers went without a Christmas dinner, and Tom Griffiths on the corner of Abbey Street, who sported a big silver winkie in his bar, into which the blasphemer needed to place a coin.

Ted's father, More Thickpenny Cash was a shoemaker and his grandfather, Isaac, made bricks by hand at the brick company in Coldham's Lane. Together they had an important claim to a place in Cambridge's history as organisers of the Boxing Day costerrnongers barrow race from East Road corner to the Bottisham Swan and back. This flourished at the turn of the century and continued until 1913.

While the public house provided companionship and good cheer, other people found the same qualities at meetings organised by the Band of Hope Union. Details continue to come in of "Uncle David and Aunt Flossie" who toured village and town chapels with their lantern slides and electric moving pictures during the 1930s.

Ted Austin of Over remembers seeing them at the Ebenezer Strict Baptist Church in Cottenham, where his father was minister, and Peggy Day from Quy recalls how she herself featured on one of Uncle David's films. Apparently he used also to intersperse his lectures with pictures he had taken of people then in the audience. If you remember seeing them I would like to hear from you.

Another side of Cambridge life, which has been raised by one or two correspondents, including Mr G Murfett of Cliveden Close, was the Castle Soap Company just off New Street, between East Road and Coldham's Lane. It was established in the 1870's to make tallow candles and the manufacture of household bar soaps was a natural extension. By 1907 the yellow, primrose and mottled bars of soap were being despatched to all parts of the country. The *Cambridge Express* in January that year described how animal fats were chopped up, boiled in large coppers, cooled and shaped. The company produced various varieties of its product perfuming it with mimosa, sweet violets and Otto of roses while their "Ovaltine and Vaseline" brand was a favourite speciality

The Factory was a self-contained industry, providing work for the local residents and employed carpenters to make the packing cases and boxes. It installed its own water supply from an artesian well and had invented ways to recycle the glycerine which would otherwise be washed down the drains. Such was the purity of their product that, in 1902, the Queen broke the usual rules to accept a gift of the Castle Soap Company's product.

All this was precisely the sort of thing the late Enid Porter would have known all about and now her contribution to the appreciation of the folk lore of Cambridgeshire is being researched for a new book.

Enid was appointed to the Cambridge Folk Museum in 1947 and in many minds the two became synonymous. Enid was the museum, the museum was Enid. She provided a human face to what otherwise might have been an obscure institution, and people need a face they can relate to. For it is often the family's treasured possession they are giving away, they need to feel it is appreciated and cared for. Enid journeyed into the fens to collect memories which she ensured were published in books such as *Tales from the Fens*, and wrote over 70 articles - on barges, witchcraft and woad - as well as her books with their cures for lumbago, rhymes and rags. She shared her knowledge through lectures in village or backstreet halls and people flocked to the Guildhall for the annual meeting of the museum, mainly to listen to Enid afterwards.

Enid Porter had an honours degree in modern languages, had post-graduate teacher training, was awarded honorary degrees from the Open University and the University of Cambridge. She was an expert. Yet she was also prepared to clean the museum windows, to run the museum single-handed on a pittance of a budget.

She would sit in her small office with its electric fire and chat to visitors, learning things that would otherwise have been lost. The most valuable members of society, she said in 1968, are people in their 70s and 80s, we have so much to learn from them.

Having just returned from speaking to Trumpington Over-Sixties this is a sentiment I can endorse completely. Now we need your memories of Enid Porter.

Write to me at the *News* and I will pass them on.

- Thanks are forthcoming from Lorna Delanoy on behalf of the Farmland Museum at Denny Abbey. Following her appeal for anybody recalling horse works (*Memories*, January 29) she has been contacted by various people able to help.
- If you need help with a project, contact Mike Petty at the *News*.

Memories 5th March 1998

KATHLEEN Skin has written to me of her memories of schooldays 65 years ago at Haslingfield Endowed School:

One morning I passed a threshing machine in a field, surrounded by groups of men with their dogs, holding cudgels of various kinds to kill rats, mice or rabbits which were fleeing from the stacks being threshed.

One man came up to me, his terrier on a rope in one hand, and the other was a closed fist. 'Put your hand up. Gal,' he said, so I held out my left hand and into it he put a fistful of baby mice, pink, blind, and squirming, I think he thought I was going to drop them or yell, but in that he was disappointed.

"Ooh," I said, "aren't they dear little things," and I put them carefully into the deep pockets of my dress.

Then I hastened off to school where all the pupils were already in the hall for assembly, being introduced to a gorgeous looking, smartly dressed student on teaching practice from Homerton College.

We were soon seated in our desks and we eyed her up and down as we were introduced to her individually. We did not exactly touch our forelocks but, as we smiled, bowed or gave little curtsies, we each vowed in our hearts to do our best to please this vision from the big town who had deigned to descend to the depths in order to teach us clodhoppers.

All went well during the first lesson, arithmetic, and as we began written work she stood behind us, wafting delicious waves of perfume.

The headmaster, Eric Cole, who lived just across the playground, decided to have his tea early, leaving the student in charge. She then sat at his desk, trying to match up the names in the register with the children.

Just then I felt a movement in my pocket and remembered my forlorn little babies. Tenderly, I took them out, one by one. I lay them in the palm of my left hand. Ugly they were really, but pathetic and wriggly.

A voice broke into my reverie, it was a strong, fierce voice. "Girl in the green dress." I looked up. "Yes, you. Come here with whatever you are playing with."

I closed my hand over the squirming babies. The class stopped working in expectation of something interesting developing.

"Come along, quickly. At once." I slowly stood up, then waited meekly in front of her desk. She stood up holding out a hand.

"Now give me what you are holding," she ordered. I hesitated. Her hand was clean, and manicured.

"Please Miss, I don't think you will like it," I faltered.

"Don't be impudent. Give it to me at once," she said. All eyes were on me as I opened my hand, depositing my precious cargo on to her open palm.

I was not prepared for the reaction. She let out a scream like a demented steam train whistle, over and over again as she flung my blind babies to all corners of the room. She jumped up and down, crying and laughing together, screaming and gasping.

We were thunderstruck. Never had we seen such a performance of hysterics. The next door teacher entered the room; she took in the situation at a glance. A child was sent to fetch the headmaster.

In the meantime I had collected my dead and dying infants in my handkerchief, helped by my classmates crawling under the desks to retrieve those they could see. The headmaster raced into the classroom. He took the sobbing student back to his house and returned. He had not been able to get any sense from her, so he asked for an explanation.

All the class pointed to me. I stood before him, telling him everything.

"I told her she wouldn't like it and she said I was impudent," I said. "Is that so?" he asked the class. "Yes Sir," they answered in unison.

"Show me" he said to me, which I did, but the babies were still and dead. Then he kindly took off the lid of the chalk box, lined it with a piece of pastel paper, and told me to place the little corpses inside, I could bury them in my own little garden plot across the playground in the lunch hour, he suggested

"However, I must punish you" he concluded, looking for his cane, "for misbehaving directly my back was turned and for upsetting a visiting lady."

Caning girls was a rare occurrence, so I felt I had been extremely wicked to deserve this punishment. The headmaster went next door to ask the teacher there to witness the punishment and set to work.

"Put your hand straight out," commanded. I looked into his face, my hand outstretched, palm uppermost. To my surprise he winked, his mouth was twitching, his eye watering. I was not slow on the uptake, so I understood each other — play-acting.

He jumped as if to give a resounding thwack the class and the next door teacher gasped audibly. The cane came down, but the sound was worse than the pain.

"Now the other hand," he said. I oblige Again the leap in the air. As he was six feet tall it must have been horrendous to the watcher. The next door teacher covered her face. But I trusted him. Once more the cane came down with a convincing sound.

His face was quite contorted with trying to look angry, but his eyes were twinkling. I put my hands under the opposite armpits as if in agony.

He made me stand with my back to the class facing the wall. Then he took the other teacher into the girls' cloakroom on the other side of the wall.

"Oh Kath, aren't you brave," said my be: friend. "Show us your marks," but I wouldn't doubting there were any. Then I heard gales of laughter from the other side of the wall, uncontrolled hoots of 'Ha, Ha, Ha!'

Meanwhile, both classes were becoming out of control. When the bell was rung for playtime everyone rushed for the door.

The girls' cloakroom was inundated by children, and the headmaster and the next door teacher emerged looking as if they had been crying. They went into the headmaster's house

We did not see the student teacher again. Homerton sent no more students on teaching practice to Haslingfield. Perhaps teaching in the rural areas held too many pitfalls!

Memories 12th March 1998 by Mike Petty

DOREEN PHILCOX of Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich, writes: "Your name was suggested as the person most likely to assist me in my quest for interesting things about Cambridge in 1948, the year the National Health Service was introduced.

"What is less widely known is that my friend and I, at the tender age of 17-and-three-quarter-years, left our respective homes in Cromer at Yarmouth to help launch the NHS at Addenbrooke's Hospital - with one or two other student nurses, you understand!

"I have been trying to recollect aspects of life as we knew it then. Rationing was still on, the New Look was in vogue and shoes had platform soles and ankle straps.

"Although we did not realise it at the time, some of the undergraduate and postgraduate students were older than average, having returned from wartime experiences to either commerce or resume their studies.

"So, do you think you can help me to discover some articles or pictures which might illustrate the time and be of interest to a younger acquaintances, who would find it all historical, and possibly hysterical, as well?

"My maiden name was Mills (nicknamed Freddie) my friend is Pamela Corbett (nee Vincent). We started our nurse-training in September 1948 and resided at Owlstone Croft during the preliminary training period."

I have written to Doreen with various suggestions, but if anyone can add to their memories of student nursing 50 years ago I should be happy to pass it on.

• Recollections of a more recent period have come from Martin Booth of Cambridge :

"I was very interested to read your account of the student protests of February 1973 (*Memories*, February 12), since I was an active participant in both the occupation of part of the Sidgwick Avenue site and of the thousand-strong demonstration to the Old Schools which was the culmination of the campaign for a greater say by students in university affairs.

"However, I must take issue with your contention that the protests resulted only in student apathy.

"In fact, despite the rather airy-fairy nature of some of the demands of the sit-in - calls for alternative universities and the like - the march at the end concentrated on one major demand. This was that the university authorities be made to recognise Cambridge Students Union as a representative body for all Cambridge University students.

"This was regarded by students as very important, as up to then, we had only been represented by college based Junior Common Room committees, which obviously made it easier for the authorities to divide and rule if they so chose.

"It was almost also important for CSU to be recognised, as it was a branch of the National Union of Students, and would therefore bring Cambridge students into a common front with those at other universities all around the country.

"In the event, this demand was realised and CSU became the recognised body representing Cambridge students.

"This marked an important step away from Cambridge being seen as an elitist establishment run along authoritarian lines, and towards it becoming a more modern, mainstream university where young people from ordinary backgrounds could feel at home, with their interests represented by a proper student union.

"In the meantime, I look forward to seeing more memories of those heady days."

Memories 19th March, 1998, by Mike Petty

THE *Memories* postbag has this week spanned most of the century.

Two people have recalled incidents as far back as the First World War.

Mr F C Mansfield, of Cambridge, recalls how, as a four-year-old in 1916, he sat in a window of a shop in King Street and watched mauve-faced German soldiers being taken to their billets in King Street Infant School. The colouring was caused by treatment for a skin disease.

From them he looked back to where his father was framing photographs of Cambridgeshire men called up to fight. Many of those portraits would have been taken by Palmer Clarke and the negatives are now in the Cambridgeshire Collection in the Lion Yard Library, from where it is possible to order copies.

More dramatic Great War memories come from Dorothy Diver of Ely, looking back to her childhood days at Lea Farm, equidistant from Isleham, Freckenham and West Row.

She writes: "At the age of 11 I stood with my parents and sister at the door of the farmhouse and watched the cigar-shaped Zeppelin as it droned its way over the fen. It was clearly visible and heard.

"Suddenly there was a big bang. My baby sister cried. I said: 'Don't cry, it's only someone shooting wild ducks'. The bomb fell in Isleham fen. The date, I think, was 31st January, 1916. A second bomb on 6 February did not explode.

"Incidentally, I think I saw the first airplane land in our area. The aviator had lost his way. My father approached him with gun and gun dogs! An old lady's reminiscences!"

And very accurate, too, for the weekly paper of February 4, 1916, carries a note that its report on Zeppelin raids had been censored. Reginald Arbon of Foxton remembers that during the Second World War he had the job of Sunday newspaper boy and was en route to collect them. Suddenly he heard a tremendous noise and saw the outline of an American Flying Fortress, moments before it crashed in the woods.

Shortly afterwards an airman came towards them, trembling violently, and asked directions to a telephone. Reg remembers that the American's lips were shaking so much that his cigarette fell out of his mouth and he was unable to hold his hand steady enough to shake another from the packet.

As the lad continued on his round he was able to spread news that would appear in no newspaper. Later he joined other children to try to outwit guards to acquire pieces of Perspex that could be fashioned into rings or at the very least, sticks of chewing gum.

Ronald and Gwynneth Rule of Willingham have looked back to the 1930s: "Your reference to Uncle David and Auntie Flossie (Moore) has revived memories of them for me and my wife. My mother Bessie Rule ran a Band of Hope in Linton in the 1920s which David and Flossie visited several times.

"I remember them arriving on motorbike and sidecar. The meetings were held in the Congregational Sunday school. Two things I remember were being taught the Siamese national anthem, which should be sung by all drunkards to the same tune as *God Save the King*. The other thing was a song about Joe Perkins, who was a reformed drunkard.

"David was secretary to the Cambridge Beekeepers Association and helped me re-queen a savage hive of bees about 1950."

Mention of a fashion show staged by Mitcham's shop in 1948, when models were male staff, resulted in this item from Irene Bloy taken by the *Cambridge Daily News*. Recognise anyone?

Memories 26th March 1998, by Mike Petty

WHEN Mr Philip Pumfrey saw the picture of the threshing tackle in *Memories* on March 5, he immediately recognised the scene and saw his late father, Sidney Pumfrey, driving the engine.

Having ordered a copy of the picture from the Cambridgeshire Collection, he has now written in with an account of the firm.

C R Pumfrey and sons, agricultural machinists and contractors, was formed in 1908 by Charles Robert Pumfrey, the eldest of four sons of Robert Pumfrey, who farmed in Cherry Hinton and Teversham. Charles started work for John Crampton of Sawston as an engine driver and engineer, though his ambition was to operate his own business.

Into 1908 he cycled from his home in Sawston to Six Mile Bottom railway station, caught a train to Stowmarket and went to George Thurlow and Sons, the threshing machine agents. He ordered a Ruston 7hp traction engine, threshing drum and straw elevator — total cost £650 — paying a deposit with 100 sovereigns. All were delivered by rail to Whittlesford station on August 10, 1908. The name on the engine was Progress.

So began his business.

The business expanded quickly as working arrangements were made with many local fanners and the family moved from Sawston to Duxford. Charles invested in additional engines and machinery, buying engines Dreadnought, Lord Roberts and Success, complete with drums, elevators, bailers and chaff cutters. In 1914 two of them were commandeered by the army, bailing hay and straw for horses in the French war zones.

The other also played a part, hauling loads of bales to various railway stations. Following the First War, the engines were seldom idle. When demand for threshing was low they hauled heavy loads of brick, coal or timber and once delivered a large boiler from Whittlesford Station to Spicers Paper Mill in Sawston.

By the mid-1920s the firm had several sets of threshing machines together with other agricultural equipment and also acquired a pair of steam ploughing engines complete with plough, cultivator and harrows. The engines had winding drums which housed a steel cable. This was used to pull the plough and cultivator across a field, with the engines placed at opposite ends of the field.

During the farming recession, being the entrepreneur he was, he rented and bought farm land, some of which had been poorly cultivated. He deeply ploughed this with the steam plough engines, bringing the land back into condition.

He continued to buy more farms in the 1930s, under the title of Pumfrey Brothers, and when he died in June 1935 he had not only achieved his ambition as an agricultural machinist, but had also, with his sons, become the owner of four farms.

Of all the Pumfrey engines, only the Success remains in working order and is still owned by a farming member of the family. I have given the letter in some length since there is an immense interest in things mechanical. There are numerous other photographs in the Cambridgeshire Collection for enthusiasts to ponder over and identify

Mechanically-powered ice cream carts have also come into the spotlight, following the receipt of an old glass lantern slide showing the Linton and District Pure Ice Cream Company. The proprietor's name is shown as H Nunn. The photo was taken by David Moore. Does this ring a bell with anybody?

Do you remember seeing prisoners wearing clothes with broad arrows on them, and Glengarry caps, scything the grass on Cambridge Castle Hill before the First World War. Mrs Gwen Peacock of Storey's House does. She also recalls how the mound was opened once a year so that people could go to the top to admire the view or, in her case, the white violets.

Another thing that stuck in her mind was that there used to be a brass cross on the mound marking, we think, the site of the original gallows. This was different from the gallows which were in the old County gaol yard until 1930, where there was a black stone in the wall marking the spot when the bodies of hanged prisoners were buried.

Her memories of the area go back 90 years because she spent her early years at the Isaac Newton pub, one of several which served the people in that most deprived area of Cambridge, where houses were crammed into the area off Gloucester Street with only primitive facilities. She recalls a headmaster becoming so exasperated at the condition of one of the children attending the school that he washed half the lad's face, half of his hair and brushed half of his clothes, sending him off to finish the job

Posher youngsters wore blazers, but why are they so-called. Joan Last's son thought it was something to be worn when it was blazing hot! But then she investigated further and discovered that the first blazers were made by Ruben Buttress, of Cambridge. They were scarlet boat jackets for the men of Lady Margaret Boat Club, St John's College. He nicknamed the jackets blazers because of the blazing scarlet colour - and the name stuck.

Memories, 2nd April 1998, by Mike Petty

Saturday's University boat race was favoured by perfect weather, an unusually strong tide and fairly smooth surface conditions. Oxford took an early lead, there was an incident with an oar which upset the rhythm of the boat but the Cambridge crew won in a record time.

A report in the "News" – yes. But the News of 50 years ago - 29th March 1948. There were of course some differences. It was the Cambridge rower Bircher who caught a crab, which

practically stopped the boat and many believed that the race was over. But with great coolness the team stopped rowing while he sorted himself out and they set off in hot pursuit of their rivals. They were soon ahead and the race became a procession enlivened by the prospect of a record time, eventually finishing up five lengths in front in a time of 17 minutes 50 seconds, no less than a quarter of a minute up on the previous record. By comparison the 1998 time was 16 minutes 19seconds, 26 seconds faster than Oxford's previous best.

There were one or two other incidents that caught the eye of the journalist in 1948. The BBC commentator's plane had to make a forced landing and the Press launch was rammed by a small passenger steamer. Then to cap it all the Cambridge cox emulated Blondin by standing up at the finish and doing a step dance in the sternsheets of his flimsy racing eight.

Other stories also have a habit of coming round. Last week the "News" carried a report of the erection of a new bridge at Houghton, which the army has constructed as a temporary measure while work takes place at the Watermill. When I was there on Tuesday the small central square taken over by the military whilst engineers were manhandling large sections of a pre-fabricated bridge. It all evoked memories of the picture I have of other army engineers erecting another temporary bridge, this time over the Old West River whilst a new road was being rushed through to connect Stretham and Wicken in 1914. The issue then was not the need to maintain a footpath but the need to move men and munitions speedily from the Midlands to the East Coast to repel an anticipated attack by the Germans in the very early days of the First World War. The road was duly constructed, the folk at Wicken anticipating the prosperity that the new Military Road would bring – for would not the cavalry be sure to pass that way, and where better than Wicken, with all its commons, for them to pause en route to the battlefield. There was one snag. Nobody could decide who was to pay for the bridges across the rivers Old West and the Cam. So they were not built – at least not until the war was won .

Since then Cambridgeshire has seen various examples of the bridgemaker's art. When Cambridge's Magdalene Bridge was being strngthened in 1981 a temporary bridge was constructed alongside (incidentally in the same position as one had been when the existing iron bridge was built in 1823!). Magdalene Bridge had previously been closed to heavy vehicles for a number of years. The new one was designed to cater for the anticipated weight of traffic that would thunder over it for years to come. Only now, of course, the road itself has been closed to most vehicles

But Don Mackay has reminded me of another piece of bridge engineering. This was the railway bridge across the river at Chesterton. Trains had crossed the Cam at this point since 1845 but locomotives had become heavier and the old bridge could no longer cope. A replacement was urgently needed and work started. Then in April 1930 crowds of onlookers flocked to watch as the old bridge, weighing 70 tons, was moved over and a new 300 ton monster, which had been constructed alongside was first lifted on hydraulic jacks and then winched into place at a rate of eight inches per minute. Don's father was in charge of the operation and the trains were running again the same day

Mona Rumsey of Saffron Walden has written following the picture in last week's "Memories" of the Linton Pure Ice Cream man, Mr Nunn. She recalls that he lived in the last house on the Hadstock Road where he kept his motor bikes and sidecars. He made his ice cream from pure cream which was delivered in churns that were unloaded at Linton station. She remembers watching him making it and the only additive was vanilla flavouring. "He would say 'get a dish and you can have some'. A small dish was refused and a larger vegetable dish was filled, which we all enjoyed. Happy days!"

C.T. Shaw of Gt Shelford has an unusual request. Does anybody remember what happened to the ashes of Henry Morris, the well-known Cambridge educationalist and pioneer of the

village college concept? Morris was cremated at the Golders Green crematorium and it is said that the ashes were sent to George Edwards, the Chief Education Officer at that time, at Shire Hall. No one seems to know what happened after that. Can you help? If so write to Mike Petty at the News and I will pass the letters on

Do you know the whereabouts of any Cambridge button factories? Button expert Kathleen Skin thinks it may have been in the Castle Hill area sometime between 1850 and 1920. Any clues?

George Dunn of Stapleford writes: "I have been trying to find out if the Vicar's Brook is named after a particular Vicar without any success to date. Since the brook has its headwaters in Shelford parish it could be a former vicar of Shelford. Any light you might have on the problem would be appreciated"

Memories, 9th April 1998, by Mike Petty

Ted Cash revived memories of his youth last week when he slotted two pence – more than twice the old fine – into the famous Silver Winkle. 70 years ago the money would have been demanded from him had entered the bar of the Hearts of Oak public house in Cambridge's Newmarket Road without carrying his own miniature winkle or been heard to blaspheme

The Silver Winkle club had been instituted by the pub's landlord, Charlie Swann in 1921 when times were particularly hard in this hard-working part of the town. Many men were employed in the gasworks, Watts's wood yard or at the Cambridge Brick Company. Ted's family was shoemakers with a shop next to the Abbey church. Here they made fine quality boots and shoes from scratch, drawing on the stocks of leather stacked in their stores. Work was collected from Cambridge shops or brought in from the village by horse and cart, prepared and returned the following week. There were unusual repairs: Ted recalls how his grandfather had a problem of how to spot a small slit in the thigh-high Wellington boots worn by men who worked in water. The solution was to set fire of a piece of material which was placed it inside the boot. Then they watched to see where the smoke came out – and thus find the hole where the water came in.

People those days worked all hours, but still found time to tend their allotments at the bottom of Leeke Street, off Coldham's Lane, where Silverwood Close now stands. They were proud of their produce, which was displayed in fortnightly flower shows at the Hearts of Oak, taking over the billiard tables for the occasion. The first prize was 15 Woodbine cigarettes, the second 10, and the third 5. One memorable exhibit was submitted by Sammy Lloyd, carefully covered to avoid the prying eyes of his competitors. When unveiled in all its glory, there it stood, two feet high – a fine wild thistle. It won!

In pride of place on the bar stood the eponymous Silver Winkle, presented to the club in 1924 in memory of Con Griffiths. Con owned a boxing ring which was delivered by the Bruce brothers to the Cambridge Corn Exchange whenever needed for the fights. At the Varsity matches Ted was a water boy, fetching the water that was used to spray and splash the boxers who changed at the side of the hall and went back to their colleges after the bouts were over.

As well as the fines for transgressing Winkle Club rules members paid sixpence a week into club funds which went to finance an excursion to the seaside. They travelled on big solid-tired, open motor coaches supplied by the Brown Brothers of Oakington and – being a pub outing – they stopped for drinks en route. However on one memorable occasion their destination was not the seaside but a stately home. For the back street lads were invited to

Croxton Park, home of Sir Douglas and Lady Newton. The occasion was the wedding of their daughter – the club was not exactly invited to the wedding, but to see the wedding presents

All that is now in the past but lives on in Ted Cash's memories, some of which I featured a few weeks ago. This article was spotted by a News reader who knew that the silver-plated Winkle was still with Charlie Swann's granddaughter, just a few streets away from Ted's present home. Thus it was that Ted and the Winkle were reunited after more than 60 years.

If you have memories to share or revive, write to me, Mike Petty, at the News

Mr E. Badcock of Cambridge has sent me a cutting from The Times of 18th June 1952 which he found tucked away in the back of a book. It reads : "A LIVE WIRE. A junior postman at the Ely post office who recently took out for delivery a telegram addressed to a workman employed on the renovation of Ely Cathedral found that the workman was at the top of the scaffolding in the Lantern Tower. After all efforts to attract the man's attention from the ground had failed the postman delivered the telegram by mounting the ladders and climbing 170 ft of scaffolding"

On the question of height can you help former Brain of Britain, Henry Button? He is trying to establish the height of the spire of All Saints' church in Jesus Lane, Cambridge. It does not appear to be recorded in any of the usual books. Over to you.

If you have questions or queries and think News readers can help, drop me a line

Memories, by Mike Petty, 16th April 1998

Tonight is the night of the Band of Hope filmshow at Castle Street Methodist chapel, Cambridge, showing once more the films and lanternslides taken by "Uncle David and Auntie Flossie" Moore to an audience, many of whom have memories of seeing the films some 60 years ago. Others have already shared their recollections, including Mrs Beatrice Stevens of Stretham.

She writes: "Nearly all the social events of the village took place at the Mission Hall or the Wesleyan Chapel. If there was a Sacred Concert at the Hall one week there might be a Magic Lantern at the Chapel the following week, and two of the most popular visitors were Uncle David and Aunt Flossie.

We children loved them. They came to our house to tea, big Uncle David Moore, with his sandy hair and rosy cheeks, and smiling Aunt Flossy, whose eyes had a permanent twinkle. They were engaged by the Band of Hope Union to visit Churches and Chapels, and their magic lantern shows were as popular with the grown-ups as with the children.

In the early days their lantern depended on oil, paraffin oil, and with the smell of that and coke fumes from the tortoise stove the Chapel often became distinctly fuggy. Once the lantern got on fire, with thick, black smoke pouring out. No one minded, though; nearly every child from the village was there except a very few strictly-Church people, who pretended not to mind when we talked about it at school next day.

Aunt Flossie played the organ, jazzing it up somewhat. Even I noticed the difference between the way she played it and Mrs. Bradshaw's more stately and dignified manner of playing on Sunday but I thought both perfect, right for each occasion

"A song, a song of water bright" we sang lustily, with Aunt Flossie singing too, while Uncle David urged us, "Louder, you can sing louder". It was enough to make Father cover his ears; although he loved singing he didn't like noise, and there was little of tunefulness as our singing became almost a yell. But then we became quiet, really quiet, as Uncle David said, "Now we will talk to God," and he did just that, as if God was standing right next to him.

When we said the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father 'chart in Heaven" we raced along in verbal contest, quite oblivious of the beauty and meaning of the words. We wanted to get to the picture-part of the programme, and were impatient that we had to sing another song, albeit a favourite, "Hold the fort for I am coming" with the boys in warlike attitudes, ready to pounce on Satan if he should suddenly appear! How we loved to dramatise, and Uncle David and Aunt Flossie encouraged us to "do the actions", something not permitted in Sunday School. Needless to say, the stories told by Uncle David as he fitted the slides into the magic lantern, one by one, all had a moral, and we heard how little George and Sally went barefoot because their father spent too much money on strong drink, while Johnnie and Daisy were always warmly clothed. They even had a holiday at the seaside, only two days to be sure, but it was all because THEIR father was a teetotaler. And, of course, the story ended happily when the father of little George and Sally signed the pledge.

The collection was "for expenses", and this included a small fee for the services of Uncle David and Aunt Flossie and a contribution to the Band of Hope Union.

David Moore had been appointed agent to the Cambridgeshire Band of Hope in 1908, he died in 1968. The film show thus marks a double anniversary – and might not have happened except for "News" readers whose memories have prompted the resurrection of pictures which might otherwise have faded into oblivion

Lucy Nicholls of Thirsk in North Yorkshire seeks your assistance in a probably impossible search. She writes: "I am trying to find a book published in the last 1940's by a Sqn Ldr Palmer. Unfortunately I do not know the title or publisher. Some of your older readers from the Waterbeach area may recall Sqn Ldr Palmer who was an officer at RAF Waterbeach during the late 1940's. I should be very grateful if you could help in any way". If you can help write to me and I will pass it on

Cambridge Scouts are embarking on a project to ensure their history is well recorded by the time of their centenary. They are seeking memories or mementoes to add to their files. If you can help please contact Ted Easy, 113 Station Road, Impington – or send them to me and I will pass them on.

PICTURES : David – Uncle David and Auntie Flossie and their camera – please use this one if you can

Visit – Uncle David and auntie Flossie visiting a village with an exhibition of Band of Hope material

Programme – a typical programme of one of their shows

Memories, by Mike Petty, 23rd April 1998

So often it seems that history has a habit of repeating itself – of perhaps that the news is just recirculated

Compare the report from 13th April 1998: "Workers at the recycling centre in Butt Lane, Milton alerted police after they found six live shotgun cartridges in a bag" with that of 7th April 1948: "I am asked to point out to the public the danger of getting rid of their war relics by placing them among the refuse. No less than eight live cartridges were found in one load recently"

Then the main headlines of recent days have echoed those of March 1947, especially in regard to the sufferings of the folk at St Ives who have found their property flooded. 50 years ago the "News" reported : "At St Ives some of the back streets are flooded fairly extensively, the water on the road to a depth of about 10 inches entering many houses in the town, forcing people to move their belongings upstairs. Traffic had to be diverted last night because of the movement washing water into the houses."

Now there has been speculation that in certain cases the problem has been exacerbated by new roads which have increased the speed at which water rushes into the rivers, or by building on flood plains. A report from August 1947 makes the same point: "Further steps are to be taken by Huntingdon, St Ives, Godmanchester and St Neots, the four towns so badly affected by the March floods, to press home to the Government the urgency of some action being taken to mitigate further floods of these places. Mr W.E. Doran (Ouse Catchment Board Engineer) said that in his view the inhabitants of those towns were suffering from the sins of their ancestors in building houses in a flood area. At the height of the recent flood water was passing St Ives at the rate of 11,000 cubic feet per second. It was impossible to dig a channel capable of taking such an enormous volume of water."

Like many others on Sunday I journeyed to Earith to view the height of the river and was concerned, not at the water across the road leading in to Earith – for this is over an area designed to be flooded to fill the washlands between the Bedford Rivers – but at the water across the road to Sutton – water that could only have come over, or through the giant barrier banks.

Then on Monday evening I was speaking at Whittlesey when a Manager with the Environment Agency mentioned that they had been particularly concerned about the possibility of a breach in the Great Ouse bank adjacent to Over fen, and had sent up a plane to view the area. It was along this bank in 1947 that the major breach occurred, a scene witnessed by Marshall Ingle of Over, who recounted the incident on television and radio last year, and whose death was reported just a few weeks ago

Despite all their efforts in 1947 the bank was breached sending thousands of gallons of water into Over fen and intimately crossing the Old West River and surging across towards Haddenham and Sutton

Farmers along the Hill Row Causeway, linking Earith with Haddenham, were warned by police to prepare for evacuation and began moving equipment to higher land – in both 1947 and 1998

The difference however is that – at least to the time of writing – the banks have held. The recent investment in infrastructure, new sluices, monitoring equipment and dredging has paid off. But it might have been a different picture had we seen a repeat of the severe storm of 16th March 1947 which whipped up the water and sent it crashing over the banks on to the fen beneath, leading to the catastrophe which saw houses flooded, not to a depth of 18 inches but to 18 feet.

A comparison of that storm with the hurricane force gusts of 2nd January 1976 has recently been published in the Journal of Meteorology for February 1997. This article is freely available in the Cambridgeshire Collection room on the third floor of Cambridge's Lion Yard Library, where hundreds of people, young and old, expert and novice discover their heritage.

On the shelves alongside contemporary accounts of the 1947 floods are the current planning reports which consider the problems of where to build the new houses and roads now deemed necessary to cope with increasing population – factors which might have a dramatic impact

the next time the floods come - and the pictorial records which show what can happen if we do not learn from the lessons of the past

Jim Laughton of Cherry Hinton writes : I was most interested in the article relating to the Silver Winkle Club run at the Hearts of Oak pub in Newmarket Road, Cambridge. I was a lad living in Gold Street so was very much aware of this type of life those days. You may have heard about a similar pub club run at the Ancient Druids in Fitzroy Street by Bert and Anne Kirlup, known as the Brush Club. They had a silver metal brush on the bar.

ILLUSTRATIONS : views of properties along road from Earith to Haddenham, 1947

MEMORIES, by Mike Petty 30th April 1998

When the history of entertainment in Cambridge during the inter-war years comes to be written one building that will achieve major headlines is the Festival Theatre in Newmarket Road, one of the few surviving wooden Georgian theatres in the country.

It started life as the Theatre Royal but fell on hard times, especially as the University limited the period when plays could be performed. In autumn 1878 the building was put up for sale and knocked down to a builder who had plans for its demolition. When however it became known that the under-bidders had intended to use the building as a Mission Hall the new owner, Mr Sayle, agreed to let them have it for the price they had scraped together. It then enjoyed a considerable period of packed congregations, before reverting to a Theatre in 1926 for a decade or so. Since then it has survived as a store, largely unknown and unused for all but a few plays which have probably attracted larger audiences because of the venue than for the quality of the performance.

Now the genteelly derelict building, its theatrical decoration peeling to reveal the religious texts beneath, has once more come into the spotlight with a meeting called last week to discuss its future use. Some of those attending had their memories of the performances produced by Terence Gray, 60 years ago, including a production of Julius Caesar in modern dress. Once more plans for the radical revamping of a building described as “possibly the most remarkable of Sleeping Beauty theatres” have been defeated and once more it may revert to spiritual use, now that it has been bought by the Western Buddhist Order, and into dramatic use for their own exploration of the arts

Other Cambridge buildings attracted far greater crowds, and yet are now largely forgotten. Tucked away in Magrath Avenue, behind Shire Hall, used to stand a multi-entertainment centre. Originally a roller skating rink, it incorporated a cinema in 1911, was requisitioned during the First War and then reopened as the Rendezvous cinema, dance hall and skating rink. It was devastated by fire in 1931 and rebuilt the following year. Later it became the Rex cinema and ballroom where in 1957 the new and outrageous “Rock’n’roll” dances were allowed after the Guildhall banned jiving

A rare photograph of the interior of the Rendezvous dance hall, decorated for one of the May Balls, which were a regular feature of the 1920’s, has been lent by Ted Mudd of Victoria Road. The ornate decoration features trellis work produced by his father from workshops at the bottom of their garden. Nor was this his only contribution to Cambridge, for the firm undertook maintenance of the First Eastern General Hospital across the Backs in the First World War and Brooklands Avenue during the second. In peacetime he made shields for

Crisps on Kings Parade and designed display stands for the Cambridge Scientific Instrument Company to promote their wares at exhibitions at Olympia and elsewhere.

Ted himself became an engineer, working for a while at the Unicam works on Arbury Road during the Second World War when the factory was a regular target for German bombers. He recalls how the raids disrupted production to such an extent that the company decided to ignore the sirens and station their own lookout on the roof who would sound a klaxon if he saw a plane actually coming their way. On one occasion several female workers needed First Aid treatment after diving under their workbenches on a hot afternoon, the mixture of heat and excitement causing them to faint. In the event the factory was never hit, though cows in the adjacent fields were injured.

Do you have memories of the Festival, Rendezvous, the Rex or other dance halls – write to Mike Petty at the News

PICTURES : interior of the Theatre Royal Barnwell Mission, afterwards the Festival Theatre, on Newmarket Road about 1900

Rendezvous ballroom decorated for a May Ball c1920 - THIS PICTURE HAS NOT BEEN USED BEFORE, please include it if you can

Memories, by Mike Petty, 7th May 1998

Jim Laughton of Cherry Hinton had to dash to get to his 80th birthday party for he was held up at Addenbrooke's Hospital where he was being scanned on a electrocardiograph – the very instrument had helped to develop when he worked at the Cambridge Instrument Company, where he had started in 1936.

Jim was born in Gold Street in 1916, a friendly part of Cambridge full of people with their troubles - now submerged by the Grafton Centre. His mother worked at home as a trouser maker and alteration hand for G.H. Jacobs of St Andrew's street. Jim attended the old British School in Auckland Road, which could be a frightening place for Tudor's Circus kept their animals stabled in the nearby warehouse. He moved to Christchurch Institute and then to the new Brunswick School in Walnut Tree Avenue when it opened in 1929, ("had to wash behind my ears that day!", he recalls).

Like many children he earned the odd coppers by running errands and could make 6d whenever he carried a can of paraffin from Laurie and McConnal's shop for the owner of the Rabbit Pub. The money went on trips to the cinema or the New Theatre where his uncle was stalls manager. Jim has some of the publicity cards they used to send out to advertise the latest attraction. Later in the 1930s he organised Variety nights at the Mansfield Hall in River Lane with local artistes such as Gwen Scott, soprano, Herbert Green, comedian, James Ison "The merry pianist" and Harry Day, the whistle player whose favourite tune was "Washington Post".

Jim treasures many mementoes of his interesting life but pride of place goes to a snippet from the Cambridge Daily News for the day he was born – which records his arrival in the world. Years ago the "News" deposited its back files in the Cambridgeshire Collection, on the third floor of the Central Library in Lion Yard, Cambridge. Here they are freely available on microfilm and specialist staff are on hand to show you how to take copies. It is not practical to copy the entire paper but you can certainly do what Jim has done & build up a scrapbook of events for the day you – or a friend – was born.

Another of Cambridge's great institutions was the Dorothy Restaurant. Gladys Hayhoe of Cherry Hinton remembers that in her youth it was the place to have tea and meet friends or dance to Percy Cowell's band (although she was not allowed to go until she was 18!). Highlight of the year was the New Year's Eve ball: "at 12 o'clock we all went crazy, and the Ballroom, having a spring floor, we felt anytime it would collapse". She has lent two pictures, one showing a typical formal dinner at the Dot and another a group of staff, including Mr Emerson, head waiter and Miss Dorothy Smith who became manageress. If you can recognise yourself – or anybody else please let me know. The pictures will be added to the Cambridgeshire Collection in a week or so.

Peter Oates of Godmanchester has written asking for details of the evacuation process in the Southery area following the 1947 floods and particularly of the Stocks family of Wood Hall. Certainly they took evacuees during the Second World War for when I was speaking at Hilgay Good Companions Club this week one lady recalled how the Squire turned up one Sunday in his pew accompanied by a bevy of young London boys. When she went round with the collection plate one of the lads said: "The chap at the end's paying for us!" Peter would also like background details of any of the riverside pubs in the area, such as the "Ferry Inn" at Southery, "True Blue" and "Jolly Anglers" at Ten Mile Bank or the "Dog & Duck" on the Hundred Foot.

If you can help, or if you would like help, write to me, Mike Petty, at the News
Note: recording of interview – MPC51

MEMORIES, by Mike Petty, 14th May 1998

Memories of the Rex Ballroom have come in from Mrs Barbara Rooney of Cambridge.

She writes: My first recollection of going to the Rex was in the early 1950s with my friend Maureen, and seeing the Rex sign all it up, we couldn't wait to go in. The first thing that greeted us was the smell, a heady mixture of perfume, face powder, cigarettes and beer. It had a wonderful dance floor, and a silver glitter ball hung from the ceiling. There was a very small cloak room where we put on make-up we didn't really need! It had a small balcony but we didn't go up there as we all thought it was for the "oldies".

The resident band at that time was Austin Payne. I only have to hear "Tenderly" or "How High the Moon" and I'm back there.

We used to go on Wednesday evenings, "Early Bird night". If we got in just before eight o'clock we were given a free ticket for Carnival Night on Saturday. I think it cost us 1/6 (7 1/2p).

We jived and danced all evening in high heels, full skirts, tight sweaters, black seamed nylons, "Betty Lou" lipstick, California poppy scent & bright red nails. Wonderful happy exciting days for two 16 year olds.

Later on when my husband was a Cambridge City Councillor he tried to halt the closure of the Rex by taking up petitions organised by patrons and attended meetings with them, but sadly the lovely old Rex closed in the late Seventies.

I met my husband at the Embassy Ballroom in Mill Road on September 26 1953, we have just celebrated our 44th wedding anniversary, we are still jiving and dancing and American line dancing and having a wonderful time.

Anna Bidder's memories go back somewhat further (well she is nearly 95!):

"I remember happy years of visiting the Festival Theatre. I was then working for my PhD. It was Terence Grey who bought drama back into it in a rather original way and produced black programmes with translucent white lettering on non-rustling paper - a boon to latecomers or to anyone who needed some point from the programme during the performance. Moreover the price of the seat was related solely to the kind of view they possessed. The very front rows were cheap, as far too near the stage, and any seat whose view was partially blocked by a pillar was cheap accordingly. I remember seeing Flora Robson making her first appearance after a bitter break following nervous trouble in her throat. We loved her - and, when many years later she came and gave us "Mary Tudor" at the Arts - we were proud - it was "our Flora" come back to show us the great skills.

The last years were a co-operative bunch of young things who did their own chores and sold programmes if they were not in the current play from their repertory - one young lady might sell programmes in slightly grubby white satin, another in flannel trousers and a shirt. There was free beer on Monday to try and pull in an audience for a night always unpopular.

One company put on a play with a satirical - political flavour. It had of course been censored, and at intervals the action would suddenly stop and a flat, impersonal voice would sound from the wings saying "speech removed by order of the Lord Chancellor" - and then action would proceed. One act was played with the stage set up as a sort of giant dolls' house and curtains which to back to reveal the actors in the appropriate box for the scene. When the curtain went back for the central box the voice said "scene removed by order of the Lord Chancellor". It showed up with great clarity that you could suggest what you liked but must not use plain words.

A very able actor was acting Captain Absolute in "The Rivals". He and Lydia Languish were quarrelling in a spirited way - she crying indignantly "There's no beating his insolence" and flung herself on the sofa on the stage - and the leg broke. Actors and actresses alike dissolved in mirth - she crouched at the sofa head, her face hidden - having fully turned her back on the audience - both with shaking shoulders. Enter Mrs Malaprop and Sir Anthony (it was in fact their cue) "What's this, what's that?" She: "Ask him Madame". He "Ask the lady, Sir" - then we in the audience realised that we must stop laughing - or they could not. So we did and they finished the scene with spirit."

Henry Button - who wrote seeking the height of All Saints church spire in Cambridge has now found his answer. It stands 198 feet high making it the third highest structure after Addenbrooke's Hospital chimney (232 feet) and the Catholic church spire (216 feet). Thank you for your help.

Sid Martin of Cambridge has recorded a postscript to the story of "Uncle David and Auntie Flossie". He knew David in his latter years in connection with his beekeeping activities. Being an expert judge David was in great demand at beekeeping shows but was handicapped in one respect. Being a lifetime abstainer he was unable to swallow the excellent mead he was called to adjudicate on! After Flossie died David Moore moved from Histon Road to Langdon House, Chesterton, where he died in 1968

Memories, by Mike Petty, 21st May 1998

This afternoon I attended the funeral of our old neighbour, Harley Crow, one-time village carpenter, decorator and coffin-maker. After the church service we gave a lift to the crematorium to a fellow mourner who had journeyed from Sussex to join the congregation. He known Harley during the second world war, not as carpenter, but as almost a foster-parent

– being billeted with him throughout the war years. He had tales to tell of evacuee experiences, of schooling and misbehaving in the days when he was but a very young Jewish lad from the East End of London, one of about 100 to be based in Stretham.

Then during the reception held in the village pub he met another resident – one who remembered him from all those years ago, who indeed had lived in those days almost next door, and continues to live in that same house. It was obviously a most poignant experience, having lost one treasured memory of happy days during the trauma of war, he had gained another. He will hopefully return again to his one-time village to be reacquainted with others he knew at that time, just as others will return on Feast Sunday as they have for years on that most traditional of homecoming days.

As villages change and “characters” are lost so such reunions will become increasingly rare – but if you have such a story please let me know

The photograph of the staff of the Dorothy Restaurant (Memories 7th May) has prompted a wealth of memories. Former Mayor of Cambridge, Albert Johnson, immediately recognised the main chef, in the centre of the picture, as Harry Curtis. He had particular reason to know them for Mr Johnson was in a similar line, being at one-time the catering manager of Peterhouse where he started as an apprentice in 1924 and worked for 51 years. He has especial memories of the difficulties of catering during wartime when various groups were billeted on the college, including Army Field Security, the London School of Economics and Chichester Theological College. The colleges had a catering allowance but undergraduates had to surrender their ration books, thus restricting their opportunities to dine elsewhere.

Another face he recognised was that of Bert Cook, third on the left of the back row. Somebody else who knew him immediately was Bert’s daughter, Mrs Phyllis Alderton of Cambridge. She recalls how; “My dad worked there before the war and went back there after serving five years in the Army Catering Corps before retiring in the late 1950s due to ill health. My sister and I used to go up to see dad on a Saturday, the kitchens were always hot and steamy but I loved it. He worked all hours imaginable, sometimes when they had big dinners on he’d go in at 8 am and work till midnight. He died in 1981, having been married to mum for 50 years and 8 months”. Talking of weddings she also had good reason to remember Bill Brignell (in the middle of the back row) for he iced her wedding cake in March 1959 – and its Jack Elmer on the left in the middle row. She adds: “It seems funny to see dad’s photo in the paper. I have got some pictures of him with pancakes etc, but I haven’t got this one. Is it possible to get a copy?” The answer is yes, from the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library, where the picture will be deposited shortly.

Ted Mudd of Victoria Road, who shared his memories on 30th April, has now discovered a most interesting snap of George Bolton’s removal vans which was probably taken in the 1920’s. Cambridge has had a variety of removal firms over the years – do you have memories? . I recall that the Library used a Finbow’s furniture van to make a journey to Sutton Coldfield, near Birmingham, about 20 years ago. That was the day that about 50,000 dead folk returned home to Cambridge – or more specifically when 1,000 boxes of glass plate negatives taken by Palmer Clarke of Post Office Terrace, Cambridge, were brought into the Collection. The load weighed something like seven tons and it is just as well that the floor of the Cambridgeshire Collection stack room, on the third floor, was designed to take heavy weights. Since their arrival the negatives have been indexed. They cover the period from about 1900 to about 1935 and if you are looking for a picture of a long-lost relation you may find it amongst them. Just turn up and check the card index. And if you’re looking for a more recent picture – perhaps of your own wedding – then remember that the Ramsey and Muspratt negatives are there as well from the 1930s to the 70’s. As they’re talking of closing the Cambridgeshire Collection room within the year it may be as well to get in quick while the material is still easy to get at.

More memories of the Festival Theatre have come in, this time from Mrs F. Coker of Chesterton. She enjoyed most pleasant evenings there, thanks to complimentary tickets from a friend's father who was a porter at one of the colleges, and remembers seeing Robert Donat, Flora Robson and Philip Cunningham, all unknowns in the 1930s. She also recalls the Rex Ballroom where you could dance all afternoon for about 2/6. "What wonderful days they were. I'll never forget, life was so different then"

If you have memories, please share them with me, Mike Petty, at the News

Memories, by Mike Petty, 28th May 1998

Fifty years ago today, 26th May 1948, the "Cambridge Daily News" – as it was then – was celebrating its Jubilee and invited its readers to send in their memories of the paper.

J. Johnson was then their oldest newspaper seller. He recalled the headlines he's called over the years: "I sold the paper when a girl was burned to death at a fire at Matthew's in Trinity Street; also at the time of the Moat Farm murder, the King Street murder, and the East Road murder; when Lord Kitchener came to Cambridge and lots of other exciting events".

G. Tarrant had been a newspaper lad, about 50 years before, "I remember how popular the paper was made by the editions that were printed giving the latest news about 'Jack the Ripper' who was terrorising the women of London at that time".

Someone who went back further was W.L. Robinson who wrote: "Being a small paper delivery boy of sixty years ago I remember the first issue of the C.D.N. a few weeks ago I had occasion to call at your front office and thought: what a contrast to years ago. Then an office staff of one, with a dim gas jet in a dark passage. One sees the great progress so steadfastly made in every department at St Andrew's street, where efficiency is the keynote in all the delicate work that is undertaken there"

Percy J. Looker recalled: "I used to stand at the top of our street patiently waiting for the red van with newspapers for a shop, where I and a crowd of people who afterwards obtain our copies of the evening paper". Competitions and prizes were an important part of the paper in those days too. H. Cross recalled how he and his wife ("Min and Bill") won a 'Holiday Memories' competition and went on to become a regular contributor. He ended with a poem that might be echoed today:

"The C.D.N.
Was welcome then
The queue shows how
We need it now"

A reference in my "Looking Back" column (15th May 1948) relating to the demolition of the old Boat Inn at Brown's Hill Staunch, Over, has brought in memories from another long-standing "News" correspondent, Ernie Papworth. "The old building was taken down, brick by brick, mainly by two or three German P.O.W.'s. The only way to move it was over a rather frail small wooden trestle bridge, with one shaky arm-guard, over the ditch into the riverside washes. They first tried with a two-wheeled Trusty Tractor and small trailer, but even this was extremely dangerous, so every bit of the old pub was taken across on a wheelbarrow. It was rebuilt into a Cold Store and the door from the old pub is now the entrance to the store.

"Inside the pub was an old blackboard with the words "Mind your P's and Q's", at the top. This was to remind the bargees how much they owed for their Pints and Quarts, which they

would have to pay for their return journey. Then well lubricated they would sing the following:

“Can ye walk along a lighter, Can ye eat fat pork, Can ye ‘oller out ‘Watchee Dozee’, Can ye drink a quart?”

Dozee Doggett was foreman of the lighters, the railway across the fens to Earith was called the Pork and Lard Railway, part of the platelayers wages. The new house, as it was then, was built on the other side of the Great Barrier Bank. It is no longer occupied but on dark cold winter nights it is still possible to see the faint glow from the old pub window and hear the merry voice of Bill Johnson tell Bill the landlord to chalk another one up for Dozee!”

Letters still pour in following the photograph of the Dorothy Restaurant staff (Memories May 7th). Mrs D. Brignell recognised her husband, William (Fred), Freda Dawson from Sawston spotted her uncle Bill Emerson. From Comberton Mrs Margaret Wakefield recalls many of the faces from when she started training as a waitress there in 1926. The most comprehensive list however comes from as far away as Yatton, near Bristol, where Marion Tankard has been sent cuttings from Cambridge friends. For she is the daughter of Harry Curtis, the chef, who died in 1980 at the age of 90, having outlived several of the people in the photograph. She asks for copies of the pictures to sent to her sister in America – where of course they can read the modern “News” every night, through the wonder of the Internet. No more waiting on street corners for the newspaper van when it can come on your computer screen – though sadly you miss the photographs which are worth so many words.

Memories, by Mike Petty 4th June 1998

“Memories” this week has a 1940’s flavour, responding to your letters and telephone calls.

We start in the garden of St Matthew’s Vicarage, Cambridge in 1941, where a class of St Matthew’s Infants school smile for the camera. It was lent to me by Sheila Wall (nee Hughes), who organises facilities for the old and bold at Cherrytrees centre, near the church. She is on it, along with Thelma Maltby, the twins Mary and June Knights, Barbara and Lorna Hills, Hazel Few, June Birch and Molly Mitchell (nee Arnold). Molly started school at 3½ with a dummy in her mouth, which headmistress Mrs Swann immediately threw over the wall – if she was big enough to go to school she did not need a dummy! Most stayed in and around Cambridge. So if you recognise yourself, or anybody else let me know.

Other children were uprooted from their homes and sent elsewhere for fear of wartime bombing raids. Many found themselves billeted in or near Ely. On a hot afternoon, 29th August 1944, one girl and her friends went to play near the river at The Cutter, Ely. The next thing anybody knew she had disappeared and was being submerged in the murky waters of the Ouse. It would have been the end of her story but for the actions of Fred Buckle.

On embarkation leave before going off to Burma as a signaller in the Royal Navy he had already seen service off North Africa, carrying supplies along the coast from Alexandria to Benghazi to support the army. Following the battle of Alamein his boat was hit by terrific storms, the engine was disabled, the compass gave out and it sank. Fred found himself swimming for his life and was fortunate to be picked up after dark by a minesweeper.

That afternoon he was staying with friends in Ely and had decided to hire a canoe, paddling towards Prickwillow, before returning to Appleyard’s boatyard. When he heard cries of alarm from the youngsters on the bank he knew something was amiss. Then he glimpsed a girl’s body floating six feet below him. He immediately ditched the canoe, dived down, grabbed the

child and carried her to the bank, turning her upside down to drain the water from her lungs. Help was soon on hand, a lady came out and took the child away, and a chap from the Cutter gave him a pair of dry trousers to replace his own sodden clothing.

Next day Fred was off to India, Burma, Rangoon and Malaya, on a trip that would keep him away until demob in 1946. About a year later he was presented with a certificate on parchment from the Royal Humane Society for the rescue of a child in imminent danger of drowning, and whose life he had saved.

The certificate ended up in a cupboard, almost forgotten. Now however Fred has rediscovered it, and has been trying to find anybody who knows more about that incident in August 1944. The local newspapers did not report it at the time, appeals on the radio have come up with nothing. Can "Memories" readers help? Write to me and I will pass information on to Fred in Suffolk

Further information on wartime Cambridge has come from letters discovered by Margaret Brierley from Cottenham written by her brother, a Cambridge undergraduate. There are the problems of everyday life – "At the moment I am eating margarine instead of butter. When I opened my last week's ration it just stank. Mrs B. Took it back to the Co-op to change it but the next lot wasn't much better". In some ways, though, Cambridge was fortunate: "If you are getting short of eggs tell me and I will send you some in a parcel. There is a stall on the market with hundreds every day from the Norfolk farms. The man says that carting them to London costs so much it isn't worth taking them so far".

War caused other disruptions, May 1941: "Well our exams have started. Owing to the Examination Hall having been taken over for wounded soldiers our exams are being held in the Corn Exchange. It is a terrible place, very draughty, and as it was raining on Monday the rain began to come in through the roof in various places"

Studies had been hampered: "On Monday I had a narrow squeak. I was brushing my teeth about 10.30 p.m. and there was an aeroplane flying very low and coming nearer. I heard a whistle beginning and then a terrific bang as the bomb exploded. I found next morning that it had hit a house about 120 yards away, completely demolishing it, the next door house and killing two ladies. There is no damage at my digs at all, due I think to it being a slightly delayed action type. It must have thoroughly buried in the house before it exploded. There are blankets etc still flying from the trees across the road. Several other High Explosive bombs were dropped the same night. Nine people were killed altogether"

Earlier in June 1940 a bomb had dropped on Vicarage Terrace, just off East Road with children amongst the casualties. This was just feet away from the Vicarage Garden where Sheila and her friends posed so happily.

Memories, by Mike Petty 11th June 1998

Something of the arrangements put in place in event of invasion during the First World War has become clear with the loan of a handbook prepared by the Local Emergency Committee for the Cambridge area, issued in 1915.

The area was divided into seven sections under the chairmanship of such people as Mr J. Chivers for the Histon-Girton area, W.C. Bull for Cottenham and Rampton and F.C. Doggett for the Grantchester group. Each would be responsible for law and order in his patch. Their role was to supplement the existing police organisation, make arrangements for instructing the

civil population. They had also to collect information on the number of horses, vehicles, telephones, male employees etc and make arrangements to collect them when the time became necessary.

Each area appointed Head special constables – E. Parish for Swavesey, A.W. Frohock for Dry Drayton, J. Mead for Hauxton - and people to organise communications, horses, stock and working gangs.

Three warnings were to be issued: “Stand By” when all arrangements were to be placed in working order – but the population was not to be alarmed. “Partial Emergency” when picks and shovels should be collected and loaded on to carts, stock had to be branded, preparations put into hand to receive refugees from adjoining counties and vehicle owners warned so that everything was ready for the movement of inhabitants and stock.

Should “Total Emergency” be declared the Head Special Constable would assume control of the parish. He would have made an inventory of all stock and horses which would be removed by the military or taken to a concentration place, in Cottenham, Lingay or Swavesey fens, Childerley Hall or at Burnt Mill, Hauxton. The remainder would be slaughtered and stocks of beans, oats and hay destroyed. Any vehicles left in the parish would be rendered useless.

Cyclists, scouts, horsemen and motor cyclists would be available to deliver orders, a band of youths would act as despatch riders, and guides posted at cross roads and entrances to villages. The Master of Horses – people like Tom Hayes of Harston - would ensure that the requisitioned horses and carts from various parishes would be kept separate in the Concentration Place He would make arrangements for feeding and lodging both horse and groom and ensure available fodder was brought in. They needed people who would know all the roads and field-ways and ensure designated Military Roads were kept free. These included the roads from Sandy to St Ives, Royston to Godmanchester, Harlton to Linton and Haverhill, and the New Road that had been constructed from Stretham to Wicken and Freckenham. This latter presented some small difficulty for although the road was built, the bridges across the two rivers were not

Meanwhile the Master of Working Gangs (A.P. Abraham in the case of Landbeach, Thomas Johnson at Fen Drayton)) would ensure that a number of workmen were ready to be moved away from their homes and used for field defences, possibly outside the county He had also to ensure that every person who was capable of working in their neighbourhood of their homes was available. They would be organised into gangs of about 25 people each of whom should come with a day’s food, his great-coat, pick and shovel. The gang would also need crowbars, sledgehammers, hurricane lamps – and a pail. The men, aged between 18 and 60, would be under military discipline.

Under DORA – the Defence of the Realm Act – everybody was obliged to comply with any order, to give help to members of the Emergency Committees – on whom might devolve “many duties at present unthought of” – and to be vigilant, challenging any suspicious alien who might present himself in the locality. Fortunately the invader never came, but – if this “confidential” document issued by Lieut-Col. Louis Tebbutt is any guide – it appears Cambridgeshire would have been prepared.

No fear of unknown faces on the St Matthews school photograph in “Memories” last week. Jean Patman of Chesterton had friends ringing up to tell her she was in the paper along with Eileen January (whose father was the chimney sweep), Pauline Goode, Rita Stepney, Jean Rouse, Diana Eusdon, Betty Brogan and Evelyn Cucut. Jean (Patten in those days) also remembers going to school with a dummy – and having it quickly despatched by the headmistress.

A couple of people this week have mentioned the hardships of being a “Tweenie” – an lowly individual responsible to cook and housemaid in the days when houses had a full complement of “below-stairs” staff. Do you have memories of life in “Service” or any snaps of the time? Please write in to Mike Petty at the News

PICTURES : sheep washing at Overcote 1917; during the Great War plans were made to move livestock to “concentration places”

Or : Electric : Cambridge Electric Light Company annual outing about 50 years ago – a photo lent by Mrs Kathleen Sargeant who recognises Roger Peck in the front row – the rest is up to you

Memories, by Mike Petty, 18th June 1998

Two recent television programmes featuring military heroes – or incompetents depending on your interpretation – have prompted readers to write.

When Charles Barnard of Foxton saw the programme on Lord Kitchener he remembered his own father’s involvement in the South African war where he was ordered to burn the homesteads containing women and children – but there was another connection. For in the 1930’s there lived at Foxton Hall nursing home an old lady, who attended church in her bathchair. Charles used to see her regularly and can point out her grave in the churchyard – for she was Lord Kitchener’s cousin, and the family crest adorns the grave.

But Kitchener also came to Cambridge, and received less than respectful reception. It was in November 1898 that Kitchener – then feted as the person who had avenged the death of General Gordon at the hands of the Mahdi – arrived at Cambridge station for a craaiage drive into town, through streets largely deserted because of bad weather. . A contingent of members of the 3rd (Cambridgeshire) Volunteer Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment formed up on Market Hill. The front of the Guildhall was barricaded, the Great Hall floor covered in crimson cloth and on the stage was a table bearing a beautiful casket designed especially by G. Munsey, the jeweller containing a scroll conferring upon him the Freedom of the Borough of Cambridge.

Once the speeches were over and the presentation made Kitchener was off to receive another accolade – this time from the University. Already Kings Parade was packed and undergraduates who had taken their places high in the Senate House used a hosepipe to spray water on the distinguished visitors gathering below them. Cheers from outside announced Kitchener’s arrival, drowning the cries of pain and distress of undergraduates who were crushed when the great railings surrounding the Senate House were pushed over by the sheer weight of numbers straining to get a glimpse of the hero.

Inside the Senate House an effigy of the Mahdi was suspended from the ceiling as more speeches of praise – this time in Latin - were delivered. Then he was off again in a carriage pulled by undergraduates as far as Christ’s college where not even a contingent of police could prevent the crowds surging through the gates.

Later the undergraduate population continued their celebrations. Hand carts, goal posts, fences from the Backs and much of Christ’s Pieces bandstand were ransacked to feed the flames of a Bonfire on Market Hill. Next morning the town centre had all the appearance of having been in the hands of a mob and many cartloads of debris had to be removed.

Later, of course, Kitchener became famous as the face on the Recruiting Poster for the First World War. One who responded to his country’s call was Herbert Hatton of Milton. He

served with the Durham Light Infantry and was killed in action on 15th July 1918, leaving a widow, Kate, living in Gentles Yard, Northampton Street, Cambridge.

“News” reader Raymond Fella of Cambridge came across Herbert’s grave recently whilst travelling in the Dolomites. It lies in the British Military Cemetery on the Asiago Plateau. He has taken a picture of the headstone, and of the entry in cemetery register which he would be delighted to pass on to any members of the family. Contact me and I will put you in touch.

The second programme was the one on the Home Guard. Ruth Holliday from Stretham seeks help. Whilst clearing old possessions she had unearthed a photograph of a group of Dad’s Army. It was taken by Starr and Rignall of Ely and probably shows the defenders of the Witchford area. Can you recognise the background or do you know any of the people.

Meanwhile yet more names have come forward for faces in the view of St Matthew’s street school. Thelma Northrop (nee Maltby) saw herself in the front row. She remembers carrying her gas mask to the school in a square cardboard box and being given a spoonful of malt: “We used to line up with our teaspoons with a piece of coloured cotton tied around the handle so that we knew which was ours. June Prime (formerly Burch) of Staffordshire Street writes “I remembers vividly the night the bomb fell on Vicarage Terrace, it was the most frightening night of her life. Thank you very much for bringing back old memories”.

Thank you very much for sharing them with me – and keep writing!

PHOTOS :

Home Guard group, possibly Witchford area

Charles Barnard with the grave of Kitchener’s cousin at Foxton – taken by photographic on Friday

Memories, by Mike Petty, 25th June 1998

Readers of my daily “Looking Back” column will have been following the story of Walter Horsford of St Neots who, just 100 years ago, was facing trial for the murder of his cousin, with whom he had been having an affair. Following due deliberation he was found guilty and sentenced to be executed.

The whole incident attracted wide press coverage. The Cambridge Daily News of 28th June 1898 devoted an entire page to the proceedings, putting it in the context of previous capital crimes – as would be expected today. But in 1990s we might not expect to be taken inside the execution room to witness the final minutes of the condemned man. Yet that is what readers of a century ago were treated to.

The report was headed “The execution, (by an eye witness)”, and still makes compelling reading.

“It was difficult to realise, as one walked up Castle Hill, to H.M. prison, Cambridge, that one was about to witness the execution of a man in the pride of strength and vigorous young manhood, found guilty of a most horrible crime. Outside the prison a glorious June morning, typical of life and joyousness; inside, already "the shadow of death" pervaded the place and the gloom of the grave overhung the precincts”.

Inside the two pressmen were escorted to a newly elected building of wood, painted a stone colour, with folding doors that open outwards. The place resembled nothing so much as a coach house, yet this seemingly innocent looking building was in reality the gallows.

“Shortly before eight o'clock, the hour fixed for the execution, the bell of the prison chapel began to give forth minute notes. Presently the voice of the Chaplain could be heard reciting in tones tremendous with emotion the opening sentences of the Service of the Dead. And now the funeral procession emerged from a door in the rear of the place of execution. The warders in charge had opened the door of the dread building, and the rope could be seen dangling from the beam overhead. On the trap doors beneath lay a new strap with which to fasten the ill-fated prisoners legs.

All eyes were fixed on the procession. There was but a few yards to traverse, but the scene was sufficiently awful to cause strong men to pale and suspicious lumps to rise in the throats of officials not given to the display of emotion. The Chaplain led the way, with a face of deathly pallor that threatened a collapse, but the Reverend gentlemen carried out his trying task to the bitter end.

The least concerned apparently of the whole group was the prisoner. With head when thrown back and unwavering step he marched to his doom with the aspect of a brave soldier about to be shot - certainly with no inclination of a criminal going to the gallows. With face unblanched and a steady eye, without a muscle moving to indicate fear or remorse, Walter Horsford walked to the place of execution. As he swung round and faced the entrance to the place of death he threw up his head still higher and threw one last glance at the blue sky overhead. He walked into the building and place himself under the noose. The executioner quickly passed the straps around his legs, adjusted the rope around the doomed man's neck, drew the white cap over his eyes, and then stepping to one side pulled the lever. There was a sickening thud as the drop fell, a slight quavering of the rope as the victim to justice disappeared from sight, and the spirit of Walter Horsford had fled to his maker”

Then the reporter added further details of the position of the knot and how death had been instantaneous. He commented: “all the arrangements work smoothly, and the execution was carried out as decently and it expeditiously as was possible under the circumstances”.

Outside the jail a small crowd had gathered who waited for a dark ball to be run up the flagpole; when a moment later it unfurled into a black flag it confirmed the sentence had been carried out. “All appeared calmly to witness the passing of the criminal, and to be thankful that once more retribution had followed on the heels of the wrong-doer”.

The prison was finally closed in 1916 – though many older Cambridge folk can remember queuing for a look in the condemned cell before its demolition in 1931. Now Shire Hall stands on its site, headquarters of Cambridgeshire County Council.

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The picture of a chain ferry being used to help wash sheep at Holywell (“Memories” June 11th) recalled for 93-year old Oliver Peters of Needingworth how he used to operate the ferry at the nearby Pike and Eel, when he was a boy. The charge was 3d each way to cross and he remembers the bank lined with people waiting - though if they bought a drink at the pub they didn't have to pay the ferryman

Mrs Lydia Hockaday of Papworth Everard, 90 years young and with a marvellous memory, recalls visiting the sheep market in St Ives as a girl. “It was a special treat to be able to touch the sheep through the pens. This may be an old wives' tale, but I remember children being taken there if they had a bad cough – it was supposed to have healing powers”. Have you heard of similar cures and remedies?

Memories 2nd July 1998, by Mike Petty

DURING the writing of this column I have the great privilege of meeting people with wonderful memories. I had only to mention the words "in service" to prompt a most interesting letter describing one person's experiences of life "below stairs" — but this one is different from most as it comes from a gentleman, Reg Wood, of Saffron Walden.

He writes: "I was rather a delicate boy, and when I left school in August 1930 I went to work on the farm. That winter I developed bronchitis, so a lady in the village suggested to my parents that I should go into domestic service as a houseboy

"So the next spring, having put an advert in the *Cambridge Independent Press*, I got a job in a house in Bury Road, Newmarket.

"The master was the racing correspondent of a well-known evening paper (not the *Cambridge Daily News*). There was a cook, house parlour maid, and chauffeur/gardener.

"The cooking was done on a large cooking range, which I had to be up at six o'clock to light and clean, I also had to attend to the water boiler, clean the fireplace and light the fires in the drawing and dining rooms, clean the boots and shoes, lay up the table for the staff breakfast, clean the front porch and whiten the doorstep.

"After breakfast I had to get in the coals for the fires, wash up, then go and sweep the landings and down the stairs and hall with a brush and dustpan, then clean up in the kitchen, prepare the vegetables and any jobs the cook wanted done, also help the maid to empty the slops, clean the bathroom and toilets and then it would be silver and brass cleaning, and, of course, there was always the kitchen table and floors to scrub.

"After lunch it was washing up pots and pans again. Then come sunshine, wind, rain or snow I had to take the two dogs out, and, if they were wet, dry them.

"Then it was teatime and afterwards time to peel the vegetables etc for dinner, feed the dogs, attend to the fires. After washing up the dishes and pots and pans, I had to get the sticks ready for the fires in the morning.

"I was glad to get to bed at 9 o'clock. I had one day off a month, an evening out on Saturday, and Sunday evening to go to church.

"I was provided with striped coats and aprons and was paid five shillings a week. I stayed there 15 months."

Afterwards Reg went on to another job at Carlton, near Newmarket, which he says was worse than ever — but, he point out, in those days there was no unemployment benefit for domestic work or farm labourer. So you had to put up with all sorts of conditions, knowing full well if you didn't like the job, there was always somebody ready to take your place.

- I have an awful memory for names and faces — but many people can look at a photograph and reel off lists of people they knew, or worked with, many years ago.

Kathleen Sargeant has sent in a picture of a staff outing from Macintosh's ironmonger's shop in Market Street. Cambridge. She worked there for six to eight months in about 1928, one of only two female staff. She manned the cash desk which was just inside the door. Customers got their goods at the counter where a bill was made out, and paid at the cash desk. Several people have mentioned Macintosh's shop where they took their shears to be sharpened, or bought screws or nails. It seems to have played a large part in Cambridge life — did you shop there?

And what of the old Ortona single-decker bus with its retractable canvas roof — it must have been delightful to ride in on balmy summer days, but what were they like to drive? Did other companies treat their employees to outings — and where did you go? Any memories to me please.

Many people find they can remember days past, but have great difficulties with days present. How often do we have a name "on the tip of the tongue", but then find it will not come out? It doesn't usually matter too much — unless it is the name of your husband, or wife. Sadly, many people suffer from just such dementia.

Next week is Alzheimer's Awareness Week — aptly called "Thanks for the Memory" — giving prominence to the difficulties of both the sufferers and their carers.

Often the long-term memory seems to grow clearer as the mass of modern cares is forgotten — so share those memories with me. Write yourself a note to write me a letter.

- For information on dementia contact Ms Susan Elliott, Alzheimer's Disease Society, Ida Darwin Site, Fulbourn Old Drift, Fulbourn, Cambridge CB1 3EE — phone (01223) 884031 (during the morning).

Memories, 9th July 1998, by Mike Petty

On Saturday Cambridge was awash with memories of schooldays and after. All afternoon Coleridge Community College was packed with old pupils — some of them much younger than others — as they celebrated its Diamond Jubilee. Wearing coloured stickers to indicate their particular vintage people paraded corridors, greeted old friends, commented on the foibles of former classmates (only to find that person standing behind them), remembered the teacher who used to keep a chair stave in his belt ready to administer retribution for misbehaviour — and the activities of Tilly, the school goat. They pored over hundreds of snapshots of school classes and old Cambridge Daily News pictures of outings — and recorded their memories for a special Jubilee Reunion edition of the School Magazine.

Earlier in the day School Buses had drawn up in King's Parade, Cambridge, and hundreds of old-girls had disembarked — some of them really quite venerable. They queued up patiently in line, each immaculate in her gown, as to spontaneous applause, they made their way to another celebration. Some needed help getting up the steps but all were determined, and some had risen very early indeed to be sure they were there. Later the Senate House lawn was full of the usual mixture of proud youngsters, their parents and grandparents. But uniquely this time they were acknowledging the achievements of the oldest member of their family. For this was Cambridge University's celebration of those women from Girton and Newnham colleges who had been students before 1948, when women were first granted degrees.

One who was watching the proceedings was Sally Hatton from Sawston. She had earlier shared with me memories of her own grandmother who had not attended University, though she had lived virtually in the grounds of St John's college for 50 years. Her cottage was in Gentles Yard, Northampton Street. It was one in a cobbled passageway with a toilet across the yard and an outside tap from which she drew buckets of water to carry into her kitchen. Inside there was a single room housing her old gas cooker, a table with a bowl and bar of soap, the black kitchen range and the cupboard under the stairs where she kept the coal — the coalman carrying the sacks in through the one door.

Every Saturday when Sally went visiting her proud grandmother would have waiting for her new bread and jelly in a basin, a new pot of Raspberry Jam, a flaky pastry turnover with jam and cream inside, and a jam doughnut. The pattern would never vary. Gran would not eat

anything herself, though she would stir the sugar into her tea for ages as she reminisced – but never of her own pecunious state or how she would sit and shell sacks of Chivers peas for a few coppers a time, or of her husband.

For gran was a widow. Herbert had been killed in the Great War when the Austrians and Germans had made a big advance in Asiago, Italy, in July 1918. His parents had lived in Milton, his father working as a cowman at Denny Abbey. Herbert had been home recovering from a wound in his hand a short while earlier and they had posed for a family photo with their two sons, George the elder and Walter Leslie, (Bib) in petticoats - Sally's late father.

She has lent me the photograph, a treasured memento of a wonderful gran and a grandfather she never knew. She now has another. For "News" reader Raymond Fella had spotted Herbert's grave when on holiday and snapped it. We mentioned it in "Memories" in the hope that somebody would be interested. Indeed they were! It has now been passed on to form part of the family's treasures. But, to make the file complete, does anybody have a picture of the cottages in Gentle's Yard, demolished in the 1960s?

Whilst on the subject of old army photographs the "Dad's Army" picture featured in "Memories", 18th June has definitely been identified as Witchford. Work is still going on to put names to faces

From Witchford Yvonne Barlow of 29 Clover End, (CB6 2XD) writes: "Historical research shows that childbirth could be a fearful, lonely and even disabling experience before modern medicine weighed in with antibiotics and pre-natal classes. I am a freelance reporter and would like to talk to older women about their experiences". Her number is 01353 663687

It was hard bringing up children when there was no money for doctors' bills and people devised their own cures. Edward Hall of Lt Eversden writes: "When I was a youngster I remember mother bringing children to inhale tar fumes to cure whooping cough when roads were being resurfaced". Whilst Mrs J. Clements of Campkin Rd, Cambridge recalls: "When my brother and I had whooping cough in about 1932 we were taken along to the Gasworks on Newmarket Road. For a very small fee we were held over the sulphur pit, after taking in the fumes we were very sick, taken home and put to bed. According to my mother we were left with a very mild cough. The pit was located under a manhole cover in the ground. I wonder if any of your older readers remember this"

She also asks if anyone has pictures of the Cambridge Albion Fishing Club children's fishing matches – over to you

PICTURES : Hatton – Herbert and Kate Hatton (nee Clayton) with their children, c1916
North : Northampton Street, Cambridge ; Gentle's Yard was on the left where the shaft of light is shining through
identified as Witchford. Work is still going on to put names to faces

Memories 16th July 1998, by Mike Petty

Mr Reginald Dye of Cambridge has contacted me about his grandfather Walter Pauley who ran the Fort St George ferry which used to ply across the river from Midsummer Common to Chesterton.

In the earlier years of the century the residents of the new houses at Chesterton enjoyed the best of both worlds. They were near enough to Cambridge to be able stroll into town across the lush green commons which were separated from their homes only by the river Cam.

Several ferries plied across the river, the ferrymen making a useful living from the tolls they charged and the residents not being too inconvenienced by the delay in crossing. Sometimes people took themselves across after hours, turning the handle that engaged the chain that ran across the bed of the river although when the ferry was on the other side it had to be pulled over by tugging on the chain itself, which was slimy - and worse - from the depths of the river.

Cambridge councillors however looked with dismay at the residents of the independent Urban district of Chesterton who were using their facilities but not contributing to Cambridge rates. They tried to encourage them to become part of a greater Cambridge. One inducement proffered was a new road bridge to replace William Bates' ferry. In 1888 Chestertonians voted for the bridge – Victoria Bridge – but then declined the amalgamation.

Whilst the residents of Ferry Path were content to cross the river in the traditional way occupants of the new houses on the De Freville Estate were soon campaigning for something better - a footbridge. The tragic loss of life when a ferry sank at Fen Ditton in 1905 would have added fuel to their cause but no bridges were to be forthcoming whilst Chesterton was independent.

In 1913 the Cambridge Borough council, having won its battle to absorb Chesterton, decided that a bridge was indeed necessary at Ferry Path, though it was another 14 years before it actually opened. Those waiting to make a last nostalgic crossing were disappointed when the ferry sank just before the new bridge opened in 1927. By then William Pauley had operated the ferry 40 years and carried an estimated one and a quarter million passengers. Further downstream the Cutter ferry, worked for years by the Dant family, was also superseded by a footbridge, though it was brought back into use five years later when the bridge needed repairs.

Old Chesterton however still had to rely on the two ferries opposite the Green Dragon in Water Street. One was a heavily built craft that could carry horses and cattle across to Stourbridge Common, alongside it a light passenger ferry. It was May 1936 before the bridge was actually open. The smaller ferry was repositioned near Banham's boatyard and was used by the engineers constructing the latest link between Chesterton and Cambridge - Elizabeth bridge

Reg recalls that Grandfather Pauley usually charged 1d a crossing but used to double it whenever Midsummer fair was in operation – and demand was greater. The late A.F. Leach used to tell another of Pauley's tricks – how the ferryman would wait in his cottage until there were five or six people waiting – and thus he received more for his efforts.

Reg seeks help on another point for although the fair was a temporary attraction a circus was ever present. My researchers show that Keith and Tudor's circus enjoyed success on Midsummer Common – too long according to Cambridge authorities who fined them for overstaying their welcome in 1888. So they moved to a new building in nearby Auckland Road in 1896 where they showed the first films seen in Cambridge. I find regular reviews of their variety performances as I compile my "Looking Back" notes for 1898 – for example on 26th July there were glee singers, lady acrobats, lady gymnasts, a riding goat - that is to say a goat that rides, "the irresistibly idiotic and curiously contrasted clowns Frisky Freddy and

Jolly Jim, the sad and silent and the gay and garrulous". It was renamed the "Hippodrome" about 1904 presenting a mixture of entertainment aimed at the lower class of working men and women. It was probably not the grandest building in Cambridge and was later reopened as the "Gaiety" in 1913. Reg believes that during the 1914-18 war soldiers were billeted in the building and it was later used as a school health clinic.

He would like further information to add to the family's story, for his father James Dye was also involved in the entertainment industry, being stagemanager at the New Theatre in the 1930s. Can you help? Do you have memories of crossing the Cam by ferry – and why was "Cuckoo Dant" so nicknamed – write to Mike Petty at the News

PICTURE : William Pauley (with the white hat) on his ferry at the Fort St George, in c1926

Memories, 23rd July 1998, by Mike Petty

When Alan Phillips of Thurston, near Bury St Edmunds, went to a car boot sale recently he spotted a couple of small wooden boxes which looked interesting. Inside were old blackened pieces of glass. As he studied them he realised they were photographic negatives and some of them were of Cambridge scenes. He took them to an antique shop in Lavenham who put him in touch with me. Now, thanks to the News photographic department, he has prints of some of the views.

It is hard to date them accurately, since Cambridge does not change radically, but I estimate they were taken over 90 years ago, though who took them is a mystery that may never be solved.

One person who seldom has problems identifying old photographs is Ernie Gray of Littleport, who looks forward to the "Memory Way" feature in the Ely Weekly News. He spent his childhood at Pymoor where they moved in 1912 after the family were flooded out from Feltwell Fen. They lived in a cottage with a parafin lamp and outside toilet & fetched water from the 100-foot river, ¼ mile away – a long trudge with two heavy buckets. He got his first camera while still attending Pymoor school which was a mile away. He always walked there even after he got a bike – bought from a shop at Lt Downham which was featured in "Memory Way" recently. He'd saved hard to get the 10/- purchase money only to find he'd lost it on the walk there. His father lent him the missing money, which he had to repay from the 2/- a day he earned from working on the farm on Saturdays.

After he left school at 14 he soon found himself employed as horseman, taking over from his father. He had to rise at 5 am so that everything was ready for a 7 o'clock start to the working day. They broke for docky at 10.30 and had their hot meal after the day's work was done, at 3.30. Then it was time to work on his garden, or – during the war - don his uniform and turn out for Home Guard duty where he was a despatch rider. Ernie's memories are as clear as the photographs he still takes – though sadly his oldest snaps were cleared when he moved into his new accommodation.

Photographs too are the subject of an appeal from Nicholas Stanley, who is writing the story of Pye of Cambridge. "News" readers have already filled in many of the gaps but there's still one remaining.

During 1940 the Ministry became so alarmed that Pye's critical defence electronics work was located in Cambridge, so vulnerable to attack. They tried to persuade them to relocate to premises in Swansea. C.O. Stanley refused such a move, but decided instead to diversify

some of the production elsewhere. He recruited housewives, retired people and older children to work in village and church halls, or garages, assembling plugs for tank radio sets. It became a way of life for many local people for 4 or 5 years

Do you have any photographs of such groups working in a local venue that you would lend for the new book, and so fill a gap in Cambridge's war-time story? If so let me know and I will pass them on. As a reward Nicholas Stanley offers dinner for two at the Midsummer Restaurant to anybody who produces a photograph that is good enough to use!

Mention of the Hatton family of Gentles Yard, Northampton Street, Cambridge ("Memories" 9th July) has prompted reminiscences from Pear Loveday and Mrs J. Horton. Pear (nee Chapman) knew the next-door neighbour, Mrs Annie Twinn who minded bicycles for people from the surrounding villages who used to bike in to the market. She had previously been landlady of the Spotted Cow, on the opposite side of Northampton Street.

Mrs Horton knew the Hatton family well, as she used to live in the area in 1928 after her father got a job at Northfields the builders at the bottom of Castle Hill. Leslie Hatton, then known as Bib, became one of the first friends her brother made in Cambridge. She points out that I had wrongly located the entrance to Gentle's Yard – it was further along the street, opposite Honey Hill. The entrance I identified was into Tan Yard – so what can you tell me about that?

PICTURES : unchanging Cambridge – Alan Phillip's snap of St John's street, c1905

Changing Cambridge – the corner of Honey Hill, Northampton Street, with the Spotted Cow, c 1926

Memories, 30th July 1998, by Mike Petty

Browsing through the files of the Cambridge Daily News for August 1923 I chanced upon an article recording the memories of one of the old village's most important men. Ted Lowe of Stretham was shortly to celebrate his 65th year as a carrier. Aged 78 he was still making the regular journey to Ely. In all that time he had had but three conveyances and the existing cart was – like himself – going strong after 50 years, with only the wheels having been replaced.

On one occasion, he recalled, he was driving a party of 13 people home from Ely market when the back band of the harness broke and everybody was pitched into the road. With the exception of a few minor scratches nobody was hurt – though one man would insist he was dead. "I'm dead, I'm dead," he groaned and no one could alter his opinion. "Are you certain you're dead?" asked his wife. "Yes, certain," was the reply. "Then lie quiet", was the wife's comforting response

There is little written about such important characters, though Kathleen Skin of Cambridge has recorded the song of the Kingston carrier that she heard over 60 years ago. This gives, in verse, an account of his weekly itinerary. Monday saw him journey to Arrington and Wimpole, Tuesday it was Barton and Cambridge with farmstuff. Wednesday saw him en route to Orwell, Barrington, Harlton and Haslingfield, Thursday to Comberton and Gamlingay – "But we doon't dew such business, As we other days dew". Friday by contrast was busy : "To Royston we goo, With shoppers and traders, And livestock a few. The market's roight boisterous, All shouting and bawl, In the inns they are roisterous, Like any market stall".

On Saturday he was available for private hire, which he found a tiring day: “Oi goo tew their Grannies, Or tek foolks tow wed, But on Sundays Oi am resting, And Oi’m in me bed”

One group of equally-unrecorded, hardworking folk, are the College butlers. Last week I had the privilege of meeting one such : Thomas Moffett, until recently butler at Peterhouse. His is a remarkable story for he had a background of Dickensian poverty. Shipped off from South Shields, an area of deprivation and drunkenness, to a Surrey building whose very name described its purpose: The Royal Albert Orphan Asylum for Thoroughly Destitute Children. He came to Cambridge to join his uncle in 1939 first working at G.P. Hawkings bakery as errand boy delivering bread at 12/6 week; then got job in kitchens at Temperance Hotel, Newmarket road run by two sisters, Ward & Cox, for nearly twice the pay. Following a spell in the navy he got a job at the University Arms hotel in 1946 where he stayed for 26 ½ years. Overcoming the tragic loss of his first wife he then sought a second career with his second. Together they applied for jobs at Peterhouse – the college were impressed by her and took him too (he says). She became housekeeper in a college hostel whilst he rose to become college butler, and when forced by statute to retire was appointed to a new post – that of butler to the Master.

A Cambridge college is a world of its own and he has been lucky enough to serve and enjoy the fellowship of a number of brilliant and distinguished people. He has been privy to their conversations and their private thoughts and had to mediate in the inevitable difficulties that arise when a small group dine and live together for years. It has not all been sweetness and light, not every change has been welcomed. But although he has a marvellous memory for many things he has also a well-developed professional amnesia – what the Butler saw is safe with Thomas Moffett

He has however shared his remarkable early life in his autobiography “A canny lad”, just published by Erskin press of Banham, Norfolk. He had to be bullied and cajoled to set it down and I hope he can be encouraged to produce a second volume on his Cambridge career – though he has enjoyed it so much it could sadly not be entitled “Peterhouse blues”

Do you remember the carrier – or tales of college life – write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories, by Mike Petty 6 August 1998

This week’s Memories seeks your help on things musical. Jim Moore has contacted me for help with a radio programme he is putting together on the Cambridge dance halls – and this seems a topic that has not properly been researched. Trawling through my memory I can think of such places as the Dorothy, Corn Exchange, Guildhall and Victoria where dances were held. Then there was the Rendezvous/Rex dance hall in Magrath Avenue, the Premier in Union Lane, Chesterton. There was another on Mill Road – was it the Embassy?

Just remembering the name is one thing, but Jim wants to talk to people who actually used to go there and who have their own memories – people like Dorothy Kidman of Cambridge who used to sneak out to go to the Premier and met her late husband, Jack, at the Rendezvous. And is there anybody who actually used to play in the dance bands? Did any of them actually make recordings? Time is of the essence here so if you can help please ring Jim Moore on Cambridge 327634 – as well as writing to me at the News.

Whilst thinking music I am most grateful to Mr & Mrs Shelley of Trumpington who have lent me a couple of most interesting photographs which I will feature. The first is this one of the Cambridge Town Band taken, we think, somewhere between 1928 and 1932. Some of the names are Mott, Hawkes, & Bullman whilst the conductor was Mr Robert E. Austin. Cecil Fordham was a singer. I believe the Band started in 1900 at which time there were five other

local bands – the Albion, Salvation Army, The Territorial and Police bands and the one reckoned to be best of the lot – the Cambridge Railway Band.

But the Cambridge Band had considerable success playing at everything from local sports and fairs to promenade concerts and garden parties. The highlight of the year was the visit to the Crystal Palace for the national brass band championships. At the end of the 1920s they recruited a new member, Leonard Lamb, an out-of-work pattern maker from Oldham. In his time they went on to win the fourth section of the national championships and the East Anglian brass band championship three years running. All this I learn from an article in the *News* in January 1973 when Stanley Brown of Landbeach was interviewed – one of five brothers who were mainstays of the Band. Do you recognise anybody hiding under their remarkable headgear or know when it was taken?

More memories of Gentles Yard, Northampton Street, have been received. Iris Ward of Cambridge used to live in one of the cottages and has snaps of her two children in the yard. When they moved down to Tan Yard Sam and Angela Ward took their cottage. She also remembers that there was an artist from Shelford who had his studios in the yard, but can't recall his name. Can you help?

Earlier in July I mentioned the Cambridge Albion Children Fishing Club matches. From a cutting from the *Cambridge Chronicle* in August 1929 I see that three hundred children complete with fishing rods assembled on Parker's Piece. Led by the band of the Boys Brigade they marched off to the railway station and were transported free of charge to Ely in the first post-war revival of the competition. On arrival at the riverbank the sight of so many youngsters struggling with their fishing equipment must have been memorable. Tangled lines, missing bait, misplaced maggots and broken rods were commonplace, whilst so many hooks were lost that at the end the organisers ran out. Amazingly many of them even caught fish with G. Cockerton getting the biggest catch, and S. Moule winning the girl's prize for the biggest fish. Then they had to be fed and got home again. It must have been a tremendous undertaking repeated year on year at different venues – does anybody remember it?

Memories, 13th August 1998, by Mike Petty

My appeal last week for memories of the dance-band days struck a chord with several readers, bringing in a wealth of information.

Ted Cash recalls dancing at the Beaconsfield Hall, whilst Percy Seeby from Trumpington has particular memories of the Embassy ballroom in Mill Road. He writes: "I played tenor sax in Freddy Webbs' band at this venue from 1952 to 1957. The manager of the Embassy was Arthur "Fiddler" Goodwill, a Newmarket race horse trainer. Business however began to decline as T.V. became more popular and the hall eventually closed and became a concert warehouse. Before this I was a member of the revolutionary "Down Beats" band which was the first to feature the then new "Be Bop" music in the area"

Megan Williams from Mill Road, Cambridge, also "read with interest your article on dance bands in Cambridge. My late husband, Eric Williams played at the Dorothy Café for many years with Percy Cowell. Later he formed his own band – the "Lyricals" performing at the Guildhall and also at private functions. I have enclosed a photograph, (which I feature) but unfortunately cannot find a recording. My husband is the one playing the accordion, he was also a competent pianist and organist." Eric died very suddenly last Christmas

From Chesterton Road, Cambridge, comes a most interesting letter from Timothy Moore, who obviously played a full part in the music scene. He writes: "From various programmes,

press cutting and posters and the “Life History Album” started by my father (Prof. G.E. Moore) at my birth and later continued by me I’ve dredged the following information. In 1943 I played piano frequently with Wally Scott’s dance band. From October ’43 I played with the Ambassadors Swing Band (reformed in Nov 1944 as the New Ambassadors Band”).

His album includes a souvenir programme of the Melody Maker Cambridgeshire Dance Band Championship in the Guildhall in August 1945. Competitors had to play first a foxtrot, then a waltz and finally a quickstep. At that time he was in the “Cambridge Rhythm Club Quintet” which came third. The winning band was the Downbeats which he then joined, playing with them in “Re-Vaudeville” at the A.D.C in January 1946. Of that band at least three people are still playing in Cambridge he believes. By the next year’s competition he was in another band, the Calinesen Quintet and judged the best pianist in the contest.

Some indication of the wealth of music at the time is contained in another of his cuttings. On 17th May 1946 at the Dorothy Café, Cambridge University Rhythm Club presented a May Ball from 8 to 1am. Playing were the Augmented C.U.R.C. Dance Orchestra, Percy Cowell’s Band and guest bands “The Downbeats” (featuring Percy Seeby), The Cambridge University Swing Cubs and Tim Moore’s Jazz men.

All this has been passed on to Jim Moore (no relation to Tim) whose programme on the Cambridge Dance Band Days is scheduled for BBC Radio Cambridgeshire on August Bank Holiday.

Mention of Ted Lowe, the Stretham carrier (“Memories” 30 July) has prompted a letter from Edna Milne of Gt Shelford, who tells me Ted was her grandfather. She still has in her possession the whip that he was holding in the photograph. Others recall that Ted was a great one for his tales, some of which seem somewhat remarkable. For example he once witnessed the remarkable spectacle of three trees being almost blown down at Stretham by a terrific gale – but then the wind veered and blew them upright again! The story might seem a little exaggerated but three other inhabitants claimed they actually witnessed the spectacle and the trees were known for many years as “The Three Wonders”

Whilst on things botanical Keith Jordan has written following my “Looking Back” article for 21st July 1923 about the Vinery Road allotments in Cambridge. “It appeared just as we were researching into the history of the allotments. Records show that 121 people had applied for land, 9 of them asking for 15 poles each”. This is testimony to the hard-working gardeners of those times, for nowadays our village has plenty of unlet allotments, with people finding even half a single plot far too big for their needs – or energy.

By coincidence that evening the 1948 extracts featured the removal of wartime defences on the eastern side of Cambridge – which Keith believes relates to Burnside allotments. He writes, “The middle part of the current allotments was apparently used for tank traps during the war. This accounts for the poor condition of the soil in this area (a lot of chalky clay sub-soil), caused by the excavations. I am not sure when they were filled in. It would be interesting to know if any maps exists of the defences, unless it’s still secret information!” Can you help fill in this gap in their history?

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Tony Chapman of Stanesfield Road responds to my request for information on Tan Yard, Northampton Street, an area he knew well until 1932. Beyond a row of cottages was the slaughterhouse of Warrington’s the butchers, where it was not unusual to see flocks of sheep, small herds of cows and pigs being led or driven to their fate. Mrs J. Horton of Wulfstan Way remembers this took place on Mondays – wash day.

Memories, August 20th, 1998 by Mike Petty

More dance band memories have been arriving. Mrs Elizabeth Chapman of Harston used to dance so regularly at the Rex in Magrath Avenue, Cambridge, in the mid-forties and early fifties that if she missed a session her father used to say, “I shall have the manager round here wanting to know where you are!” There was no staying out late for dances finished at 11pm and everybody left at the interval for a drink at the Carpenter’s Arms or Blackamoors Head nearby. She recalls that the old Masonic Hall in Corn Exchange Street (remember that?) used to have well-known jazz bands such as Humphrey Littleton and Duncan Whyte.

Elizabeth may have danced with Dave Dilley of Cambridge for he too was a regular dancer at the Rex, Embassy and Guildhall at that time. He remembers many of the “name bands” who visited the Rex including Harry Gold, Sid Phillips, Vic Lewis and, one evening, the exciting Tommy Sampson band. “It was a very loud band. There were 49 people at the Rex that night. After the interval only 12 remained”

Sid High of Waterbeach recalls Josephine’s Band, formed by Jo Clarke and consisting of seven people with Jo’s husband Nobby on saxophone. He was thought to be the first person in Cambridge to own and play a soprano sax. Their son, Frankie Clarke, followed in their footsteps playing double bass and became well-known in the London area playing with the big bands and often going on tour with American visiting artists

Graham Taylor of Trumpington recalls the Ted Heath Band who came to Cambridge in the early 1950s with vocalists such as Lita Rosa and Dickie Valentine – whose autograph he got by waiting at the stage door of the New Theatre. He can also add some details about the Cambridge Town Band whose photographs – wearing Bear Skins – I featured on 6th August; he writes, “My father was a cornet player with them during the war when they were part of the Home Guard 5th Battalion. The conductor then was Wally Cantt and when he died Ron Mathews took over for a short spell. Their main task then consisted of morale boosting parades to lead visiting troops – Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders from the railway station to their billets in Cambridge”. (This incidentally is another unrecorded aspect of war-time – did you have soldiers billeted on you, how did it work, did it cause problems – or lead to romance?) They also played to the Americans at Wimpole Park when it was a Hospital (– any memories of this?)

On the subject of uniform Graham remembers Cambridge Band tunics were army style but as musicians they wore a Lyre emblem on the sleeve. When the war was over the band were issued with red tunics and berets and eventually they had flat caps

The mystery headgear is solved however by Mrs G. Murfett of Cambridge. “I can tell you that the photo was taken at the New Theatre where the Cambridge Band was playing a Guards Band on stage for a week. I know this because Stan Brown is my dad’s brother. He is the only one left and will be 90 this year”. The picture shows her father Cyril, together with Harold, Frank and Stan Brown. Keeping it in the family she adds “My sister and I also played in the Band for a while; at that time it was known as the British Legion Band, as they were the sponsors for a while”.

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Mrs Gladys Davenport of Sawston has staked her bid to the free dinner on offer for any picture of war-time outworkers for Pye’s chosen for the book now being written. She has a snap of a group who used to assemble equipment in outbuildings at The Grove, Sawston, which belonged to the Stanley’s. There’s some doubt as to whether it was taken during the

war or around 1948-49. Do you recognise anybody – or yourself. There's still time for other pictures of this vital war-time activity so turn out the family photographs.

And whilst on Sawston Julia Falkner-Tompkins has sent me a chapter from her biography of Keith Falkner, one of England's finest 20th-century singers. He was born in the village in 1900, the son of the schoolmaster of what is today the John Charles Falkner Primary School – a post he held for thirty-five years. Perhaps you remember father or son. If so the book, published by Thames Publishing at £14.95 might be of interest.

Finally another school-day snap to puzzle over from Mrs Shelley of Trumpington. This group of young musicians was photographed outside St Barnabas school, Cambridge in the 1940s when Miss Foster was head. The conductor is Christopher Hodges and the band includes evacuees. Can you identify anybody?

PICTURES : A group of outworkers for Pye's, taken at Sawston about 1948
School band at St Barnabas School in the 1940s

Memories 27th August 1998, by Mike Petty

Do you remember seeing elephants in St Andrew's Street? Not so long ago they heralded the arrival of the circus as they paraded from the station to Midsummer Common in the days when animals were an essential part of the show.

Just 100 years ago Cambridge was preparing for "The Greatest Show on Earth", "the worlds largest, grandest, best amusement institution" – Barnum and Bailey's Circus. Advertisements in the Cambridge Daily News extolled the wonders to be witnessed. There would be wild beasts, the funniest clowns on earth, stupendous mid-air feats, 400 blue-ribboned horses and Joanna, the only giantess gorilla in captivity.

They would be matched by a world's fair of modern marvels – giants, midgets, dwarfs, tattooed people, armless and legless men and seven open dens of trained wild beasts.

Cambridge's own, permanent neat little Tudor's circus in Auckland Road prepared to compete although "Last night was not the occasion on which the average cold-fearing rheumatic-dreading Britisher would elect to plough through muddy Cambridge streets to spend a few short-lived hours at a place of amusement", commented the News on 30th August 1898. But still they turned out to see the jolly clowns Rabbit and Frisky Freddy, to admire the skills of the acrobatic performers and listen to the sweet-toned voice of Cissie Warner, a dusky little maiden, apparently about eleven years old, who "sings coon songs with a delicate grace seldom to be found in dancing ladies of a maturer age"

But when Barnum's great circus finally hit town 15,000 packed round the vast area, perspiring, laughing, cheering and perspiring again. The reporter enjoyed the bearded lady, the dog-faced man, the double-wonder (combined brother and sister). He marvelled at the footballing dog, the pig races, educated elephants and the four or five other shows all going on at once; "the camera of our memory holds only imperfect slides of a myriad sights taken with a lightning shutter".

But he was concerned about the welfare of the animals, for Summer had broken out and while the elastic skinned man and the skeleton dude were favoured with "their lives and experiences (printed) wherewith to fan themselves", "some of the animals clearly had the hump over it" and, "the hyenas swore at the Cambridge folk in the severe language of some distant Billingsgate"

Then it was all over, the American circus packed its bags and headed off on the next leg of its tour and Tudor's had the town to itself.

Fifty years go, August 1948, the Americans were once more in the news, for more than 700 airmen had landed at Lakenheath, "where 31 giant silver Super-Fortress bombers now lined the runways of this big new R.A.F. station". The airfield had opened in June 1941 as a satellite for Mildenhall and remained operational as an RAF station until May 1944. Now it was in use again, this time by the Americans. They found the accommodation less than ideal – having to use RAF huts and eat RAF food, but already semi-prefabricated buildings were shooting up and the runways were being lengthened.

Many of the airmen knew Cambridge well, having been based at Bassingbourn during the war. They shared their memories of the Baron of Beef, the Rex ballroom, the Dorothy – and the Cambridge girls. They wondered what Market Hill and Petty Cury would be like, now the lights were back on, having only known it in the blackout. The reporter looked around "to see if we could find two airmen dressed alike, but without success. Yes it sure did seem as though the Yanks hadn't changed"

Nobody could say how long they'd stay, though "it looks like we are here for a spell". Fifty years later they still are.

Other bases proved less permanent. The American presence at Alconbury is now only a memory, but one enhanced by a photograph of Wally Scott and his band playing away in front of a most futuristic backdrop. For this engagement the band had to hire transport, but, as Marjorie Scott told me, for those bookings nearer Wally's Girton home he would bike, his music slung one side of the cross-bar, the trumpet the other. Then it was back home in the early hours only to be up at crack of dawn to bike to Chiver's dairy on Pound Hill. There he would collect his horse and cart and deliver milk to the Milton Road area of Cambridge – probably humming the latest waltz as he trotted along.

Note: tape-recorded interview with Mrs Scott filed TC62

Memories 3rd September 1998, by Mike Petty

Terry Holloway from Marshalls writes to seek further details about the flying exploits of a 24-year-old Cambridge housewife, Mrs Richarda Morrow-Tait who set off from the airfield on 18th August 1948 in an attempt to be the first woman to fly round a light aircraft round the world. She was accompanied by her navigator and co-pilot Mr Michael Townsend of Cranmer Road, Cambridge who had served during the war with RAF transport command and made several trans-Atlantic flights. They carried only a minimum amount of baggage but included in it was a .303 rifle and ammunition, as part of the flight would be over uninhabited territory. Maps and baggage stowed away, including some sandwiches cut for Mrs Morrow-Tait by her husband the two climbed into the aircraft, an ex-RAF Proctor aircraft which had been thoroughly overhauled and fitted with a reconditioned engine. Her husband said, "She is a wonderful person, full of courage and determination"

The dream of completing the trip in six weeks soon went sour for the very next day her plane was damaged when landing at Marseilles. She told Reuter's correspondent, "I hit a small ditch owing to bad visibility. The propeller was twisted, a wing damaged and the undercarriage also suffered. Our plan for a round-the-world flight in 200 hours is no longer realisable. I think I will probably go back to London and start again". When a C.D.N. reporter told her husband of her accident he said, "I don't care twopence about her abandoning the flight. I expect she will have another go"

Start again she did, and the columns of the “News” began to carry regular snippets charting the progress of her journey. A year and a day after she left Marshall’s she was finally home, landing at Croydon airfield – though not in the same plane, and without her navigator, having made the final 1,200 mile hop on her own”

They had got three-quarters of the way when the Proctor was wrecked when she had to make a forced landing on the Alaskan highway. “I was nearly home and just could not quit” she said. She sang in nightclubs, modelled and gave talks to raise money for a new plane. Well-wishers in Seattle and Vancouver subscribed 500 dollars to buy a Vultee Valiant replacement aircraft which she again named “Thursday’s Child” for it – like the first one “had far to go”. But, she told the reporter, “I cannot afford to keep it, there is about £24 customs duty to pay on it and it would be necessary to get an import licence”. Does anybody know what happened to it?

When interviewed at her home at St Regis, Chesterton Road, Cambridge she said she’d made the trip because “I wanted to be the first woman to fly round the world and was “narked” because Britain did not seem to be doing too well in international sport and seemed to be getting effete”. Now she was happily reunited with her husband and baby daughter but had not given up all flying ambitions: “I hope to continue flying by joining the W.R.A.F.V.R., but my main job is going to be looking after our home” What became of the gallant flyer?

Other flying women have been recalled by Harry Bye of Ely. Pauline Gower and Dorothy Spicer were friends of Amy Johnson – indeed they had plans to go into business together, but when Amy continued her record flying the other girls set up a company to give joy-rides to the public, Pauline as the pilot and Dorothy keeping the plane in good trim. They joined the flying circuses which visited the Cambridge area in the early 1930s. The programme always began with a formation flight on which passengers were carried, so that everybody around would know there was an air circus in town. There would be balloon bursting, paper cutting, bottle shooting from the air – an endless supply of beer bottles lined up in front of a screen at which the pilot fired as she flew past. The bottle always smashed (but, say Harry, the gun fired blanks and the bottle was hit from behind the screen with a sledgehammer). Later in the ‘30’s the girls based themselves at Hunstanton, living in a gipsy caravan on Searle’s donkey field and giving flights to holidaymakers.

Harry used to bike miles from his home at Shippea Hill to watch the lucky passengers make their flights, but never had the money to take a trip himself. On one occasion Dorothy Spicer – now well-used to the sight of the lad – offered him a cut-price trip, but that would have meant a long bike back home without any money at all and he had to decline. Harry was left with a love of flying and decided that he would join the RAF when the time came. He changed his mind after witnessing horrific crashes during the war, which brought home to him the bravery of those magnificent women in their flying machines

Jack Back has other memories of flying from Marshalls. “During the early part of the war the pilots used to get bored. When they were flying they would go over the fens and annoy the farmers there. They would see a tractor and then fly across the field at “0” feet and hop over the tractor. One day we had a Tiger Moth come back from buzzing a farmer and his undercarriage was peppered with 12 bore shots. The old farmer had let fly with his gun! So what we did was get some yellow “dope” and paint over the plane quickly ... before the police arrived, because they came round looking at all the kites to see if there were any gun pellets in them!”

Elizabeth Chapman of Harston was sorting through some old photographs she came across one which caught her eye. It shows the Cambridge Water Polo Team – but can you recognise any of the faces, or supply further details?

Mrs Caroline Henman of Gamlingay, now 83, writes: "I used to dance with Josephine's Gipsy Band. It was a great band. A Miss Dorothy Parcell from Orwell played in the band. She was my school mate. I also danced to the Ted Heath band. They were two great bands in those days of so long ago". June Carter recalls another band, The Stirlingaires. "I think the leader was the drummer, Len Stevenson & they played the Guildhall on Saturday nights. As a member of staff at Rose's Fashion Centre (remember that?) we went to all the dances you have written about. They also had dances at the YMCA, Alexandra St, but only records, not a band. Jean Pope of Comberton writes: "I remember being taken by my mother to tea and coffee dances at the Beaconsfield Hall in Milford Street, off Sturton Street in Cambridge. The band was called Sons Accordion Band, I wonder if any other readers remember them"

PICTURES :

Pauline Gower and Dorothy Spicer & their Spartan aircraft, 1934

Harry Bye's snap of Pauline Gower and Dorothy Spicer's plane – note the loudspeaker to give running commentaries

Cambridge Water Polo Team – a fine body of men

Memories, 10 September 1998, by Mike Petty

Many people remember the Civic Restaurant which started life as a British Restaurant in the Pitt Club, Jesus Lane, before moving to the old Post office building at the corner of Petty Cury, Cambridge. Its closure in 1972 – during the mayoralty of Jean Barker – now Baroness Trumpington, left a gap in the facilities enjoyed especially by the older Cambridge resident needing a place for an inexpensive snack in a city centre more used to catering for more affluent visitors.

This role was continued for a while by the Blackbird Club at the Unitarian Church before a Centre for the Elderly was opened in Parsons Court, beside the Corn Exchange. Here in the somewhat intimidating city centre is a friendly place where the over-sixties can be assured of a cup of tea, piece of toast or snack and – most importantly - good company, while they gather up their energy before taking the bus back home.

It was there that memories turned to a sport which it seems has united generations of youngsters – roller skating. Whilst the story of ice skating in the area has been often told the story of the wheeled version needs to be pieced together.

It seems that the modern roller skate was the invention of one James L. Plympton who opened the first rink at Newport, Rhode Island in 1866. Here in Cambridge the University and Town Roller Skating Rink opened in December 1909 in Magrath Avenue – it later became the Rink Cinema, then the Rendezvous and Rex. As a cartoon postcard in the Cambridgeshire Collection shows the sport became very popular, whole families taking part together. Several other rinks were set up, including one at the Victoria Assembly Rooms, Market Hill. There was a Cambridge Roller Skaters society and fancy dress carnivals were held in 1911 and 1912.

Then the story seems to be forgotten – or just unrecorded, until in April 1951 when roller skating restarted at the Rex Ballroom to be followed at the Corn Exchange in July 1956. It was about this time that I remember being the first person to roller-skate on Stretham school playground, though I never picked up the courage to try the roller-rink at the end of Hunstanton pier – and anyway the wheels kept coming off.

By 1970 the sport was back in fashion. The *News* for May that year reported how as many as 200 young people regularly crowded into the Cambridge Corn Exchange to take advantage of evening skating sessions. At 2s. (10p) skating was cheaper than the cinema and besides there was "nowhere to go on Monday" said young teenager Yvonne Stewart, while her friend Carol

Casey of Newmarket Road added: "It gets packed here, but you meet lots of people". They included Karen Lewis of Akeman street and Kersti Robinson of Herschel Road who was sure that it was good for the figure and reducing weight.

Some insight into the earlier story of skating appeared in October 1970. "In the days when Elvis was king, quiffs were in fashion and the permissive society had not been discovered a roller-skating craze swept the country, like hula-hoops a few years later. Night after night, young people would do to the converted dance halls or purposely-built skating rinks and sweep gracefully around in ever-decreasing circles as Gene Vincent or Presley belted out their latest numbers". But, it went on : "A former Teddy Boy happening upon the Corn Exchange in Cambridge could be forgiven for thinking that he had returned to the scene of former glories. One more Elvis rules the roost, skaters zip across the parquet floor and chewing gum and Coke are sold in quantity"

For the most part it was youngsters showing the way, with the music loud to drown the rumble of the rollers on the wooden floor, and miniskirts and flared trousers flying in the breeze. But on Monday nights there would be a fair sprinkling of older people who acquired their skating skill in the hey-day of the sport in the 1950s. A helper said: "You get all sorts of people here. A group of fellows came in the other evening looking as though they should be in their club bar rather than a skating rink. But they got the skates and pottered round quite happily for a time. Even occasional "parades" of Rockers seem to annoy nobody and add colour to the proceedings"

Roller skating stopped at the Corn exchange in April 1982 and continued at the Kelsey Kerridge sports hall. But by then the youngsters were into skateboarding, with a skateboard park opening at Cheddars Lane in 1978, and closing the next year. Now it is roller-blades – continuing the old fascination for wheels on the heels.

So what can you add to the story of roller-skating in the area. And what was a Teddy Boy anyway? Perhaps I should ask them at the Parson's Lane centre, before that too disappears into the memory – or can you tell me?"

.....

Mrs Win Griggs of Longstanton writes with her memories: "In 1945 I started work for the Rural Food Office based in rooms at Christ's college, later a large house at the Parker Street traffic lights and later still at Dr Salisbury's vacated house opposite Robert Sayles. Then the Rural and City food offices joined up and we were then in the old post office on the corner of Petty Cury, opposite Lloyd's Bank. I remember helping to issue ration books in the Corn Exchange"

.....

Another Marshall's memory from Jack Back of Cambridge, recorded by H.Wallace Badcock. "In the real old days we had a boy called "Goss" – he was gormless. One day they had to change a wheel on a Gipsy Moth, or renew a tyre, but when they put it back Goss fitted it, but it had a castellated nut on the end and he couldn't 'split pin' it. The kite took off, and unfortunately this nut was on the side of the craft so that as the wheel went round the nut would undo. The plane got a fair way off the deck when the wheel dropped off! We had an old fire tender there, then, a real old one. One of the old boys got hold of the wheel which had dropped off and stood on the fire tender and held the wheel up to try and tell the pilot that his wheel was off ... there was no radio in those days. The pilot made a good landing though ... just as if he was making a three-point landing ... but on one wheel and tail skid. Of course when he stopped over she went. I don't know what happened to Goss over that!"

PICTURES : roller skating in the Corn Exchange, May 1970
Mayor Jean Barker at the closure of the Civic restaurant, 1972

Memories 17th September 1998, by Mike Petty

Two stories carried in the News recently have prompted memories of not-so-long ago in Cambridge.

Whenever people reminisce about the present Lion Yard area before redevelopment they remember the Lion Hotel - and the flower seller who used to sit in the doorway (I have never seen a photograph of him in action - can you help?), MacFisheries - though people remember the name but forget the smell of Billingsgate which used to hang around the alleyways off Petty Cury - and of course Heffers even though it has now been closed for 26 years.

In September 1970 over 400 people queued for the opportunity to buy bargain stock left over from their long stay in that shop and which was not considered appropriate for their new premises opposite Trinity College, opened by Lord Butler.

Now comes the announcement that the Heffer empire is up for sale. Their name has been synonymous with Cambridge bookselling for 100 years and must hold memories for many generations of Cambridge residents and students alike. Do you have stories to share – or did you pick up your bargains every week at David's bookstall on the corner of the market?

The second item was the interview with Hank Marvin of The Shadows fame who is due to return to Cambridge once more to give a concert at the Corn Exchange. In it mention was made of the earlier visits of the Shads as part of the combined pop group visits of the 1960's. Then the venue was the Regal cinema and youngsters queued to hear their favourites of the day. But how many groups do you remember seeing at the Regal. Some of course are easy - the Beatles, the Rolling Stones but you can come up with a more complete list, and what sticks in your memory of those days when reporters condemned the sounds made by the musicians but praised the audience whose screams drowned out the music they had come to hear. And is it you in his queue at the Regal?

Memories continue to arrive of another type of music – the dance bands

Pam Pettit of Cambridge remembers going to dances at the Beaconsfield Hall with her mother and grandmother. Emily Pink, their near neighbour in Abbey Road, played in Son's Accordion Band which gave an extra interest.

Mrs M. Stevenson of Cherry Hinton writes to say that her late husband, Len Stevenson, played with the "Railway Silver Prize Band" and as a semi-professional drummer with the "Melody Makers", "Cambrians" and "Stirlingaires" throughout Cambridge and at several of the American camp bases. She has photographs of several of the bandleaders, F. Lofts, B. Gordon and L. Tibbs.

Jim Laughton records his memories of an old school chum in the late 1930s named Gordon Hunt who together with "Yorky" Robinson formed the Kestrels Dance Band, who dressed resplendently in light blue satin tunics. After the war they reformed and played for many years as one of the popular "Old Time" bands.

Eddie Ramonde of St Neots writes: "Prior to joining the RAF in 1943 I shared the Hammond Organ spot with Don Lorusso at the Rex Ballroom. The band was made up of local musicians who were either waiting for their call-up paper to arrive or exempt from the forces. It was a popular band and the tea dances were the highlight – always packed to capacity. You would never have known we were halfway through Word War II. I wonder how many members of

that band are still around?" I wonder if they are still playing – Eddie not plays a Yamaha Election Organ, still giving pleasure to those who remember the days when, he says, music was music.

Harry Bye of Ely can substantiate Jack Back's account of British pilots' high jinks. He writes: "I remember a Tiger Moth with a crew of two dive bombed some estate workers near Shippea Hill station on Chivers estate who were cutting cabbages. Some threw cabbages at the plane, one reached a height above the plane, fortunately the pilot was not hit. "Popeye" Lucas, the New Zealand Wellington bomber squadron leader often flew over "hedge hopping", waving to some of the workers he had met in the Plough Inn at Lakenheath the night before." He also has memories of the problems of parachutes. "In 1932 at Littleport annual show I flew in a De Havilland Gipsy Moth for 5/- just before a parachutist was killed. His harness became tangled on the rudder of the plane which caused it to crash and the pilot was severely injured." Not put off he went to one of Alan Cobham's air shows at Ely when he witnessed a parachute descent from the air during a trip in a Fox Moth which cost him 7/-. Later he flew in an Avro 504, expending another 4/- of his hard-earned cash. If you have recollections of air flights in early days of aviation I should be delighted to hear from you

Memories, 24th September 1998, by Mike Petty

Roy Coxon, one-time goalkeeper for Cambridge Town Football Club, has called to say he recognised himself in the picture of the queue of young fans for the Regal cinema pop concert in last week's "Memories". Whilst others are dressed in ankle-socks and scarves, Roy is the one in the middle with his scooter helmet and gauntlets. These were essential equipment when you were a Vespa rider in the 1960's – and especially when you were a member of the 12-strong police scooter patrol.

He had joined the police in 1950 and recognises his colleague, Jock Urquart on the right. He thinks it likely that the sergeant on the left was Tim Gedge.. The normal-looking police helmets were reinforced to give extra safety in event of accidents

Like others he used to patrol the town centre in the days before personal police radios. He was supposed to be at certain places at certain times so the Sergeant could be there to meet him. But if he were needed urgently he had to watch out for the blue flashing lights on the top of the police telephone boxes. These were sited outside Heffers in Sidney Street, near Mitcham's corner, at the Cattle Market and in Trumpington – but were there others, and did you ever have occasion to open the door and use the phone to contact the police?

Rosemary Preston of Cherry Hinton was one of those who used to queue for the pop concerts at the Regal, though, we writes: "One memory I have is of skipping technical college one afternoon with my friends and going to see a show. We got a lad to climb up a drain pipe in the passageway at the side and he came down and opened a fire exit to let us in. We ran up the circle and saw a band on stage rehearsing. We then went through to the restaurant where some of the performers were eating before getting thrown out."

Another memory she has is of a Beatles concert. "We heard nothing because of the screaming, but had a really good time just seeing them. They had the Shelford rugby club at the front of the stage to stop people trying to get onto it. The next morning my mother came to my room with a copy of the Daily Express in her hand with a photograph of me and a couple of my friends at the concert screaming. The caption was "City of learning and culture bends to the sound". The date November 27th, 1963. I still have this cutting"

She also has autographs of some of the acts, including Chris Montez, Tommy Roe. Billy Fury, Eden Kane, Dave Clarke and various others. She had Billy J. Kramer's autograph on the

back of a dinner menu for the University Arms Hotel on Sunday 11th August 1963. Dinner was 15/-

Just to test the memory I print a picture of one of the stars Rosemary mentions, with a couple of fans. Can you identify anyone?

Whilst researching my "Looking Back" column I found a most interesting account in the CDN for 21st September 1948 of a radio broadcast from the Barley Mow, Histon of which I could only give a snippet in my daily column.

Various people took part in "Country Magazine" including Reg Robinson of Church Farm, Babraham "rather an old fashioned farmer" who told how he disliked the combine harvest – "I do believe in horses and stock" he said. "What grows what my farm I like to back into the land by feeding straw to cattle and treading straw into muck". Jake Smith of Willingham who had charge of the pumping station recalled how his engine pumped for 336 hours during the 1947 floods, "everything went through the pumps, including a tremendous lot of fish"

Fred Toates of Histon was the village rat and rabbit man, with wasps and hornets as a summer-time addition. "Funny things how the hornets get into all the posh houses", he ruminated. "Doctors and Parsons and such cases". Then Mrs Young Nightingale of Girton spoke of her gleaning activities, "A job you've got to like because it's very tiring. If you don't keep your back down you won't get much".

Ron Butler, a Swaffham Prior agricultural worker told how a bog oak 96 yards long was found buried where he was working and the programme was wound up by "Admiral" Ben Lee of the Royal Sovereign barge belonging to the Ely beet sugar factory. At 62 he was the oldest waterman around these parts, born on a barge and has spent his life on one. Now he was in charge of the six tugs and 84 barges of the sugar beet factory.

The broadcast disappeared into the ether & was later repeated in the General Overseas Service of the BBC. I wonder if anybody now remembers their parents taking part or whether the programme exists in some form apart from the report in the C.D.N.

Did you ever dig up a bog oak or drive a sugar-beet barge and what was "gleaning". And what about other countrywork before everything was mechanised – memories please.

Mrs Carol Reeve from 66 Brookfield Avenue, Poynton, Cheshire, has written following a "Looking Back" article in July 1923 which refers to Burwell Village College players giving a performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in a clunch pit belonging to Dr Ennion. She would like to know just where this pit was and how it came to belong to Dr Octavius Ennion, who was her grandfather. Their daughter, Ruth, was her mother who married Dr Dick Gilbert and lived in Bottisham until the 1950s. Now Carol is writing up the family story. She has already discovered that Bottisham was "invaded" in turn by Austrian refugees, cockney evacuees, Army tanks, the RAF, the USAAF, the Belgians and finally Polish school boys but would welcome any assistance any readers can offer in the form of reminiscences, old photographs or cuttings.

Memories 1st October 1998, by Mike Petty

RECENT pictures featured in *Memories* have had readers identifying faces - some of them their own.

Diane Barnes (nee Emmines) of Elizabeth Way, Cambridge, writes : "I was most surprised when reading the News to see myself over 30 years ago! Yes, I'm the girl in the front of the queue by the Regal cinema holding the gondola basket."

These baskets were high fashion at the time recalls Jenny Brading of Brampton, for she had one too. And could have had one since as she saw one in an antiques fair a few weeks ago. The blonde girl in the front row was Bridget - but Diane forgets the surname - while to her right was Judy Gordon whose dad, Bill, played in several Cambridge bands, including the Pye Dance band. They played functions in the pavilion at the back of St Andrew's Road on the Pye playing fields.

So why were the girls there? Diane again: "If my memory is correct it was in the autumn of 1963 and were queuing not to hear the Beatles but to buy tickets for the concert. In fact I wasn't the first in the queue as my mum wouldn't let me camp overnight as many did - I was only about 12!" It was all worth while, "the concert was great - Paul was my favourite - though of course we didn't hear much 'cos we were all screaming so loudly."

Deborah Smith of Cambridge was another 60's pop picker and has posters to prove it. "My friend and I queued out all night to get tickets for the Rolling Stones, she having told her father that my father had agreed and vice versa. The police were there all night to watch over us!

Diane, however, remembers that being small was an advantage where the police were concerned for she managed to duck under their guard to get the autographs of The Small Faces.

Max Rees of Birdwood Road was there too. He writes: "Thanks for evoking memories of the concerts held at the Regal. I was very happy to see the Hollies, although we were more interested in the support act, The Small Faces, who were just superb.

"Most memorable however was the great Stevie Wonder. Other gigs I enjoyed were Amen Corner at the Dorothy Ballroom, and the Yardbirds and Spencer Davis Group. Ones I missed, but would love to have attended were Jimi Hendrix (Dorothy), The Who (Corn Exchange), Queen (Tech) & Oasis (Boat House). Also many people who went on to become Blues legends played at the Alley Club and the Red Cow in the Lion Yard area."

Earlier Max had been with his father to see Billy Fury, whose picture I featured last week along with two young fans. They have been identified as Janice Bilton (now Watkinson) of Swards End, Saffron Walden, and Peta Truscott.

Just to keep the memories flowing a little more I reproduce another group with their fans and one of Deborah's flyers for a concert in November 1964. She finishes her letter. "I love the nostalgia items about Cambridge. I wish there was a photo book covering the 40's, 50's, 60's. There is - my *Images of Cambridge* published by Breedon Books with the *Cambridge Evening News*, which covers the period 1900-2000 and has pictures of the Stones, Beatles and cheering teenagers selected from the *News* photographic files.

Memories 8th October 1998 by Mike Petty

MY APPEAL for memories of gleaning has brought memories from Joan Wick, of Comberton.

She remembers how she would be allowed in the cornfield once the farmer had finished harvesting and how she would hunt around in the stubble to gather heads of corn into her apron to feed to her chickens, the sharp straw stalks scratching her legs as she did so.

Ernie Papworth, of Over, explains the system in greater detail. He writes : "In Over, we had three types of gleaning -common gleaning, leaf gleaning and bean-bunning.

"Provided a shock had not been left in the field, anyone was permitted to go gleaning, but had to wait at the entrance gate until the church gleaners' bell rang at exactly 8am and again at 3.30pm, when everyone had to leave.

"The gleaning was done mostly by women, often pregnant and with young children helping them, and a baby in a pram with a bottle of cold tea with a few drops of laudanum to keep it quiet. My own grandmother was reputed to be very good at gleaning, she had to be with 11 children.

"No woman would enter the field until the bell had rung, to give everyone a fair chance. There are numerous entries in the church school records of children absent from school 'gone gleaning', and tales of arguments as the women scrambled for places.

"Leaf gleaning was done when the shocks were in the field, but only with permission of the owner, who usually gave it to near relatives and friends he could trust, for fear of tampering with the standing shocks

"Bean-bunning was done at the end of the harvest and not subject to the rules of the other gleaning, the stubble from hos (horse) beans were hand or reaper cut. These were pulled up by hand, the dirt knocked off and taken home to store in the barn for kindling, and a quick boil of a tin kettle on the old kitchen stoves.

"Over the years, the bell was eased and rules not strictly observed. After gleaning, the stubble was lifted with a horse drawn skimmer, or broad shear, then harrowed and burnt.

"Now those days of long straw, mowing round, dockey time, the old pork and large railway have long since gone and all I have left are the tales told by my father and his old mates as we sat in the low-roofed Gilbert's cottage on those winter evenings so many years ago."

Harry Bye, of Ely, writes: "When I was six, my family moved to Plantation Farm, near Newmarket. We used to go gleaning for corn for the chickens, a job we did not like. But we liked to see the horse binders, as my father worked one. In the hope of cheap dinner, scores of people with sticks would wait for rabbits to run out of the fields, away from the binders." Later, he moved to the fens and started work when he was 14.

"Working with a threshing machine was a dirty job and the young lads mostly took the job of looking after the chaff with the rats and mice running around you as the sacks of sheaves were put on to the drum. When you got to the bottom of the stack, there were always several dead rats."

He also sends me a marvellous old poem about spinning potatoes, written by a horsekeeper in the Littleport area many years ago. Farmwork apparently was not without its problems.

*At half-past five from bed I get
Sometimes before I'm hardly fit
Then with my basket on my back
Up to the farmyard I do track
Get food for horses which are three
As they want food as well as me.
As I pass the pickers on their retch,
"Good morning" out of them I fetch.
Someone says their piece is long,
The argument then does get strong.
The ganger then will shout and say*

"Well step it out yourself today."

Is that really what happened? Surely there were never disagreements in the potato patch
- and what was a retch? Other poems are welcomed.
-

Meanwhile, Eric Roberts of Barnstaple, Devon, has been browsing through a box of family photographs and discovered a group taken during the 1920s in the grounds of a Cambridge college. Two of them are in fancy dress, while the ladies are holding coconuts. The only clue he has is that the lady seated on the right was his late aunt, Miss Ivy Dollman, who lived in Duxford, and was employed by Eaden Lilley. Any ideas?

Memories 15th October 1998, by Mike Petty

IN LAST week's *Memories* I shared recollections of gleaning. But newspapers have long been the source for ordinary people to reminisce.

John Denson remembered when, "the wife and children of the labourer gleaned immediately after the sickle; now a field must be cleared of its corn before the gleaners are allowed to enter, and even then it is a favour to glean.

"Then, besides the gleaning of wheat, they had the privilege of gleaning barley, beans and peas; now that privilege is given to the hogs of the farmer, and the poor are entirely excluded."

Things were hard in those days, but he looked back to when "there was no difficulty in getting situations in service and as young people could, by sober habits, accumulate a few pounds, they seldom married till they could begin the world with comfort.

"Now it is difficult to procure a place in service and both young men and women go to work for the farmers for from three or four shillings per week during the winter. And their earnings during the summer will very little more than maintain them.

"Thus knowing their situation cannot possibly be worse, and seeing no hope of it being made better, they marry; and I believe it will generally be found that those who have the least prospect of being able to support a family are the most eager to rush into one."

Denson was writing 170 years ago. His letters were printed in the columns of the *Cambridge Chronicle* newspaper and later published as *A Peasant's Voice to Landowners* in 1830.

Given such hardship in his village of Waterbeach, no wonder people were deserting the countryside to find work elsewhere, and just down the road there was the prospect of employment for hardworking young men and women.

For Cambridge was experiencing great prosperity. More and more people were flocking to the university and colleges were expanding their accommodation to keep pace with demand. There was also a building boom enveloping the green fields that had always surrounded the historic core.

The enclosure movement that was sweeping away the old system, with labourers having a strip in this field and a strip in that field, brought great change to the village, but in Cambridge it brought great opportunity for the builder.

Many plots of land were allocated to colleges who took time over their development, but others went to speculative builders who threw up long lines of terraced housing, intent on cashing in on the opportunities offered for a quick profit.

The Barnwell area along Newmarket Road expanded rapidly, houses growing along rural East Road, separated from the university town by the delights of the Garden of Eden, soon to be developed as Paradise Street and Adam and Eve Street.

In 1830 an Earith man, Richard Grey Baker, produced a remarkable map of Cambridge just before the Victorian age. Unlike previous maps — and many since — he did not confine himself to the town centre but surveyed the much wider area around, from Chesterton to Grantchester with a remarkable amount of detail: roads, milestones, footpaths, public houses, schools and fields are shown on one of the largest maps produced of Cambridge. Baker advertised his map in the *Cambridge Chronicle*, but it was expensive then, at £1.8s. plain, £1.10s. coloured, and has been virtually unobtainable ever since.

Now it has been reissued by Cambridgeshire Records Society, which has agreed to offer a special discount to *News* readers. By using the form on the left you can obtain your own copy of this unique map for just £6.50, a saving of £1. Copies of John Denson's *A Peasant's Voice to Landowners* are also available for £10.

Memories 22nd October 1998, by Mike Petty

LIKE a cinema-full of other folk last week, I watched films of the 1940s selected from the files of the East Anglian Film Archive.

The cheers which greeted every mention of the Women's Land Army was proof that memories of that institution are alive and flourishing - even if not in letters to this column. Instead, I am grateful for two regular contributors, A C Gillett from Ten Mile Bank and Harry Bye from Ely, for details of the "retch", which I mentioned in connection with a marvellous poem on potato harvesting.

Every morning in potato harvesting time the length of a field would be "stepped-up" by the ganger who would stride down the field and divide it into equal distances - called a "retch". He would mark them with a stick cut from a tree which still had the leaves on it so that it could be clearly seen.

Then, however many women who had turned up for work would have her allotted length for the day to pick the potatoes into 'cob' baskets.

A young or less able worker could have three-quarters or even half length with proportionate pay. Arguments broke out when some complained that their 'retch' was longer than her neighbours.

Those on day rate were relied upon to keep the piece rate workers going. The horseman had to keep the pickers working and faster workers would complain if a slow picker happened to hold up the "spinner" machine turning out the potatoes.

It was a thankless task. Harry did it one season and didn't like it.

An empty cart had to be available at the start of every round. This was the responsibility of the clamper - who would construct by hand the five-foot high mounds heaped about five feet high, which were strawed and covered with earth.

In a full gang, there were two at clamping, one or two drivers to take the potatoes, the horseman with spinner and two throwers-in -picking up the cobs and throwing them into the carts. It was hard, backbreaking work.

Gatekeeper's lonely job

SEVENTY years ago, Ted Austin of Over, then a lad of 11, used to cycle from Cottenham to Histon where there was a level crossing on the St Ives to Cambridge line.

Inside the small brick-built crossing keeper's hut was a Tom Payne stove, usually with a tin tea kettle singing and a solitary oil lamp for lighting. Ted remembers; "Charlie the gatekeeper was a quiet-spoken friendly man who cycled to work from his home in Milton. His was a lonely job and he always worked 12-hour shifts.

"His crossing was not protected by signals, neither had it a telephone, just one warning bell to open the gates operated from the Histon signal box. Against all regulations, Charlie allowed me to open the heavy crossing gates when the bell rang.

"This was not as easy as it looked since you had to slide the large bolt across into the socket at the exact moment the gate reached the post - otherwise the gate bounced back and you had a hard job to prevent being knocked over!

"Charlie had a vivid white scar running across his scalp. One day, he had been outside his hut waiting for the bell to open the gates for 'The Express'.

"To his horror, he heard the engine whistling as it sped through Histon station, less than half a mile away. For some reason the warning bell had not rung. Charlie rushed to open the gates but had to jump clear as the engine crashed through it

"The heavy metal bolt securing the gate flew through the air cutting a gash across his scalp - half an inch lower and I should never have had the pleasure of meeting him!"

Ted never knew Charlie's surname -do you?

Memories 29th October 1988 to find

Memories 5th November 1998, by Mike Petty

After a short interval, while cuttings from the News find their way around the country and fingers less agile than they once were pick up pens to write, memories of the Dance Band Days burst forth once more.

Jenny Bradine of Brampton writes : "I have been in touch with my mother who has moved from Cambridge in her 83rd year to live near me. Her name is Bertha Hawkes (late of Greville Road) and she has a mine of information on the dance bands of the 30s and 40s and also of the Cambridge City Brass Band.

"She recalls first starting to dance at the age of about ten with her twin sister Jessie at the Gas Works' parties on Newmarket Road. From this she graduated to dancing at Pye Radio in St Andrew's Road, where she used to work on the production line. She recalls that her real 'Big Dance' was when she visited the Dorothy. In fact she married a musician, Harold Hawkes, who used to play for the Cambridge City Brass Band at concerts at the Crystal Palace. The band made a 78 rpm record entitled Cambridge Bells in the early 1930s."

Bill Graham from Nacton, near Ipswich, used to be known as Gordon Revell and had his own dance band. Later he ventured into the pop scene, becoming the Foster Trio and then Foster Sound. He gives credit to the impresarios of the period.

Les Baker, of University Recording Studios, promoted many successful functions, including the Cambridge Dance Band championships, Cavalcades and Jazz Jamborees.

Harry Bradford was instrumental in bringing to Cambridge the very best of British dance entertainment. In due course he opened a new venture, the Embassy Ballroom, and Harry Webb became his resident band. He had, years before, played drums for Son's Accordion Band.

"I could go on and on bringing in names of bands about the 40s and 50s and 60s, such as Vin Wright's Stirlingaires with Jean Circuit, Fred Cross, Josephine's Gypsy Band, Len Tibbs and not forgetting the Riverside Jazz.

"I could also mention the Trojan work carried out by the Concert Parties, Alice Reynold's in particular, and the dancing troupes of Joan Metcalf, the King Slocombe School and the Joan Slipper School of Dancing whose troupes of babes were essential to the existence of any concert party.

"The ladies deserve more than a brief mention. They were Aileen Ross, Julie (Butler) Townsend and Audrey Payne. I could expand quite a bit more on most of the subjects but I hope this will bring back a few more memories."

One name omitted from the list was The Organ Grinders harmonica band, the most popular band around Sawston, formed in 1937 by Don Clare. Sid Robinson from Cambridge has cause to remember it well, for he is the little fellow in the front in the photo.

The band consisted of thirteen players, drums, banjo and accordion. The vocalist had a microphone for his numbers powered by an old three-valve radio set - the valves, as Bertha will remember, used to be the size of electric light bulbs.

Such apparatus needed electricity so they had to carry long lengths of wire for the sometimes very distant power supplies. Even this was no use in one hall where the only illumination was by oil lamps hanging from the ceilings.

It is not so many years that I used to have to carry one of those plugs that would adapt to round or square pins whenever I gave my slide shows. And I remember one where the only source of power was the minute three-pin socket in the church pulpit and the only way was to push the bare wires into the holes and secure them with matchsticks!

Other readers continue to spot articles in my daily *Looking Back* column. Sir Arthur Marshall writes from Horseheath: "I attended an 80th birthday party on Sunday - a very happy occasion - and somebody read out a cutting from your Looking Back column about the opening of Hemingford Grey Reading Room at which 'Sir Arthur Marshall spoke of the cheapness of books and newspapers'. It is an occasion I have no memory of.

Sir Arthur's memory is magnificent so I looked up the article again - to find it dated from August 1898! As he says "presumably there must have been another Sir Arthur Marshall in those days". Presumably?

Harry Bye from Ely has another titbit of information. Did you know over 100 years ago a Burnt Fen farmer named Seaber built a chapel and a pub on a piece of land near Shippea Hill station?

"At one end was the Wesleyan chapel which he called 'Heaven'. At the other end was the 'Pig and Whistle' which had more customers than the chapel and was called 'Hell'. The chapel was demolished many years ago and the pub closed, like the others in Burnt Fen. But it remained

an eyesore for many years before it was mysteriously burned out about four years ago. So the story of Heaven and Hell ended."

Memories 12th November 1998, by Mike Petty

Taking advantage of a half-term break from my various lectures, we ventured to Bath, joining dozens of others on a guided tour of the Roman baths, each of us listening intently to our own personal sound guide which explained various aspects of what we were seeing.

Rut Cambridge too was a Roman town, and also had Roman baths, albeit not until July 1861. It was then that a group of university and townsmen, several of them doctors, got together to inaugurate a scheme proposed by a company which had already established baths at Oxford and Aldershot.

The Roman Baths were built the following year in Jesus Lane with an 18th-century style facade and a small Ionic portico. Inside was a swimming pool 17m (56ft) long by 6.7m (22ft) wide, which took seven hours to fill. Its 172,748 litres (38,000 gallons) of water were heated to 17 C (62F).

It was open from early morning till nine at night, with discounted prices for early and late bathing, but these were still too expensive for townsmen who could, of course, bathe in the river for nothing.

The company arranged special openings for ladies only on Tuesdays, allowed invalids in for half-price and gave free baths to members of the police. Then they targeted working men with early baths on Sunday mornings, 5am-9am, provided they supplied their own towels.

It was to no avail, and the business closed down. The building had been taken over by the University's Pitt Club by 1867.

They were apparently too expensive for townspeople and not needed by students, who, after all were only up for a few weeks at a time. Even today anybody strolling through some of the older colleges early in the morning may still spot hardy undergraduates in dressing gowns, carrying their flannels as they cross some chilly courtyard to a distant bathroom.

But Cambridge councillors were concerned that the townsfolk had a cleanliness problem. Very few people had access to a bath, certainly they were not to be found in their own houses. Baths could be taken at two hairdressers in Mill Road but these could not cope with all the demand.

Public baths had been suggested as an appropriate way to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897, but nothing had come of it. Then in 1902 a meeting was called at the Guildhall, but the debate diversified into swimming baths and Turkish baths and ordinary baths became submerged.

In 1910, there were complaints that the average Cambridge builder was omitting to build bathrooms in otherwise tolerable houses, whole streets of new houses did not have a bathroom between them.

Then, in 1927, public baths were provided in a purpose-built building at the corner of Gwydir Street, off Mill Road.

They proved a most useful facility -in 1970-71 5,335 adults and 2,000 children and pensioners made use of them, the adults being charged 10p each and the others 5p. Towels and soap were provided if required.

Additional facilities such sauna baths were added but by 1975 the baths were losing £7,000 a year and the boilers, which had been second-hand when they were originally installed, were wearing out. They were closed and demolition was planned, but locals voiced opposition to the loss of the building and it was converted into a neighbourhood centre.

Did you ever make use of the Gwydir Street baths, or was it a case of using a tin bath in front of the fire - and how did you feel when you finally got a proper bath of your own in your own home?

On the trail of a brochure

VARIOUS readers have asked for assistance, some questions I can answer, others need your help.

Ted Cash has been racking his brains for the name of the sweet shop that used to be next to the Rose and Crown in Newmarket Road during the war. I believe this may have been Miss M White, just around the corner in East Road.

Does anybody remember Charles Macintosh's factory, making raincoats - I've checked street directories without results. There was the ironmongers in Market Street and a scale maker, but no factory.

Do you have a copy of Peter Turner's history of the Cambridge-Mildenhall railway line that you no longer require - if so Pam Dowhill on Cambridge 241235 would like to hear from you.

In 1947 Pye Radio launched its new radio-telephone system. The company produced a three-colour brochure, its cover headed "Urgent", pictured below, left, showing how communication between ambulances, fishing boats and railway trains was now possible. Gordon Bussey, who is writing the company history, has got one copy, but needs another in better condition. Do you have a copy to lend?

Lilian Barker from West Glamorgan is trying to find the owner of a Certificate of Merit which she found backing an old photograph of her father, Arthur George Bowd, when she reframed it. The certificate was awarded to Minnie Florence Archer for a scripture examination at Hills Road Wesleyan Chapel in 1913. Lilian writes: "The certificate is such a lovely one, I'm sure a relative would love to have it to frame. I would appreciate if you could find the owner."

• If you are interested or can help please write to me, and if you have a historical query that *News* readers can help with, drop me a line, too.

Memories 19th November 1998 by Mike Petty

THE Armistice commemoration last weekend has prompted various readers to share their wartime memories.

Joan Wick of Comberton lived in Shepreth during the Second World War. She writes: "I was in Shepreth Church when the Rev Sharp announced we were at war. I think that was the same day that the five chimneys of the Rhee Valley cement works were blown up. We had to go to Shepreth Village Hall to get our gas masks which we had to take everywhere with us. We had to blow into them before we put them on, otherwise the glass steamed up.

"Shepreth is a village that you can walk around the middle part. More than half of this was taken up by an army camp, and near the watercress beds was a search light battery. All the children at school had to go to nearby houses if the air raid siren sounded. Mine was Allan's Nursery next to the Congregational Chapel.

"We had a school from London evacuated in Shepreth, so they had half the school and we had the other half, with partitions in between.

"We all had to wear berets or pixie hoods to school, which were hung up with our coats. We all caught head lice, and guess who got the blame for giving them to the village children.

"We had to comb our hair over brown paper, and kill the live ones with our thumbnail. Nitty Nora, the school nurse, must have had a busy time. We never had any evacuees at home because we had some army wives billeted with us - very nice ladies they were.

"During the Battle of Britain one of my grandfather's brothers decided to come for a holiday to get away from the bombs in London. They lived in Leightonstone and used to go down the underground at night to get some sleep. Their son, Joe, cycled from London, getting to Shepreth very early on Saturday. That day we had six air raids, so early on Sunday morning he cycled back as he thought he was safer in London.

"We had quite a few bombs drop in the village. At Bassingbourn airfield there were bombers, and at Duxford and later Fowlmere, there were fighters. I was told the German bombers lightened their load to get away from the fighters."

Percy Seely from Trumpington tells me he played with the Freddy Webb Band at the Embassy Ballroom, the Gordon Revel Band and the Ken Stevens Big Band.

Ken him self is now living and working in Los Angeles and has won two Oscars for his film music scores - a fine example of a local boy made good.

In 1942, Percy formed the Ambassadors Dance Band from which evolved the 'Down Beats' which included Tim Moore and later Ken Stevens on piano. This five-piece band was basically a jazz group and played the American bases.

He adds: "I would like to play tribute to the contingent of black American servicemen musicians who were stationed at G.23 Camp on Milton Road, Cambridge, during 1943/44

"They were excellent players and often used to 'sit in' with us when we played at the Cambridge Rhythm Club above Millers Music Shop in Sidney Street They also had a very stylish big band; I wonder if any readers remember them playing at the Beacons field Hall or on Jesus Green?"

Derek Stubbings is seeking information to add to his researches into the men's Bible classes at New Street and Old Chesterton. The latter was started in 1900. Its first meeting attracted just one person but by 1914 more than 130 men and boys regularly spent their Sunday afternoons discussing the Bible - numbers that declined as they left for the carnage of the Great War.

Derek knows that the Bible class held its Jubilee Service in 1948 but would like to know more. Can you help?

Contact Derek on (01223) 525009 or write to me at the News.

Memories 26th November 1998 by Mike Petty

Among the treasured possessions of Cecil Cundle, of Cambridge, is a framed scroll.

It reads : "He whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger and finally passed out of the sight of men ... giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom." It concludes: "Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten."

The name lives on underneath: Pte Reginald Victor Nightingale, Suffolk Regiment. What has been forgotten is what happened to him. The family remember he volunteered from Girton and had been in France only a week when news came of his death.

While the Cambridgeshire Collection holds details of the Cambridgeshire Regiment dead, the Suffolk Regiment roll is not there. So I turned to the Internet, using one of the free machines in the collection.

I typed in "Suffolk Regiment" and chanced upon a record of the men from Swavesey who had served, together with a record of a plane crash in the village - which sent me off on one of those many diversions which is the fascination of local history. I did not find what I was looking for but had perhaps found a different *Memories* story.

I contacted Phil Curme from Swavesey whose website I had blundered across to ask him more details of his research. This had apparently had been encouraged by a visit to the Cambridgeshire Collection when I had shown him a marvellous file of newspaper cuttings compiled by CR Vincent, village correspondent for the Swavesey area - hundreds of pages, with indexes identifying events both happy and sad.

Phil is a member of the Western Front Association whose members ensure the memory of those who fought and lived through those war years is remembered. He consulted the Suffolk Regiment war list - available on CD-Rom -and the story became clearer.

Reginald Nightingale had been killed on May 23,1916, when his battalion had gone for a first six-day stint in the front line near Becourt Wood to accustom themselves before the Battle of the Somme, which was to take place a few weeks later. On their second night, A-Company under HW Stace had suffered severely, one section of a platoon being all but exterminated by a night-time bombardment of canisters which exploded and scattered metal balls, causing horrendous casualties. It would all, Phil said, have been kept very secret.

Now I had a date I turned to the files of the *Cambridge Chronicle*.

The issue of May 31, 1916 reports casualties - "the heaviest we have had to publish for some time". Although Pte Nightingale is not listed, there are details of many of his pals. They include Pte JC Hunt, licensee of the Cow and Calf public house, Pound Hill, Cambridge, hit by a large piece of shell.

Two who joined the regiment together, and died within a few hours of each other, hit by shells, were Ptes George Casey, killed outright, and Alfred Reynolds, who died of his wounds. The sister in charge of the casualty clearing station wrote to his parents in River Lane: "I am sending you a lock of his hair, which I thought you would greatly care for." Similar news was being received that Pte Alfred Potter of York Street had died of wounds while Fred Wright of Cross Street, Co vent Garden, had been wounded in both legs. Gangrene had set in and his left leg was amputated.

Next week the *Chronicle* had yet more sad news of that bombardment. Pte BO Woodcock of Catharine Street had been "badly hit by a shell and I am thankful to say passed away quietly and in no pain".

The parents of Cpl Bolton of Grantchester had the consolation of additional news of their son when Cpl Billings, a stretcher-bearer, called on them. He had helped to bury their son and took back with him a small token of the parents' love to be placed on the dead soldier's grave. Had Reginald Nightingale survived the bombardment he might well have perished days later in the Battle of the Somme. • You can access Phil Curme's website at <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/phil-curme>.

STAYING on things military, A Maltpress of Soham has lent a photo of the Ely contingent of the Cambridgeshire Regiment of the Territorial Army taken about 1934 which shows Walter Maltpress on the left of the back row. Who are the others, where was it taken and what was the occasion that led to the impressive array of silverware in front of them?

DON Challis would have been a lad in Foxton in the Thirties, earning extra pocket money by fetching water from the village pump for the schoolmaster and escorting Captain Martin's daughter to and from school each day.

The Captain owned and ran a very high-class cafe on the site of the present Q8 filling station in Cambridge Road, Foxton. His cafe was a model of an upper class English tea room with highly polished floors and immaculate tables with crisp linen.

He had no compunction in turning away customers who did not come up to his high standards. At exactly five to six each evening his two daughters would remove the large potted shrubs which stood guard at the entrance and shut the large gate.

At six o'clock precisely the Captain and his wife would appear at the back door, he would lock it up, kiss his wife on the cheek and they would walk arm in arm to their bungalow. The cafe closed in 1935 in advance of a bypass that has never appeared. It is now only a memory - but one brought to life by Don in a little booklet entitled *Schooldays in Foxton* being sold to raise money for the village church at £3 plus 40p postage, from him at 4 Caxton Lane, Foxton CB2 6SR..

Memories 3rd December 1998 by Mike Petty

Ted Austin from Over has sent in some childhood memories well worth sharing.

He writes: "Seventy years ago I was a whippersnapper aged 10. We lived in a small Cambridgeshire village where my father was the local Baptist Minister.

"Monday was universally kept as wash day -whatever the weather. Although my father was very poorly paid we had to keep up appearances so employed the services of a Mrs Few as our washerwoman.

"She was a very large lady indeed with thick powerful arms and enormous bosoms! She always dressed from head to foot in black while her apron was made from a well washed corn sack.

"On Mondays when father got up to make the early morning tea he also set light to the copper fire in the kitchen which heated approximately 10 to 15 gallons of soft rain water.

"Promptly at 8am Mrs Few arrived to start the week's washing. For this service she received half-a-crown (12.5p!) plus a very generous hot dinner.

"The washing was done mainly with scrubbing brushes in a wooden tub and with much application of Sunlight soap. This soap came in foot-long yellow rectangular bars. These bars were kept for many weeks on the scullery shelves before being used. This made the soap hard so it lasted longer.

"In those days wildlife was much more plentiful than, sadly, it is today. We boys frequently caught grass snakes.

"One weekend I caught a particularly large and beautiful specimen which I put in father's garden frame. On Monday morning I thought I would exhibit my prize capture, and took it into the scullery with its head just poking out of my fist. "Look what I've caught, Mrs Few," I said.

"Being slightly short sighted she came over and bent down close to the snake - which just at that moment decided to stick out its forked tongue several times.

"With a piercing shriek Mrs Few collapsed on the cement floor in a dead faint, and in doing so tipped the wash tub over, spilling a flood of soapy water across the scullery.

"Father came rushing in, but mother was much more concerned, that in lying prostrate, Mrs Few was exposing the full range of her underwear to father and me! Fortunately she rapidly regained consciousness and was helped into a chair.

"Upstairs in a secret drawer father always kept a bottle of brandy (strictly for medicinal purposes!) This was fetched and after two or three large glasses of the fiery liquid the good lady pronounced herself much better - though after such an experience she couldn't possibly contemplate doing any more work that day - but thought that she might, just might, be able to eat her dinner! In fact she did more than ample justice to her meal.

"She always came on foot, and eventually departed rather unsteadily - but doubtless fortified not only by the brandy but also by the extra money father had given her.

"I was despatched to the allotments at the end of our garden to release the snake - strictly forbidden to bring one on the premises again, then banished to my bedroom to reflect on the lack of understanding in adults!"

- The recent reports of the removal of an ancient avenue of trees across Christ's Pieces in Cambridge prompts memories of other tunes when trees have hit the headlines.

Dutch elm disease in the 1970s saw the loss of elms throughout the area, but there was an earlier outbreak in 1950, which particularly hit Brooklands Avenue and Trinity and St John's colleges.

At that time several giant 500-year-old trees along the Backs were removed, and although much replanting has since taken place this is one area of Cambridge that has changed dramatically over the century.

FOLLOWING a recent exploration of Samuel Pickwick's Cambridge Scrapbook at Ickleton I was approached for details of a Cambridge gunsmith who produced a pocket pistol owned by a village collector.

All that was known was the inscription "Evans, Cambridge" and the possible date about 1810. This is too early for any of the Cambridge town or county directories but does fall within the dates for which the Cambridge Chronicle newspaper has been indexed in some detail.

The News Index in the Cambridgeshire Collection records various entries for gunsmiths between 1770 and 1820, mainly referring to advertisements they placed in the paper. Thus on February 23, 1810 came the following. "To sportsmen. Evans, Gun maker, Trinity Street, Cambridge (from Mr Galley's, London,) humbly solicits the attention of the sportsmen... to his new gun manufactory, where he undertakes to make and repair all sorts of guns and pistols... for ready money".

Five years later, on August 4, 1815, Samuel Evans is now advertising a large stock of double and single-barrel guns and a quantity of patent powder flasks which prevented the flask exploding should the gun accidentally go off while being loaded.

- Do you know what became of HMS Loyal, the warship which the people of Cambridge adopted during the Second World War?

It features on the front of a November 1941 Warship Week leaflet headed "Imagine this in Cambridge", depicting German troops marching down King's Parade, the West window of King's College Chapel obscured by a swastika. Cambridgeshire communities raised huge sums of money during the war - were you involved?

At about this time T Miller, now of Orwell, was apparently in dire trouble, being "progged" outside Queens' College for not wearing his gown after dark.

In fact it was a put-up job, a propaganda photograph to be sent to Russia to encourage them to continue their struggle in the war to ensure that both they and Cambridge university students could live undisturbed in the way they chose - unless of course they transgressed the rules. The proctor was traditionally accompanied by two fleet-footed college porters known as "Bulldogs". Were you ever one, or stopped by one?

- My apologies to Percy Seeby for mistakenly transferring Ken Stevens to Los Angeles and crediting him with two Oscars for his film music scores in *Memories* on November 19. These achievements belong to another musical Ken - Ken Thome, pianist in the Sammy Ash band at the Rex ballroom during the war years.

- Betty Newman of Bassingbourn is the first to identify faces in the picture of Tony Blackburn at the Cambridge Co-op stores which we featured in *Memories* on November 20, when she spotted her father who was store manager at that time. But who were the fans?

- Meanwhile, Jean Chase of Ely has spotted her father, Herbert Armsby, as the middle soldier in the back row of last week's picture of Ely soldiers.

- It is never too late to start researching the past. Edwin Nicole of Wilburton was aged 73 when, in 1957, he set down his family history, recording what his father, onetime county court bailiff of the Isle of Ely, had told him. Edwin himself was apprenticed to a jeweller's firm in Derby but later sought the quiet life in Wilburton, where he was licensee at the Bell Inn for 30 years, also carrying on the business as timber merchant and druit grower. Perhaps you remember him.

In 1959, shortly before he died, he gathered together whatever he could find on the history of his native village in a notebook which is now the treasured possession of his granddaughter, Tracey Dalton from Toft

Memories 10th December 1998 by Mike Petty

CHRISTMAS is not always a time of happiness. For many families there is an empty space by the fireside that was not there before and stories which may have been heard so often - sometimes too often - are now sadly missed.

How often do we regret that we never captured those tales on tape or got them written down, so they could be remembered?

I have been privileged to read one such unpublished collection of memories of Winnie Maltpress of Soham - of school days, tea-party day, Sundays; of working days and sweetheart days. Winnie died last spring.

Winnie recalled wartime days in Soham: "During the war we had two cinemas. The real old one that was owned by Nick Nack Taylor was something you would never forget.

"We used to have some lovely Saturday afternoon matinees there but the cinema often had breakdowns. Then the boys would call out, Tut another shilling in the meter, Les'. The other cinema was across the road: it was called the Regent. Once I remember the air-raid went and we were not allowed out till the all-clear sounded.

"I was working in the cake shop. During the war soldiers were billeted in Soham until it was time for them to go abroad. Once we had some Polish officers billeted. They were so polite. Every time they came in the shop they used to click their heels together and salute us. It used to be embarrassing if we had a shop full of people but that was their way and it brought a smile to people's faces.

"One evening my mother and I were going to the cinema when we met one of these Polish officers. He recognised me and yes, we got the heel clicking and salute. My mother was so embarrassed. I am sure she thought all sorts of bad things about me.

"When I saw him in the shop next morning he said, 'You have a charming lady for a mother', which she thought was very nice. A day or two later, they all disappeared and that was the end of our salutes

"In June 1944 a terrible thing happened. An ammunition train blew up just outside Soham railway station. It was in the early hours of the morning and lots of homes were damaged. At the time my niece was staying, sleeping in the same room, when came an almighty bang and the bedroom ceiling came down on us. We thought we had been bombed. Not only that but most of the end of the house had been blown out. My niece and I were badly bruised, covered in lathe and plaster. We looked at each other and said, 'You've got a black face'.

"There was a funny side to it though. Dad had had a pig killed that spring and had the bacon and hams cured. They were sewn up in muslin. The sides of our stairs consisted of boards of wood and to keep the bacon and ham from prying eyes, Dad had knocked hooks in this wood and hung the joints on them. When the end of the house was blown out there hung the meat for everyone to see. I never had seen my Dad move so fast. He hid the meat somewhere but it must have been all right as we still had bacon to eat."

More action is recalled in *Ely Memories*, just published by the Ely Society. The reminiscences come from many periods and people: some scholars, some not - like Obed Cross who set

down his memories at the turn of the century: "I kood not rite nor read till I was about twenty years of age, and then 'ad to learn my sult as I had no schoolen."

But Beryl Buckwell, now over 90, remembers more recent events At the Ely Cathedral celebrations in 1973 she found herself next to the husband of a grand Lady Mayoress in the row in front. Came the last hymn and the organ crashed out for the last verse, "Now before Him with our praises we fall", when a pigeon, obviously asleep, was shaken off its lofty perch in the roof and plopped into the Mayoress's hat. It bounced to the floor and was neatly fielded by the husband, who thrust it at Mrs Buckwell. She passed it on till it reached the end of the row. A man arrived with the collecting bag into which he pushed the pigeon and hurried to the south door to let it fly away!

Schoolday photographs are usually posed playground pictures but not so one lent by Alan Tompkins of Sawston. It shows the back of his head in the front row of a class at Newnham Croft Junior School, Grantchester Street, Cambridge, about 1946.

But who is the girl reading to the teacher - or any other children shown? His grandfather, Charlie Wallman, built up a taxi empire, including the Newnham Hire Service. They advertised in a brochure produced by the Bull Hotel in Trumping Street, where double rooms with hot and cold running water cost from 14s to 16s 6d

There was no charge for baths although you could expect to pay an extra 2s 6d if you required the fire in your bedroom to be lit of an evening. The brochure is undated but Thrussell and Sons Ltd of Sidney Street were "foot fitters". Biggs and Sons Fruiterers were at 47 Bridge street and the Electric Wiring and Repair Company would give free estimates for complete electrical installations of lighting, phones, bells, heating and power from their base at 5 Corn Exchange Street, Cambridge.

If any of this rings a bell, let me know.

Memories 17th December 1998 by Mike Petty

On Saturday the crowds packed Cambridge streets, and Ely shopkeepers reported healthy trade. Yet experts elsewhere predict that people will be spending less, worried about what the New Year might bring.

Just 25 years ago there was much more to be concerned about. In December 1973 the country was in the middle of a crisis - the gravest by far since the end of the war. Edward Heath's government was finding itself in a true winter of discontent over trades unions' reaction to its prices and incomes policy.

Power workers, miners and railwaymen had banned overtime, coal getting through to power stations was down by 40 per cent at a time when the Arab-Israeli war had cut oil production - and oil provided half the country's energy. In an effort to contain the crisis, electricity cuts were introduced and a three-day working week brought in. The New Year would see an election on the theme of 'Who governs Britain?' -which Harold Wilson's Labour Party was to win. But that was to come.

Local people coped as best they could. Stores were making valiant efforts to give the public every opportunity to do their Christmas shopping, depending heavily on emergency lighting and special security measures to beat the shoplifters on days when there was no electricity. Eaden Lilley planned to use old gas lamps which were still fitted in their shop.

Shoppers in Cambridge defied the gloom and were out in force to do their last-minute Christmas shopping. At Woolworth's in Sidney Street the manager said: "People are determined to enjoy Christmas despite the gloom and doom."

The general manager of Joshua Taylor reported that trade was about 20 per cent up compared with the previous year and Tesco, in Regent Street, was fairly busy.

Traders in Ely, Newmarket and other small towns also found business booming as the petrol shortage encouraged shoppers to stay at home - or perhaps it was the fear of shortages in the future which was encouraging shoppers to stock up more than ever.

To add to it all, the January sales were brought forward at Robert Sayle to take advantage of remaining days with electricity before the more stringent regulations came into force in the New Year

Everywhere shop workers put in extra hours during their five-day period of electricity supply, and looked forward to a rest - albeit in blackout - after Christmas.

Thousands of women planning to have a holiday hairdo were to be disappointed. Leading Cambridge hairdressers announced they had been forced to cut their bookings by almost half because of Government measures that said only five out of the last 10 days before Christmas could be worked. A spokesman for Joshua Taylor's hairdressing salon, Raymond, said, "We can do simple appointments which won't involve the use of electricity but I estimate we will have to turn about 1,000 people away."

How ironic that precisely at this time came a prediction that total disaster faced the world in about two generations since so much energy was now being burned that the temperature of the earth's atmosphere would rise by half a degree.

"This will melt the polar caps and start a runaway reaction which will raise the ocean levels to a height which will bring about disastrous flooding," said Prof Mike Pentz of the Open University, speaking in Cambridge.

A rise of 100 feet in this country would have put Cambridge well beneath the waves - all the more reason for a very good Christmas now!

HOW about a Coat-of-Arms for Christmas? Mr W J McClure from Cumbria has written:

"Some years ago, while helping to clear a house of a very good friend of mine, I found what at first appeared to be a roll of wallpaper wrapped in newspaper and was about to put it the bin, when I thought by the feel of it it was more than that

"On taking it home I discovered what I had found was a parchment, hand-written, and with the seals and stamps and signature of the gentleman mentioned, granting the bearing of arms to one Fred Crisp. I contacted the College of Arms who said it was authentic.

"However, they could not tell me who was the present user of the coat-of-arms, and since then I have been trying to find if Fred Crisp had any descendants, but with no success."

According to the grant, dated February 24, 1898, this Fred Crisp was of White House, New Southgate in the County of Middlesex, Scotland Farm, Dry Drayton, Moor Barns in Madingley and of the Manor Fliston (probably Histon), all in the county of Cambridge.

I have done some digging in the University Library and discovered that Fred Crisp was High Sheriff for Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire that year and had some sons, whom he

named Albert Hemington (born 1878), Frederick (1884) and Stanley Searle Crisp (1887). There is also reference to a General Firth Crisp, born in 1898. Of these Albert had a son, Dudley Charles Hemington Crisp. But what then?

Mr McClure wrote that he wished to return the document to the family.

Steve Foreman of Girton can identify himself and some of the scholars at Newnham Croft School, featured last week, which he attended between 1945-1950. He writes: "Teachers Mrs Marriot, Miss Wilson; pupils John Goddard, Gill Thurston and the girl reading is, I believe, Marina Chapman (my first love aged seven), whose parents kept the Red Bull public house on Barton Road,"

Memories 24th December 1998 to find

Memories 31st December 1998 to find

Memories 1999 in one sequence

Memories 7 January 1999, by Mike Petty

"Petty Cury, may be a short, narrow street in which traffic congestion and overcrowded pavements cause considerable anxiety to the City police, the local traders and townspeople, but it epitomises the character of Cambridge". Thus wrote Erica J. Dimock when she surveyed the area as part of a series of "Down Your Street articles" in the Cambridge News of 1964

I thought it might be interesting to look back on them to see what jogs your Memories of Cambridge and its shops 35 years ago, at a time when change was then very much in the air.

The Lion Hotel, once a well-known coaching inn had been owned for the previous 25 years by members of the Barr family but by 1964 its hotel facilities had come to an end and only the bars were being kept open to attract some local custom. Nobody was sure what the future might hold as the site had just been acquired by Jack Cotton and Charles Clore in the largest single property transaction to be made in Cambridge. Various plans were being touted for redevelopment and change but Erica found "Most of the traders are very happy with the street as it is and feel the ban on cars would lead to a loss of custom. If buses were not allowed through Petty Cury they would have to make a very long detour and if neither they, nor cars, came near then people would not come either, they contend"

Erica surveyed some of the shops. Starting on the corner of Guildhall street were Dolamore, wine and spirit merchants, next door was the hairdressing, tobacconist and confectionery business of Finlay & Co, then Heffer's Bookshop which had moved to Petty Cury in 1896. Beside Heffer's was a passageway leading to a house occupied by Ellison and Co, then came the Lion Hotel, its doorway the home of a much-remembered flower-seller. Beyond came Falcon Yard and Mac Fisheries one of the few shops in the Eastern Counties which sold bulk ice for hospitals, champagne parties and other purposes.

Hunt's Dress shop on the corner of Alexandra Street dealt in the full range of women's clothing and on the opposite the alleyway was Dewhurst butchers and canned food retailers. Two men's shops, those of John Collier and Alexandre Ltd had replaced George Stace's fashion store after the second world war. Dipple and Conway was an old established firm of opticians whilst Separates catered exclusively for skirts and blouses, woollen goods and slacks as opposed to full length coats and dresses. This was run by Mr Monty Harris who complained that there were only three locally owned businesses left in Petty Cury, all the

others being branches of national firms. "I think it is local firms which attract people and which have something different to offer them. Otherwise you might just as well go to Bedford or Welwyn to do your shopping. The goods will be the same anywhere in these multiple stores", he said

Further towards Sidney Street was the Civic restaurant occupying rooms which had earlier been used as the headquarters of the Air Raid Precautions and Special Constabulary. In 1964 over 1,000 good-value meals were prepared each day for eating either in the restaurant or transported to people's homes by the W.V.S. meals on wheels service. Completing the south side of the Cury was the old Post Office building which then housed the offices of the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance and upstairs the Overseas Services Club for employees of overseas government attending courses organised specially for them in Cambridge

All of these have now gone, swept away by Lion Yard redevelopment. But what of the shops on the other side? I will return to the survey in another next week's "Memories"

Readers write :

D.J. Beynon from Haslingfield and H.G.Mansfield from Cambridge have shared their knowledge of the story of Cambridge's adopted warship, HMS Loyal. The ship was completed in October 1942, one of the first to be fitted with three power operated turrets. Immediately after work up she and her sister ship H.M.S. Lightning were in action in the Mediterranean, sinking two Italian boats. Two months later she had to rescue 181 survivors from the Lightning when an E-boat sank her. Loyal took part in the Salerno landings, firing 1714 rounds of 4.7 inch shells despite being hit in the boiler room and remained in action for a further three weeks after the damage. On 12th October 1944 she hit a mine off the west coast of Italy which caused major structural damage. Loyal saw out the war as a base ship at Malta until 1948 when it was towed to Milford Haven to be broken up. Mr Mansfield writes: "I remember that we sea cadets were involved in collecting money at various cinemas in Cambridge"

After a successful Warship Week National Savings campaign in March 1942 the people of Ely had adopted the destroyer HMS Walpole, which had been built in 1918. Already it had experienced an eventful war being damaged by a mine in October 1940 and spent several months under repair before returning to escort duty, only to hit another mine – which did not explode – in December 1941. In February 1942 the ship was sent to make torpedo attacks on the German warships Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen but developed a machinery defect and was withdrawn. On her way back to Harwich for repair it was attacked by a Wellington but survived when the "friendly" aircraft was driven off by German fighters!

After her adoption Walpole fought on being involved on Russian convoy, anti-submarine and anti-E-boat work as well as assisting in the Normandy landings. On January 6th 1945 two of her crew were killed and five seriously injured when she hit a floating mine. Disabled and listing the ship was towed into harbour, only to be declared a total loss and broken up. Ely museum records her heroic story.

Readers ask :

Dr Tony Merrifield from 2 Barton Square, Ely seeks your help in tracking down material relating to the early history of the Royal Air Force Hospital, Ely for a talk to the Ely Society. He is particularly interested in the site, farm owners and so on and would welcome any personal memories.

One of the most important buildings in Cambridge is the old University Library, beside the Senate House, which now houses the library and archives of Gonville and Caius college.

Above its entrance doorway is inscribed the word “Bibliotheca” and above that there are a number of “V” sign graffiti. Do you know how they got there? The oral tradition is that they were part of the celebrations at the end of the Second World War and certainly the VE celebrations were extensive and resulted in damage to the top of the fountain on Market Hill. But do you know for sure. If you can help please contact Miss Ellie Clewlow, archivist of Gonville and Caius college or write to me at the News

Memories, by Mike Petty 14th January 1999

Just before Christmas I featured a letter from Mr W. McClure of Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria who had discovered a century-old parchment conferring a coat of arms on one Fred Crisp. Mr McClure was trying to discover something about this gentleman with a view to returning this most important document to the family. The citation had indicated there may have been a connection with the Dry Drayton, Madingley area.

Within a few days I received a reply from Dennis Jeeps of Willingham telling me that Fred Crisp had been born in that village. His father had been a butcher and publican and they’d lived in Church Street. Disaster had struck when the shop together with numerous other dwelling were burnt down in April 1866. Fred had left home by this time to make his fortune in London.

Following other clues supplied by Dennis I have been able to track down something of Fred Crisp's progress. His obituary in the Cambridge Independent Press of 17th November 1905 records how he left the village when aged 12 to become an apprentice in one of the large business houses in St Paul’s churchyard, London.

He began business for himself in a small way, aided initially by his uncle, Mr Thoday of Cambridge. He acquired shop after shop until he had no fewer than 26, covering more than an acre of ground and a window frontage of 650 feet. It became one of the largest emporiums in London & he became known as “the man who made the Seven Sisters Road”, gaining the reputation of being the very model of what a business man and employer should be.

But this, alas, was not the whole story, for according to issues of The Times the business hit difficulties. When Thursday early closing was introduced the shop saw a drastic fall-off of trade, yet he was criticised for not also closing early on Saturdays. In 1899 profits had fallen from £12,000 down to £3,000 and Crisp was personally offering to make up the dividend to disgruntled shareholders from his own pocket. In 1902 owing to the great strain and worry of the business he resigned as chairman and gave up his seat on the board. A new management was put in who started a wholesale restructuring of the company.

The founding father left to concentrated on his beautiful house in Southgate, Middlesex and his other pursuits. Chief amongst these was the breeding of Shire horses. He bought himself another residence, Whitehouse at Girton, acquired 4,000 acres of land in Cambridgeshire, paid 1,400 guineas for one of the best stallions of the day and won numerous awards. He diversified into Aberdeen-Angus cattle and built up one of the largest herds in the country.

With all his wealth he never forgot his home village and in 1896 gave the money for the construction of Willingham town hall with a reading room, committee rooms and accommodation for a caretaker. It was, he said be beneficial to the youth of the village who “instead of being on the street, would go to the Hall and read their papers and books”. It was soon filled with over 50 people busy at various games, chess, drafts, dominoes, ludo, bagatelle and other games and has continued to serve the village to the present day. Perhaps the grant of arms might find a home there?

But there is still a mystery – what happened to the great man himself. We know he died at his residence in 1905, aged 56 years, but Dennis believes he took his own life and that this might explain why the grant of arms was put away, as suicide was a cause of great shame at that time.

Does anybody know the area today or have a snap of Crisp's emporium in its prime

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Returning to the "Down your street" article on Cambridge's Petty Cury published in 1964. Starting on the north side corner with Sidney street Erica Dimock found True Form which had opened before the war, then Dunn and co which had taken over the Maypole grocery site two years earlier. J. Hepworth mens tailors had the Eros café above it which like the Waffle further along was "one of the few restaurants which remain open late at night". Familiar names like H. Samuel, Boots & Dixons "which deals in photographic equipment" are followed by Barnett Hutton women's fashions, Lyons restaurant which had arrived in 1931 and Dolcis shoe shop. Then came Eastman's butchers on the former Empire Meat Company's site, while the adjacent shop previously occupied by Kendall's the umbrella makers was then James Smith dyers and cleaners. Next door was Ken Stevens music shop where you could have your money refunded if you were not satisfied with a second-hand record you'd bought there. Peter Lord's shoe shop at no.36 had been opened by Katie Boyle the television personality three years earlier and was alongside Paige's dress shop.

She concluded, "This then is Petty Cury. A street which in character must have remained very much the same over the years and the future of which is inextricably bound up with the future re-development of the central area of Cambridge as a whole"

Your memories and snaps of the shops and area would be most welcome

READERS WRITE

Elizabeth Byers of 6707 Ellen Place, Nanaimo, British Columbia V9V 1A2, Canada is on the ancestor hunt. She is trying to track down the children of George Alfred Widdas and his wife Annie Tadcaster who married in 1900. So if you know the whereabouts of Margaret Butler, Ellen Sutton, Violet Peacock, Doris Harris or Kathleen Smith – who was living in Gwydir street, Cambridge in 1953, Elizabeth would be delighted to hear from you

Another Canadian reader is Jane Wilson from Ottawa who writes; "I enjoy reading the Cambridge Evening News and the "Memories" column, on the Internet. It certainly allows you to keep abreast of things. The other day I had a letter from a friend who used to work at the MRC on Chaucer Road, telling me about all the changes that have taken place, but as I had visited their web site a few days prior to the letter, I actually had more up-to-date information. What a topsy-turvy world!"

MEMORIES, 21st January 1999, by Mike Petty

Cambridge's Green Street, between Sidney street and Trinity street. is currently undergoing a facelift to make it more enticing to shoppers and visitors. I thought it might be interesting to look back at what Erica Dimock discovered when she surveyed the street in the Cambridge News in August 1963.

Right at the start she identified the problem planners are now trying to solve. "As the public hurries along this narrow by-way not one person can be oblivious of the congestion which

mars its charm and causes one to hop on and off its insufficient pavement to skirt a hurriedly parked lorry or avoid being brushed by a passing car. For the street has been invaded by frustrated shoppers trying to find a parking place, by lorries unloading their wares and by harassed residents endeavouring to keep a clear space so that they can see out of their own front windows.”

Although Mrs F. Dench still took eight students in her five storey house most of the lodging houses which had formerly occupied the street had closed. In their place had come Trinity college hostel under resident housekeeper Mrs G. Badcock , while another opposite belonging to Caius college was run by Miss I.L. Cottrill as a private business venture, accommodating holiday makers and overseas visitors outside term time

Mr Leonard Whitehead had been cutting men’s hair in the street for more than 40 years. He remembered that when he first started, porters and waiters from nearby colleges would trundle their wicker trays along the street, delivering breakfast to their students or waiting upon them at private cocktail parties. One man who became a kind of institution in the street was Mr Freddy Fulcher, who used to stand with his coster barrow selling fruit to undergraduates. Other hairdressers were E.W. Matthews and T.E. Twinn.

One building which had changed very little was the Volunteer public house, then a popular meeting place for undergraduates with a variety of pursuits such as chess, skittles, billiards and draughts. It also had the attraction of an inter-college competition of drinking a yard of ale – the record time of 11.4 seconds being held by Sidney Sussex college

Amongst the current traders were the Eastern Gas Board occupying premises which had earlier been Stockbridge’s furniture store rooms & Ellams Duplicator company which sold officer machinery operating a comprehensive duplicating service in the days before photocopiers.

Eaden Lilley’s bedding department and wholesale grocery store occupied premises that had once been Herbert Robinson’s cycle shop. Auctioneers G.W. Haslop and the surgery of well-known doctor Rex Salisbury Woods were nearby. A.G. Almond and Bodgers, the mens clothing shops with their main frontages in Sidney street were complemented by another tailors, Strickland Sons and George who had traded from Green street for 45 years.

Probably the most famous of all establishments were the bookbinders John P. Gray and co, in their Dickensian premises, the oldest in the street. In 1919 the firm had taken over the business of another long-established binders, G.F. Stoakley to be joined later by that of Cox and Allen of St Andrew’s Hill. Erica noted: “Specialising in the restoration and repair of valuable books and manuscripts and in fine binding, it is perhaps surprising to learn in these days of ever increasing mechanisation, that everything at Gray’s is done by hand. Presentation volumes have been bound for every member of the Royal Family”

More people however would have patronised two of the other establishments. The Coffee Pot, run by Mr & Mrs A.H. Moffatt specialised in home made food and enjoyed its reputation for supplying “the best cup of coffee in Cambridge”. For those who fancied something stronger there was the recently constructed Stable Bar, “decorated to give the impression of a stable with timber and rough-cast walls, a wattle ceiling and an array of cartwheels, bridles and collars providing added authenticity”. It was as part of the Berni Inn’s “Turks Head”, which had converted the old Matthews’s restaurant into “a miscellany of chicken, ham and steak restaurants and bars”

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Mrs Joan Summers of Newnham writes: “I loved your piece about Petty Cury. Just as a matter of interest my father E.S. Summers had a studio over the Maypole (now Boots) and when

alterations were made by Boots he moved to Alexandra Street, opposite the Y.M.C.A.. He was a heraldic artist and had a shop and studio. The buildings were pulled down in March 1971 to make way for Lion Yard”

Hazel Evans found something of interest in my “Looking Back” column article for 8th January 1899 when I mentioned her grandfather Joseph Redfarn. “His daughter, my mother, lives with me. She is 98 and intrigued about where I get your information from, do you keep all the newspapers from years back”. The back files of the “News” and its predecessor papers from the 1760s, are filed in the Cambridgeshire Collection on the third floor of the Lion Yard Library. I go through these looking for my snippets, which I copy from the microfilm of the papers. The story of Joseph extended over half a column and I have sent Hazel a fuller extract. If you see anything of interest let me know.

Mrs Judy Robinson of Lt Abington writes: “In “Looking Back” you mention by husband’s father Reg Robinson, Babraham farmer, when he was on the radio “Country Magazine”. I wondered if you could find out if in 1949 there was any mention of Arthur Askey’s programme ‘How do you do’. He went to Church Farm, Babraham and recorded the programme.” Well, writing on 12th February 1949 the “News” commented: “I thought the programme from Babraham was the best of the lot, so far. Farmer “Reg” Robinson, his family and his friends, seemed to be thoroughly enjoying themselves”. The Cambridge Independent Press added: “That cheerful little comedian, Arthur Askey, had what must be for him the unusual experience of meeting someone his own size when in farmer “Reg” Robinson’s spacious parlour in Church Farm, Babraham he met Herbert Jones, famous 68-years-old former jockey to the King, who lives at Girton. The hospitable farmer Robinson had invited a merry crowd of guests. He is himself no stranger to the microphone, having broadcast in “Country Magazine” from Histon and from London too. His lively party was relayed by landline to London, there to be recorded for transmission in the Light Programme”. Hazel would love to get a recording of the programme – can anybody help?

PICTURE :

CELLAR : The Turks head cellar bar, 1963

Nursery children : IF SPACE, OTHERWISE RETURN AND I’LL USE ANOTHER WEEK :
John Durrant has lent this picture of mothers and children at Ditton Fields Nursery school, Waddelows Road, Cambridge in 1949 : do you recognise anybody

Memories, 28 January 1999, by Mike Petty

Do you remember that severe winter of 1963 with its deep snow and severe frost, of blocked water mains and seven foot drifts – Lady Rowena Ryle does. She has sent me some papers she discovered tucked away in the study of her late husband, Novel prize-winner Prof. Sir Martin Ryle. They do not relate to any astronomical discoveries of his, but to one of her own adventures.

It was the 21st January 1963 that she and two friends, having already seen the Backs on skates, and undertaken an excursion on the ice to Grantchester, decided to make a longer expedition – from Denver Sluice to Cambridge. So they took a train to Downham Market, brought chocolate and apples, and asked their way to the lock gate

Denver sluice was clearly marked on their map, but it not some of the new channels that had been recently cut. Which was the river to Ely? Workmen pointed it out to them, doubtless wondering why two women and a man wearing climbing boots and a rope would be contemplating such a journey.

The ice looked very safe and solid. It was obviously strong enough to bear birds and animals, as their footprints testified, but would it stand the weight of people? There was only one way to find out. They tried the ice nearest the bank, for the most part it held, though some sections broke and sent them flying time after time. Some of the ice was just too slippery – “as my skates were the same ones I’d had as a child, with the edges worn away and the cross-wise surface almost rounded, it was impossible to skate just because of the marvellous surface – they simply slid horizontally with each forward stroke”.

Nothing daunted the trio continued, the ice breaking in long lines ahead of them with loud bangs like gunshot. They saw eels and fish, frozen just below the surface, slid past houses and bridges. On one a woman called a warning; “I shouldn’t go on that part of the river – it’s only been frozen two or three days”. Too late – that was the section they’d just skated.

Now however it was safe to venture into the middle where the ice was clear and the miles fell behind them. But they were still very far from Ely when they stopped for sandwiches, coffee and a chat to a workman, seeking assurance that they were indeed going the right way! On they skated, counting down the miles to Littleport, with three swans leading the way, flying overhead, then alighting and waiting for them to catch up.

By this time the effort was getting to them, her ankles aching from the strain of keeping up. “But coming into Ely was an experience I’ll never forget – the sky reddening behind, and the great cathedral high up on the rise so that it looked as if it was floating out of the flat fen land. As we came to the first bridge into Ely there were old collapsing warehouses at the foot of the cathedral that looked as ancient and medieval as any Breughel picture”.

Time was getting on, it was four o’clock. The railway station was nearby with its prospect of a comfortable end to a day’s adventure. “I knew I was tired and it would be hard, but it was too much of an experience and a challenge to stop at that point. We went on with more of urgency in our skating”. The setting sun sent great shafts of reflected-light dazzling the way ahead. Physical fatigue was more noticeable, but this seemed negligible, and the end was only a few miles away.

“The sun finally went down and there was no moon, but brilliant stars reflected in the ice. In the dark the noise of cracking ice was more ominous and we knew we had to be careful because of the increasing narrowness and speed of the river.

“By now Anne had taken the rope and gone ahead. In star-light we could see the marks of skates ahead. These were deceptively reassuring. I suddenly saw her disappear into the river. Before I could stop I had followed in behind her. I was wearing Martin’s ex-American Army sheep-skin coat, and this helped keep me up as we struggled to climb out. The ice was breaking round us, but with John lying flat and hauling we managed it. It was the coldest night of that remarkable winter and the ice was forming in plates all over us. We pulled off our skates and ran along the bank towards the lights of a house ahead of us”.

The lady who answered their knock was shocked at the sight before her – so much so that she hurried them through a cosy kitchen, where her dog basked by the hearth, to the front room and a tiny electric fire.

“We were able to phone Martin, who had the task of locating us ‘somewhere along the river bank near Waterbeach’. It was wonderful to get back home to hot soup and drinks and a bath. Only later in the middle of the night, did I wake up shaking”.

She had recounted her adventures on the way home, forgetting just one detail. Only later did her husband remember: “You never told me, when you phoned, that you’d fallen in too!”

READERS WRITE

Various readers have written in following “Memories” articles or photographs. Ted Austin of Willingham writes: “Your article triggered off a surprising number of contacts, including a Perse School fellow pupil of 72 years ago, and also my old school caretaker” Colin Hayton of Oakington spotted himself amongst the shoppers in Petty Cury, 1963.

Peter Andrews of Histon writes:

“Your weekly “Memories” are always of interest to me and they were particularly so on 14th January because I am confident that the woman in the photograph of Willingham Public Hall is my mother, Violet Andrews who died in 1968. She appears to be looking towards our house immediately opposite. The Hall is now a day Nursery called the “Buttery” and outside stands the old butter churn in which my father Bill Andrews made many tons of butter during the pre-war years. He also made many thousand Cambridge cheese which are remembered fondly by the older residents who invariably say how much they would like to have one of them now. I learnt to dance in the Hall to the strains of the “Arcadians” who were smartly attired in red shirts and black trousers. Many of the RAF members at Oakington attended and some weddings ensued

Memories, 4th February 1999, by Mike Petty

Twenty-five years ago Cambridgeshire was, like the rest of the country, suffering the impact of the winter of discontent. Yet thinking back on it I cannot remember much about it. My little cupboard at the back of the Reference Library in Wheeler Street was never particularly well-lit – and had been, I discovered, condemned in 1904 – but even there disruption must have been apparent. Perhaps we were concentrating too hard on preparing for the new Lion Yard Library, then nearing completion, or the impending local government reorganisation that would see library powers transferred from the city to the county.

Meanwhile the Cambridge city council was preparing to be wound up and a new District council waiting to take over – though before it took office the Queen had allowed it to retain the style and status of “City”.

Yet looking back through the *News* files the story becomes a little clearer. Council offices were adjusting their opening hours to maximise the periods when they were granted electricity, closing when darkness fell on non-power days - though St Neots were continuing almost as normal thanks to oil lamps.

Businesses were struggling to cope, bringing in generators to supplement power supplies, but the Pye group, who employed a large percentage of women, did not want to ask them to work on those Saturdays when they were allowed power, because of the inconvenience this would cause to their family commitments. Such a contrast to the present days of late and Sunday opening

One major casualty had been Christmas – or at least the Christmas lights which the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce had strung across the streets. They looked marvellous, but there was one snag – they were not allowed to turn them on. It was too much to bear so in the middle of January – and hoping no one was looking – they lit them up for just two minutes so see what they had missed

Housewives feared shortages of more than electricity. Shops were besieged in the search for toilet rolls, which were rumoured to be soon to disappear. Bread was another casualty with a

Haddenham baker being forced to cut his van deliveries in half, leaving 600 people in Cottenham, Haddenham and Willingham to make alternative arrangements for their daily loaf.

Bread was one thing but local Scots had already had to endure the misery of a Hogmanay deprived of haggis. Now Burns night seemed equally at risk. Because of rail and post problems the supplies to Mr Derek Traylen's butchers shop on Newmarket road, Cambridge had been axed. His Glasgow suppliers could however send a delivery direct to Euston station. So Mr Traylen drove to London and picked up about 2 cwt of the stuff to avoid a culinary disaster.

But what did you do after tea when the television programmes closed down early to save power. Hundreds flocked to Huntingdon library where Reg Keyworth and his staff endeavoured to cope with the rush of people bored into rediscovering the joy of reading. Old people took to reading in bed, one way of keeping warm in a cold and cheerless winter

The question facing the Government was "Who governs Britain". Having been challenged by the miners Edward Heath called an election. The three Cambridge parliamentary candidates competed for the ears of shoppers in a battle of decibels in the Market Place. The Liberal, Dr Michael O'Loughlin, was coming to the end of his soap-box session when his Conservative opponent, Mr David Lane, arrived armed with a megaphone. Minutes later the Labour contingent arrived with their candidate, Mr Jim Curran. Their loudspeaker van made a tour of the Market Square booming out the socialist message and drowning everyone else. Meanwhile a late contender for the seat, a Girton undergraduate standing for the "Diggers" seemed somewhat unsure as to her policies and Clement Freud, Liberal candidate for the Isle of Ely, moved into a new house at Mepal in the middle of campaigning.

Regulations were relaxed to allow the street lights to be turned on in time for polling day. Freud, Renton, Pym and Lane were returned, the Heath government was not. Harold Wilson formed his administration and on 8th March a five-day week was resumed.

This was reported by the News – but they could not cover everything, indeed with the petrol shortage they were forced to bring back bicycles to get their reporters to the scene of the action. So what do you remember of the dismal days of the winter of discontent?

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Local historian Alan Brigham has been researching more of the story of Fred Crisp, the Willingham lad who made his fortune in London and established the village's Town Hall – now used by the playgroup. Despite my best endeavours there was still a mystery about his final years. You may recollect that in 1875 when just 25 years old, Fred bought a shop on the Seven Sisters Road, Islington, which he opened as a fancy drapery business. Success followed success, shop after shop was added and by 1894 he was employing 300 assistants in the busy season. Problems arose and next year the business became a limited liability company under a new management team. Costly extensions were undertaken, new departments and a marketing hall opened, but the business failed to thrive. It closed in July 1910.

Fred himself had died in 1905. According to the "Holloway Press" he left a fortune amounting on paper to nearly £96,000, but in reality he was a ruined man. He had sold his house at New Southgate which had been dismantled and the furniture removed. Crisp went there one Saturday afternoon and was seized by an apoplectic stroke. A mattress was borrowed from an adjacent pub and he was laid upon it. He died in his old bare, dismantled, drawing room.

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A recent story in the *News* about a proposed leisure park scheme for the Cambridge cattle market site on Cherry Hinton road gives me an excuse to feature a picture of this once-thriving institution which used to attract thousands of people on Bank Holiday Monday where a vast area was covered with stalls and traders held mock auctions. It was apparently a high-spirited affair. You might come home with a tea-set, a new coat or biscuit barrel. It was not unknown however for a pair of stockings to be of different sizes or a cheap shirt to have one arm a different colour from the rest. But did you visit it – or recall when the cattle market was just that, the gathering place for farmers from miles around.

Write to Mike Petty at the News

MEMORIES, 11TH February 1999. by Mike Petty

Mr H. Bye of Ely has written following my mention of Arthur Askey programme broadcast from Babraham.

“This reminds me of the 1932 and 1933 Chivers Christmas Parties. We were transported from Shippea Hill estate to the Dorothy Café in Cambridge for a tea, then to the Guildhall where the Percy Cowell band played to accompany a sing song. Then the Chivers Brothers would deliver some state of the firms profits or failures, followed by the usual, in my mind, boring speeches.

“A variety show would follow with all sorts of classical comedy or London acts. It was either in 1932 or 1933 that a bespectacled comedian came on stage in the usual actor’s evening dress. I had never heard of this man, Arthur Askey, I was more familiar with Sandy Powell. One piece I remember: he said a friend who kept a pub told him his best customer was the teetotaler. The heavy drinker upset his customers in his drunken behaviour so they would leave early. The light drinker would spend all the evening drinking half a pint. But the teetotaler would nip round the back several times a day when the pub was closed and say “A pint please”. He’d drink it quickly and was gone like a shot

“These Christmas parties ended for some reason and the last treat was a cinema show at the Central. The main film was Chivers silent film called “From Orchard to Home”. On that particular morning our special steam train from Shippea Hill arrived in Cambridge thirty minutes late. We missed some of the cowboy film but we did see Mickey Mouse, then the main Chivers film. After the show Mr Sidney Lamb, one of the directors, made a speech which in some eyes had a flavour of blasphemy. He said: “Unfortunately the Shippea Hill train arrived 30 minutes late. It says in the bible that God created all creeping things, so he must have created the London and North Eastern Railway”

C.W. Barnard of Foxton writes : “I am sure there are many elderly readers of the CEN who remember the hot mushy pea stall on the market every Saturday. It was situated where Mr Gawthrop has his meat stall today. Whether the pea stall was on the market other days, I do not know.

The stall consisted of a square tent, containing three wooden trestle tables and forms to sit on. I believe there was another square tent at the rear where the peas were served and the washing up done. Outside were two coke braziers where the mushy peas bubbled away, and where water was heated for the washing up in a large kettle.

For children there was a fairly large tea cup (minus its handle) for a penny, a small basin for 2d and a large one for 4d. I am sure too one could purchase a slice of bread and margarine for a penny. Salt, pepper and vinegar were available on the tables.

On bitterly cold days I remember how good it was to have a warm by the braziers. How many years the stall was there I have no idea. It was there in 1927 when I was eight years old; probably it was there up to the outbreak of the war, or during the thirties did the authorities consider it unhygienic or too dangerous to people walking past the braziers?"

In one of those strange co-incidences I visited Mr Barnard in between him writing the letter and my receiving it. Next day I mentioned it at a meeting at St Martin's day centre and the stall-keeper's daughter was in the audience! Do you remember it and is it the same stall shown on Midsummer Fair

Richard Badcock of Rampton writes: "As an avid fen skater I seem to recall we skated "everywhere" in 1963 but the ice wasn't particularly good because the snow had spoilt it. Nevertheless all sorts of things were achieved on skates, many of which may never been repeated during our lifetime". He then encloses a cutting from the Cambridge Independent Press of 18th January 1963 recounting an adventure in which he took part. It reads: "On Saturday there was quite a gathering of Cottenham skating enthusiasts at Twentypence bridge to skate on the Old West River. Then a party of a dozen set off for Smithy Fen engine, but soon only half were left skating in a heavy snowstorm. On reaching the engine it was decided to skate as far as Aldreth Causeway High Bridge and then forward to Willingham Flats. Eventually Earith bridge became the target and this was reached in just over one hour's skating time – a distance of 6 ¼ miles". The party decided to beat that time on the return journey and succeeded in what they believed to be a record time. As well as Richard the skaters concerned were named as Edwin Gifford, David Gilbey, Dudley Morgan, Colin Norman and the Youth Leader Mr Roy Carter, then well known locally as an athlete and school teacher – and now for his sports and injuries clinic at Cottenham.

MEMORIES, 18th February 1999, by Mike Petty

Last Thursday morning I was speaking to a class at Queen Edith's school, Cambridge. Over coffee beforehand got to talking to one of the staff about her memories. She recalled the hard winter of 1963 when they had no water for weeks, of walking to school in the snow and draping cold wet clothes around the tortoise stove to dry – a stove which the boys were responsible for keeping supplied with coal and in front of which the lady teacher aired her knowledge – and her bloomers!

We wondered what memories the youngsters would have of their earlier days, would it be of television cartoons, of football matches – or even of somebody showing slides of the 1947 floods. Only time will tell just what fragments will stick.

When Terry Staines of Ely was challenged to record his memories, he wasn't sure where to start. So he thought out a series of headings to help him. The first was smells – the smells of Ely brewery, the smell of the dray horses and of burning wood as the cooper put the rings on the barrels. There was also the burnt smell of horse hoof at Brand's smith where they watched the great shires being reshod.

Then it was fears – of going by the green when the gypsies were selling their horses, of being chased across King's school fields by Mr Bailey the groundsman. The thrills of opening the railway crossing gates for Mr Garner, the signalman or cycling to Waterbeach to watch the first Meteor jets based there just after the war.

Scares – of being trapped in the mud at the sugar beet settling ponds – and sights like the Ely cattle market when bulls, heifers, horses, pigs and every sort of animal and bird would be put up for sale. Then he thought of sounds such as the "Oyez, oyez" of the Ely town crier who

would stand outside Reeder's butchers shop at the end of St John's road to call out his news and people would come from their houses to hear the announcements.

When others were stimulated they came up with other fantastic happenings. Phyllis Trevor recalls how her father, when a lad, used to go to election meetings: "they used to take sparrows and tie ribbons on their legs and let them through the school room to upset the meetings". Christine Kerswell recalled schoolday milk: "I loathed it especially as we had open fires and in the winter they stood the 1/3 pint bottles around the fireguards to warm and it was even worse, it had a skin on it and was revolting".

Many who attended Soham Grammar School will have memories of cross-country running - out of the school ground, over the railway crossing, across horse fen and onto Wicken road, and back. As Terry remembers: "Mr Thomas, a little Welshman would bike along the road waving an old bicycle tyre which he had cut in two, and if you happened to be in his way you got hit. He didn't like it but we simply jumped into the field beside the road where he couldn't reach us".

Lilian Martin went to West Row junior school in 1943. "The only thing that wasn't very good was bucket toilets in the playground, and they were grim places. At the beginning of the war an air raid shelter had been added and I remember going in there wearing a Mickey Mouse gas mask". In 1962 she moved to Soham and was horrified with what she found: "I was shocked by the poverty in some areas; there were people living in houses with dirt floors, with a sack on the floor".

Hopefully today's children will never have occasion to remember wartime – not like Maureen Scott: "Most weekends after school on Friday I would cycle to my aunt's house at Prickwillow, returning home on Sunday to get ready for school. One Thursday in February 1945 an American bomber ploughed into my aunt's bungalow, killing my little 19-month-old cousin and an evacuee sent to the country for safety. My aunt was on the danger list for weeks and had it not been for the RAF hospital in Ely she would not have survived. As it was she was in hospital for many, many months and always remained very badly crippled"

June Strawson recalls another side of life. "Death is all hurried now. You no sooner die than you're removed from your house, taken to a chapel of rest and then the church service comes later. It wasn't like that. It was all given proper reverence and the body was kept in the front room. When my mother died I just went in and looked at her every now and again. Those few days between the death and burial was eased over by the mourning. It wasn't morbid, just got you acclimatised to it. It was part of dying and part of mourning, having the person in the house"

Memories can't just be summoned on demand. They sneak out when you least expect them – stimulated, as Terry says by a smell or a sound. But they are personal to us, we don't usually share them and they disappear again. Trying to capture them for posterity is a difficult task, taking commitment and time, and the need to learn new skills.

For the last three years Cambridge University Board of Continuing Education have been undertaking a fenland oral history project as part of their programme for widening the range and number of people participating in high education. Now the results of their work are being published, with "Voices of the fens", edited by Pamela Blakeman due in the shops very shortly at about £4.50.

Brian Peck of Cambridge has needed no help with his memories of the Cambridge cattle market. "In the early 1950s us kids would go there via a mud pathway from Rustat Road. The gateman wouldn't let us in unless we were with a grown up, so we used to go and jump over the wall to watch the cattle sales. Bank Holiday Monday was a day out. The stalls were in the

hundreds and people in the thousands. They stopped cattle sales on a Bank Holiday when a large bull ran amuck in the crowd after injuring itself jumping an iron fence. A cattleman roped it round the horns then tied it to a tree. Someone shouted it was getting loose so more people were injured in the rush to get away. The bull was shot on site”

Memories, 25th February 1999, by Mike Petty

Just 100 years ago Cambridge was preparing for a special exhibition in the Corn Exchange. The room had been tastefully decorated with festoons of artificial flowers hung from the arches of the roof, choice pot plants arranged and the creature comforts of visitors would be catered for by the Kardomah Tea Company.

The opening ceremony was performed by the Mayor, George Kett, though he confessed he knew little of the subject of part of the display. Certainly he was acquainted with the bicycle for it had made man independent – it was his own horse and driver in one. There had been those who had predicted that the craze for bicycles would soon pass. They had been proved wrong. The demand for cycles had stimulated manufacture, there were hundreds of different makes many of which were represented in the exhibition.

Conspicuous amongst the stands was that of F.W. Lawrence from King Street, Cambridge exhibiting his own “Belmont” machines alongside “Royal Enfield”, “Osmond” and “Star” makes. Nearby was the stand of the Humber Supply Company of Regent street with some 64 machines, including a “cut line” priced at just ten guineas, while H.J. Gray of Sidney street displayed “Marriott” machines.

But today the bicycle was being eclipsed in the public imagination by that new development – the motor car. Since the first London to Brighton run just two years earlier the car had become so common that now even the boy in the street would hardly turn his head to look at one. Indeed there were now as many styles of motor vehicles as of horse vehicles.

There in the hall were displays from the Motor Manufacturing Company from London, claiming to be the original manufacturers of motors in England, with enormous works at Coventry. They showed some of their latest, 1899, models, including a motor char-a-banc with seating for nine people who it could carry at a massive 12 miles an hour on the level at an average cost of three farthings a mile. Also on display was an Ariel quintette – a Daimler four horse-power sporting drag which had already accomplished 350 miles without a hitch.

H & G. Bedwell, of the New Town Cycle Stores were sole agents for the De Dion Bouton petroleum motor tricycle whose previously troublesome accumulator had now been replaced with new electric ignition. The new model promised acceleration from four to 25 miles an hour, with an almost instantaneous increase or decrease of speed. By attaching a dainty little carriage to the tricycle two people could travel in comfort and without exertion.

Amongst those people attracted to the display were William King and H.H. Harper. Unlike Mayor Kett they were experienced in the modern technology, indeed they had been present in the Corn Exchange a year earlier when an undergraduate drove a motor cycle round the room, in between the cycle stands. Like Messrs King and Harper that young man went on to develop his own motorised vehicles, though his name has achieved more lasting fame – for he was the Hon. C.S. Rolls.

All that was in the future. In February 1899 Mayor Kett was sure that virtually the whole of the population now aspired to “mote” and the motor car had come to stay. Over the years other Motor Shows would be held in the Corn Exchange and other young boys turn their heads to look at them. Were you one – and what do you remember.

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Mr D.M. Cracknell of Lt Abington writes with his memories of Tiny Spicer, of Pampisford. Tiny was small and vicious, he would bite anyone he could get near, but had no ear for music. This could not be allowed to stop a lad practising on his mouth organ, a little burst of “God Save the King” here, a few bars of a tune there, and then off before Mrs Richards came out to remonstrate with him in her thick brown rimmed glasses, slippers and apron. But there was no escaping parental retribution, and a swift clip around the ear from his mother would discourage further torment of that scruffy little dark brown mongrel dog.

But what breed was Tiny? Horry [SUBS THIS SHOULD INDEED BE HORRY – MJP] Hawes thought it was a cross between a step ladder and a doormat – but then he was always a bit of a wit, especially after a few pints in the Chequers. Like on one occasion when Bert Allan asked him how his garden was coming along. “Not too bad”, said Horry: “I’ve got some decent carrots and peas”. What are yer spuds like? “I got some as big as marbles, some as big as walnuts and a bloody lot of littleuns!”

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Dennis Gifford of Victoria Park, Cambridge writes : “I was very interested in your article on the 1963 winter. There is no doubt it was severe. I had just started at King’s college and I well remember having to retrieve two of our very heavy iron seats along the ice from St John’s Bridge of Sighs where they had been taken for a prank. I also remember the winter of 81-82 when we were felling the elms on the Backs when my outside thermometer went down to five degrees Fahrenheit. Our contractor had to thaw out his diesel pipes which were frozen solid with a lighter rolled up newspaper before he could grind out the stumps. We were not able to replant before March”

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Jim Richardson of Cherry Hinton drops a line to say: “I remember the pea stall on Cambridge market was run by a Mr Mickey Holland who lived in the Romsey Town area. This was when the market closed at 10 00’clock Saturday nights”. He goes on to ask: “Could you tell me by whom and why roads in Romsey Town were named after countries abroad – Cyprus, Suez, Natal, Madras and Hobart Road”. I believe this had something to do with the route followed by a ship en route to Australia – can you help?

Having spoken recently to a group at St Martin’s church in Suez Road, Cambridge I was delighted to receive a letter from Maurice Kidd of Chatteris with some details of St Martin’s road there. Apparently St Martin was a Roman soldier who became a Christian and ended up as Bishop of Tours in France. He is Patron Saint of soldiers, horsemen, travellers, tailors and reformed drunkards. His charity and compassion became notable, related in stories as to how he tore his robe in half, giving half to a shivering poor man. Exning church is dedicated to him.

ILLUSTRATIONS

PHOTOS OF AN EARLY CAR AND MOTORCYCLE EXHIBITION IN THE CORN EXCHANGE – NB not the one mentioned in the article

MEMORIES 4th March 1999, by Mike Petty

As we approach the end of this Millennium the county seems even more alive with people anxious to discover – or to dispose of – material relating to the history of their community.

In the former category are those investigating their past for a history or recording their present as a modern Domesday survey. They are discovering the wealth of material listed and accessible through such places as the County Record Offices at Shire Hall Cambridge or

Huntingdon, libraries such as those at Lion Yard Cambridge, Saffron Walden or Haddenham and museums like the Cambridge Folk Museum or the marvellous Norris at St Ives. The results of their investigations will doubtless be manifest in a myriad of booklets, videos, oral history tapes or CD Roms. Hopefully the compilers will remember to deposit a copy of their finished projects at whichever depository they used to compile it.

At the same time there are numerous people for whom local history is no new discovery. They have been carefully collecting and recording for decades – indeed in some cases they have inherited material compiled by their fathers. Now, no longer young, they have the agony of debating what should be done with the items they have been instrumental in saving. The spectre of a bereaved family faced, with the prospect of clearing a home, electing to solve one of their problems by binning or burning the old papers is one which haunts many of them.

The ideal solution is to pass them to somebody who shares your passion – but often they are also becoming elderly and may be reluctant to accept the burden. Some might form the basis of a history display in the local church and the local schools may welcome other bits and use it to death, but the donor often wants his collection to live on after him. So one is back to the museums, record offices and libraries. Each will probably have its own storage problems and long backlogs of unrecorded accessions but that is something they have to manage – they are the professionals in the field and material in their care is there for posterity, available to everybody.

A simple little item such as a newspaper cutting lent to me by Gerry Young of Cottenham can give an insight into the problems of not so long ago. It comes from the News Chronicle of 22 June 1938

It reads : “There’s a crisis in parts of Britain. To the thousands of people involved its effects crowd out all talks of foreign war and the possibilities of war. It is to many the greatest disaster in their lives. It is the failure of the fruit crop of 1938. Early in the year there was severe frost & prolonged drought. The results are apparent now when the fruit should be ripening on the trees and in the fields”

It goes on to examine the situation in Cambridgeshire, then one of the great fruit growing areas, which normally produced a million pounds worth a year and discovered what people involved thought about it. Their reporter talked with large-scale growers and village smallholders in Cottenham. They told of exceptional losses, and of a number faced with bankruptcy. He saw for himself how crops had been wiped out over thousands of acres.

One picture shows a man, a fruit tree, and one small plumb tied with a piece of string. This was the only plumb growing in an orchard stretching across 24 acres, and this was the only way the grower could find it. Normally his crops were worth about £3000, this year he thought himself lucky if he harvested half a ton, valued at £25.

W.S. Barnes, 56, a smallholder with 5 acres paid £3.5.0 a year rent said: “I spend all my time from dawn to sunset tending my orchards. I don't expect a penny”. 72 year old Herbert Wiseman and Herbert Leete, aged 58, had planted and tended their orchards, but would get no return for their labour. Miss Winifred Roberts of Newington said “I've been out for five hours this morning and picked only 24 chips of strawberries. (A chip was a 2lb basket.) They're harder to find when they're scarce and picking takes much longer. There should be three times as many”. Mr C Chivers expected to get only 40 per cent of his normal strawberry crop and nothing at all from 12 acres of plums, apples, cherries and pears.

Cottenham had 7000 acres of fruit, and a population of 2446 dependent on fruit and flowers. Eleven years earlier the parish had leased 200 acres of land from a Cambridge college for a rental of £450. It was secured on the parish rates, but the maximum of 8d in the pound now

produced only £27. The land was divided among 160 tenants who, after five difficult years had no resources to meet the debt. The village parliament talked of nothing but the disaster overtaking them.

By contrast the problems of celebrating the year 2,000 seem very minimal!

Fortunately there was a war on the horizon to provide employment for the men who Gerry remembers seeing queuing up for any farm job that might become available. Yet this is one side of local life that does not seem to have been adequately recorded. Do you remember it.

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John Durrant, himself researching a certain best-seller of old Cambridge pictures, lends a photograph of Ditton Fields nursery school in 1949, at a time when Ditton Fields were open countryside. Does anybody recognise the mothers or their children?

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With some parish councils now preparing for elections in a month or so I conclude with some lines from “Misguided missiles” by P.F. Franklin, anticipating the Cottenham election of 1958.

“Under the spreading chestnut tree some village voters stand,
They’ve seen the list of candidates, a truly motley band,
Who range from eager untried youth to really ripe old age ...”

“The voters wear a worried look, they’re really at a loss
To know just who should have their vote, made by the usual cross”

The poet then goes on to summarise the claims of each including the oldest:

“And you may think he’s far too hold, please don’t sustain this grouse,
For he has served the village well and any new recruit
Will earn our lasting gratitude, if he can follow suit”

The tragedy is that many will this year be elected unopposed – and then you’ll only have yourselves to blame if your Millennium commemorations fizzle out.

Memories, 11th March 1999, by Mike Petty

As Cambridge continues to grapple with its traffic problems so attention is focussed on the stretch of road leading from the “Four Lamps” roundabout,(where Victoria Avenue, Maids Causeway and Jesus Lane meet) towards Drummer Street. Here Emmanuel Road runs between two grassed areas, Christ’s Pieces and New Square – havens of tranquillity which seem to have been that way for centuries.

But many will, like me, remember New Square as being a most convenient car park not so very long ago. It is an area that has seen the battle of the car fought on more than one occasion.

The Square was developed by Jesus College as a spacious urban development in the 1830s, the houses overlooking a green park. Postcards from the Edwardian age show elegant ladies and gentlemen strolling across as they make their way to the historic centre. By the 1920s photographs show a truly rural area with cows grazing on grass which resembles a meadow.

But change was in the air. With the growth of the motor car came the demand for somewhere to park them. In 1925 a small piece of Christ's Pieces was taken as part of a scheme for a combined bus station and car park at Drummer Street. This caused great protest with a mass meeting lobbying the Mayor to demand that the council change its mind on the desecration of such an important open space. Nevertheless the scheme went ahead.

Within a few years the car parking problem was again acute and eyes turned this time towards the large grassy area of New Square. Opponents urged the Cambridge Daily News to take a stand but the paper commented: "Most people smile when they think of the tremendous agitation worked up against Drummer Street ... but nobody is one penny the worse. The only fault is that Drummer Street was not big enough ..."

In 1932 New Square opened as a car park and was soon packed with 188 cars. By 1950 over 43,000 vehicles a year were using it, despite the increase of other parking areas.

Park street multi-storey car park opened in 1963, Queen Anne Terrace in 1971 and Lion Yard a few years later – but still New Square continued. It was improved by the addition of a pedestrian bridge in 1966.

Then came proposals for a comprehensive redevelopment of the Kite Area, to include more provision for cars. One element of the plan was that New Square should revert to grass. Thus it was that the concrete was removed and – for the first time – nature regained ground lost to the motor car.

Now Emmanuel Road might be closed to most traffic and the traffic congestion of this part of Cambridge at least may become just a memory.

My "Memories" postbag this week has included a number of letters from readers seeking your help.

C. Winterton from Thornton Road, Cambridge, draws my attention to the 50th anniversary of the "Yangtse Incident", which became the subject of a film. The episode involved the British frigate H.M.S. Amethyst, one of a number of ships protecting British interests in China during the civil war between Communists and nationalist forces. In the confusion of the time she was shelled and badly damaged as she tried to make her way from deep inside China down to the sea. Various attempts to rescue her were made by other warships, but they were forced back by shore batteries. Amethyst was badly battered and trapped with Communist howitzers trained on her from less than a quarter of a mile away. Under a scorching summer sun life became intolerable for the 86 men left on board with temperatures below deck rising to 120 degrees. With fuel running low its captain, Lt Cdr Kerans decided to cut and run the 168 miles to safety. Her battling journey back to the sea, during which it was again repeatedly shelled, ended with the sending of a message: "Have rejoined the Fleet. No damage or casualties. God save the King".

One of the crew, a stoker, came from Cambridge. When he returned home crowds turned out to meet him from the station. Mr Winterton remembers crowds lining the whole length of Station Road. Do you remember the occasion?

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Mrs J. Clements of Campkin road writes following my appeal for memories of electricity. “I think it was about 1936 when a man called at our house in Blossom Street, Cambridge, and asked my mother if she would like electric light. He was doing a survey to find out if it was worth putting the cable in the street, my mother said yes. They would put the light in two rooms for 10/6, any other rooms would cost more. We just had the two rooms as money was short, but in time the while house was done. There was even more excitement when we had an electric wireless.”

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Norman Thompson writes from 5 Chiltern Avenue, Bedford, MK41 9EQ:

“I very much enjoy reading your “Memories” pages in the C.E.N. I now live in Bedford but make sure that I do not miss this weekly reminder of the years I spent at Haslingfield in the thirties, forties and fifties.

“My father, Norman Thompson ran his buses from Harston and the surrounding districts to Cambridge and Royston. He named the business “Harston and District Motor Company”. In 1936 he sold it to Premier Travel and became a manager.

“At present I am researching his life story and would be grateful if any of your readers have any memories of his early buses or later the wartime services of Premier Travel. Hopefully someone may have a photo showing his buses or of groups of passengers on outings in those distant days. This Cambridgeshire exile would be grateful for any help”.

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By contrast Miss Daphne Freeman of Sturton st, Cambridge is looking for assistance from people in the north of the area: “When I was a child, living in Hilgay, Norfolk, I remember my mother telling me about a village boy who became a famous professor. John Taylor was born on the Hundred Foot Bank in 1865 and worked on farms from seven years old to twenty. When aged 22 he decided to devote himself to Phrenology (the study of the shape and size of the head as an indication of character). He ended up with a string of letters after his name and wrote several books”. How, she asks did he make that leap from fen boy to student and what happened to him. If you can help please let me know

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When exploring “Pickwick’s Cambridge scrapbook” at Trumpington Local History Group the other evening I noticed they have produced an interesting array of booklets relating to their area. Amongst them is a reprint of extracts of entries from the Spalding’s Cambridge directory of 1939 which lists just who was living in which house from the Pembertons at Trumpington Hall to the college servants in Alpha Terrace. The 1939 directory was the last to list people’s occupations, giving an indication of the diverse skills then available in the area including Walter Dring plumber and hot water fitter, Benjamin Stone the farrier, Percy Robinson schoolmaster and Mrs Harvey at the General Stores. A complete file of the directories from 1864 can be consulted in Lion Yard Library but this little extract is well worth £1.50 including postage from Arthur Brookes, 46 Lantree Crescent, Trumpington CB2 2NJ

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Other people were grateful for any kind of accommodation. George Sewell recalls that old railway carriages provided homes for families in the days before caravan parks. As early as February 1920 the Chesterton Rural District Council had purchased two and were planning to erect another in Shelford. The “Cambridge Chronicle” published a photograph showing just

how comfortable they could be. But how, George wonders, did they get them to the chosen site – presumably on the back of a lorry? Are there any still in use?

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As the century draws to a close a countdown to the Millennium has been erected on the front of Cambridge Guildhall. There is of course another clock at the top. Have you noticed the two figures on either side – an owl and a cockerel. Unkind people used to say they were an appropriate choice for the owl sleeps all day, and the cockerel makes a lot of noise but does little!

There were other Cambridge street sayings – King’s Parade was a most miserable place – it had shops owned by Sadd, Greef and Pain, while it was very difficult to get down Fitzroy Street because there were Gates at either end and a cart right (Cartwright) in the middle. Do you recall others?

MEMORIES, 18th March 1999, by Mike Petty

It has been a week of interesting discoveries, several of them photographic.

The first occurred when I was invited to give advice over a suitable home for some of the manuscript, printed and photograph materials collected by the late Frank & Harold Fossey of Eversden. Much of their magnificent collection of bygones have long since been deposited in the Farmland Museum at Denny Abbey, more has been auctioned off and found good homes with other collectors. But it was the unvaluable, yet invaluable, documentary sources that now concerned their executor. A morning’s sorting resulted in the delivery to the Cambridgeshire County Record Office of a box of assorted material.

Amongst the other material were a few Victorian cartes-de-visite –small photographs of forgotten faces that were so popular nearly 150 years ago. Two in particular stood out for me. They were taken by William Nichols, Cambridge’s first photographer, from his premises in St Mary’s Passage. Nobody now knows the subjects, but they are less important than the painted background in front of which they were posed which I had never seen before. It shows the scene virtually outside his door – King’s college chapel.

Another exciting find was awaiting me at the *News*. Robert McBeth came to Cambridge to study photography at Huntingdon Regional College, bringing with him two reminders of his grandfather, George McBeth, an Aberdonian. Of George himself we know but little. He served in the Great War, and he was a photographer. His medals have survived, as have his snapshots of family members.

But two of the glass negatives are somewhat more exciting. One appears to show Lord and Lady Baden-Powell at their home in July 1928 at a reunion of members of a camp on Brownsea Island 21 years earlier. The second is a magnificent snap of the Graf Zeppelin which was launched on 8th July 1928. This giant machine cruised at 68 mph and pioneered a direct postal service across the South Atlantic, picking up sacks of letters by rope whilst flying slowly over a lorry at one end and delivering the mail by parachute at the other. In 1934 a letter could be posted in Berlin and a reply from Santiago received within seven days. The machine was broken up in March 1940. As far as Robert knows the picture has never before been published and I am grateful for this opportunity to print it.

If you can shed more light on either Graf Zeppelin or the Baden-Powell garden party let me know and I will pass it on to Robert. If you have other reminders of the early days of Cambridge photography I should be delighted to see them.

Norman Thompson writes from 5 Chiltern Avenue, Bedford, MK41 9EQ:

“I very much enjoy reading your “Memories” pages in the C.E.N. I now live in Bedford but make sure that I do not miss this weekly reminder of the years I spent at Haslingfield in the thirties, forties and fifties.

“My father, Norman Thompson ran his buses from Harston and the surrounding districts to Cambridge and Royston. He named the business “Harston and District Motor Company”. In 1936 he sold it to Premier Travel and became a manager.

“At present I am researching his life story and would be grateful if any of your readers have any memories of his early buses or later the wartime services of Premier Travel. Hopefully someone may have a photo showing his buses or of groups of passengers on outings in those distant days. This Cambridgeshire exile would be grateful for any help”.

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By contrast Miss Daphne Freeman of Sturton st, Cambridge is looking for assistance from people in the north of the area: “When I was a child, living in Hilgay, Norfolk, I remember my mother telling me about a village boy who became a famous professor. John Taylor was born on the Hundred Foot Bank in 1865 and worked on farms from seven years old to twenty. When aged 22 he decided to devote himself to Phrenology (the study of the shape and size of the head as an indication of character). He ended up with a string of letters after his name and wrote several books”. How, she asks did he make that leap from fen boy to student and what happened to him. If you can help please let me know

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When exploring “Pickwick’s Cambridge scrapbook” at Trumpington Local History Group the other evening I noticed they have produced an interesting array of booklets relating to their area. Amongst them is a reprint of extracts of entries from the Spalding’s Cambridge directory of 1939 which lists just who was living in which house from the Pembertons at Trumpington Hall to the college servants in Alpha Terrace. The 1939 directory was the last to list people’s occupations, giving an indication of the diverse skills then available in the area including Walter Dring plumber and hot water fitter, Benjamin Stone the farrier, Percy Robinson schoolmaster and Mrs Harvey at the General Stores. A complete file of the directories from 1864 can be consulted in Lion Yard Library but this little extract is well worth £1.50 including postage from Arthur Brookes, 46 Lantree Crescent, Trumpington CB2 2NJ

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Other people were grateful for any kind of accommodation. George Sewell recalls that old railway carriages provided homes for families in the days before caravan parks. As early as February 1920 the Chesterton Rural District Council had purchased two and were planning to erect another in Shelford. The “Cambridge Chronicle” published a photograph showing just how comfortable they could be. But how, George wonders, did they get them to the chosen site – presumably on the back of a lorry? Are there any still in use?

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ILLUSTRATIONS

SCANNED : NICHOLS : one of the earliest photographs taken in Cambridge, some 150 years ago, showing the painted backdrop of King's college

GRAF ZEPPELIN & THE BADEN-POWELLS

ROBERT McBETH WITH HIS GRANDFATHER'S UNIQUE PHOTOGRAPHS

MEMORIES, 25th March 1999, by Mike Petty

It is that time of the year when adult classes are coming to the end of their current session. If they are fun and instructive to attend they are much more so to those fortunate enough to teach them. There is much to be said for the opportunity to drive home in Spring sunshine through rolling rural Huntingdonshire having enjoyed the company of a group at Alconbury chapel schoolroom on a Tuesday morning, or negotiating the twists and turns of the dark fen tracks home from Burwell on a Thursday night. Whatever members of the class learn it is nothing to what the tutor discovers from having the challenge of answering their perceptive questions.

In my case there is the added bonus of their assistance in supplying material for "Memories", even if sometimes it takes a little while to come through. Four months ago Mrs Rosslyn Kellock of Cottenham promised to look out for me a prize-winning essay that her mother had written for East Barnwell Over-60's club and now she has found it.

In it Mrs Bertha Stone recalls her schooldays in Hadstock. She writes: "I started school on Monday June 3rd 1907 the days following my fifth birthday. To reach it all children had to walk through the churchyard. The building consisted of a large room and a small one for infants. Boys and girls had separate entrances with a lobby to hang our outdoor clothes. Lighting was supplied by oil lamps. There was a head mistress (who was also the school post mistress, the Post Office being closed during school hours) and two teachers for about 100 children. Toilets were about 25 yards from the entrance and could be a very muddy approach so we avoided them if possible. The girls were all proud of their clean white pinafores which had to be boiled and starched. Our hair had to be either tied or plaited

"On the afternoon of May 27th 1913 we had a terrifying experience. The sky became very black with thunderclouds and we had a most dreadful storm. Lessons were abandoned and every one was very frightened. Teachers gathered the children at one end of the room as the hailstones smashed the windows. Everyone was crying. When at last the storm was over and we were able to go home it was a scene of desolation. Nearly every house had windows smashed and hailstones as big as eggs laid around for hours

"In winter the school was very cold, the only heating being provided by a tortoise stove which burnt coal and it was often getting bunged up with clinkers which made it difficult to get any heat or even keep a fire going at all. We would push the desks towards the centre and would march around clapping our hands and stamping our feet to get warm. When there was snow we would fill an enamel bowl and stand it on the stove for hot water. Why we did this I can't imagine as we had no washing facilities or towels for drying. It has given me much pleasure to think back on these things"

It was a privilege to be at the Headquarters of Cambridge University's Board of Continuing Education, the great Jacobean Madingley Hall, last Friday when a coachload of students gathered for a special reception. They were all dressed in their Sunday-best and had travelled from the far north of Cambridgeshire. Most were well into retirement age, and many of them

were celebrating the result of their first university course ever – and looking forward to going on to gain further credits towards a degree.

The occasion was the official launch of two volumes of fenland oral history, “Fen Voices” from the Ely area and “The Light of Other Days” from Wisbech in which people from Gorefield, Friday Bridge, Manea and Bunkers Hill shared their memories of days gone past. They recall tied cottages and farmwork, make-do-and-mend, paraffin delivered by the horse-drawn grocers van and school-day memories which have lasted into old age. They all left with extra memories to treasure - of being feted by Cambridge University in the tapestry-bedecked grand saloon - as impressive in its way as the hall at Three Holes - & of the cake baked in their honour. They also took copies of their contribution to Cambridgeshire history, the books now signed by other members of their class, which, at just £4.50, will be making an appearance as many a grandchild’s Easter present

More schoolday memories were being aired last week when Lt Thetford village school was formally launched into the Twenty-first century, with the opening of its new buildings. Not so long ago it was being considered for closure and the community agonised about accepting massive new housing development as the price to pay for its retention. A year ago June Shrubbs (nee Barwick) of Lode sent me her recollections of teaching there in the bitter winter of 1946-47.

“Each day started with assembly – a hymn, a prayer and a reader. Then we would split into the two rooms for spelling and mental arithmetic plus tables. PE or drill came next. When the milk supplied to school by local farmers was declared unfit a huge paraffin stove was delivered and powdered national milk – so we had to heat water and stir the milk powder into large jugs which was very messy and time consuming. After a break we went on to do comprehension, dictation & composition and or sums.

“Most of us had sandwiches for lunch but a lot of children went home for the midday break. Afternoons were spent doing history, geography, art, poetry, music – using the wireless for singing together – and games. Reading & silent reading ended the day with a story read by the teacher and then a prayer. Once a week we opened up the library, talked to parents and collected national savings.”

One thing never changes; June remembers, “I was terrified when the Inspector called” – and last week OFSTED descended on the WEA. They never found their way to the methodist chapel at Alconbury which was a pity for – quite by coincidence – one of the class had brought in a marvellous collection of old photographs of the village that everybody was fascinated by, even an outside like me!

ILLUSTRATIONS : MEMORIES OF BYGONE LIFE IN NORTH CAMBS

blacksmith at Wisbech, 1933

Harvest cart c1926

Memories, 1st April 1999, by Mike Petty

Twenty-five years ago today – and some said it was an appropriate date, being April Fools day – local government underwent its biggest upheaval ever. Out went South Cambridgeshire Rural District Council and in came South Cambridgeshire District Council, out went Cambridge City Council and in came Cambridge City District Council and above all out went Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely, Huntingdon and Peterborough County Councils and in came Cambridgeshire County Council – which was of course not the Cambridgeshire County Council which had existed until 1964 until it had merged with the Isle of Ely ...

Some new councils had new powers, others, like Cambridge city, lost services they had developed since before County Councils were first thought of. They also lost the advice of university councillors, who had helped to bridge the gulf that had previously existed between town and gown interests. It was all in the name of greater efficiency and public accountability. Happy birthday to them all.

One thing councils cannot change, in the short term at least, is the weather. Maureen Hardingham of Sturton Street, Cambridge was browsing through family photographs when she came across a scrap of newspaper containing a poem entitled “In Trinity” which she believes was written by her father, A. Jex who was for many years employed there. He wrote occasionally under the pen name “Ajax”:

“Oh; have you seen the crocuses
In Trinity – just where one sees
Right through the archway – where the path
Leads on beneath the tall lime trees?

Oh, spare the time to go and see
The trinity of colour there –
For through the year there will not be
Another sight one-half so fair!”

But what was the date? There are few clues on the surrounding fragments of newsprint but a brief news item records the burial of Dr John Storrs, Dean of Rochester. A quick check in “Who Was Who” gives his death as 28th February 1928, making “Ajax’s” poem 71 years old – yet it is as true today as anyone who strolls along the Backs will testify.

Many other poets have praised the Backs in different seasons and times. One woman’s poem recalls how the unchanging scene will never be the same, for the young man she used to stroll it with has died in a corner of some foreign field. He was just one casualty of the Great War, one of many that enlisted and was slaughtered.

There was another side to that story. Throughout the period 1914-1918 local weekly newspapers were full of letters back from casualty clearing stations or hospitals – like the one which started at Trinity college and moved just across Queens Road. But they were also full of another side of the war – rural tribunals.

As the flow of volunteers failed to keep up with the increasing casualties so commissions were set up to adjudicate between the conflicting demands of those needing to keep some semblance of normal life at home and the demands of the war machine.

I showed a slide from a part of one page whilst speaking at Burwell recently. It reports that Pte A. Nicholls of Sutton was wounded on August 20th 1915 at the front. He received a bullet wound in his left hand, necessitating the amputation of the forefinger. Alongside is a report: “We regret to record another casualty from the firing line in the death of Percy William Nightall of Silt road, Littleport. He received a wound in the head and wrist from a bursting shell last October and after a short convalescence returned to the firing line in December last, where the young hero met his death on the battlefield on March 18th, being killed by a German sniper”

I however was emphasising some applications under the Military Services Act before the Newmarket Rural District Tribunal where farmers were appealing to be allowed to keep workers on the land. Men like 19-year-old Sidney Ashman of Soham, horsekeeper to Jesse Wake, William Hitch of Soham, hay-trusser, & Charles Adams of Chippenham. A voice from

the back asked me to read another section, relating to her grandfather. “Mr James Carter, farmer and lime burner, Burwell, applied for two sons, Arthur (24) and Edward (28). He said he had brought up a family of thirteen and had four sons serving in the army, while another one had been rejected”. The chairman of the tribunal told him he could not keep them both – one had to go. The agony of that choice must have been enormous. The co-incidence that of all the pages I should have shown that one was even more remarkable. The story itself appeared in the Ely Standard on 7th April 1916, and like other such news in that paper right through the First War has been indexed and recorded in the Cambridgeshire Collection, Lion Yard Library, Cambridge.

There is however one mystery yet to be solved. Amongst the 400,000 or more pictures they have there is one showing Trinity Hall bumping Caius in 1892. Nothing unusual about that except they are shown rowing along King’s Parade with hansom cab drivers looking on. My indexes have no reference to a flood in 1892 – can you assist?

Meanwhile Mrs P. Anderson of Cherry Hinton Road writes: “I always enjoy reading ‘Memories’, being an old original ‘Cambridge citizen’. Do you remember how we once used to say that in Cambridge you could get milk from Bulls and ink from Heffers”. Come on – who are you trying to fool?

ILLUSTRATIONS

THE PICTURE OF THE ROWING RACE HAS BEEN COPIED BY PHOTOGRAPHIC. IT WAS IN FACT A SPOOF PICTURE, PUBLISHED AS A SUPPLEMENT TO “THE GRUNTER” BUT IS PERHAPS APPROPRIATE TO USE ON APRIL 1st

BULLS WERE DAIRYMEN – I WILL TRY AND FIND DISPLAY ARTICLE FOR THEM

CATHARINE STREET OUTING, August 12th 1955. This shows an outing to Wicksteed Park organised by the Catharine Street Social Club, Cambridge . The officers were Mr E. Norden (chairman), D. Hobbs (secretary) and E. Charge (treasurer) PLEASE RETURN TO ME IF NOT USED AND I WILL KEEP IT IN MY FILES FOR ANOTHER DAY

OTHER PICS AS ENCLOSED

Memories, by Mike Petty 8th April 1999

My photograph of “Trinity Hall bumping Caius in the floods of 1892” seems to have fooled few people. Perhaps it was the fact that it was published on April 1st! Everybody is now just too aware how easy it is for pictures to be faked nowadays by computer wizardry.

But the bumping picture was not faked by the technicians at the *News*. There truly is a picture in the Cambridgeshire Collection. Underneath is the claim that it was published in the May Week supplement, 1920, to “The Grunter”. “Grunter” is obviously a parody of “Granta”, the humorous undergraduate magazine that ran from Victorian times, but just who produced the photograph, obviously by melding together two separate images, is unsure.

Such faking of pictures is nothing new. The photographers of the 1930s, like Briscoe Snelson, were adept at combining a landscape taken on one day with a cloudscape taken on another, whilst Ramsey and Muspratt and their predecessor photographers employed skilled assistants to retouch and remove blemishes from portraits.

One of the earliest instances of manipulating the image by Cambridge photographers dates back to 1889. One would expect a picture taken in the centre of the historic – unchanging – town of Cambridge to have changed very little in such a short period of time. When I first show it people are puzzled, but soon they recognise Joshua Taylor’s premises on the corner of Market Street and Sidney Street. Except that it isn’t there at all.

As you can see by comparing it with a more recent photograph it is a view across the front of the Guildhall, looking down Petty Cury – and everything has changed completely. The shop on the left corner was replaced by Hallack and Bond’s grocery store, and is now Burtons, the buildings on the right were replaced by the Guildhall in 1938 and the whole south side of Petty Cury in the distance disappeared some thirty years after that for Lion Yard.

Even the traffic congestion has gone – no more vehicles blocking the streets or fighting their way past pedestrians. But here come the fakery. When the old photograph was reissued by the Victorians as a postcard they coloured in the buildings but they also painted over some of the people in the foreground, creating an impression of a much less congested town.

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I have recently been lent a document which nobody would have believed had I reported it last week.

It is an **Indenture**, properly drawn up, stamped and sealed, made 16th January 1926 **Between** Albert Gabriel Warboys of West Street, Comberton, builder of bungalows and mansions of the one part, and Sarah Ann Wells of Welwyn in the county of Hertford, judge of coddlin, pippins and russetts & inspector of Woolworths, Selfridges Bargain Basement and other places of entertainment.

It “**Witnesseth** that the consideration of the natural love and affection for the aforesaid lady, the said Albert Worboys doth hereby assign and give unto the said Sarah Wells **All and singular** his whole heart which being pierced in the year Anno Domini one thousand nine hundred and twenty three doth need a woman’s kindly sympathy and affection to guard it ... moreover the said Albert Worboys doth journey abroad to wit Hodges of Hitchin to purchase one circular gold band to ward off all intruders and doth also journey to Charles Wayres in the County of London to purchase on Mongoleon wolf fur to protect the said lady from the inclement Comberton climate ...”

The whole document was signed, sealed and delivered by 27 people, including H.E. Reynolds, M.G. Taylor, H.H.P. Thulbourne and S. Goode. It is a fascinating and very personal piece of somebody’s family history.

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Ralph Crawley of Cambridge contacted me following my mention of Hadstock schooldays, a couple of week ago. He was born in the village in 1911 and also attended the school when it was kept by Miss Salmon. His family used to run a thrashing tackle set and one day a policeman came into the yard which they were repairing the machine and put a paper parcel on the wheel. It contained the body of a new-born baby which had been thrown out of a train between Linton and Bartlow and picked up beside the line. They were told to take it up to the

churchyard and bury it. As the hole was being dug the Rector came out to ask what was going on – and when told he did not believe it. He cut the string around the parcel and the baby fell out. Immediately he went into the church, came back dressed in his robes and said a prayer over the body.

Mrs Boyce of Cherry Hinton also writes with regard to a graveyard. “During the 1960s and again in the 1980s I took my dogs around the grounds of Fulbourn Hospital, where there was a small cemetery plot which backed onto the railway line. The cemetery was consecrated in 1860, the paupers were buried two to a grave and the ground was in use until 1955. There were also stones for staff members, one of which was for the matron who died in either 1952 or 1955. I recall that when I used to walk along there about 1983 the remains of the chapel had been removed & only a commemorative slab remained. The stone for the matron was leaning against the wall near the railway line. I regret that I am not now able to walk to see for myself if the plot is still kept separate”. Can anybody tell here whether it is still there – write to me and I’ll pass the letters on.

MEMORIES, 15th April 1999, by Mike Petty

I have been spending some considerable time recently scouring through the photos files at the *News* in preparation for an exciting new book on Cambridge to be available in the Autumn.

“Memory Lane, Cambridge” will be just that – a selection of pictures of how Cambridge used to be between 20-40 years ago, with just a little glance before then. In a folder heading “Signs” I came across a picture of the front of a newspaper shop belonging to Loker and Company. I’m pretty sure I know where it was – East Road, but can anybody confirm it for me. And while you’re working that out, how about trying to put a date on it. There are a number of clues on the billboards to set you thinking.

The “Street Vendors” file came up with a picture of the last hand push milk cart to be used in Cambridge, renovated in 1985 by Stephen Harris. It originally belonged to Edward Goodrum of Hemingford Road about 1923. Do you remember seeing it in action. In our village the milk used to be delivered by a horse-drawn milk float, which was an excellent idea because the horse gently wandered down the road, keeping up with the milkman as he moved from house to house. And what other vendors, rag-and-bone men, scissors-grinders etc do you recall

Whilst on the subject of milkmen, Margaret French of Stapleford, tells me she remembered Bull's Dairy. She writes: “As a child I lived near, in Norwich street, and had a friend who lived in a flat above the dairy. There were cowsheds at the back of the dairy, in Russell street, and the cows would be on Coe Fen in the summer for grazing. I remember seeing a cow give birth to a calf in the cowsheds. We also used to play on the sacks and straw in the loft above the stalls. We were interrupted in the middle of our sherbet dips by Mr Bull poking his head through the hatch and wanting to know what we thought be were doing! Our pleasures were simple, but such fun to look back on.”

Another twist to the “Milk from Bulls” comes from Mike Tebbit of Ely. He writes: “In 1957 I left agricultural college and joined my grandfather, Frank Oswald Tebbit, at Glebe Farm, Trumpington. He had another farm at Hauxton. At each farm we had two cowmen and about fifty cows. We had our own bottled milk supply business, in particular in Trumpington, Gt Shelford and Cambridge. I remember Bull's Dairies as our biggest local rivals. They had a fantastic motto which was: “You can whip our cream but you can't beat our milk”. The Tebbit motto was “T.T.T.”, short for Tebbit's Tuberculin Tested”. We sold our milk round business in about 1957 to Woolards Lane Dairies in Gt Shelford and continued to supply them with milk in bulk. Our roundsmen & women, bottles, bottling plant all went to them.”

And just when I thought the story could not get more complicated comes a letter from a lady in Upper Gwydir Street, Cambridge. "Yes I remember 'Milk from Bulls', in fact my late husband Percy Cream delivered it around Trumpington and Grantchester for several years from 1928. The cow-sheds were in a yard next to the "Coach and Horses", opposite Alpha Terrace. The cows were taken to and fetched from a meadow between the river and Grantchester mill. After milking the milk was poured from a rather primitive 'cooler', it was then put into a churn and taken to customers in a pony driven cart. Customers used a jug, and milk was measured with measuring cans that hung inside the churn. Later of course they had to use bottles. My husband, "Phil" as he was known, will be remembered standing in the cart and driving back to the yard after finishing his round, as if in a chariot. He was also called 'Creamy' before anyone in the village knew his name". So Creamy delivered Bull's milk – thank you Margaret Cream.

More recent memories come in a newspaper cutting from the C.D.N of 28th September 1960 reporting concerns about the jive sessions at the British Legion Hall in Cherry Hinton. These were very popular, with groups like The Tornadoes (not the 'Telstar' one – this was an earlier Cambridge version) attracting teenagers from the surrounding villages, an evening when youths and their girl friends arrived to let off steam in an energetic manner. There were no complaints about the music, there was no drugs or drunkenness – it was soft drinks only at the bar. No, the complaints were about the noise made by the motorcycles which kept children awake at night, roaring up and down the lane as late as 10.30 p.m!

The article was accompanied by a number of photographs which I have yet to find in the *News* files – and this is something that you can help us with. If you have a favourite *Cambridge Daily News* photograph amongst your family files that would evoke memories for somebody else, and are willing to lend it to me for consideration for the book, I should love to see it. Please put your name and address on the back, jot me down some notes for a caption, and sent it to me at the News. We will take a copy and post it back to you. Together we can make "Memory Lane, Cambridge" truly a book about Cambridge by Cambridge people.

Oh yes, the Loker shop picture has a date on the back. It was taken on 16th November 1965

MEMORIES, 22nd April 1999, by Mike Petty

Many thanks to everybody who responded last week to my picture of Loker's newsagents shop on East Road. Writing in the News in June 1963 Erica Dimock reported: "It is 100 years since Mr Frederick Loker first started a newsagents business in East Road, a business which is still being run by members of his family - two of his grandsons, Mr Denis Brown and Mr D.J. Oakman. But although Loker and Co, wholesale and retail newsagents are known far and wide in the trade, older people will also recall the humbugs, rock and other sweets which used to be made on the premises by Mr Loker's wife and other helpers".

Mrs Lucas looked it up for me in an old edition of Spalding's Directory, Roger Birch tells me his father sold papers there for many years, John Josling shopped there as a boy. Ted Cash, Jimmy Easton and Mrs J. Jenner of Bourn have contributed some excellent reminiscences both of the shop and the area, which I will try to include in the forthcoming "Memory Lane, Cambridge" book, due out in the Autumn. Ron Smith from Gt Abington writes: "I have waited outside for the delivery of the Cambridge Daily News, as it was in those days. The van would pull up with the papers hot from being printed in St Andrews Street and hand them to me to take into the shop. You may ask why a nine year old boy was there every day. Mr Bilton the butcher in Burleigh Street gave me 2d - a penny for the paper and one for myself for fetching it. It was a lot of money in those days, one whole penny!"

Reg Oakman of Cambridge tells me his mother was a daughter of the original Mr Loker. Not only was it a flourishing newsagency but also a successful sweetshop. The bicycle incidently

belonged to his cousin, Frank Brown. Barry Moore knew it well as he often visited his grandparents in James street - and also remembered Goodrum's milk cart.

Whilst mentioning Goodrum's cart I have a letter from Graham Smith - its restorer - to say it is now in Sutton Windmill and Broads Museum, near Stalham in Norfolk. Terence Sweeney from Lichfield Road tells me that two streets away from Goodrum's was another dairy, that of C & A Pearson of Thoday Street. They delivered milk by handcart into the 1950's. Bob Nicholas of Milton Road recalls that the Alsop Brothers from Garlic Road dairy also had a hard-cart well into the fifties - or was it electrically driven?

Tom Ponder from Trumpington recalls Bull's bull, Tom. They both lived in Russell Street. Tom's house backed on to the dairies, which had a pasteurising section where churns and bottles were filled, and a large dung heap. A cowshed opposite housed about 12 cows and Tom, the bull. Each morning the cows went to Coe Fen. As a twelve-year old Tom and a dog took them two at a time. He fetched them back again at 3pm for milking. He writes: "The bull was kept to sire the cows as necessary, and it and the cow made love in a part of the yard. Sometimes the bull broke loose at night and we had to go to Hills Road to knock up Stuart Bull and three or four men with pitchforks were needed to get the bull back into his lock up". Tom - the writer - worked for the firm for some months. His day started at 6am when he got the horse and cart ready, loaded and delivered the milk, before he unloaded the cart, booked up his accounts and got the milk ready for next day, finishing after 4pm. It was a seven-day-a-week job, though he got some time off on 23rd March 1946 when he finished work at 12 noon - to get married two hours later

Keeping on the milk theme let me try you on another picture from the "News" files. This one is dated 13th September 1963 and shows a building labelled "London Co-operative Society, Cambridge Creamery". Can you place it, & share your recollections of it please.

I have had less success so far in locating early 1960's pop pictures, but did come across a photograph labelled "Ted's Party", which is undated. The cake being held seems to be inscribed "Happy 26th from Shirley". Does this mean anything or can you recognise yourself or a friend. It might have been taken in the Saffron Walden area. Please write to me at the News with any memories of the "Teddy Boy" years

If, while sorting through your pictures, you come across anything of interest relating to Histon and Impington then Eleanor Whitehead of 21 Cottenham Road, Histon, CB4 9ES, would be pleased to see them. The Village Society are in process of producing a Millennium Book and would like to hear memories of anybody who went on the 1952 Chivers seaside outing, or who used to play cricket for the Histon team before the war, since they are trying to put names to faces.

One lady who has not waited until the Millennium to publish another volume of her memories is Beatrice Stevens from Stretham. Her family, the Acreds, have long been connected with the Methodist church throughout the area. She tells tales of the problems of ministering to rural communities - like when the borrowed pony refused to pull the preacher's cart up the hill into Coveney and had to be left beside the road, or the time when George Richardson and Ely butcher Arthur Lemmon were unceremoniously dumped in a ditch near Littleport by another ill-behaved mule. Fortunately it was a dry ditch and the only harm they suffered was a scattering of grass on their dark Sunday suits, though such an incident would surely almost be enough to make a Methodist swear! Her fascinating "A family memoir" costs just £2.50 or with her earlier "Feast of Memories" at £5 the two (plus 50p each postage). I'm always pleased to learn of such publications that might be of interested to "Memories" readers.

Mr G. Stelmaszyk of Cambridge has set me a puzzle I am having some problems solving. He recalls a story from between 1945 and 1947 of a case of black-marketeering by long-distance lorry drivers. The ringleader kept a "little black book" recording all the transactions. Scotland Yard was aware of what was going on and, to trap the lorry driver, put a female detective on the case. Her job was to hitch lifts on as many long-distance lorries as possible. On one trip she found her man, but he murdered her and dumped her body. Following most lengthy investigations a lorry driver from Wisbech was convicted and hanged. It's all a long time ago, but does anybody recall it.

MEMORIES, 29th April 1999

More milkman memories have been received in my pigeonhole.

Mrs Peggy Brutnell of Howard Road, Cambridge writes: "Your Memories page brought many memories flooding back to me about dairies, cows etc. I was born in 1921 & lived in New Street all my childhood life in a house where my Granddad, Bob Beamiss (nickname Far) who worked for Arnold's Dairies, rose at 4.30 in the morning to milk the cows which were housed in a cowshed opposite the dairy part in Abbey Street. A bit later he drove them every day along Newmarket road & down Auckland road onto the common where they stayed until 4 o'clock & were fetched home again. [Cows being driven down Newmarket road! Does anybody have a photo please]

"I had three uncles – Bill & Cyril Crook and Arthur Beamiss - who also worked at the dairy, delivering milk. I remember being taken when I was a youngster in my uncle's pony & trap, sitting on a little seat beside the huge churn of milk & watching him skilfully tip a pint into the customer's own jug. In the late afternoon they would come home, wash and change and drive to the railway station with churns of milk and pick up the empty churns for cleaning out and using the next day. That was my granddad's job as well, and every night he would have churns to mend, which were soldered, and he did that in front of the fire in the living room – didn't that please my mother – solder all over her mat!"

John Towler of Haslingfield used to live in Cam Road, Cambridge, (now Elizabeth Way), just opposite the dairy run then by Mr & Mrs Clarke who delivered milk locally. There were cowsheds behind the Cam Road premises where the cows were housed for the winter & during spring and summer months they grazed on land close to the river at the end of Fen Road, Chesterton. Mr Gazeley of Catherine street recalls Mr Biggs delivering milk with a churn on a pushcart in 1940-41, David Sharpe of Darwin Drive tells me his father worked both for Bulls and Goodrum's dairies where he drove a de luxe milk float with car type wheels and hubcaps, chrome handrails & a lovely padded seat.

Barbara Rooney of Chesterton recalls that a Mr Holm used to deliver milk to her gran in Covent Garden. He came with a small hand cart and poured her milk into a jug which gran then covered with a lace cover with beads at each corner to keep it clean. She also recalls a gypsy lady who called with a big basket of ribbon and lace and an Indian lady who made and sold perfume on Cambridge market

Mr R. Thompson of Gt Eastern Street, Cambridge has sent me a wonderful letter packed with memories which answers some of the points I have raised in earlier articles. They includes the old railway carriages, used as homes. He writes: "In 1923 my father bought one to live in. It was brought to Harston station on a truck and transferred to a big trailer and pulled by traction engine to the site. In 1944 he had the electric put on and later moved out and used it as a grain

store. There was another carriage came at the same time. I think Mr Sutton lived in it between Harston and Newton. Dad said it cost more to transport it than the price of the carriage”

He also recalls other itinerant traders – the tinker who came round the village who was a scissors grinder, knife sharpener and pot repairer. There was an old tramp with a can begging for hot water for tea and a man who came to the door selling bottles of peppermint essence which you diluted with water. Then there was another man who came round buying snakes, toads, frogs or rats – what did he do with them? Whilst on the subject of animals Mr Thompson also recalls cycling from Harston to Cambridge Midsummer common to see somebody showing a big whale on a trailer. It had a motor ventilator to blow air through it. This was about 1938, but I’ve heard of another whale being exhibited in the 1950s or 60’s – do you remember either, or have a snap

If, while sorting through your pictures, you come across anything of interest relating to Histon and Impington then Eleanor Whitehead of 21 Cottenham Road, Histon, CB4 9ES, would be pleased to see them. The Village Society are in process of producing a Millennium Book and would like to hear memories of anybody who went on the 1952 Chivers seaside outing, or who used to play cricket for the Histon team before the war, since they are trying to put names to faces.

Mr G. Stelmaszyk of Cambridge has set me a puzzle I am having some problems solving. He recalls a story from between 1945 and 1947 of a case of black-marketeering by long-distance lorry drivers. The ringleader kept a "little black book" recording all the transactions. Scotland Yard was aware of what was going on and, to trap the lorry driver, put a female detective on the case. Her job was to hitch lifts on as many long-distance lorries as possible. On one trip she found her man, but he murdered her and dumped her body. Following most lengthy investigations a lorry driver from Wisbech was convicted and hanged. It's all a long time ago, but does any body recall it

PLEASE KEEP THE GOLDEN WEDDING MEMORIES IF POSS

MEMORIES, 6th May 1999, by Mike Petty

Memories from the further-flung part of the News’ area have caught my eye this week.

Writing from Ware Mr H. L. (Bert) Hewett recalls Cambridge, where he was born in 1911 in Guildhall Place, just off Market Hill. In those days they had no electricity, all rooms were lit by gasbrackets fitted with mantles and cooking was done on the fire or a gas stove. When, aged 14, he left school, he was thrown onto the labour market, like so many of his colleagues. When Bert went to the Juvenile Employment Exchange in Hobson street he was told that a firm called Baily Grundy and Barrett, electrical engineers in St Mary’s Passage, required an errand boy. If he fulfilled that role for a year they would offer him an apprenticeship to learn the trade of electrician.

His main work was to deliver accumulators, low voltage batteries used to power radios which had to be charged from time to time. He collected them with a three wheel box tricycle and one day was challenged to a race by a laundry boy on a similar machine. They collided, one battery fell over and the acid spilled out. “I decided I would fill it with water from a nearby ditch and left it on the doorstep of the house I was to deliver it to. A day later I was asked to see the works manager, a Mr Morley. The customer had returned the battery as their radio had faded out after a short time. Mr Alf Male was the man in charge of the charging plant, and on inspection found the specific acid of the battery was nil. But when he held it up to look at the

plates to his astonishment there were tadpoles going up and down. They obviously had got into the battery with the ditch water”.

Within six months he was out of work – so many people were buying radios the firm had to invest in a van to collect them - but was taken on as apprentice. “It was not long before I went as a wireman’s boy with an electrician. Most of the time I was with Dick Matthews, though others were Ernie Ellis, Ron Cowell, Mr Duke and Mr Froment.

Once a year they would put on temporary lighting in the college grounds for the May Week Balls. The marquees would be lit by 300 watt bulbs enclosed by pink fabric shades and would have carpets and furnishings loaned by Eaden Lilleys. Another job was to hang lighted Chinese lanterns in the trees which overhung the river banks, making a magical sight which used to attract crowds of onlookers to the gates at the Backs.

“I remember being on duty one night with an electrician at Trinity Hall. In those days when a gentleman asked a lady to dance with him they both carried dance cards which had numbers on them. The couple would meet at a rendezvous also shown on the card. The Band Leaders would change the numbers at the end of each dance and show them on a small board or easel on the stage. A lighted box number would also be on the bridge to attract people maybe in punts on the river. I had the job of changing it when the band leader pressed a bell button. In the early hours of the morning the bell kept ringing too frequently. That night a well known London band was playing, either Joe Loss, Ambrose, Henry Hall I cannot remember which. The leader, a little unsteady on his feet came to me and said I was changing numbers too quickly. I found out later he was contriving with the band and some of the unsobber ones to make things difficult by upsetting the dance card arrangements.”

The last job he had with the firm was in 1931 when Baily Grundy and Barrett carried out the complete electrical installation work at the Victoria Cinema. Bert had to be present on the opening night with Dick Matthews just in case anything went wrong. The sound tracks were not on the film but on large records on turntables in the projection room which had to be changed as necessary by the projection staff. But now electrical work was scarce and Bert moved to a job with the North Metropolitan Electricity Supply Company in Hertford where he stayed for nearly 40 years.

Mrs Audrey Coleman from Stowmarket recalls how an electrical fault brought her true love. In November 1946 she worked at Heffer’s bookshop, Petty Cury, when fire broke out in the early hours of the morning. By the time the firemen arrived flames were shooting out of the roof and as all roofs opened into each other the whole block was in danger. Extra engines were called from Newmarket, Linton and Letchworth in case the blaze spread throughout the town centre. Hundreds of books were destroyed or damaged by water and shop assistants Audrey Wright, Doris Pilsworth, Jean Mayle and Norah Thomas worked with others to rescue what they could. Also called in was electrician Peter Coleman from the Cambridge Electrical Supply Company. He and Audrey started dating and the rest is history. Last month they celebrated their Golden Wedding.

PHOTO : corner of Petty Cury and Guildhall Place about 1972, after Heffers had moved to Trinity street & Bert had left Cambridge

MEMORIES 13th May 1999, by Mike Petty REVISED TEXT

Last weeks “Memories” had scarcely been printed last week before John Taylor phoned up with details of the Teddy Boys party. He was quickly followed by Ernie Booker from Sutton and Len the Ted of Chesterton. The definitive account comes from Mrs Y.S. Brooks of Saffron Walden who writes: “The Ready Teddy go photo is of a surprise 26th birthday party I

arranged for my boyfriend, who I later married". It features members of the Cambridge Rock and Roll Club celebrating Bill Brooks' birthday party at Gt Chesterford village hall in October 1973 where they danced to the Bluebirds Rock & Roll Band. One who missed the bash was Trevor Noddles from Eaton Socon who tells me that many of them, like himself, went on to become successful businessmen. Some, he says, "still make their presence known on the Rock'Roll circuit, though probably cannot jive the night away these days but can still muster a pint or three". Paul Murden from Willingham (third from the right) remembers they also featured in a television documentary. He's tried to trace it but without success. I suspect this was one in the "Portraits of Places" series, screened on ITV in July 1974, which was reported in the News on 13th June 1974 and will feature in my "Looking Back" column this time next month – keep reading!

Flushed with such success may I try you with the Cambridge Freebooters Coffee Bar and club pictured here in February 1961. I believe it was formed by a Cambridge graduate, John Ewing, who was then teaching in the city. But where was it, and who's on it

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25 years ago, in May 1974, "Diddy" David Hamilton was being rocked and rolled as he endeavoured to broadcast a live edition of his Radio One show from a punt on the Cam. About 30 other boats packed with cheering youngsters surrounded the radio punt, squirting water and bombarding him with bags of pepper before his three-hour programme was abandoned four minutes early.

His day had started quietly on Cambridge cattle market where moos and baas cued in Abba's chart-topping "Waterloo". He then interviewed a butcher, an auctioneer and an office girl. Obviously some people were listening for he had acquired an escort of youths on Suzuki motorbikes by the time his van drove down Hills road towards his next stop. At the Pye factory in St Andrew's he chatted to the people making the police pocket radios which were later to bring in his rescuers. He stopped for an apple at Reg Finch's shop in Chesterton road & handed out Diddy Hamilton T-shirts to girls in Jesus Lane.

By the time he arrived at Market Hill a crowd of about 200 young people were shouting jibes. As he interviewed a porter at King's college somebody started up a powerful rival record player in an upstairs room and a voice warned "We've got a torpedo for your punt".

Safe inside Old Addenbrooke's hospital Hamilton interviewed nurses while his producer called in for a police escort. Then it was on to Garret Hostel bridge where students with short-wave radios eavesdropped on private conversations between the producers in London and Cambridge as the radio crew made their way to their punt for what was supposed to be a tranquil tour of the academic calm of the Backs. Instead it turned out into a full frontal assault summarised in the headlines of the time as "Diddy David cut short by a drenching"

.....

Reg Wood of Saffron Walden has responded to my request for old "News" pictures that we might use in the "Memory Lane Cambridge" book with this picture of the interior of a well-loved Cambridge shop, Pigott's tools of Sussex street. It was taken in May 1963 when the company celebrated its centenary.

The firm was started by John Pigott, a member of a Landbeach farming family who walked with a wheelbarrow every day Saturday to Cambridge market and sold nails and screws, small hand tools, hammers, chisels, sand-paper etc. He first set up shop in Sidney street and had several moves before establishing himself in Sussex street shortly before the Second World

War. Throughout its history the business was handed down from father to son and a feature of its service was that some member of the family was always behind the counter. They prided themselves on giving the best possible service and kept up with the times, giving up hip and slipper baths but retaining a wide range of tools, including up to 140 different types of pocket knife. But like so many other long-established firms they found changing times brought problems and closed in the mid 1980's

Reg writes : "I joined the firm in January 1955 when Mr Robert Pigott opened up a DIY shop in Hills Road (later moved to Victoria Road). The staff at Sussex street were a very happy team. Although there were other shops with tool departments Pigotts were the most popular and served most of the University labs. As far as I can remember other shops in Sussex street in those days were Beales the chemist, Granta Wool, Paris House Fashions, Easiphit shows, W.H. Peak carpets, Ridgeons florist, Rothman's tobacconist, Greta Thorpe lingerie, Roses Fashion centre, Gordon Thoday fabrics & Rogers gents' tailors.

"By the way I was the assistant in the photograph. I left the firm in February 1974 to take over Hadstock Stores and Post Office"

MEMORIES 20th May 1999, by Mike Petty

Whilst scanning the News files for possible "Memory Lane, Cambridge" pictures I have come across a strange photo from June 1961. According to the article which accompanied it "thirteen members of the Christ's College Milton Society took part in a traditional annual "pilgrimage" from the college to the main door of St Mary's church to burn the works of T.S. Eliot. With caps and gowns and carrying a bust of the poet Milton they walked in procession through the crowded Market Square. Then in front of the church the "damnable and dangerous works" of T.S. Eliot were set in flames on the paving stones. Crowds appeared from nowhere and passages of Milton were read before the procession returned to the college where they consumed noggins of nut brown ale".

Is this a "tradition" which survives, or was it just a student jape. Did you ever witness it, or anything similar.

Bert Hewett from Ware recalls an earlier rag that he saw: "In 1922 an archaeologist, Howard Carter, discovered the tomb of Tutankhamen. Next year a note was circulated in Cambridge that his mummified body would be brought up from his tomb in the Market Place. At the specified times students dressed in Egyptian robes with red fezzes on their heads brought up a sarcophagus from the underground Gents' toilets. With other Egyptians playing mournful music on their ancient instruments it was placed on a raised draped platform. They took the lid off and there was the mummy all swathed in linen, which they started to remove. A yell went out from the crowd when he sat up in his coffin and asked for a drink. They brought up from the tomb a case of Bailey & Tebbutt's beer and a kind of goblet which he had a drink from. Needless to say he was given the usual treatment – bombarded with squashed tomatoes, flour, cabbage leaves etc. It was all good fun"

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Milk stories continue to pour in – and one News reader, Raymond Alsop, was shown a recent "Memories" article mentioning his father – the only thing was that he was on holiday in Spain at the time! He makes the point that in those days before refrigeration the milkman was a vital part of the community – if there was a new-born baby in the street his father would deliver to that house first before starting the rest of his round. Milk bottles had the firm's name embossed on them, but often one bottle would be returned to a different dairy so a firm called Milk Vessels Ltd used to collect them up and return them to their proper home. The bottles

had to be thoroughly cleaned each night and the milk pasteurised by boiling in a big copper. When it was icy the horses that pulled the milk cart had special shoes with a hole in them though which a thread was put so they could get a grip on cold mornings.

Kathleen Morgan recalls how her father had a herd of dairy cows at Fen Ditton during the Great War. "The milk was delivered in a churn and measured by a half pint measure kept hanging inside, either into a jug belonging to the customer or a metal can with a tightly fitting lid attached and engraved with the name of the dairy. The cans were in two sizes, pint and quart. Hence the saying 'Mind your P's and Q's' means don't give short measure."

Thomas Taylor from Newton tells me he was born in Christ's Lane, Cambridge in 1919. (Do you remember this lane which led down to Drummer street before Bradwell's court was built in the 1960's?) Their milk came from the Stetchworth Dairy in King Street and was delivered by a milk lady called 'Auntie Nelly'. His grandfather, J. Doggett used to keep the Granta Inn on Newnham Road and he often saw cows from Motts Dairy walking through the mill pool after grazing on Coe Fen. Mrs I. Bloy of Cherry Hinton thinks the milkman I showed recently in Chesterton was Mr Jacobs who kept his cows in a field in Fen Road

Mrs S.A. Ramsey (nee Froste) [subs – is FROSTE – MJP] of Cambridge used to work in the London Co-op Creamery in Ditton Walk between 1956-57. She recalls: "Milk was delivered to the depots in churns from farms in East Anglia and then tested by us for fat and protein content and for freshness. There were three in the laboratory – Betty Speed, Hazel Warren and myself. When the milk was passed fit it was passed through a cooler and into large tankers to the transported to London Co-op's bottling plant and then delivered to customers in the London area. One of my least favourite jobs was climbing into the tank of the tankers to take swabs to test for bacteria. Milk came into the depot every day including Christmas and all public holidays so that someone was on duty every day until all the milk had arrived and been processed. There was another building on the site where eggs were graded and packed. I believe the whole enterprise transferred either to London or the Cambridge Co-op in the early/mid 1960's"

RESERVE STORY IN CASE I CANNOT FIND THE PICTURE TO GO WITH THE MILTON SOCIETY STORY. PLEASE DON'T USE WITHOUT THE ACCOMPANYING PHOTO

Does anybody recall the Cambridge Freebooters Coffee Bar and Club which in early 1961 launched an appeal for £20,000 to pay for a new type of youth centre which would include a coffee bar and even a fish shop. In true "The Young Ones" style the members had already raised £400 and redecorated the main part of their premises. Photographs in the News showed them indulging in typical youth activities, playing dominoes and reading books whilst others played ping pong and tuned up for a spontaneous "rick" session. The article doesn't tell me where it was or what became of it. Can you help?

PHOTOS

CHRIST'S COLLEGE MILTON SOCIETY STUDENTS BURN WORKS OF T.S. ELIOT, 1961
BRADWELL'S COURT, ST ANDREW'S STREET AT OPENING 1961
FREEBOOTER'S YOUTH CLUB MEMBERS 1961

Memories 27th May 1999, by Mike Petty

Last week's photograph of the "Freebooter's coffee club" has prompted Pam Lucas (nee Gentle) from Gt Shelford to contact me. She was a regular attender at the club, one of many who travelled there from all over Cambridge. She participated in the fund-raising events of February 1961 and won a 25-hour jiving competition with her partner Fred Elliott, beating Linda Warboys and Adrian Meade in the process.

Whether Geoff Bye of Burwell says the Freebooters was a regular haunt for him and his friends and the "in" place at the time. It was situated in Wellington street, off Newmarket Road, Cambridge in what was originally either a church or school hall. He writes: "I remember playing ping pong in the front hall as in your photograph, but a lot of the activities took place at the rear of the building where there was a soft drinks bar, juke box and T/V room. The Freebooter was well thought off at the time because it kept us teenagers off the streets and out of trouble".

This indeed was the prime aim of a remarkable project as Joan, a former helper told me. The club was started by John Ewen, a theology student at Ridley Hall. As part of his training he organised an open-air service at the Mill Pool. Local town boys went along to heckle and stayed to chat to the young preacher, accepting an invitation to join him back at his college. This was a strange experience for them, opening their eyes to a different lifestyle to the one they knew. Student and townees became friends.

John got permission from his college to open up a room at King Street Boys Club, the lads went – and the girls followed. The project snowballed and was fully backed by the Cambridge Education authorities who gave them use of old church premises in Wellington Street. It was not an instance success. Although they offered soft drinks, beer was readily available from nearby pubs. There were fights with motorcycle boys, disturbances, trouble. Police and Probation services became involved – but in a fully supportive role. More theology students came along to help, and so did Joan.

Gradually they built up a remarkable atmosphere, organised film shows, debated taboo subjects – such as birth control. John got himself a motorbike, joined them in their pub trips, provided safe accommodation when they had problems with parents, and got to know them on their own level.

John Ewen himself gave up his training as a Minister and became a paid youth leader. Then he moved on to similar work in Harlow, Leicester, Oman, Nigeria, Australia – and is now employed by the Government in Zambia. He keeps in touch with his helper, Joan, who now lives in Hertfordshire.

From the summer of 1960 to December 1962 the Freebooters Coffee Bar and Club offered local 15-18 year olds a unique experience – one they obviously remember, yet one which may have passed unrecorded had not the News photographer popped in to one of their sessions in February 1961.

If you have memories of the Freebooters, or other youth clubs which changed your life, let me know.

Regular "Memories" readers may recall a letter some months ago from a Mr McClure in Cumbria who had discovered a grant of arms to a gentleman called Fred Crisp. With your help we tracked him down to the Willingham and Over areas, found pictures of the store he established in London, but then the trail went cold. But not for long. Now thanks to a "News" reader I have been contacted by Andrew Forman from Skipton, Yorkshire, who is a direct descendant. The two are now in touch and another mystery solved.

Recently while engaged in the sad task of clearing a house I chanced upon a programme for the Stretham annual sports of 14th July 1956. This was obviously a lavish affair with some 42 events including a half-mile cycle handicap that attracted contestants from Leicester and Tottenham as well as M. Chilvers of the Littleport Wheelers and G. Human from Ely City Road Club. Other local participants included R. Houghton and R. Summerfield of Coleridge A.C. in the 100 yards flat handicap, competing for a first prize to the value of £3. In all there were over 42 events including 20 for children. I have a vague memory of participating in the slowest bicycle race but all this took place more than 40 years ago – in the decade I call the “forgotten Fifties”. Did you used to participate in such events, or have snapshots. Write to me at the News.

PICTURE:

This week’s “Memory Lane” picture is one for you to puzzle over. The caption reads: “Neighbours exchanging the time of day in the autumn sun”. It was taken by “News” photographer Eddie Collinson in 1976 but where is it, and who are the gossipers

SECOND PICTURE IF NEEDED :

These pictures of Newmarket Road, Cambridge, were probably taken in 1963. Do you recognise the area, and can you offer me some ideas for captions in the forthcoming book?

MEMORIES 3rd June 1999, by Mike Petty

Mrs J. Jenner of Bourn has responded to my plea for memories of Christ’s Lane, which was at one time the most well-known bit of Cambridge to those who came in by bus, as it linked Drummer Street bus station with the town centre.

As she recalls: “There was a toll bar about half way up which was always open, except for Rag Day. Then the students held it shut and put sludge around it about an inch thick and ten inches long. This meant that people passing had to give them something to walk through the small gap in the sludge. The opening was only wide enough for one person at a time to pass. They gave mums with prams a helping hand by lifting the pram over the barrier”.

She also remembers another Cambridge institution. “When the bus office ceased to look after passengers’ parcels a man, who lived in the Sturton street area, came and sat by the wall, near Milton’s Walk, to watch the parcels and sometimes cases, when people had a long wait for coaches. He charged according to the length of time parcels were there. Those to be collected before noon were placed on his right, between then and two p.m. were in front, and two to four or five on his left. He charged 1/- a parcel for each period of time. Each customer was greeted by Good Morning or Good Afternoon and he touched his cap to lady customers.” She remembers that the News took a photograph of him, but I’ve never seen one – have you?

More milk memories have come in from Doreen Brett of Haverhill. She writes: “We lived at Carlton Green, when I was born and our milkman delivered the milk from a churn. My mother bought various quantities of milk which was measured into her jugs (one pint, half pint and a little gill into my jug as I was under six years old and school children had a third of a pint delivered to their school. If my father had not died just before my sixth birthday the milkman would have taken me and the neighbours young children to Carlton village school. As it was, mother and I moved to live with my mother’s parents who had a small farm in Norfolk and sold milk at the door, either full cream milk or separated, which meant skimmed milk. My grandmother turned that cream into butter to sell to the grocer who called on her each Wednesday”

Mrs T.A. Harrall from Willingham has lent me a marvellous photograph of her grandfather, Andrew Biggs who had a dairy and shop in Fitzroy street, Cambridge. His sons also had shops selling milk, Will in Sturton street & Fred in Gwydir street.

Mr G. Stelmaszczyk of Cambridge remembers a tale of black market skullduggery and murder from over 50 years ago. He writes: "In the late '40's I was employed by the Artificial Stone Company in Mill Road, Cambridge. With me worked a very friendly chap from Wisbech, whom I knew only as Bert. During our morning breaks we used to have some very interesting conversations and it was during one of these that he told me of how police used a female detective to break a black marketeering ring operated by long-distance lorry drivers. I was fascinated to hear about the painstaking enquiries which Scotland Yard were pursuing because, as a high-school boy in Poland before the war one of my uncles was a policeman. I think this is why this story stuck in my memory". Sadly he can't quite recall the end of the tale

One family that was happy, in distressing circumstances, is recalled by Mrs Mary Denny of Arbury. When just one year old, in 1939 she was evacuated with her with parents John and Phyllis Cook to the vicarage at Gt Shelford to stay with the Rev Frederick William Jeeves as housekeeper and gardener. Her dad was deaf, and going blind and the Rev Jeeves was like an uncle to her. The vicarage had two large towers and ball tops with lavender along the walls to the front doors. It had many rooms, and beautiful gardens. The Rev Jeeves retired 1947 and they moved to Histon as a family. He died in 1964. Her father John Cook was then blind and deaf & worked for the blind making rush chairs. But with sign for blind/deaf they were able to talk and get about Histon very well. Mary went to work at Unwins seeds when aged 15, retiring after 44 years in 1998. She has suffered sad family losses but says bravely: "memories are forever, life goes on". She adds: "I don't suppose many people at Gt Shelford would remember the Cooks and I haven't been there for over 30 years. There were some good times but I'm sure everything changes"

Somebody who does not let a challenge defeat him is Ernie Papworth of Over. He spotted a "Looking Back" article for March 1924 relating to an exhumation at Over churchyard when the body of French refugee who had sought shelter in the village during the Great War was returned to his old home. Through careful research he has identified the gentleman and even turned up a photograph of the family.

PHOTOS

BIGGS : Andrew Biggs with his milk cart, Cambridge

SHELF : Shelford station, 1930s

MEMORIES, 10th June 1999, by Mike Petty

On Saturday I got lost in London. I'd arrived early for a meeting in Stationers' Hall, in the shadow of St Paul's, so decided to wander once round the Cathedral. A quick trip down to the river, and there I was lost. I tried everything – asked a policeman, hailed a black cab, even stopped a lad on his moped who was doing "the knowledge" with his street map & list of destinations. No use. It didn't help that the centre of London was wreathed in scaffolding and builders' hoardings, hiding half-familiar landmarks. Once I did get to my meeting I made sure I got somebody to lead me back to the railway station for home.

Even here I am experiencing that frustration of half-recognising something I ought to know to caption pictures for the forthcoming "Memory Lane, Cambridge" book, poring over maps for streets which are now no more in those areas of Cambridge which have been comprehensively "redeveloped" in the last 40 years. Pictures of Campkin Road when it was

nothing but a building plot, bits of East Road which have gone and in particular a photograph which was taken by a "News" photographer on 28th February 1964. It says "Wrays Court" on the back and I know I ought to know it, but for the moment, once more I'm lost. Can you help – where is it - and knowing "News" readers – who is it?

Sam Harris of Fallowfield, Cambridge writes to say the article on the Freebooters Youth Club brought back many memories for him, and he can add more to the story of youth clubs. He tells me "Wellington street church hall was first given to the "Cambridge Boys Club" in 1949 after we lost out to the Army Cadets who took over our first club on East Road, exactly where the new Working Men's Club stands now. After many meetings we finally got the old church. There were drawbacks because they could not afford to do it up for us. We got together just before Christmas and decided to go carol singing and raised about £200, what with raffles made up for us by the late Terry Thurston's mum and sold in the George IV pub we had enough to start. We bought a table tennis table, dart boards and equipment for the canteen."

The club was one of several in Cambridge at the time, they organised their own football, cricket, table tennis and boxing tournaments, as well as outings and holidays which proved very popular as most of the lads had never been outside Cambridge before. He particularly remembers their first club camp at Stockheath Camp, Hayling Island and a trip across to Ryde, Isle of Wight in 1948. Most members were called up for National Service and lost contact with each other and Sam wonders what happened to the club between 1954 and 1961.

Going back further in time is Deryck Chambers from Duxford. He has been endeavouring to find details of an air raid on Cambridge which he experienced as a youngster. He writes: "I cannot recall the year, but I do remember it being during the summer school holidays. I was staying with my aunt in Great Eastern Street, off Mill Road. The house immediately opposite where I was staying received a direct hit. I still have vivid memories of this and would like to establish more accurate details. My relatives who would have been able to help me have all died."

The Cambridge Daily News of August 29th 1941 carried the following report: "An old lady and a four-year old boy lost their lives when high explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped on an East Anglian town last night. A Sunday School was destroyed and a chapel and private houses seriously damaged. A high explosive bomb which fell outside the chapel caused severe damage to the interior but incendiaries which were dropped were promptly tackled by ARP personnel and neighbours and overcome before they could gain a hold. A lady who was living in the house where the lady and boy were killed said: "We went to bed as usual and all I can remember is being encased in something. I was badly bruised and received abrasions. Mrs Jones, whose house is nearby told a reporter that she woke up suddenly and heard a terrible explosion. "I nearly fell down stairs with my child", she added. Next door to a demolished house lives Mr Webb who was also asleep in bed when the bombs fell. "My wife shook me up and I heard rubble flying. I got up and had a look out and when back to bed when things quietened down".

This was but one of several raids on Cambridge, which left parts of the town looking something like the St Paul" area of London did on Saturday! If you remember seeing bombs fall on your area, and feel like sharing the experience please write to me at the News.

PICTURES :

WRAYS COURT (off Sidney Street, Cambridge – but don't tell the readers!)

GT EASTERN STREET FOLLOWING THE BOMBING

Memories, 17th June 1999, by Mike Petty

Thanks to everybody who contacted me to locate Wrays Court following the photograph in last week's Memories. Roger Cork from Stretham, Mr Offord from Barnwell road, Cambridge and Mrs Doreen Ellum from Trumpington all consulted their old directories to place it between numbers 42 and 43 Sidney St. Mrs Badcock of Cambridge knew it without looking up as her aunt lived there some 70 years ago. But the definitive answer comes from Mrs Cheryl Bolton, of Sawston, who writes: "My husband, Philip Bolton, was surprised to see himself playing with his dog Sue in the courtyard of Wrays Court. He lived at number five, a large Georgian building at the end of the court and the picture was taken when he was eight years old. The entrance to the Court was in Sidney Street, which was demolished to make way for Sainsbury's. It brought back happy memories for my husband and his father".

Colin Moule, from the News, was prompted by the picture of the bombing in Great Eastern Street, which damaged Sturton Street Methodist Church. He writes: "I would have been six years old then, but I remember the crump which woke us all up – the bomb fell ahead of the air raid warning. Our house, (number 6) was in Ainsworth Street which runs parallel with Sturton Street and my dad, Percy, was one of the air raid wardens – he used to organise the fire practice with stirrup pumps. On that particular night, and because the bomb preceded the warning, he was not on duty outside our side passage – a position he always took up during air raids. When he rushed outside it was to find that many house windows had been blown in, including ours. But most sobering of all was that, embedded in the wall just behind where he always stood, was a piece of red hot shrapnel! My mum always said that God really loved us that night! She felt that the direct hit on the chapel must have prevented a much higher number of casualties. Everyone called it a miracle for years afterwards. My brother still has that piece of shrapnel".

A picture of Chesterton housewives practising using a stirrup pump appeared in the C.D.N. on 19th June 1940. Alongside it is a list of casualties caused by an earlier raid on Cambridge – the attack on Vicarage Terrace. I showed the slide during a talk to Sawston Senior Citizens last week and afterwards a lady came up to tell me that her boyfriend had been killed – his name was amongst those listed in the newspaper. Suddenly memories of nearly 60 years ago had come flooding back.

Later that week I was giving a similar talk to the Royal Air Force Association, whose members have remarkable knowledge of such matters. From Lacey Anderson I learned that the first Americans to arrive in Cambridge during the war were initially encamped in Dick Downham's cornfield, Green End Road, with a second group near the railway crossing on Milton Road. Does anybody have a snap? His mother took in their washing. Lacey himself used to entertain the troops both as a solo artiste and with his own band.

More musical memories have come from Dave Bott of Duxford who was involved with the Riverside Jazz Band from 1957 when they played at the Criterion pub, now swallowed up as part of the Joshua Taylor complex. Initially this was a part town/ part gown band but it was decided to make it town only, so it could do more gigs during the vacations. This prompted a move to the YMCA building in Post Office Terrace where a thriving Thursday night club operated until the Rock & Roll era took over from Trad Jazz. Other thriving bands at the time were The Idle Hours, The Fenland Feetwarmers, The Savoy and The Cardinal Jazzbands. Dave would also like information on a publication called "Gunsite Gossip" – the unofficial journal of Cam / 101 Battery A.A. a copy of which, for November 1943, he came across recently. Does anybody have copies?

Most wartime memories were revived in the peaceful setting of Wentworth church on Saturday when members of Cambridge Antiquarian Society, on a coach tour of the Isle of Ely, popped in on their church fete and came out laden with home-baked produce. The small community is struggling to maintain their combined church and hall, a remarkable building which includes a stone statue of St Peter, dating from the 11th century. But it was the visitors'

book which caught the eye of one Antiquarian. Since they do not attract a vast number of people one book goes a long way and names of troops based in the area in the early 1950s feature prominently in the earlier pages.

More tangible memories of the area's military past is visible each weekday at the RAF Witchford museum, housed in the offices of Grovemere Holdings, amongst the industrial units on the old airfield site. The base had a short three-year existence, opening in June 1943, but the mementoes amassed by Barry Aldridge are a remarkable testimony to their activities and well worth a visit.

Meanwhile Ken Booth from 3432 N. Wisconsin St, Racine, Wisconsin 52402, USA, has been reminiscing about another small village, Lode. He writes: "My first visit to Lode was in 1938 where I stayed with relatives during my summer holidays. Here I romped freely in the fields with my cousins, gorged myself shamefully with Victoria and greengage plums, played cricket with the village lads, and followed the binder when the last rows of grain were cut to chase the rabbits with sticks as they scurried for safety. Our uncles Johnny and Aunt Rosa Shipp lived a stone's throw from the old mill. Their cousin George lived in a wooden shed in their garden. Wounded in the First World War and later contracting tuberculosis he spent his days in and out of hospitals, always returning to his little hut which, except for inclement weather, was always open to the elements. That was sixty years ago and remains fresh in my memory today" Ken is seeking copies of some booklets written about Lode by Marjorie Sabin –can anybody help him?

NOTE : IF YOU NEED TO CUT COULD YOU LOSE THE SWANSEA STORY

Memories, by Mike Petty, June 24th 1999

The article about Wray's Court, Sidney Street, Cambridge continues to bring forth mixed memories. For Sally Whyte it was a frightening, dark, dingy, eerie place inhabited by witches. As a girl she lived just a few doors along, over the shop of Moore and Co. and one day she and her sister went out on their scooters, as usual. This time something went wrong. Out from the dark recess of Wray's Court came an old lady, bent over, dressed in black – "Come back with me, I'll put in right for you". As Sally followed the lady into her lair her twin sister dashed off to fetch their father to rescue her from the 'kidnapper'

Yet, as a young married woman just after the War, Mrs Joan Goody, now of Cherry Hinton, was delighted to be offered the chance to move into one of the houses in the Court– until she & her husband Felix saw it. Wray's court might look quaint but the buildings were occupied by old people & in very poor condition. The houses had no back door, no water, no light except gas and just two toilets for all the residents, some of whom could not get out to them! Their house was on three floors and had a basement full of cobwebs like upside down umbrellas – they threw buckets of water down it to force a way through. Overcoming their initial revulsion they set too on the other rooms. They stripped many layers of wallpaper – one layer containing pins and needles placed there by a long-dead seamstress. With blistered hands they decorated and made the place look something like a home. Only then did they discover to their horror that they had not, after all, got the house. The person who'd made the offer had no rights over it - that decision had to be made by a Committee, they would need references. The couple wept.

The Trustees of Wray's Charity, who administered this court and also maintained almshouses in King Street, were impressed by their hard work. They could have it subject to certain conditions: there was to be no washing hung out in the court – this was after all part of 'old

Cambridge' and admired by visitors – and they were not to have children. But a baby came. They could stay provided it was not heard to cry, but the pram was not to be on view in the court.

As the other elderly residents died or moved away more young families were moved in. One of these were Mr & Mrs K.P. Harris, now living in Witchford. They too worked hard to create a "little Palace". They scrubbed the cobbles, for now babies would be crawling around (despite the committee!), though the washing lines were still confined to the basements. The young community bonded together, organised child-minding so that each could have spare time, and they have stayed friends together ever since. But then the Council said they couldn't live there as the properties had no back doors and the occupants were re-housed in various parts of Cambridge. Yet they look back on Wray's Court with the greatest of affection

Joan Fitch, of Highsett, knew the King Street almshouses. They belonged to the Charity of Henry Wray, which had been founded in 1634. From 1958 to 1968 she was Clerk to the Trustees of the Foundation of Edward Storey. One of her duties was to take a small monthly pension to a scatter of old ladies living in the parishes of St Giles and Holy Trinity, one of whom lived in Wray's court. There were then three sets of almshouses in King Street: Wrays, which have disappeared, Jackenett's which is still there but given over to other uses, and Knights and Mortlocks, still managed by Cambridge United Charities.

Another example of the 1950's society is recalled by Mrs E. Bradford of Sawston who lent me a newspaper cutting showing an outing organised by the Trumpington Tenants Association to Wicksteed Park in August 1950. She tells me that Trumpington was the first council estate to be built after the Second World War and most of the 400 homes went to returning forces. "We were a happy crowd", she recalls, "and Paddy Harris supplied the coaches". Did your estate organise similar outings, and did it stay one big happy family?

Can anybody shed light on a picture taken by the News. On first glance it would seem to be one of those posh Cambridge University May Balls but this dates from December 1986 and I believe relates to a Ball at Hills Road Sixth Form College. Do any of the younger readers have any memories of it that I can use for a caption in the "Memory Lane, Cambridge" book?

More memories were generated by the references to second world war bombing in Great Eastern Street. Miss M.R. Bavey of 4 Cavendish Rd, Cambridge writes: "I, too, remember the bombs that fell in Great Eastern Street. In August 1941 I was seven years old and I remember being woken up in the middle of the night by the rattle of falling debris on the roof. On that occasion "Gerry" dropped a stick of bombs, one falling on the Baptist chapel at the corner of Stockwell Street, one in a garden a short way down Cavendish Road, and another in Great Eastern Street. At number 4 Cavendish Road we were in one of the gaps! My father was in the ARP and he immediately went out to give assistance. Mr R. Thompson of 84 Gt Eastern Street remembers that after that bomb fell bricks, dust, wood and feathers from the beds were scattered all over the area, an aviary at the back of his house was set on fire by an incendiary bomb. But he has another memory he seeks assistance with. He writes: "Does anybody remember when a Flying Fortress crashed at Royston Road, Harston. I think it was before the Americans came into the war and it was a secret plane with British crew. I was there and helped the farmer pull bodies from the plane, but had to get away as the ammunition was exploding". Over to you

Memories 1st July 1999, by Mike Petty

Opening the box file containing my “Memories” letters the first one on top is written in an elegant hand in black ink. It contains the story of a French family of refugees who had fled their homeland at the start of the Great War and found sanctuary and friendship in the Cambridgeshire village of Over. It gives information only discoverable by somebody with an intense knowledge of his subject, prepared to spend hours delving for detail. Pinned to it is a typewritten sheet, “from my £3 Car Boot Cannon Electric Typewriter, not exactly thrilled with it, may have been ‘overcharged’. Hope to see you soon, thanks again for all you have done – yours sincerely, Ernest”. Sadly I will receive no more letters from Ernie Papworth, the Over village historian, who died at the weekend. All who knew him will have their own memories and stories of him. He taped the tales of many local folk, and set down the history of his village in literally hundreds of elegantly written articles for his church magazine. We will not see his like again – thanks again for all you have done Ernest.

I am no football fan, indeed the last time I attended a match at Cambridge United’s Abbey Stadium I had to have permission for not doing my French homework – not something you asked lightly of ‘Slug’ Riley at Soham Grammar School! Now I need help in captioning two pictures taken by the News in April 1973, when the team won promotion to the Third Division. One shows jubilant players, the others celebrating fans – but who are they, and has the scene changed at all. Over to you.

Continuing on the football theme, I have had a letter from the Zion Eagles Football Club, which was launched in July 1998 and plays in the Cambridge and Bedford Churches League. Craig Hatfield and his team are now delving back into the early history of their sport. He tells me that in 1848 representatives of various groups met to agree the rules of the game and “affixed them to trees on Parker’s Piece”. When the Football Association was established in 1863 the Cambridge rules were adopted and were later accepted throughout the world. Apparently the FA say no copies of these original “Cambridge Rules” have ever been found – unless you have one. Zion Eagles would like to commemorate this major connection between Parker’s Piece and international football. If you have ideas, or would like to help you can write to them at the Zion Baptist Church, 1 East Rd, Cambridge CB1 1BD.

From Prifysgol Cymru Abertawe – the University of Wales, Swansea, comes a plea from Christopher Stray. He is trying to track down a painting by Harston artist Mary C. Greene of the Albany Café which stood in St Mary’s Passage, Cambridge in the 1890s. It shows various well-known locals who used to gather there for morning coffee and a chat, including Robert Bowes, Prof. McKenny Hughes, Sir William Ridgeway and the artist herself. The picture was featured in the CDN on 12th March 1936, the Folk Museum think they might have had it once and that it went to be framed but was retained by the framer who thought he had been underpaid. Christopher Stray thinks it is probably hanging on a wall somewhere locally. If you know where he’d be pleased to hear from you at the Department of Classics and Ancient History, Singleton Park, Swansea, SA2 8PP

From even further afield comes a letter with a Lusaka, Zambia, postmark. It reads: “By some extraordinary co-incidence, I received here in Lusaka, a cutting of your “Memories” article on the Freebooters Club (27 May) on the same day that I was awarded the Order of the British Empire in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list. I believe the award was for 40 years of service to youth, and it all started with Freebooters in the summer of 1960”. Prof. John Ewen then goes on to sketch out his extraordinary career which has led to his position as the Commonwealth’s National Advisor on Youth Affairs to the Government of Zambia. He has sent me three pictures, one of himself – without the motor-bike and leathers of his Cambridge days – and two more of the 25 hour jiving competition winners in October 1961. So if you are or were Pam Gentle, Fred Elliott, Linda Warboys or Adrian Mead and would like a picture of yourself in your younger days just let me know. Prof Ewen, OBE, MA, concludes: “If any of your readers who were Freebooters from that period would like to contact me at the Ministry of Sports, Youth and Child Development,

Memaco House, P.O. Box 50195, Lusaka, Zambia, I would be delighted to hear from them. Meanwhile thank you for bringing back so many happy memories on a day when I was both feeling highly honoured by the Queen's award, and when nostalgia was flowing through my veins"

Memories 8th July 1999, by Mike Petty.

A couple of weeks ago Mr R. Thompson of 84 Gt Eastern Street asked whether anybody remembered when a Flying Fortress crashed at Royston Road, Harston. "I think it was before the Americans came into the war and it was a secret plane with British crew. I was there and helped the farmer pull bodies from the plane, but had to get away as the ammunition was exploding".

Two readers have responded. Mr W.F. Collins of Gt Shelford remembered the event as if it were yesterday:

"At the time I was in class at Harston school, aged about 12 years, when suddenly we heard this aircraft approaching so low and making a terrible noise – so low in fact that I thought it was going to take the roof off the school. Two or three minutes later we heard a heavy thud and knew the plane had crashed.

As it was about mid-day meal time we were let out of school, many of us used to go home for dinner. When we got outside there was a big pall of black smoke rising from the Royston road, Harston mill direction. Instead of going home for dinner a lot of us ran or cycled towards the scene. When we got nearer to Harston mill, which used to grind the corn for local farmers at that time, we could see the flames and black smoke billowing upwards, about ¼ mile behind Hayes farm, a bit beyond the Queens Head pub.

When we got there the fire was so intensive we couldn't get too near the burning plane, lucky for us as suddenly the ammunitions started to go off with tracer canons flying through the air, of course we couldn't see the other shells but could just hear them whiz as they went over our heads. Some of us saw where the canon (tracer) landed, one boy (a London evacuee) dug into the soft ploughed field and pulled out this tracer still steaming with his gloved hand. We were then told to move back out of danger, which we did. The A.F.S. then arrived, soon covering the burning plane with foam.

Now I would like to point out that the plane certainly wasn't on the secret list. We knew it was a B.17 Flying Fortress and understood it was returning from a daylight raid with 8 American crew members who all perished in the flames."

Mr D.J. Beynon of Haslingfield has supplied more details based on his researches. The plane was indeed a B17C "Flying Fortress", flown by No.90 Squadron from Polebrook, Northants. It was one of twenty early-model "Forts" which had served with the squadron since mid-1941. Found to be unsuitable to operations with Bomber Command the surviving aircraft were subsequently engaged in a series of very high-altitude test flights, which might explain Mr Thompson's belief that it was a "secret plane". This particular aircraft was on a routine training flight on 9th January 1942 when it was seen to come out of cloud in a left-hand spin before crashing in a field near the Queens Head. The crew of five were all killed in the crash. There are graves in the Service Plot at Whittlesford Churchyard of three aircrew who were killed on this same date.

Mr Beynon points out that this should not be confused with another B15 of the 8th USAAF based at Bassingbourn, which crashed at Royston road, Foxton, on 24th December 1944 – so did anybody see this one?

More schoolday memories have come from Mrs Jane Hough (nee Dyson) from Guildford, Surrey, following a photograph a couple dancing on the table at the Hills Road Sixth Form College Christmas Ball, 1986. “Guilty as charged – it was me, but I am sorry to disappoint you – the photograph in the newspaper was very much staged by the photographer; no-one was really dancing on the tables – it was quite unstable and it was a relief to get down once the picture had been taken!

At that time the Christmas Ball was definitely the highlight of the social calendar. Much of the organisation was undertaken by the students themselves. The music alternated between an hour’s live band (with ballroom dancing) and an hour’s disco. A large number of students took up the offer of ballroom dancing lessons during the lunch hour in the weeks preceding the ball. After Hills Road Jane went on to study at Brunel University and now works as an economist for the House of Commons. She’s lost touch with her partner in crime for the photograph, Andrew Noble who also went to Brunel to study engineering.

This week’s picture to ponder is a mystery at present. It might date from 1973 and shows a protest meeting near the entrance to King’s college, Cambridge. The speakers notes refer to “A struggle” – but for what. And when did you dress like this?

ALTERNATIVE OR ADDITIONAL

I found this picture amongst the News files, but there is no date or place. It might be in the Saffron Walden area. The dustcart’s number is NNK 307H. But who are the men clearing away the dust, and where? Memories please

MEMORIES, 15th July 1999 by Mike Petty

It is time to catch up with some of the mystery photographs. Two weeks ago I featured Cambridge United on one of the greatest days in their history. The date was 28th April 1973, the opponents Mansfield Town. Whichever team won would be promoted to the third Division. When Ronnie Walton fired home the winning goal in the 62nd minute the record 10,542 people packed the Abbey stadium went wild with delight. Doubtless the cheering echoed around the surrounding countryside and may have reached the ears of John Taylor one of United’s neighbours – though he lives some distance away across Coldham’s Common

John has written with his memories of house-history hunting. He writes: “It was in March 1958 that I picked up from the Cambridge Guildhall the key to my new home. The label said “Pinder’s Cottage, Coldham’s Lane”. Cycling over Coldham’s Lane bridge I got as far as Cherry Hinton before I realised I had missed the cottage, turned round and found it near the Greyhound pub, trying to hide amongst the shrubs and weeds in the garden.

“What an odd looking building. I unlocked the door and went inside to find only three rooms plus a tacked-on lean to which looked as it doubled as kitchen and bathroom and potting shed. Of the three other rooms the middle one was 14 foot by nine foot and the other two – one each side of the main room – nine foot square. And then I noticed something odd: the dividing walls between the centre room and the two smaller ones either side were OUTSIDE walls. This seemed to indicate that the building started life as only one room and later a room was tacked on to each end”

This was confirmed when John researched into the house’s history. He discovered it had been built in 1857 as a weighbridge house. This was to enable the corporation to keep check on the amount of coprolite – fossilised organic matter which was dug up, ground down and used for fertiliser. He then dug down along his front wall and found where the weighing mechanism entered the building below ground level. The coprolite did not last for ever and the house was empty until the council decided to add on two rooms to house the gatekeeper for the

Common. She was Elizabeth Layton - her initials were carved into the end wall. She ended up in the Workhouse.

So most of the story was complete – except for something a neighbour had said when he'd first moved in. John continues: "He asked me if I'd seen the ghost yet."

Nearly 20 years later John was having some extensions done: "I was levelling the lawn when the fork struck something hard. It turned out to be an oddly coloured stone about 40 inches by 20 inches by four inches thick, and looking closely I noticed a number of brass pins set in the stone". He contacted the County Archaeologist who identified part of a 14th century tombstone, the pins being to hold the effigy of the person buried beneath the slab, together with an inscription saying what a good person he had been. It had probably been placed there when stone was cleared from Barnwell Abbey in 1810.

But who was buried under it – and who is the ghost. John is not sure. 216 people died during the Great Plague of 1665/6 at The Pest House, which was situated between the present allotments by Stourbridge Grove and Sainsbury's – and the bodies were loaded on to the plague cart and buried somewhere nearby in 'the dead of night' – so there are plenty to choose from.

More details of burials on Coldham's Common, and other parts of Cambridge, are included in a new book "Cambridge, the hidden history" by former County Archaeologist, Alison Taylor, (Tempus £18.99) which is essential reading for anybody interested in any bodies which might be around their own homes.

Last week I featured a picture of a crowd of students at a rally on Kings Parade. The date was 12th February 1973, the occasion a rain-drenched rally which had reduced demonstrators from an expected 1,000 to just 300. The protest was over student grants and the speaker outside King's college was Mike Terry of the National Union of Students.

This week I invite comments on a picture taken inside Alex Wood Hall, Cambridge, when council dustmen and other outdoor workers were on strike despite an 11% pay increase. This seems a high percentage, but in February 1979 would have amounted to £4.50 a week extra. While the men struck council environmental health officials were keeping watch on the state of 55 emergency refuse tips set up around Cambridge – trying to ensure there was no outbreak of infection such as that of the 1660s

A few years earlier Len Hutt had been sweeping his way along Maids Causeway when up came this chap with a notebook and stopwatch. It was September 1966 and the City Council had called in a "works study assistant" to increase the efficiency of their refuse collection services. Photographs don't capture thoughts, but I wonder what Len was thinking!

Memories, 22nd July 1999 by Mike Petty

As the end of July nears I have been working very hard to try and complete the "Memory Lane, Cambridge" book which has to be with the publishers, Breedon, by the end of the month.

I have scoured the photo files at the *News*, whittled the chosen pictures down to just under 350, and sorted out the arrangements. It looks as though there will be one chapter on the Petty Cury – Lion Yard area & another on central Cambridge streets. The Kite area needs to be covered separately and then its off right around the town, starting at Castle Hill via Arbury, Chesterton, East Road, Mill Road, Coleridge, Cherry Hinton, Trumpington, Newnham – and

a bit on the University to finish off with. The photographs selected range from the 1960s to the 1990s – hopefully the period that will jog some memories, whatever age you happen to be

There are some pictures which I still need help captioning, please can anybody help.

This group of cinema-goers are leaving the Victoria, Market Hill after an all-night film session, but I don't have a date. The main attractions at the cinema is "Innocent" or something similar starring Stanley Baker. The Still and Sugarloaf is open, as is the Seven Star Grill, but the shop next door has a "sold" sign on it. The negative reference would indicate it was taken about November – December 1972, but can anybody tell me more

The next picture come from the "Portugal Place" file and might date from about August 1965. I know that the street was then home to Jack Carter robe maker who hired gowns, tails and dinner suits to students and townsfolk, and also to Joshua Taylor who then made the large proportion of the robes worn in universities, councils and courts throughout Britain and the Commonwealth. In September 1965 they took an order for robes for an Australian University Chancellor, but is this it? And who are the couple admiring them?

My third choice is doubly frustrating in that there is the remnant of a cutting stuck to the back of the picture and I know the date is sometime in 1975. But I have checked the Nursery Schools files in the Cambridgeshire Collection so far without result. The caption reads "St Luke's playgroup in progress in the big room complete with tricycle track". It would be nice to be able to identify some of the children – and of course if it was taken 24 years ago they may well have children of their own by now. So if you see yourself or your mum please drop me a line.

If you were up at Trinity in about 1969 perhaps you will recognise a face or two in this group. As part of the Rag, Trinity college undergraduates, with help from the women's colleges, were trying to break the world record for the number of people who could squeeze into a mini-car. They were aiming at crushing 27 inside – but did you succeed?

If you worked at Marks & Spencer in July 1966 can you identify either the customer or the sales girls in the days when foam interlined bras were 7s.11d.

Some other points I'm still trying to confirm. How many pints were consumed in how many pubs as part of the King Street Run. What happened to the White Ribbon Hostel on East Road and when was the Eastern Counties Bus garage on Hills Road demolished

If I do ever get it finished the book should be out in the Autumn

MEMORIES 29th July 1999, by Mike Petty

Last Thursday, while the England test team was being bowled out by New Zealand, a group of senior Cambridgeshire cricketers met at Fenners to look back on the history of their sport.

The former secretary of the Cambridgeshire Cricket Association, Bernard Green, had for many years cared for the group's archives, carefully tending files of old newspaper cuttings, score books and minutes which dated back to the Victorian period. Now the time had come for them to pass these valuable documents over to the County Record Office for safe keeping,

where they will be more accessible for researchers. So it was that Association President Tony Douglas together with other officials gathered for a last browse. Just turning the pages of the scrapbooks there are wonderful records – of how 19 members of the Cambridge Borough Police played the Cassandra cricket team. In their first innings the constabulary scored 47 runs for 18 wickets, in the second just 12. Needless to say they were well beaten by the Cassandra team – despite the fact that they batted using broomsticks in place of bats!

There was one item that particularly caught my eye: a cricket ball with an inscription commemorating how in a match between Kimbolton and Keysoe on 29th July 1903 Dan Hayward took 11 wickets for five runs. I promised to research this wonderful feat through the files of old newspapers held in the Cambridgeshire Collection – but none of them mention it! But at least I know the answer can now be found amongst the archives of the Cambridgeshire Cricket Association at Shire Hall. – or can somebody give me details. Do you have cricketing memories to share – please write to me at the News.

Last week I sought your help identifying various people and photographs. As usual readers were very quick to respond. Barbara Wilson recognised herself and fellow assistant Maureen Stratton (now Jeffery) at Marks and Spencer. They think it must have been taken when the upper sales floor was opened. John Luckham and Mary Burdett have come to my rescue with details of the White Ribbon Hostel. Mary did a student placement at the Hostel for a while and John was secretary of Coulsons the builders, next door.

We have also sorted out the details of the robes in Portugal Street. They were made by Joshua Taylor for the Coronation of the King of Tonga in 1965 and were displayed in their shop. But Brenda Goodall comes up with the fascinating detail that the King's robes were being modelled by Norman Douglas, who worked in the Finance department of Joshua Taylor. Because he did not quite have the great stature of King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV Norman was actually standing on a box when the picture was taken.

As yet nobody has come forward to tell me that the crowds leaving the Victoria cinema at 8am on 18th November 1972 had just experienced Cambridge's first all-night horror film show, 8½ hours of Frankenstein, Dracula, vampires and gore, sustained only by hot-dogs and soft drinks. Perhaps some horrible fate has overtaken them! Fortunately I have tracked it down for myself.

There is another picture for which I need help and it is doubly frustrating because there is a remnant of a cutting stuck to the back of the photograph and I know the date is sometime in 1975. The caption reads "St Luke's playgroup in progress in the big room complete with tricycle track". It would be nice to identify some of the children – and of course if it was taken 24 years ago they may well have children of their own by now. So if you see yourself or your mum please drop me a line

Jason Hoare of Newmarket Road, Cambridge was browsing through his family snaps when he chanced upon a picture of a steam boat on the Cam which looked remarkably like the one featured in the News last week conveying commuters from Ely to Cambridge. When his mother, Freyja, snapped it at Biatsbite lock in the early 1970s it was owned and operated by the late A.F. Leach. He had restored an old craft to make it the largest, finest and fastest steam boat on the Cam. Many of Mr Leach's old pupils might remember how he occasionally took them on trips on the boat, regaling them with tales of river history as they stoked the furnace and got covered with sooty smuts in the process. If you made such trips let me know

Sheila Mann is seeking information on the early days of the Evelyn Hospital. As far as I can gather there was once a nursing home in Thompson's Lane, Cambridge, which was somewhat inconvenient in that the operating theatre was on the first floor. There were no porters and patients had to be carried up and down narrow zig-zag stairs at an angle of 60 degrees.

Nevertheless it seems to have provided excellent service. When the wife of Charles Agnew, a Bond Street art dealer, underwent a successful operation there he was so grateful that he built a new nursing home, about 1922, by extending a large house called The Orchard in Trumpington Road which he named Evelyn after his wife. If you can add to the story please contact her at the Hospital, 4 Trumpington Rd, Cambridge CB2 2AF

Sawston is a village that has been blessed with a number of histories. The latest is "A stroll through Sawston" in which Dennis and Barbara Poulter have pooled their extensive knowledge and considerable research to record the story of the people and buildings that have made the village what it is today. They have illustrated it not only with photographs but also a fascinating selection of billheads and notices issued by local firms. Should you be on your uppers then G & W. Garner "Desire to inform the inhabitants of Sawston and neighbouring villages that they make all kinds of Boots and Shoes to measure, and trust by using good material, with good workmanship, and at fair prices to have a share of your support". A good pair of men's boots for land work cost just 14/- the pair. The book itself is £7.50 from Sawston Book Shop, 6 Morley's Place, Sawston (Cambridge 837456)

Simon Hill of Linton writes with a strange request for information. "In June 1940 the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars were stationed at the private estate of Babraham Park for training before they went overseas. Cpl. Harvey, who was in charge of the cookhouse, wanted a sump dug for the waste. A site was chosen near a huge oak tree and a group of six men started digging. About a foot down they came across a gruesome discovery. They found six bodies buried standing up, three adult, one child and at least three incomplete skeletons. The bones were yellow and frail. A group of experts from the Archaeology Unit of Cambridge University arrived and they were taken away. I never heard any more about who or what they were or what happened to them". Do you know, or have you had similar discoveries. Keep the letters flowing

ILLUSTRATIONS

the modern picture of the Cricket Association taken last Thursday (22nd July)

St Luke's playgroup – submitted last week

Jason Hoare's mothers snap of a steam boat at Baitsbite Lock

MEMORIES, 5th August 1999, by Mike Petty

My mention last week of A.F. Leach and his steamboat brought memories flooding back to Ron Malby of Bottisham and John Ianson of Stretham, both of whom were taught by him at various times, either at Brunswick or Chesterton Senior School, Cambridge. Both remember him as an excellent teacher and John recalls that if by a Thursday afternoon a pupil had caused him no aggravation that week there was a chance he might be amongst four lads invited to take a trip on the boat, which was then moored near the Fort St George. Whilst one polished the boiler until it shone, another would stoke it with wood, producing black smoke as the boat chugged down to Baitsbite or even Bottisham lock where they would enjoy a picnic of sandwiches. They might come back covered in sooty smuts but it was well worth while.

Bill Leach's involvement with boats had started when he and his brother discovered an old capsized hulk in 1926. Together they managed to make the wreck float and steam again. For 20 years this relic of a bygone age could be seen plying up the river, "a dirty, stinking old thing" to some, a source of unmitigated delight to its owner. In 1952 the dream had to end, as the hull was just too weak to take any more pupils on river trips. But he was not finished, he acquired another which he rebuilt and refurbished, polished and perfected until once more he owned the largest, finest and fastest steamboat on the Cam. Bill died in June 1989, much loved by many of his pupils

Transport memories of another type have been shared by Jacqueline Saville,. She tells me that her grandfather, Thomas Priestley, was a representative for Crawford's biscuits in the days before the First World War, travelling by train throughout East Anglia. When he died her mother's young uncle, Thomas Daisley, took over the job, which now came with a 1912-vintage Renault car. All went well till Thomas was called up for the army in 1916. In those wartime days women were starting to do jobs previously the preserve of men and it was decided that his wife Kate should continue the work until he came home again. There was one snag – she did not drive.

Jacqueline's mother, Doris Priestley, didn't drive either – but such a small problem was not allowed to stand in her way. She took rudimentary lessons, learnt how to hang the headlamps and trim the sidelights and together the two women went off on their journeys. They left Cambridge on Monday mornings, staying in hotels around the region before returning on the Friday, just in time to leave the car in a garage near the Catholic church so that it could be checked over ready to repeat the experience the next Monday. I've been lent a photograph of the two young ladies with their car. Kate looks on while Doris, with her long pigtail, cranks the starting handle. This could be a hazardous exercise On one such occasion her scarf got caught up in the engine – so after that she wore her pigtail up!

The two ladies plied the roads of East Anglia till Thomas came home from the war, then Doris took another job which also involved some driving. Later she met and married James Saville, an airman who had crashed his machine and spent some time in Cambridge's First Eastern General Hospital. With such a background of transport history it is no wonder that Jacqueline herself inherited a love of driving which she has shared with many through her Gainsborough School of Motoring.

I have been passed some motoring memorabilia relating to the hazards of driving issued about 40 years ago by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. They highlight the hazards of being an "amber gambler", the madness of speeding and the problems that one stationary car could cause. Their owner would like to find a good home for them and I would appreciate your motoring memories, especially those with a local slant. The answer is obvious – they go to the sender of my favourite automobile anecdote.

Rodney Dale however is barred from entry – for few could match the wealth of recollections of post-war vintage motoring contained in his latest book "Halcyon Days" (Fern House, 1999). Here is one such tale. "We lived on Chesterton road, Cambridge, opposite Hallen's showroom on the corner of Hawthorn Way. One day in 1944 father discovered a chassis in the show room, a Bentley chassis. Although it had no body, petrol was unobtainable, and he didn't know how to drive it, Father forked out £125 and the chassis was pushed round into our garage. Needing a body where better to go than Les Rich's yard in Coldham's Lane. Father and fellow Addenbrooke's porter Harry Rooke went along to do a bit of measuring and came back with the news that a 1923 Sunbeam tourer body (£5) would fit the chassis – with a bit of work".

The work involved a considerable amount of measuring, adjusting and improvisation, eventually it was ready. "Petrol was virtually unobtainable, but you could get lighter-fuel if you tried hard and we were able to procure a box of those squidgy capsules of Ronson lighter fluid. Laboriously we squirted the lighter-fluid into the Autovac; Bunty Smith wound the handle; the engine started instantly. He sprang round into the driver's seat and depressed the clutch – it made a noise like a tiger. Into reverse, and the car leapt backwards into The Lane and stopped. It had run out of fuel. Father climbed on to his tricycle and pedalled off in such of more lighter-fuel. He returned bearing two 1/6 bottles of Ronson and we carefully poured them in. Bunty started the engine again; not wanting to risk running out of fuel during a trip to the end of the Lane and back, he drove back into the garage, and that was that"

Later they got proper petrol from W.J. Ison's vintage petrol pumps up Chesterton Road, which gives me an excuse to feature a picture of King and Harper's garage, Milton Road. It was taken by Ted Mott in the 1920s – about the time that Steamboat Bill Leach was discovering the joys of boating.

PICTURE : Doris and Kate with their car
King & Harper's garage, Milton Road

MEMORIES, 11 August 1999, by Mike Petty

All the excitement of yesterday's eclipse prompted Jose Parr of Ely to turn up her family postcard album which was compiled by her late great-uncle Harry Vail. There she rediscovered a view of a previous eclipse of the sun as seen at Ely at noon on 17th April 1912. This has prompted me to see how the News reported that occasion.

The eclipse of 1912 took place between 11am and 1.30pm and at its peak a trifle over nine-tenths of the sun's surface was hidden. In Cambridge the morning was beautifully fine, the sun shone and the phenomenon was observed under the most favourable conditions. The News fine prose describes how the sunlight seemed to fade away, the temperature fell perceptible, the songs of the birds were hushed and familiar objects assumed an almost spectral appearance.

Inevitably people chanced a peek, and inevitably they suffered as a result. "One lady complained that after glancing at the sun through her veil the pavement seemed tessellated and everything she looked at had a mottled appearance. Hundreds of people were out peeping at the sun through smoked or coloured glasses. An excellent medium proved to be an old photographic negative. Here and there a cyclist might be seen lighting his lamp and smoking the glass and then observing the eclipse through it"

At Newmarket "the greatest interest was shown. At the Conservative Club the steward had provided a large thin sheet of glass, thoroughly smoked, and a little crowd outside the club were able to watch the increasing black disc as it crept across the face of the sun. A few persons tried the method of providing a pail of water and watching the reflection in the pail. For fully an hour the keenest interest was maintained as it was generally understood that no portion of the sun's surface had been eclipsed since 1858 and the novelty attracted popular attention"

This great natural phenomenon was however eclipsed in the news columns. The main story was not the loss of the sun, but the loss of the Titanic. By Wednesday April 17th 1912 no more survivors had been picked up and it was feared that over 1,200 people had glimpsed their last sight of the sky and been lost beneath the waves

OTHER PICTURES ENCLOSED :

Another treasure from Jose Parr's postcard album. Taken by A.J. Davis of Rose Crescent it shows a large gathering of Scouts inside the Cambridge Corn Exchange, I would guess just before the First World War"

and / or

A group of members of the Cambridge branch ASLEF (locomotive engineers and firemen) with their banner about 1913

Do you have an interesting snap in your old albums, that might spark memories - let me know.

pictures : ECLIPSE AT ELY, from Jose Parr's album

Mrs Jean Clements of Cambridge writes:

"Reading in the paper that the Regal Cinema, Cambridge, is changing its name made me very nostalgic. Before the war my mother used to take in lodgers to help with the family income. Two of them were bricklayers on the start of the Regal, after them we had two plasterers, then in due course two electricians. When the balcony was in place an advert was placed in the News asking for men to go to the cinema on the Sunday morning and stand on the balcony to test it out!

"My uncle who had just arrived home from India with the army, managed to get the job of doorman and "chucker out". He was a very big man and looked quite formidable in his green uniform and gold braid. Our family went to the very first show, it was "Swing Time" with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. My mother had the programme up to her death, then it disappeared. My uncle only had the job for about eighteen months as he was recalled into the army and was later wounded at Dunkirk. His name was Dick Summerfield"

Jean wonders if anybody has a snap of Uncle Dick in his resplendent uniform - and were you ever chucked-out by him

Various people have been remembering various old country saws and sayings, like "If sun shines through the apple trees upon a Christmas day, When autumn comes they will a load of fruit display". So often elderly members of the family seem to come out with them, they become familiar, and then fade away from memory as the years pass. Do you have any which are peculiar to your family? Share them with me at the News

Memories 19th August 1999 by Mike Petty

My mention of A.F. Leach in "Memories" of 29th July, has continued to prompt his old pupils to put pen to paper - or in Mike Payne's case onto the E-Mail. Through the ether he recollects that Mr Leach was his form master at Milton Road Junior School in 1944, when Mike was 10. "I met him again in 1982 and as we had not met since 1945 it was a bit of a surprise for both of us. I always imagined him to be about 9 feet tall and was very surprised that he was only about 5ft 6 inches. I mentioned to him that he had taken us out in a barge towed by the same steam launch you illustrated and he mentioned that his propeller had stopped due to weeds having tangled themselves round it. He was a great man"

Roger Coleman from Gilbert Road, Cambridge also came across him while aged 10 - in 1959: "His science lessons were most memorable and exciting and would now be banned on Health and Safety grounds". He recalls a voyage made on the steamboat "Artemis" with fellow pupils David Howard and Derek Cowling. Their destination was Fen Ditton, "where he produced a battered leather suitcase that was normally attached to the back of his ex-WD 1st World War Triumph 500 cc motorcycle, and produced ice-cream wrapped in newspaper in an attempt to stop it melting on the sweltering summer's day". Roger concludes with a sentiment expressed by many "I feel honoured to have known him - a gentleman amongst gentlemen". Thomas Taylor of Whittlesford made three trips on the boat while a pupil between 1929-30 at the Brunswick School in Walnut Tree Avenue (and you have to be fairly old Cambridge to remember that street, now replaced with that part of Elizabeth Way between the river and Newmarket Rd)

Elizabeth Lane of Ely got to know Anthony Leach better than most and treasures letters he wrote her in 1983. In one of these he describes the other side of boating: "humping coal about, and clearing ashes out after the trip; setting a new fire and doing at least some of the brass again. Running a steam boat is hard and dirty work: so dirty that getting your hands clean afterwards is a job in itself".

But Bill Leach had other loves as well, including his motorbike, "It was a 550 c.c. single cylinder side-valve Triumph, with a Sturmey-Archer 3 speed gear box and chain-cum-belt drive. It was an ex-army machine rebuilt by the makers who claimed they had supplied 30,000 of them to the Allied Forces during the 1914-18 war. I never had an accident with it although I used it for just over 50 years, but it had very poor brakes. In spite of its big engine, its top speed was fifty two m.p.h. and at that speed it felt rather unsafe." The bike was still in existence in 1983 and being taken to rallies. I wonder if CE 6043 is still around and if the owner knows that Elizabeth's autograph book includes a sketch of it made by Mr Leach himself. (Autograph books - whatever happened to autograph books and all those things people used to write)

In one of his letters Mr Leach recalled a memory of early motoring, dating from about 1910. "There was a doctor working in the Chesterton area who used to use his car when visiting patients in their homes. This was Dr White; his car was white, and it had the name White on the hub-caps, and I was naive to suppose that he had built the vehicle himself! His car behaved differently from all the others. The others had to be started by cranking a handle on the front of the vehicle. Dr White's had no starting handle. When he left a patient's house he got straight into the driver's seat. First he sat back and did nothing for two or three minutes, except that he fiddled about with something low down near the floor. Then after about three minutes the car moved off, but what a difference from the others!. They made rather a sort of noise - chug-chug-chug apart from other general noise. Dr White's vehicle moved off in a quite dignified silence, apart from a slight crunching of the tires on the gritty roads. Very superior, I thought, and what a clever man!

"It was some years before I discovered the truth about the car. The "White" car was American! It was a steam car. Its fuel was paraffin. I later learnt that such a car might take about 15 minutes to get enough steam pressure from cold for the car to move. But once the boiler was hot one could turn the flame of the paraffin boiler down, and if you were lucky could get away after a short wait. Say three minutes!"

Pauline Anderson of Cambridge has been trawling her memories and files for information on the King Street Run. She tells me it was a comprehensive drinking circuit when there were 14 public houses and the race was to drink a pint of best bitter in each pub whilst running the full length of King Street without being sick or using the loo, and be able to stand at the end. It was said the record was 19 minutes. Needless to say most of them were on their hands and knees at the end, and this – she says – is how the “pub crawl” was invented.

In turn she seeks help: “In the 1930’s I remember seeing an old cannon on the green where Tenison Road, Lyndewode Road and St Barnabas road meet. It disappeared at the outbreak of WW.II, but was it a relic of the Great War, or did it go further back in time?” – over to you

ILLUSTRATION

Pic no.2 : Can anybody help me identify this view of a local blacksmith’s shop – and did you ever see the blacksmith at work – your memories please

Memories, 26th August 1999, by Mike Petty

Life was far from sweet in Cambridgeshire twenty-five years ago. Whilst the government debated, the EEC agonised, the Commonwealth were consulted and pundits pontificated all that mattered to local housewives was the shortage of sugar in supermarkets.

By August 1974 the crisis was reaching epidemic proportions. Many shops in Mid Anglia were trying to beat the sugar shortage by selling specially-imported supplies, and customers were eager to buy the new stocks although they are having to pay 20p a kilo as against the old price of 11½p for 2 lb. Even so a Haverhill market trader found himself attacked for profiteering by housewives when he charged the higher price for the lower weight

Sugar was still available in shops at the old price, but supplies were strictly rationed, so people turned to various means to stock up their larder.

Children on their own were banned from buying sugar in Lipton's Huntingdon supermarket because the manager claimed they were running a high price black-market. John Fareham, also reported how each member of a family were coming in individually to purchase a bag. The shop was receiving about 80 per cent of their normal supplies and he was filling the shelves at different times each day to avoid a rush. At the nearby Keymarket the manager was adamant that if people stuck to their normal amount it would be all right. Civil's in St Ives reported that "It's like the gold rush. As soon as its out on shelves it's gone"

By August 28th white sugar was unobtainable at most Cambridge supermarkets, though Arbury Discount had enough for everyone to have one bag each at the beginning of the week and two at the end. They were however right out of artificial sweeteners. Sainsbury's had only brown sugar, while the International Stores on Market Hill (remember them?) had only a small amount of demerara at 10p a pound.

In St Neots there was virtually no sugar on the shelves, though by strict rationing Dudeney and Johnstons had seven bags left on sale. Woolworth's had had none for three weeks. The situation was similar in Saffron Walden and Royston was rationed.

John Wilson, manager of Ely Tesco, told how customers swooped on 1,400 packets of sugar in only two hours. His was not an easy position to hold: "Customers are so insulting. What do they say to me? It is unrepeatable. By the end of the year there will be so many shortages that managers' lives will be hell. First it was toilet rolls, now it's sugar. We are all going to end up nervous wrecks"

Later in the year the panic switched to salt and by December queues formed outside a new shopping experience – the giant Sainsbury's superstore on the corner of Coldham's Lane and Perne Road, Cambridge. Traffic came to a standstill and queues built up as eager shoppers converged on the packed shelves and crowds formed round the plentiful supplies of sugar – though rumours circulated that the town-centre store had been denuded just to give a boost to the new one.

One useful man to have in a sugar shortage was a teacher like Bill Leach, as Rosey Rossiter (nee Sward) of Cherry Hinton, remembers. "In one of his science lessons, at Milton Road Junior School, 1944, he brought in a sugar beet which had "fallen off the back of a lorry" and proceeded to demonstrate how it was eventually made into sugar (with the help of a bunsen burner to melt it down!)"

"Colin Fleming is still alive – are you?" Perhaps you remember him from his days at a cycle shop in Burleigh street, Cambridge or earlier with the "Marfly Entertainers", a troupe of 20 entertainers who comprised the Marshall's Flying School concert party and toured British and

American bases and army camps during the war years. The man responsible for it all was Bert Miller, a comic, whilst Colin provided the accompaniment on the piano and performed accordion solos.

There was another name from those days which still haunts him. Joan Hicks was a ‘chaser’ at Marshall’s, a job which took her all over the factory. Whenever she came into hangar number four, where Colin worked, she spoke to him. Sometimes they took their tea breaks together with biscuits on the flight deck of an aircraft. They never dated and one day she stopped coming. But Colin still treasures some poetry she wrote. He includes some of her verses in a little volume entitled “Poetic Encounter, 1938-1947” which also includes poems written by his father, Harry Colin Fleming, who some may remember as landlord of the Sun Inn Waterbeach or as head porter at Jesus College.

As for Colin himself, one-time juggler, unicyclist, plate-spinner of Butlins, Pontins and Warner holiday-camp fame, not to mention numerous tv appearances. Well, he’s still alive and living near Sandown, Isle of Wight. If you’d like his address let me know.

Memories 2nd September 1999, by Mike Petty

Haddenham is usually a peaceful village, but some still talk of the day, 75 years ago, when things turned distinctly nasty. It was all to do with the sale of a haystack.

Farmers throughout fenland have always had an additional burden to bear – the payment of drainage rates on top of all their other expenses. Fred Peacock had paid the first instalment of his Ouse Drainage rate, but many of his neighbours had not. So Fred was upset when asked for the second half, and refused to pay until the others had forked out. The Drainage Board decided to make an example and sent in an auctioneer to sell one of his haystacks and get the money that way. The scene was set for the fun that followed.

George Love, auctioneer of Bridge Street, Cambridge arrived at the premises in Hill Row, Haddenham to conduct the sale. He found a considerable crowd of farmers and their wives. He also found the hay, which had been grown by Peacock to feed his stock during the coming winter. People pointed out that it had not been grown on land subject to drainage rate, and was standing on land that did not belong to Peacock. It was however visible from the man road, and on the main road Love took up his position.

The auctioneer called for bids, but no bids were forthcoming. Instead eggs made their appearance & things got lively. The eggs came from all directions, some hit him on the hat, some on the chest, some on other parts of his body, in fact he was hit all over. The eggs were thrown singly and in volleys, but nobody was really sure where they came from – though Mrs Peacock did have a large shopping bag with her. Nor were they good eggs, in fact they were well rotten.

Nobody really saw who was throwing them – Fred Searle did have one in his hand “but was only egged on by the others”. Fitch Everitt was seen hurling one, though even the policeman confessed that egg had not been thrown at the auctioneer at all, but at somebody else – perhaps he was practising – and that immediately afterwards Fitch had been overcome with the pong, & dashed behind a hedge to be sick.

In fact it appeared the farmers of Haddenham were just very bad aimers – intending to hit the Board’s bailiff, or to settle old scores amongst themselves. But none could dispute that before very long the auctioneer stood like a hero besmattered with yolks of many hues, and with a

dead chicken sprawled across one shoulder of his suit. The suit could not be produced in court as it was still too smelly.

The Ely Police Courtroom was too small to house all the crowds of well-wishers who flocked to the trial and a larger court-room had to be pressed into use. The proceedings were as liberally smattered with wisecracks and laughter as the auctioneer had been with eggs. In the end all six accused were found guilty, and in one voice declared they would go to prison before they would pay the fines, at which the gallery burst into applause. As they were led down a voice from the rear of the court offered to pay the fines for them.

The battle of Hill Row was concluded, but the battle against the drainage rates continued, and still causes controversy to this day.

Do you remember Colin Fleming from his days at a cycle shop in Burleigh street, Cambridge or earlier with the “Marfly Entertainers”, a troupe of 20 entertainers who comprised the Marshall’s Flying School concert party and toured British and American bases and army camps during the war years. Colin accompanied comic Bert Miller, on the piano and performed accordion solos.

Joan Hicks was a ‘chaser’ at Marshall’s, a job which took her all over the factory. Whenever she came into hangar number four, where Colin worked, she would speak to him. Sometimes they took their tea breaks together with biscuits on the flight deck of an aircraft. They never dated and one day she stopped coming. But Colin still treasures some poetry she wrote. He includes some of her verses in a little volume entitled “Poetic Encounter, 1938-1947” which also includes poems written by his father, Harry Colin Fleming, a former head porter at Jesus College.

As for Colin himself, one-time juggler, unicyclist, plate-spinner of Butlins, Pontins and Warner holiday-camp fame, not to mention numerous tv appearances. Well, he’s still alive living near Sandown, Isle of Wight, and would love to hear from you. If you’d like his address let me know.

Memories 9th September 1999, by Mike Petty

The news that Cambridge will shortly be home to the biggest pub in the country, when a new hostelry opens on the site of the former Regal Cinema is a reminder of how things keep repeating themselves. For the Regal cinema was built on the site of one of Cambridge’s oldest inns, the Castle, which burnt down in August 1934. The inn dated back to the thirteenth century and had been reconstructed about 1620. It even had a room in which Oliver Cromwell was said to have slept – and which it was said his ghost still haunted.

It prompts me to look back on some of the pubs that Cambridge has lost and gained in recent years. By 1990 it was reported that Cambridge had lost half of the 500 pubs it had in 1950. My own knowledge of these is strictly limited, but if the names ring bells with you I should be pleased to hear. They include:

1950s :

Plume of Feathers, Park street- demolished 1953 – but we gained the *Weathervane* and the *Carlton Arms* in 1959

1960s

gains : *Racehorse*, Newmarket road 1961; *Queen Edith*, 1961; *Man on the Moon*, Norfolk Street, 1964; *Jenny Wren*, St Kilda avenue, 1965; *Plough & Harrow*, Madingley Rd, 1968
losses : **Angel**, Market Hill, 1962; **Pelican**, East Rd, 1967; **Criterion**, Market Passage, 1968; **House of Commons**, 1969;

1970s

gains : *Alma Brewery* (embracing Alma pub), Russell St & *Kings Arms*, King St (replaces old Royal Arms), 1972; *Ship*, Arbury (transferring the name from a pub in Coronation street), 1974; *Granta*, Barton road reopened after rebuilding, as did the *Red Cow* which reopened after Lion Yard redevelopment 1975; *Spade & Becket*, Thompsons Lane (formerly George & Dragon), *Salisbury Arms* opened as CMRA pub after closing 1973, *Panton Arms* refurbished – all 1976; *Free Press* reopened 1978 having been threatened with demolition in 1960s;

Cambridge Arms 1980

losses : **Wheatsheaf**, Castle Hill, 1970; **Britannia**, East Rd, & **Old English Gentleman**, Fitzroy St, 1971; **Brewers Arms**, Gydir St, 1972; 1975 saw the loss of the **King William IV**, Newmarket Rd & **The Bun Shop**, St Andrew's Hill – of which the "Romsey Town News" in 1974 commented: "Scores of people still flock there to enjoy friendly and lively hospitality. Two rooms are served by one bar, it is not tarted up and few places are left in the town with such character"

1980s

losses : **Ancient Druids**, Fitzroy street – last of nine pubs closed due to the Kite Area redevelopment (but opened in Napier St 1984) & **Rose**, Rose Crescent 1981; **Eagle**, Bene't street closed temporarily in 1988 for redevelopment but reopened later to great acclaim

What others do you remember?

Frank Dobie, a Texan, who knew Cambridge during the war recalled: "There are numerous pubs in Cambridge – The Baron of Beef, out of bounds for American soldiers; The Angel, there soldiers are too thick for anybody else to get in bounds; The CastLe, where the matured barmaid combines dignity with easy welcome; The Jug and Bottle, where citizens take their pitchers to be filled; The Red Cow, too cavelike for cheer; The Bun Shop, often in stock when other pubs have run out but too garrulous for conversation; the Hat and Feathers, too far away; The Little Rose, just what it should be."

The Volunteer in Green Street was one of the busiest pubs in town during the early 1950s. It had been enlarged in 1947 and redecorated with furniture from bombed-out Gt Yarmouth pubs. It enjoyed an all-day trade with snacks considered definitely superior to college lunches and in 1948 was serving 100 gallons of bitter on an average Saturday night. Their speciality then was an audit ale called "Old Nog" which had kept up its pre-war strength – "you can't comfortably carry more than four – we hope to have it on draught soon" commented landlord Fred Godlington. By 1963 it was a popular meeting place for undergraduates with social evenings featuring chess, skittles, billiards and draughts. They also hosted an inter-college competition for drinking a yard of ale in the shortest time – the record then being 11.4 seconds, held by an undergraduate from Sidney Sussex college. When did it close?

Villages too have lost their locals. My memory of the Chequers in Stretham is of playing darts – something else I was no good at. The dart hit the light over the board and put it out. End of game. The next player tried to put it back on again, which fused the entire pub. End of going to that pub!

Of course the pubs are one thing, their clientele another. The late Harold Painter, from Sutton, used to collect masses of village memorabilia and compiled fascinating notebooks of sketches and rhymes. [SKETCHES ENCLOSED AND ON DISK] One of these was :

“I remember, I remember
The noses long and red
That hung o’er glasses tall
When day had long since sped:
The tables ringed with beer spilt,
The settles, where still they set.
The gossip of that yesteryear
Rings in my ear yet”

If it rings in yours too let me know. It’s not that long since the old men would gather in our village local, when they had their own seat and woe behold anybody who inadvertently sat in it. They’ve gone now, and we miss them – as is the spittoon which they invariably hit (or most of the time anyway)

Thank you to those who confirmed that the picture of a couple of weeks ago was indeed of Barton Road. Mrs B. Pratt from Trumpington tells me that on the left of the picture there was a large house, since demolished, which had a basement. She worked there from 1936-37 for Lady Macintosh and her daughter. At one time there was a small house adjoining the Red Bull.

Michael Payne from Cambridge has sent me an extract from his autograph book which contains a verse from teacher A.F. Leach. It is entitled “Crying for the Moon” and starts:

“I’d like John Dunn to get his sums all right,
And Michael Payne to know what’s nine times three
And Malcolm Gill not to be such a blight;
And Maurice Frost to know his A.B.C.”

There is one name at least that should be familiar to us all for Malcolm Gill went on to become Chief Cashier at the Bank of England and it was his signature on the old £1 and £5 notes.

PICTURE SCANNED ON DISK

Mrs P. Konsiewicz of Haslingfield has lent me a picture that may stimulate a few memories. It was taken on a staff outing from the Laurie and McConnell store in Fitzroy Street, Cambridge in the early 1950s. Two names to start you off: the third lady from the left is Daphne Dearsley and the fourth Shirley Conner (or O’Conner). If you’re having difficulties remembering Lauries I include a picture of Fitzroy Street

OTHER PICTURES – SEE SEPARATE NOTES

NB : TEXT ON DISK MAY BE DIFFERENT FROM THIS PRINT-OUT

MEMORIES 17th September 1999, by Mike Petty

I was invited the other the day to give some advice to a lady engaged in that awful job of having to clear a house, full of books. One item which caught my eye was a copy of the University's "Varsity Handbook" for 1957-58. So just how were the new undergraduates being prepared for their big adventure of Cambridge life, 40 years ago.

The freshman would be one of some 8,000 undergraduates arriving in the city. He would find awaiting him either a gyp or bedder who "will have cleaned the rooms of many generations of undergraduates, and will have no illusions about them. He can be a very great help to you in many ways. The small tip that you are expected to give him at the end of each term does not indicate that you are the victim of a protection racket. It is just part of his regular wages".

Many students would find themselves living in lodgings. Here the Varsity guide is less than flattering: "It would be pleasant to say that the traditional tyrannous landlady is a mythical figure, but the fact is she does exist. Most landladies are normal people and some are exceptionally kind but a few gorgons remain. Tough, poker-faced and filled with strange obsessions they can make your life miserable". Students were encouraged to develop "a reasonable aloofness, and a brisk way of talking" which would engender a certain amount of respect. (Were you a 'gorgon' and did you have cause to be. What was the reality of being a college landlady in those days?)

College porters were another group it would pay students to cultivate for they could be of great assistance on many points of information and University etiquette. This would include a knowledge of University regulations, such as not using a radio or gramophone on the river or in any other public place, without proctorial permission, and of course the rules over gowns. These had to be worn after dusk, or when in the University Library, in church or the Senate House. They must be worn "in decent order and in the proper manner" and not over a sweater, or by ladies in trousers. There is no mention of students "climbing in" after returning back to college too late, or had the practice of locking the main college gates ended by then? Certainly Mr T. Miller from Orwell has shown me a photograph of himself and friends, bedecked in their gowns, climbing into Peterhouse in 1943 – a picture taken to send to Russia, though why they would want such an image of Cambridge during the dark days of the War I cannot imagine.

So what was the fashion in 1957. The customary outfit for everyday wear was the sports jacket together with grey flannel or cavalry twill trousers. For relaxed occasions the coloured ski-sweater and the silk cravat were most popular. For social functions you needed a smart lounge suit – along with a good selection of not too gaudy ties. A dinner jacket would be a necessity – although it could be hired for £1.2.6 a day from Jack Carter of Portugal Place, or bought second hand from Normal Bradley, Bridge Street.

Accessories included an umbrella, "which adds character to your appearance when neatly rolled", a duffel coat was indispensable for winter and the normal custom was to complete the disguise with a college or boat club scarf. That left just one more essential – a cap, which would give an added touch of affluence. Select a tweed cap as opposed to a corduroy one, but remember not to wear it with a gown. Even on a cold winter night you were only allowed to warm your head with a mortarboard, as this was the only legal headwear with a gown.

By 1960 Cambridge tailors were bemoaning the changing face of undergraduate fashion, now that 80 per cent of undergraduates were on a grant and boaters and blazers no longer the accepted fashion. The trend to more casual wear, sloppy-joes and 17 inch trouser bottoms was hitting their trade. Cambridge's oldest bespoke tailor, Pratt, Manning & co. closed in 1962 lamenting how: "Thirty years ago students were proud of their dress and bought four suits at a time. Now they shuffle around in jeans and sweaters and do not have two halfpennies to rub together"

The Varsity Handbook advice to women in 1957 was: “the men will outnumber you by ten to one. So what are you going to do about it. You can sit on your laurels and wait for the flies to swarm around the honey pot. You don’t have to dress as if you were a Vogue model ... but beware! Most Cambridge men are explorers at heart. The excavator is the man who believes the real you is only to be found under all those layers of (we hope) attractive clothing”. I am not sure such comments would be encouraged today, nor that female students would compete for the title of University Rag Queen in quite the same way some of them did ten years later in 1967

So what was the social scene of the late 1950s. “Parties are very popular in Cambridge, but most of them are unfortunately very dull. The day of the small dinner party ended when grants made their appearance. You should try and give the odd party, for the mean man is soon shunned. A ‘Please bring a bottle and a partner’ will not cost you very much and one party a year is plenty”

The Varsity Handbook offered one final tip to the newcomer: “Don’t be too abashed at the great men who are at the top when you arrive. In three year’s time they will be Joe and Alf to you, so why not now? All you need is a little self-confidence. But don’t be bumptious. You may get on, but you won’t be popular”

There are surprisingly few pictures of 1950’s student life but I feature a selection from a year or two later

READERS WRITE

Ann Brown, nee Wilkins, of Histon has contacted me to say that she and her friend Betty Dale used to perform with Colin Fleming in the Marfly Concert Party. Her mother made their costumes out of blackout material, edged with orange binding.

Mrs O. Osborne from Comberton writes to say my picture of Coronation Street (Memories 2nd September) reminds her of when her parents kept the Hare and Hounds public house on Newmarket Road between 1932 and 1934. “Father used to write the drayman’s order on Sundays and often as juniors we walked to Lacons Brewery in Coronation Street to post the order in the letter box, then straight home again. This errand would surely be out of the question for young children today, with the horrendous traffic and modern day hazards. Thank you for these memory reminders

Brendan Wyndham or Burwell spent part of his youth touring Cambridge looking for public houses, which he plotted on a map, remembering also the various ales they stocked. Mr A. Driver of Cambridge has sent an impressive list of pubs that he remembers having closed since the last war. These include the Still and Sugarloaf on Market Hill, the Duke of Cambridge in Short Street, the Air Port Hotel on Newmarket Road and a pub in James Street, the name of which has slipped his memory. He has sharper memories of a Wellington bomber crashing on Histon Road early in the war. It smashed into two houses belonging to a Mr Ison and the Misses Allen who kept a sweetshop with its tail resting on houses on the other side of the road. Does this jog memories with anybody else?

MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPH

Some years ago I came across this photograph in the News files, but failed to note down where or when it had been taken. The car in the distance carries L plates and had the number BE 28. Can anybody identify it please

SCANS :

photo of 3 Cambridge undergraduates from Varsity Handbook 1957-58
caricature of the modern undergraduate from a Co-op advert 1957
line of houses in street – mystery picture

OTHER PICS : see separate notes – include contestants at the Cambridge University Rag Queen competition, 1967

Memories, 25th September 1999, by Mike Petty

Mrs P. Konsiewicz of Haslingfield has lent me a picture that may stimulate a few memories. It was taken on a staff outing from the Laurie and McConnell store in Fitzroy Street, Cambridge in the early 1950s. Two names to start you off: the third lady from the left is Daphne Dearsley and the fourth Shirley Conner (or O'Conner).

If you're having difficulties remembering Lauries I include a picture of Fitzroy Street which will locate it for you - next to Peaks the furnishers near the corner with Fair street.

The shop first opened about 1883 but in 1903 suffered a disastrous fire. Fire fighters rushed to the scene but had no fire engine they could bring - just six hose reel carts stationed at various parts of the town. With no pumping equipment they relied entirely on the poor mains water pressure and quite expected the whole of Fitzroy Street to be devastated. They considered wiring to London for an engine to be sent up by a special train but felt this would have taken too long.

In the event the street was saved though the shop was just a mass of blackened ruins. But Mr McConnell was not one to accept defeat. He moved some of the salvaged stock to the garden of the house in which he was lodging, opened a temporary shop in Fair Street, accepted an insurance settlement of £22,650 and set to work constructing a new building.

The new premises featured a little bandstand from which the Cambridge Town Band used to play to entertain Saturday shoppers, while teas were served in a roof garden. For a while the Police Band performed but their woodwind instruments could not be heard in the street below.

Throughout the century the firm expanded until it occupied much of that side of the street. In 1950 a planning report suggested the Fitzroy street area would be a valuable relief for shopping pressure in the historic centre. The debate dragged on for over 25 years blighting other developments. In 1977 Laurie & McConnell announced their closure, blaming planning indecision.

Even before that, Fitzroy street was an area which had seen considerable change as Sara Payne found when she visited it for her wonderful "Down your street" articles in the Cambridge Weekly News in September 1981 - can it really be 18 years ago!

One of the characters she interviewed then, and somebody I had the privilege of chatting to myself, was Percy Moon, whose father used to keep a draper's shop in the street. He used to tell me that it was a very astronomical area since another trader was a Mr Starr. Moon and star, people would say, where's the sun? I'm the son, said Percy, because my dad keeps the shop.

He also recalled some most important local traders, Norman Bradley and Frederick Morley, two pawnbrokers. The women used to go into Morley's on a Saturday to get the suits out so that their husbands could go to church on a Sunday morning. The manager, C.J. Fordham recalled in 1964 how "Monday morning used to be very busy and we often had queues waiting outside to put their Sunday clothes in pawn for another week"

Richard Benstead of Ely recalls another local trader, Frank Evans, who used to have a tailor's shop at 6 Fitzroy Street. He writes: "Frank was a countryman at heart and would set out in a pony and trap to offer tailoring services to farmers and villagers around the town. Being near to Jesus College, a certain amount of University tailoring was also undertaken. Most of the work was not done at the shop as it was very small inside, just sufficient for one man to work sitting on the back room bench, under the glass skylight. The rest of the work was sent to outworkers. I actually still have my old college blazer, made by him and the badge embroidered by my mother on the pocket"

Somehow Sunday best clothes is not something usually remembered in connection with the area of Fitzroy street nearer East Road, which was hit particularly badly by the planning indecision that surrounded the development of the Grafton Centre.

Pictures in the News library show run-down shops and houses in the 1960s & Percy North, who you may remember as a chiropodist next to the Festival Theatre on Newmarket Road, took many photographs of the area in the 1950s which are now in the Cambridgeshire Collection. But none of them tell us much about the people who lived there - was it a pleasant place to live, or were folk happier in new homes on the new Arbury Estate.

If you knew the area before all the redevelopment, or remember other local shops, please drop me a line at the News. And if you have pictures to jog post-war memories I'd love to see them.

R.H. Oakman of Cambridge is the first to recognise my mystery picture of last week. It was of Brandon Place, taken from the City Road end. The left hand side shows the back entrances to houses in John Street and is the same today but the houses on the right have long since gone and been replaced by Brandon Court, a sheltered home complex. Thank you.

I have dug out another unlabelled picture from the News files. I think it's somewhere in the Fitzroy Street, Burleigh street area, but do you recognise your backway or the tall building in the background please

Keith Ward from Canada is trying to contact some old boys from the Central School for Boys. Some of the teachers that come to his mind are Jock Livingstone, Dinger Bell, Taffy Evans, Dick Ansley, Buster Brown, Ted Edser, Percy Franklin and a French Teacher by the name of Parker - he's forgotten the first name - perhaps excusable since he's thinking back to 1945. If you remember Keith & have E-mail you can contact him at kward@netcom.ca or otherwise write to me at the News

More memories of pubs have come streaming in. Olive Osborne from Comberton recalls some others which have closed, including The Tiger & Granville Arms on East Road, the Old Abbey in Beche Road & The Rabbit in Gold Street, while Bob Nicholas of Milton Road, Cambridge sends a list of over 60 that he recalls.

Brian Poulter has lived in Cambridge for over 60 years and remembers how before the last war the family used to walk out to the Plough and Harrow on Madingley Road on Sunday evenings and eat in its gardens. He recalls the Granta on Newnham Road and the Bun Shop on St Andrew's Hill which was a favourite watering place for himself and fellow soccer

players in the 1950s and 60s. At the time there were two bars and it was very popular with both town and gown.

Another correspondent recalls that Walter "Wally" Hall was 'mine host' of the Fitzroy Arms in Fitzroy Street, where the staff of Boots, just opposite, used to gather each Christmas Eve for a seasonal toast. "Happy memories of that area and its residents will always remain" for my shy reader, who omits to sign the letter. Nelly and Paddy Munnelly were the final landlords of the Tiger in East Road, until it closed in October 1972. They then went on to celebrate 30 years in the licensed trade, and send a list of other good pubs they remember

Mrs P. Anderson of Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge has a favourite story of the landlord of "The Angel" in Market Street. She writes: "Being situated where it was, it was popular with students, and one day, in the 1930's there was a college rugby team in there doing what rugby teams usually do when they are celebrating. As they left one of the students said to the landlord 'What do you do we we aren't here?' 'That's easy son,' the landlord is reputed to have replied, 'We just put away the half pint glasses

Peter Hall recalls his grandparents, Rue and Kate Elsdon who took over the tenancy of The Fitzroy Arms in Fitzroy Street in 1914 and together with his parents ran it until 1954. The pub was quite a social centre in its day being the headquarters for The Albion Angling Society, The Preservation Society, a Buff Lodge, Foresters lodge, Gogs Ragle Club etc. How many remember the Albion kids annual fishing matches when seemingly millions of snotty nosed kids were taken off for a day by the river somewhere with the prize giving usually held on Parker's Piece

Memories of The Eagle come from Mrs J. Pryme of Willingham. She recalls: "In the 1950s by mother and father, Frank and Phyllis Lawrence worked for Corpus Christi college. Ted Gent was the landlord of the Eagle and on Christmas Day he would open the pub in the morning and close for the rest of the day. We would be invited to the Eagle big room upstairs for a big Christmas party. At the bottom of Eagle Yard was a printing press where my dad printed the late football results for the Evening Standard

PICTURE :

SCANS : LAURIE & McCONNAL staff outing

BACK GARDENS OF HOUSES SOMEWHERE AROUND FITZROY ST - BURLEIGH STREET - CAN ANYBODY PLACE IT PLEASE

OTHER PICS ENCLOSED, WITH CAPTIONS

MEMORIES, 1st October 1999, by Mike Petty

NB THIS PRINT OUT MAY DIFFER FROM TEXT ON DISK

In April 1963 the News went "Down your street" along Histon Road. Reporter Erica Dimock found a street where residents were gradually witnessing the countryside slipping away from their doorsteps. The latest development was the new McManus Estate where it was planned to build 500 flats, houses and bungalows as demand arises. On the other side of the road people were still living in prefabricated houses and seemed very content with the "temporary" homes erected as an emergency measure during the war.

Much of the road still had a semi-rural aspect with two nurseries, the Clive Vale run by the Dear family and Scotsdale Nurseries where they specialised in geraniums & bedding plants.

Nearby was the Scotsdale Laundry where the washing used to be done by hand and hung up on ropes to dry, although now roller mangles, coppers and flat irons had been replaced by electrical machines of every type. Mr R. Turvill, its director was confident that trade would continue to boom, despite washing machines now being within the budget of most households and laundrettes springing up on every corner – besides which laundries eliminated the gruelling task of ironing. But just down the road was the Midland Co-operative Laundry, who operated a “bagwash” service where customers could send their sheets, towels and other articles to be washed and collect them clear and dry, but unironed.

The oldest florist shop in the road was operated by Ernie Phillips, while others might recall Clark’s newspaper shop, W. Welch butchers and Yallop’s fish shop, whilst Ison’s corn merchant’s business was the biggest distributor of its kind in Cambridge, employing over 40 people

But amongst all the details recorded, nobody mentioned the wartime incident recalled by Mr A Driver of Cambridge when a Wellington bomber crashed on the road

This almost forgotten incident sparked memories for Les Ray of Histon. He writes: “I lived on one of the houses opposite Mr Ison’s and apparently the crew abandoned the aircraft over Newmarket Heath after dropping its bombs over Germany, but still with incendiaries on board. The plane carried on to take the chimneys from my parents’ house and then to take the roof off Mr Ison’s houses and the two Misses Allen next door, who were unfortunately killed. The plane ended up on a tennis court belonging to Mr Freeman who owned a plumbing business”

Mrs Rosemary Kunish of Dry Drayton was actually involved in the incident, as she relates. “There were four terraced houses. My late father and mother, Mr & Mrs Ison, with myself, were in the first house, then the Misses Allen, then Mr & Mrs Waldock, & I cannot remember who lived in the fourth house. As a result of the crash there was someone killed in each of the houses except for ours. One of the Wellington engines ended up on the tennis court at the rear of the houses.

“The crash happened at night, we were all in bed & in my family house my father had to climb over heaps of debris, first carrying my mother downstairs & then returning to rescue me from under a pile of bricks. So the Ison family were lucky.”

“The following day the crew of the aircraft, who had parachuted out, were brought to view the wreckage. Although the top half of each house, together with the roofs, all disintegrated into rubble, the lower parts of the houses remained. They were eventually repaired and are still in use today.

Such horrific incidents are part of the pitfalls of war, but does anybody remember a potentially much more serious incident which occurred just 50 years ago – the crash of a US Atom bomber.

The Cambridge Independent Press of 14th October 1949 reported how Newmarket and surrounding districts were shaken by an enormous explosion when a giant six-engines American B50 stratobomber, the latest type of U.S. bomber still on the secret list, crashed at Isleham. The plane was carrying a load of 12 live 500-lb bombs. It made a crater 30 feet by 20 feet and 10 feet deep. Wreckage was scattered about the stubble field on Beck Road, where the crash occurred. Neighbouring farm buildings and stacks were set alight and blazed for hours afterwards. Houses had their windows & ceilings blown in and the walls of the village school were cracked.

Or perhaps you recall another incident at Ely in August 1951 when a Harvard training plane crashed on St Mary's street, coming to rest in the showroom of Messrs T.H. Nice & co. One member of the crew was killed, along with a passing lorry driver whose cab was ripped from his lorry by the plane.

[ONLY USE IF WE FEATURE THE PICTURE Such tragedies highlight the dangers faced by servicemen in war or peace and it is appropriate that Derrick Mallows of Lt Eversden should this week have sent me a picture of a war memorial "somewhere in England". Does anybody recognise it.]

On a much lighter, flying note, Anne Brown (nee Wilkins) has now found her photo of the Marfly Concert Party, taken in 1944. They entertained thousands of British & Allied troops at various camps and aerodromes. Amongst the faces you might recognise are Arthur Miller standing tall at the back and next to him Colin Fleming. Anne is in the centre of the middle row wearing a 'military' top as is her friend Betty Dale (now Milnes) in the front. Also there are Hazel Hargreaves, Irene Watts, Cynthia Cockerton and Beryl Turkentine. Anne and Betty have had many happy times reminiscing about the picture and would be delighted to hear from anybody else. I'll pass on letters.

Doris Kriesi of Cambridge has been scouring her photo album since the picture of Brandon Place appeared in Memories a couple of weeks ago. She has sent a snap of her grandmother, Martha Bonnett, standing outside her house in that street. "I and my two bothers were always happy going to see granny Bonnett", she recalls. "She was left a widow with three girls and a boy, my mother, the oldest was only 10; granny died in her 93rd year at the same house"

ILLUSTRATIONS

Histon road, Cambridge in 1960s

HEADLINES of the Isleham bomber crash, CIP 14 October 1949 & of Ely plane crash, 1951
—copied by Photographic from Cambridgeshire Collection

Marfly concert party 1944 —SCAN ON DISK

Village war memorial – where is it? – SCAN ON DISK

Memories, by Mike Petty 7th October 1999, by Mike Petty

The news that the name of Eaden Lilley is set to return to the Cambridge shopping scene with a new food hall in Sussex street, will delight those who lament the loss of old names and services. Their return is not unprecedented for the name that once dominated the grocery trade in Trinity street – that of Matthews, which closed in 1964, is now to be found gracing a coffee stall on Cambridge market. This in turn is just yards away from where the aroma of freshly ground coffee used to waft from the premises of Hallack and Bond, on the corner of Petty Cury – and just around the corner was Jo Lyons teahouse, where Central Library staff used to take their breaks in the 1960s (the library staff-room being reserved for the Admin staff). Then when a late-night shift beckoned (and the library opened until 9pm in those days) there was the Civic Restaurant for a hot meal to sustain the final hours.

So many names have disappeared from central Cambridge over the last few decades. Older readers may remember Coad's drapers and tailors in Sidney street, while Bodger's the tailors and Gallyon's gun shop which closed in 1982 after 198 years are more recent.

But change has always continued and often been lamented. When George Stace closed in Petty Cury in 1951 people lamented the closing of yet one more old established firm which had filled a special place in the local fashion scene for many years, its place was taken by a big, modern multiple tailoring store. Another tailor, Suttle, closed in 1958.

More tailors gave up in the “swinging 60’s” as student fashions changed, but new shops came in. Did you shop at Pussy Cat Boutique or the Alley, Cambridge’s answer to Carnaby street. Names that disappeared included Weatherheads stationers on Market Hill, taken over by W.H. Smith and Macintosh ironmongers just along the street. But there was a new addition to the shopping scene when Tesco opened in St Andrew’s street in 1964 – does anybody have memories of shopping at Tesco I wonder (they were there till 1983).

The ‘70s brought traffic restrictions in the city centre and the start of superstores with the Co-op’s Beehive designed as a discount warehouse for people wishing to purchase in bulk, but then opened to the public. Marshall’s applied for an out-of-town complex on Newmarket Road, Tesco tried for another in Milton Road – unsuccessfully – but the Government overruled local planners to allow Sainsbury to open in Coldham’s Lane. Mitcham’s on Chesterton Road and Laurie’s in Fitzroy street closed, but the opening of Lion Yard was followed by shop rent rises which were unaffordable by small local businesses as the multiples moved in. Now the old Lion Yard is once more wreathed in scaffolding as redevelopment takes place – will we look back in nostalgia in years to come?

Throughout the 1980s the “3 R’s” – rents, rates and recession – contributed to the demise of Wards cycles and electrical goods, Bacon & Ora tobacconists, F.O. Sennitt on Peas Hill, and specialists such as Grays bookbinders in Green Street & Pigotts tools in Sussex Street, while Barrett’s china shop moved out of the city. Meanwhile the Grafton centre with its big-name stores opened in 1984

In more recent years name such as Joshua Taylor and Eaden Lilley have gone – but now one at least has come back. What shops would you wish to see reinstated. But remember that shopping used to be very different not that long ago. People have mentioned queuing at Sainsbury’s old shop in Sidney street, waiting for the assistant to bring goods to the counter, then queuing to pay at the desk; and although waiting for your change as it swished through the air on those contraptions on wires was something to be remembered, surely it was much less convenient than today?

Mr H.J. Midge of Cambridge has written with his own shopping memories in the Fitzroy street area from the 1930s. He remembers J.A. Sturton, where the front part of the ground floor was a retail grocery and hardware shop, whilst the back and two upper floors operated as a wholesale business. Then there was Lawrence’s bread and cake shop & Freddy Hopkins Fish & Chips. Nearby was Suttle’s confectionery and tobacco and on the corner of City Road W. Thompson the furnishers.

B.D. Thompson recalls Pages the bakers, Pearkes the grocery store, Taylor the chemist, Mrs Tarrant’s sweet shop, the International Stores and Home and Colonial – “gosh didn’t we have a choice of food shops?” he remarks.

But the main point of Mr Thompson’s letter was to share his memories of old schoolmasters at the Central School in response to the appeal from Keith Ward of Canada. He recalls Rowland Parker who taught French and wrote two books on the history of Foxton, Jock Livingstone had served with the Royal Marines during the Great War, Dick Annely taught geography – “one day he decided to give us a rest from topography by playing classical music on a gramophone”. Taffy Evans taught woodwork, Dinger Bell music and sport – “a dapper little man, he drove a super sports car, while Buster Brown was loved and admired by all who knew him – but he would keep brushing my unruly locks with a file brush”. H.F. King – (who many will remember as the first head of biology at the Grammar School) – tells me that several of the teachers moved to the new Grammar School in Queen Edith’s Way. Jack Cornwell of Birdwood Road, Cambridge was at the Central between 1943 & 1949 and played football and cricket for the

school. He too remembers the Burleigh street area as his father ran a second hand furniture shop there and was a well-known local character.

Trevor Gill from Burwell attended the Central School between 1947 and 1951. He has sent me a photograph of a group of footballers in training on the Cambridge City ground off Milton Road. Trevor is in the front of the left hand line, behind him is Ron Gibbons and behind him Michael Rice. They all played for the Central School and the other two went on to play for Cambridge schoolboys and St Andrew's Football Club in its early days. On the right with the leather football is Spud Driver who also played for the Cambridge School boys. Do you recognise anybody else

MYSTERY PICTURE – ONLY USE TEXT IF WE USE PICTURE

An older generation of young sportsmen features in a photo lent by Jim Laughton of Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge. It shows the sporting prowess of the Albert Institute, featuring their boat that, according to one of the shields, was head of the river from 1891-97. The Institute were also cross country champions according to another shield, but there are also boxing gloves and cricket kit on display. The group are posed outside the half-opened door of Kerridge the builder. It may be too far back for anybody to remember, but does anything ring any bells?

Last week's Millennium Memories picture shows a queue for potatoes on outside S. Green's shop on Mill Road during the Great War, when food rationing was intense. The potential danger of long queues caused margarine to be removed from central shops and distributed from the Corn Exchange

PICTURES ON DISK : SCHOOLBOY FOOTBALLERS August 1952 ALBERT INSTITUTE SPORTSMEN

MEMORIES, 14th October 1999, by Mike Petty

Twenty five years ago, in October 1974, the debate was opening on the future of the Cambridge Corn Exchange with proposals unveiled to turn it into a concert hall. It would, it was said, be contentious – but then much associated with the building has prompted controversy

Right at the start there were what is recorded as the Death Riots. In November 1875 John death, Mayor of Cambridge, was also owner of a livery stable. As he drove in his robes and chain to open the new Corn Exchange various undergraduates called out "Whoa Mayor" – but he carried on to do his civic duty.

Then two days later an inaugural concert was held, arranged by the Cambridge Musical Society. The building was packed, the reserved seats patronised by dignitaries and members of the University being separated from the promenade by a barricade. During the singing of the National Anthem certain undergraduates in the promenade began to yell and stamp. When the Mayor and Corporation attempted to reach their reserved seats they were jostled and had to force their way through.

Before long the concert was interrupted and twice the Mayor appealed to the undergraduates to keep order, but to no avail. Women fainted, children screamed and many of those standing rushed the barrier and pushed people out of their seats. Goaded to anger the Mayor sent for a body of police to keep order and seven arrests were made. This led the undergraduates to attempt to "rescue" their colleagues and some of the police were roughly handled. Under such circumstances the concert had to be abandoned.

The next day undergraduates burnt effigies of the Mayor, crying “Death! ... Death!” and after the arrested men were heavily fined a mob marched on the Mayor’s house, which stood on the site of the present Wesley church. Here police were able to prevent the house being broken into, though stones smashed the windows and the situation seemed out of control.

Then onto the scene strode “Black Morgan”, tutor of Jesus College, a popular figure in the University. As the crowds parted before him he climbed on a wall and addressed the crowds. “You young scoundrels, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves frightening a lot of old women out of their wits”. He told the multitude that he would be quite blind for five minutes, but no longer and during that period the crowd dispersed with three cheers for the Tutor of Jesus. No further action was taken by proctor or police.

Since its dramatic inauguration the Corn Exchange has echoed to tranquil dance music & the heady beat of pop bands; to the ping-pong of table tennis competitions, the rumble of roller-skating wheels and the patter of motor car salesmen. It was the place where the Hon C.S. Rolls first rode a motor cycle – before going on to found his car company. Winston Churchill addressed a meeting of undergraduates there in 1939 and I’m told the Home Guard’s rifles were assembled there at the start of the Second World War. It has been home to violence of a different sort – with boxing and wrestling tournaments, while drink has played its part through beer festivals. There have been dog shows, book shows, children’s entertainment and old people’s teas, twist and bingo sessions. For a while it was even used as a corn exchange, when farmers and merchants conducted their business, though this aspect of its life is surely all but forgotten – or do you remember it.

One man present through much of its varied career was Jonas Webb, whose statue used to dominate the hall in commemoration of his prowess as a breeder of sheep at Babraham. But in 1971 Jonas was taken away on the back of a lorry.

Throughout the 1970s the search was on for a source of funding to allow the transformation of the old building to be completed. Mayor Jack Warren started negotiations with millionaire recluse David Robinson, who having funded a new college, was now looking to make a contribution towards the city itself. But he found the Corn Exchange too ugly and the cost too high. Mecca became involved for a while, but things move at a leisurely pace in Cambridge and it was November 1986 before the hoped-for Concert Hall actually opened and the building itself started a new phase in its most varied career.

What are your memories of the Corn Exchange

READERS WRITE

Gilbert Crisp from Quy has identified one of the group on the Laurie’s outing as Billy Brigham. He also remembers how just before Christmas I featured a letter from Mr W. McClure of Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria who had discovered a century-old parchment conferring a coat of arms on one Fred Crisp. Mr McClure was trying to discover something about this gentleman with a view to returning this most important document to the family. Now thanks to News readers we have tracked down a relation, Andrew Forman, an architect in Skipton, who is the proud possessor of the certificate to add to his extensive research about his long-lost ancestor. I will pass his research notes to the Cambridgeshire Collection.

Two readers have mentioned the man who used to keep an eye on shopping bags in Drummer street. Graham Clarke says his name was Jim Wooders and he used to charge 6d to 1s. Graham remembers he had only one leg and thinks he was probably injured in the 1914-18 war. Reg Wood from Saffron Walden also remembers that across Christ’s Pieces there used to stand a

blind man who played a gramophone on top of a wooden box on which was written 'The public is my only support' –do you remember him?

John Furbank of Gt Shelford has supplied more details of the bomber that crashed on Histon Road, Cambridge on the night of 11-12th February 1941. The aircraft was a Vicars Wellington from 115 Squadron. It had taken off from RAF Marham on a mission to Bremen, Germany. The pilot, Pilot Officer Clarke, and his crew of four abandoned the aircraft in the vicinity of Cambridge. The squadron lost two other Wellingtons on the raid, one crashed attempting to land at RAF Finningley, Yorks and the other was abandoned over Saffron Walden. Mr D.C. Fordham writes to tell me he now lives in one of the Histon Road houses damaged that night, and lends me a picture of the famous Vicarage Terrace bombing.

Colin Webster of Wendens Ambo recalls an incident at a munitions site at Lord's Bridge. During the war it was used for bomb storage, including mustard gas. After the war one of the containers was being neutralised with petrol gas when it exploded. He thinks the date was about 1955

Mrs G. Buck from Blossom Street, Cambridge has sent me a cutting showing the last of the horse trams standing outside its depot in East Road in February 1914. The vehicle is virtually submerged by customers and besieged by crowds of onlookers. If it had attracted as many users normally then they would never have closed – for this was the last one. A reminder of the trams has been visible recently in Senate House Hill, Cambridge, for when the road works were in full flight it was still possible to see some of the old tram lines below the present road level

MYSTERY PICTURE – ONLY USE TEXT IF WE USE PICTURE

Jim Laughton of Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge has lent a photograph demonstrating the prowess of the Albert Institute, featuring their boat that, according to one of the shields, was head of the river from 1891-97. The Institute were also cross country champions according to another shield, but there are also boxing gloves and cricket kit on display The group are posed outside the half-opened door of Kerridge the builder. It may be too far back for anybody to remember, but does anything ring any bells?

MEMORIES, 22nd October 1999, by Mike Petty

This being Flood Awareness Week it seems appropriate to recall some of the occasions when homes and their contents have suffered the devastation and disruption of flooding.

Of all the post-war floods that of March 1947 must be the one most remembered, certainly I seem to spend most of my lecturing life on about it. Many have forgotten that this local devastation also hit Cambridge with the area around Mill Pool under water, people marooned in their houses and buses ploughing through flooded streets

Many remember the awful flooding of 1953 when a very high North Sea tide overwhelmed sea defences, causing great damage and loss of caravans, and more significantly loss of life, in the area around Kings Lynn and Hunstanton. Certainly I remember being told about it when our family went for our annual sea-side holidays over 40 years ago. In Cambridge the local Women's Voluntary Service were busy distributing clothing for victims and were visited by the Queen Mother. Were you there?

Riverside areas of Cambridge are vulnerable to flooding from the Cam, as in January 1959, but even streets far from the river, such as Campkin Road can find themselves under water, as on one memorable occasion in June 1970 when on “Monsoon Day” 2½ feet of water gushed into houses and was made worse when waves from passing traffic pushed water back into houses that had been baled out. But it was fun for some, as the News reported: “As parents brought out buckets and mops the children dived for water wings. Within minutes the road took on the appearance of a seaside carnival, except that it was in the centre of Cambridge’s biggest housing estate, 60 miles from the nearest beach. There was even surf and breakers and heavy lorries and buses barged their way through the swirling water”

Outside Cambridge in 1974 the Ouse was well over its banks at many points between Houghton and Huntingdon and the river came up to the front door of the Fish & Duck at Lt Thetford – one of the difficulties of building a pub beside the river. Next year it was Swavesey where some farming land was under water for six months. But it was May 1978 when after 24 hours of rain – the heaviest for ten years – areas alongside the Cam flooded, including the new Pye factory at Chesterton then due to be opened. Aerial pictures taken by the News show some of the extent of the inundation. There was more flooding at Ely and the banks of the Soham Lode leaked like a sieve – for it is only when the floods come that the state of the banks can be properly known.

The area was on the verge of a major flood alert in March 1980 & engineers kept a round-the-clock vigil; torrential rain in April 1981 saw the bank burst at Kimbolton with conditions on a par with those of 1947. By the end of the year the conditions were right again, with heavy rain coinciding with a thaw and the icing up of roadside culverts. There was a red alert in January 1988 on one of the worst nights of floods in 10 years and in January 1993 alerts on almost a daily basis as rainfall 40% above average was recorded, more followed in October. February 1995 saw vast sheets of water laying at St Ives which were very slow to drain away.

Throughout all this the various agencies responsible for flood protection have been active, strengthening banks, putting in new warning systems, learning the lessons

The flooding of April 1998 is too recent and its effects too painful to be looked back on with nostalgia. Placenames familiar in the annals of flooding were once more affected – Alconbury, Hemingford, Earith, St Ives. Since then more steps have been taken, more lessons learned – and this Flood Awareness Campaign introduced.

Amongst the analyses of the events of April 1998 is one produced by Cambridgeshire Constabulary in a “Blueprint flood special”. The comments of Inspector Steve Lodge seems to me to sum up the story of flooding. He wrote: “ ‘The environment agency says that these floods will be at least as bad as those of 1947’. Wow! That sounds serious. What were the floods of 1947 like then? If we could retrieve data from the 1947 floods then we would have something to work to. Data, what data? None had been preserved and no-one could remember what the floods were like. No-one from any of the emergency services knew anything about 1947, and strangely, neither did anyone from the Environment Agency. So we had to start from scratch.” He concludes “The main lesson gleaned from the event was the need to preserve records and provide guidelines for the next poor devils who are faced with the phrase, ‘The environment agency says these floods will be at least as bad as those of 1998’. Wow! That sounds serious. What were the 1998 floods like then?”

If you have memories of flooding that you can bear to share I should be pleased to hear them

My appeal for your shopping memories has kept the postman busy, thank you to everybody who has written.

Pride of place must go to Miss Daphne Foreman of Sturton street, Cambridge who writes: "In 1947 I worked for Denton-Smith, architects at 40 Regent street. The offices were over Dobby's gown shop. The shop was later taken over by Currys electrical.

On the left was Sanders' garden shop and coming down Regent street from the traffic lights was Singers Sewing machine shop, where I took home-made garments to have machine-stitched buttonholes. There was Adams and Dellar newsagents, with three high steps up to the door. The Eastern Counties Library housed a sub post-office, where we bought the office stamps, then came a chemists, then Sanders and Dobby's. Further down were Woodward's typewriter service, who shared a doorway with Smith's dry cleaners. Opposite were the Glengarry Hotel, Brown and Pain haberdashers, Alkit men's store and Moore's pianos.

Later I moved to Llandaff Chambers over Robinson's Garage. Next to the entrance to Downing college the first coffee bar in Cambridge opened, called Snax, and after an evening at the Regal we girls would go there for coffee and fancy cake and feel we had really been 'on the town'

Dress materials were still hard to get so when the Belfast Linen Co. had a consignment of printed curtain material in three shades - pink, blue or yellow, we all hurried down and bought lengths to make dirndl skirts. Further down Vogue was a store into which we could only gaze, but instead of having a sale they would down-price one garment in the window. I once bought a gorgeous rust-red coat for £3 and later found the label inside marked at £25 - a lot of money for a coat in those days.

Rose's Fashion Centre in Sussex Street sold attractive women's fashions at a reasonable price, which felt a lot 'different' from M&S yet were within the reach of young office workers.

I wonder if anyone else remembers the 'invisible mending' shop in Corn Exchange Street, where we took our precious nylons to be repaired, by a system of picking up the dropped stitches in 'ladders' and re-knitting them up?

I remember Coad's - an old-fashioned shop even then, but one could often get accessories there which you could not find elsewhere. And Miller's Music Shop with the lovely sloping glass front where I bought sheet music each week. It all seems another world now"

John Witt of Histon used to be a partner in Hobbs Sports Outfitters in Trinity street remembers the Whim across the street. "I had coffee there most mornings during 1949 until it closed down. Often there would be long queues outside the door, right round into Green Street. The owner, a Miss Thoinber, would have a Christmas party for the shop owners of Trinity and Green streets & one year, in the early 1970s, Thora Hird was at one of these parties. She was filming in Saffron Walden with Marlon Brando in "The Night Comers" and found time to walk round and talk to all the guests". (Have you memories of meeting celebrities locally - or of filming in your area).

John used to purchase sale items from Shepherd's, but was not in the picture I featured. However Jeanne Barker of Hardwick was: "I had quite a shock when I opened the CEN and saw myself in the queue at Shepherd's sale in 1964, and still have the sheepskin coat which I was wearing. I recognise several of the 'regulars' who came to the sale each year but unfortunately can only see the back of my husband's head. I expect he was keeping well out of the way as he was skiving off work! Having been born in Green street (& my late husband Ray in Mill Lane) I am very interested in all your memories of Cambridge and can talk about them for hours"

The picture of Shepherd's sale, together with others featured today and over 300 more from the News' photo files appear in my new "Memory Lane, Cambridge" book, which is due to be received from Breedon Books any day and will be in the shops very soon at £14.99 [OR ARE WE OFFERING A READER PROMOTION?] There's a lunch & lecture at Gresham's (next to the YMCA), Gonville Place, on Thursday 28th October 12.15 pm (phone Cambridge 354012) & a presentation at Waterstone's in Sidney Street at 6.30 on Wednesday 17th November - so come along if you can

I do not however include this picture of an eminent group of "Old Boys" of the Central School, since Sally Whyte of Babraham has just lent me it. It was taken by the News in March 1956 at an Old Boys' dinner and shows Mess Fardell, Ray, Livingstone, Williamson, Henn, McFarlane Grieve, Bowman, Cogman and her father Cyril Moore, who organised the annual dinner dance at the Dorothy Ballroom. Through most of the 1950s Sally lived above Moore's the tobacconists, her grandfather's shop, at 50 Sidney Street. It was a lively meeting place during their breaks for many of the people who worked in nearby shops (Johnson's the tailors and Stockbridge's antiques on either side, Bodgers and the Gas Company alongside them). Employees of larger businesses such as King & Harper's garage in Jesus Lane were also regular customers, as well as policemen taking a quick break from point duty at the Market street junction who could be found drinking tea at the back of the shop. Mr Matthews ran a men's hairdressers on the ground floor at the back of the building, and for some years there was a ladies hairdressers on the first floor which was run by a Mrs Marjorie Womack. My family lived on the second and third floors, along with a resident ghost! (Have you encountered local ghosts - memories please)

More Central School memories have come from Thomas Taylor of Whittlesford who remembers staff and some of his class mates from the early 1930s. He still has all his terminal end of term and year reports together with the copper bowls and pots made in Mr Barnet's metalwork classes. Another treasure is a personally written guide book to the school camp at Looe in 1931 and 1933 which was produced by Mr G. Martin, the headmaster

A somewhat unusual plea has arrived from Mrs Beryl Johnson of Cherryhinton Road: "I have in my possession a tin nearly full of Wellington knife polish, which we cleaned and sharpened the old steel knives on. Knowing the original firm will be long gone would it be worth trying to trace them to see if any one is interested?" Can anyone help

Bonfire Night will soon be upon us, with all its organised firework displays. But do you remember when Cambridge was a place to avoid on November 5th, students forbidden to go into the centre, and the armed forces banned from the town. And how did you celebrate in your family or village. Does anybody have snaps?

MEMORIES, 29th October 1999, by Mike Petty

Recent correspondents to the News have bemoaned the number of abandoned cars littering the streets of Cambridge, though pictures in the News files indicate that such wrecks were also around in the 1960s.

Rodney Dale recalls how 55 years ago such old vehicles could be recycled. He writes: "We lived on Chesterton road, Cambridge, opposite Hallen's showroom on the corner of Hawthorn Way. One day in 1944 father discovered a chassis in the show room, a Bentley chassis. Although it had no body, petrol was unobtainable, and he didn't know how to drive it, Father forked out £125 and the chassis was pushed round into our garage. Needing a body where better to go than Les Rich's yard in Coldham's Lane. Father and fellow Addenbrooke's porter Harry Rooke went along to do a bit of measuring and came back with the news that a 1923 Sunbeam tourer body (£5) would fit the chassis - with a bit of work".

The work involved a considerable amount of measuring, adjusting and improvisation, eventually it was ready. "Petrol was virtually unobtainable, but you could get lighter-fuel if you tried hard and we were able to procure a box of those squidgy capsules of Ronson lighter fluid. Laboriously we squirted the lighter-fluid into the Autovac; Bunty Smith wound the handle; the engine started instantly. He sprang round into the driver's seat and depressed the clutch - it made a noise like a tiger. Into reverse, and the car leapt backwards into The Lane and stopped. It had run out of fuel. Father climbed on to his tricycle and pedalled off in such of more lighter-fuel. He returned bearing two 1/6 bottles of Ronson and we carefully poured them in. Bunty started the engine again; not wanting to risk running out of fuel during a trip to the end of the Lane and back, he drove back into the garage, and that was that"

But in those days you did not need petrol to operate motors. Charles Silverman senior is used to recycling office furniture from his base in Fen Road, Chesterton, but now seeks your help. In 1958 he was responsible for cutting up the sad remains of what had been one of the proudest and best vehicles available – a “Super Sentinel Wagon”. Described at the time as ‘a fire-eating gargantuan of a bygone age’ wagon no V.E. 181 had been acquired by the Cambridge Gasworks in 1928 and for over 30 years was used for carrying coal from the Coldham’s Lane sidings to the Gas Works.

Then it was something special – a steam wagon. With its glowing fire underneath the driver’s cab and the funnel above belching clouds of steam and smoke the Sentinel made a most impressive sight. It would require 150 per inch steam pressure in the boiler before the engine could move at the correct speed, but once rolling could be handled by only one man. That man however had to be fully trained in its operation and the first men to drive it had to go on a four-day instruction course organised by the makers so that they were well-versed in the handling of the monster’s controls and the vagaries of its diet – a massive demand for coke, two cwt of which remained in its boiler when Mr Silverman started to cut it open.

There used to be two such vehicles at the Gas works and one carried on for a while. But few would mourn its passing for at its best the Sentinel was not much of a charmer – but now the search is on for a photograph of it. One appeared in the CDN in March 1956, do you have a print. Meanwhile I enclose a snap of it from an earlier period.

Similar vehicles seem to have been used on the roads. In January 1924 the News reported how a steam wagon belonging to a Birkenhead haulage contractor was travelling from Cambridge to Chatteris with a trailer attached. The driver left Cambridge about 7.45 pm and intended to get there some time in the morning. On the way he stopped to put water into the engine from a pond. The engine was in a bad state on account of their having had to use dirty ditch water, and it would not travel at more than three or four miles an hour. It was run into by a motorcycle, with tragic results for the rider – perhaps he had not seen the steam belching monster. Earlier in 1922 Lynn Road Ely was the scene of another accident when a Ford car collided with a steam lorry, with predictable results : motor wheel spokes and pieces of lamp glass and rubber from an inner tube which was burst littered in profusion about the road. The near side front wheel of the lorry crashed almost broad side on into the motor's off-side front wheel which it splintered beyond repair. So badly wrecked was the front of the car that it took mechanics about two hours to lift it sufficiently to get it away.

On a happier steam-powered note I reported a story in “Looking Back” from August 1949 of how much amusement had been caused at a scramble organised at Old Bank, Littleport, by a vintage 25-year old Scott motorcycle which careered round the course with large volumes of steam issuing from its radiator. Now its rider of 50 years ago, Mr J.H. Diver of Impington, has written to tell me he still rides such a machine!

Do you have memories of steam-powered transport?

READERS WRITE

Shirley Dodson of Swavesey writes. “Your Memories article about Cambridge shops, particularly the Alley reminded me that I still have two dresses bought from there, as well as my first long dress which I bought from Vogue to attend the ‘Firemans Ball’ held at the Dorothy in the late 1960s. Shopping at Vogue was a very different experience from the Alley. I believe it was run by the Harris family who were also connected to Modiste in St Andrew’s street. I also have a long pink dress which I bought from Wallis when it was opposite Marks and Spencer

Mrs O. Osborne of Comberton is also prompted to reach for her pen once more. “I well remember Jim Wooders who looked after bags at Drummer street. It was said he was a London orphan. Also I remember the blind gramophone man, his name was George Pope from Staffordshire street and Bowry O’Dell with his home made chicken coop on pram wheels, or similar, from which a customer could purchase a freshly-killed chicken for dinner. There was a quaint old man with a long brown coat who regularly walked along Newmarket road carrying lengthwise a very long pole. He never spoke, they say he lost his money at Newmarket horse racing”.

H.J. Midge of Lichfield Road, Cambridge, has an answer: “Some little while back you conjectured as to whether Saffron Walden Lillies football club had any connection with eaden Lilley’s shop in the town. In Fact I think you will find that, as they played in a white strip they called themselves the Saffron Walden Lilywhites which eventually got shortened to “Lillies”

Do you remember Auntie Jean and Uncle Dennis, the childrens’ entertainers who would organise games on the beach at Hunstanton in the mornings and shows in The Lounge – the stage covered but the auditorium open – in the afternoons. “Uncle” Dennis Collins has contacted me in connection with the aftermath of the terrible 1953 coastal floods to say that they organised a show in Cambridge Corn Exchange to raise money for the flood relief fund. 1,200 people packed in, at 6d. a go, and raised the princely sum of £34. Dennis in his younger day a member of the Cambridge Daily News Robin Goodfellow Club – were you?

NOTE :

J.H. Diver, 5a School Lane, Impington CB4 9NS – photographic were going to take a picture of him – is it available to use in Memories?

Memories Nov 5th 1999, by Mike Petty

Judi Pollard (nee Moore) is first out of the postbag with her memories of Bonfire Night in Cambridge. She writes: “Living most of our childhood in Sidney Street I remember that when we were young my father used to take us to a friend’s house in Chesterton to share their celebrations. But inevitably we would return home to find Sidney Street blocked off by the police to avoid the Market Square crowd rampaging. On one such occasion my mother, who had stayed in the flat, was bombarded by fireworks being thrown up against our windows. I can remember when in my teens my boyfriend and I crammed on to Market Hill with a few hundred others. Somebody let off something – probably home made – because it was the loudest bang I’d ever heard and the ground actually shook. As a finale to that evening we were then pelted with bags of flour by the people residing in flats over the Milk Bar and other premises on that side of the Square”

30 years ago, 1959 was being heralded ‘the roughest fifth for 20 years’ with a pitched barrage of squibs and bangers descending on the crowds. As more and more people came onto Market

Hill preliminary skirmishes quickly developed into war on all fronts. The News reported how youths poured oil on the water in the fountain and then set it ablaze, the heat felt by bystanders on the Victoria Cinema pavement. "After an hour's bombardment the square was blanketed under a thick pall of sulphurous smoke into which more and more people groped their way. Nearly everyone was caught at one time or another by a squib, many people's clothes were scorched and burnt and several people injured", it reported

One of the most serious of disturbances was in 1948 when a newspaper headline read : "Bonfire damage worse than enemy action during the war" over a report of how the interior of the Senate House was severely damaged by an explosive charge and 70 panes of glass broken. The priceless medieval glass of King's College Chapel narrowly escaped destruction and three motor vehicles were damaged and four constables and at least four civilians were injured. In the aftermath a Colonial Civil Servant was fined for obstruction – he had been caught with a "Keep Left" sign, 'which he had found' and had tried to get a car to turn into Rose Crescent. He was fined £5 and asked for time to pay as the Government 'does not pay us much money'

Given such horrendous acts the police and university authorities took steps to control the situation, with students being banned from the centre of the city – a ban which was also extended to members of the armed forces.

Eventually sanity was restored with the start of the large-scale organised bonfires on Midsummer Common which now attract thousands of spectators. But should anybody feel tempted to recreate the madness of past times it might be worth recalling that: "Any person who casts or fires a squib, cracker, serpent or other firework in the public street shall be committed to the House of Correction to hard labour for one month or forfeit 20/-" - and when that rule was made in 1786, twenty shillings was a great deal of money!

Returning to Judi Pollard's letter she gives further information of the resident ghost at 50 Sidney Street, Cambridge, which was mentioned by her twin sister, Sally Whyte in an earlier "Memories". "We were never sure who or what the ghost was. My father thought it was his great uncle who didn't want my grandfather to have the business. Rumour had it that a servant girl had been murdered in one of the back rooms and one of the resident hairdresser's staff left the premises screaming because she'd 'met a man on the stairs dressed in an old-fashioned uniform'. We, as the immediate family living there, didn't encounter too much trouble with the ghost but my grandmother became mysteriously locked in an upstairs bedroom when she went in to clean, and a lodger asked us one morning who had tried to pull his bedclothes off in the middle of the night. As perhaps a final proof of a likely 'presence' I'd add that a few years after the building was sold to the Woolwich Building Society a friend of mine stopped me in the street to ask if we'd had any ghostly happenings when we lived at no.50. Apparently none of the Woolwich staff would stay long in the flat because they heard strange noises and felt very uncomfortable there. I wonder whether any of these people, or subsequent residents have anything to add?" Over to you. PICTURE OF SIDNEY STREET

Anne Brown of Histon has lent me a picture of a VJ party at St George's church, Cambridge in 1945. People present included Kenneth Rumsy, Richard Biggs, John Dring, Tony Tiller, Geoffrey Dale, Christopher and Caroline Cointwaite, Roger Edwards. Robin Whyatt and Anne herself. PICTURE SCANNED ON DISK

L.M. Chaffe has rediscovered pictures of fenland flooding including one taken from the railway bridge on Longstanton Road, Over looking towards Swavesey station showing waves threatening to cover the railway line. He recalls the Mare Fen at Swavesey was regularly flooded in winter so that when it flooded skating matches could be held there. PICTURE SCANNED ON DISK

Red Wood, my regular correspondent from Saffron Walden remembers that in the 1920s-30s when he lived at Caxton End, Bourn, the Bourn Brook flooded at least twice a year cutting Caxton End and Alms Hill from the centre of the village and also flooding the road between Kingston and Toft. Reg adds: "The last flood I remember at Bourn was March 8th 1941. It was my sister's Wedding Day. We had to walk ½ mile to reach the stiles and cross the meadows. Cars were waiting the other side of the water to take us to church. This had to be repeated on the way home" [What wedding-day problems did you encounter?]

H.J. Midge of Lichfield Rd, Cambridge has given me further notes about the Cambridge and District Thursday Football League which was set up when shopkeepers were encouraged to grant workers a half-day off each week, though other teams also joined in. Teams played on Parker's Piece on Saturdays as well as Thursdays. Mr Midge was associated with the Fitzroy Thursday Football Club and other teams include Beehive, King & Harper's, Exning Thursday Athletic, Royston Thursday, Eastern Counties Bus Company and Sawston P.M. (what did the P.M. stand for, I wonder?)

I BELIEVE WE WERE GOING TO TAKE A PICTURE OF THIS LADY WITH HER DRESSES :

Shirley Dodson of Swavesey writes. "Your Memories article about Cambridge shops, particularly the Alley reminded me that I still have two dresses bought from there, as well as my first long dress which I bought from Vogue to attend the 'Firemans Ball' held at the Dorothy in the late 1960s. Shopping at Vogue was a very different experience from the Alley. I believe it was run by the Harris family who were also connected to Modiste in St Andrew's street. I also have a long pink dress which I bought from Wallis when it was opposite Marks and Spencer

Mr Charles Silverman's appeal for a picture of the Sentinel Steam Lorry that used to operate from Cambridge Gasworks has been answered by Jack Hagger from Saffron Walden who used to work there, and also remembers the late Phil Prior who used to drive the vehicle
PHOTOGRAPHIC WERE TAKING A COPY OF THE SENTINEL VEHICLE AND
THERE WAS SOME HOPE OF GETTING MR SILVERMAN AND MR HAGGER
TOGETHER FOR A PICTURE. JACK HAGGER IS ON 01799 522473 – 20 VICTORIA
AVENUE, SAFFRON WALDEN

SPARE GUY FAWKES STORIES

If ever there was an illustration of the determination of Cambridge town and gown not to be done out of the fun associated with the Fifth it has been afforded in 1899. The anniversary of the discomfiture of Guy Fawkes fell on a Sunday, and moreover on an exceeding wet day, but the 4th and the 6th was made to do duty.

It was Monday that by general consent the noisy section of the community chose for the display of their fighting, drinking and shouting powers. Effigies for the purpose of collecting pence were few, the most noteworthy being that stuck in an old hansom cab, and attended by some half-dozen black-faced personages, carefully thrusting collecting boxes in the face of all and sundry who came near

The police were fully alive to the occasion and made ample arrangements to cope with any threatened disturbance. The largest force possible from the borough was posted on Market Hill and environs, and, in addition a contingent of the county constabulary was brought into the town.

Almost as soon as it was dark a large number of youths made their way to Cambridge Market Hill which was in a short time alive to the crackling and bangings of the smaller fireworks. The 'Varsity', after hall time, joined the townspeople and from eight to eleven there was a roaring, rushing crowd of several hundreds about the hill and neighbouring streets. In a few instances there were evidences of the survival of the old Town and Gown feud, but as a rule, the representatives of both corporations found a common cause in the very restricted display of pyrotechny, in the exercise of very powerful lungs, and in the baiting of the police. Certain of the townsmen who had begun the day not to wisely by profusely drinking were responsible for the greater part of the disorder and were seized and marched off by the ever-vigilant gentlemen in blue.

As far as one could judge the majority of the fun consisted in mad, headlong, rushes from one side of the square to the other, back again, & down one of the narrow streets leading therefrom..

There were, however, some ugly incidents in which the police played a leading part. Occasionally they would spy a delinquent breaking the law by lighting or discharging a firework. The humble imitator of Brock would be pounced upon by the representatives of the outraged law, and with scant ceremony hurried into the Guildhall, there to be charged with the offence. The constable and their victim would be followed by the mob, hurling very uncomplimentary and unparliamentary expletives at the captors, and in some instances the police were roughly handled. In one affray in Wheeler Street one constable was struck and kicked in a brutal manner.

So the game went on, for two or three hours, the bang of a firework, the seizure of the law breaker, the hurry and scurry to the temporary police station at the Guildhall and the rush of the crowd after the police.

Later in the evening the proctors appeared, and with them the gradual melting away of the 'Varsitymen, leaving townspeople in sole possession of the square. Towards 11 o'clock the crowd had thinned considerably, small and noisy parties were making their way home. Even then more arrests were added to the considerable number already made, and the cells had new occupants charged with being drunk and disorderly, and not a few with assaulting the police.

1949

The quietest Guy Fawkes night “rag” long-service Cambridge police officers can remember passed off without even a street lamp being extinguished – another “within living memory” record. A crowd gathered on the Market Square by 7pm and fireworks were thrown. A police car which arrived on the scene radioed for reinforcements. These shepherded the crowd off the square. After that police posted at the entrances to the square prevented people entering the area. Early in the evening a few rotten eggs were thrown, and a smoke bomb exploded in the Sidney Street area. These incidents, and the intermittent throwing of fireworks, constituted about the only “excitement” of the evening, though there was an occasion when a “bulldog” pursued a man at full speed in front of the Guildhall.

Memories 12th November 1999 by Mike Petty

With the approach of Armistice Sunday the Memorial at the end of Station Road, Cambridge, prepares for its annual pilgrimage of dignitaries and servicemen, as those who have grown old join with others in paying tribute to those who did not.

Yet this year there is an added emphasis for now there are plans for the memorial itself to be moved. But this is nothing new, for the figure atop the plinth has seen all the debate and discussion before.

At the end of the Great War Cambridge decided to erect a War Memorial and a collection of £6,000 was made for the Nurses’ Home at Addenbrooke’s Hospital. In September 1920 a meeting of the Cambridgeshire Joint War Memorial Committee agreed the erection of a statue at the corner of Station Road. A Canadian sculptor, Tait McKenzie was commissioned, and he modelled the figure of a private soldier, in full kit, striding along bareheaded, helmet in hand, a German helmet as a trophy strung on his back and partly concealed by a laurel wreath, carelessly flung over the rifle barrel. In his hand he holds a rose, another rose thrown to him has fallen to the ground. His head, based on that of a Christ’s college undergraduate, Kenneth Hamilton, is turned to the side, his expression alert and happy, and his lips slightly parted as if he has recognised an old friend in the crowd. As he glances over his shoulder he looks down Station Road from which he left for the war. But now he is at peace, for the statue is of The Homecoming.

The day for its unveiling was set for July 3rd 1922. The Duke of York, who was in Cambridge to open the Royal Show at Trumpington, would perform the ceremony. The plinth was erected, the crowds anticipated. Everything was ready. Almost.

Meanwhile the sculptor was feverishly trying to get the design just as he wanted it. In his studios at the University of Pennsylvania he was working constantly, inviting artist friends to comment and criticise. At last he was ready. The mould for the statue was complete, it just need to be shipped to England. But the boat was delayed and the bronze could not be cast in time for delivery.

With the day booked, the Duke booked and the plinth erected the Committee was faced with a dilemma. They could not unveil a statue that was not there – or could they. They decided on a subterfuge. A plaster cast of the statue was erected and painted to look like bronze. Then they prayed that it would not rain – for that might dissolve the paint, and that the wind would not blow and the covering canvas rub out essential details. And being Cambridge it rained and

blew. But nobody noticed and in the presence of thousands of people The Homecoming was unveiled.

Then ten days later a lorry drew up with the proper figure. The copy was taken down and for a while Cambridge had two war memorials – but not identical, for the sculptor had made slight changes once he'd seen the figure in place. As far as I know nobody took a picture of the switch-over and the fact that it happened has thus faded away.

For years the memorial has witnessed acts of Remembrance, though as the years have passed so the proud “Old Contemptibles” of the First World War have faded away and new soldiers have taken their place. In the Summer of 1937 there was something a little different at a commemoration service, for at a wreath-laying by German ex-servicemen the Nazi salute was given. THERE IS A PICTURE OF THIS IN THE Cambridgeshire Collection REF NO V.R.K37 20459 – IT APPEARED IN THE CAMBRIDGE INDEPENDENT PRESS ON 2ND JULY 1937 P12

Then just 50 years ago in October 1949 there were plans for the statue to be moved to make way for a new traffic roundabout at the junction. Views were sought, and opinions expressed – very much like those now being repeated in 1999. There was a feeling that unless it was moved the beauty of the statue would be lost, being surrounded by traffic signs. It would be better, some urged, to move it to a position in front of the entrance to the Botanic Gardens, into a restful haven away from the traffic. But there was another option, to move the statue just twenty feet to the middle of the new roundabout. This compromise was agreed and work got underway at the end of January 1950.

Then in January 1982 the County Council proposed to move it again to make way for a revised traffic island and new lights. Once more the opinions were expressed, with suggestions for resiting in at New Square, or in the middle of the Market Place. The MP, Robert Rhodes James suggested diverting traffic away from the area during the commemoration period and in the memorial stayed, though some felt it was obscured by the new traffic lights.

So now the discussion is raging once more but wherever The Homecoming finds itself in the new Millennium may it always remind us of the lads that did not march back from the station

I HAVE ALSO SCANNED A PIC OF THE UNVEILING OF THE ELY WAR SHRINE, 1922

Memories, 19th November 1999, by Mike Petty

Dora Tack from Fenstanton writes to tell me that her wonderful book “From bombs to buckets” has now been reprinted and is being relaunched shortly. It seems appropriate that it should come out again so close to Remembrance Sunday, for while we remember the hardships of those who fought for their country, the tales of those who fought to maintain everyday life in the country can be overlooked.

Dora was not a country girl. She was born in Peckham and lived in Brixton until the incessant bombing forced her to escape to rural Huntingdonshire. While working at Papworth Settlement she met and married Frank, a farm worker. So it was that the London girl found herself living in the depths of the countryside in the tiny village of Papworth St Agnes with no gas, no electricity, no running water and the most primitive of sanitary arrangements. Dora's memories make most interesting reading. Take the “coffee shop”, her mother-in-law's name

for the little brick building with a slate roof outside the back door, which contained the bucket lavatory.

Dora recalls: "The lavatory seat was made of a large oblong piece of wood with a smooth hole, adult bottom size, and on a lower level a smaller piece of wood with a child-size hole, so parent and child could sit side-by-side doing their daily duties in their respective buckets. On one occasion I had need to occupy the lavatory for a "big job". I was seated on the wooden seat, just reaching for some lavatory paper, when I felt a mighty draught up my bottom, and a hand appeared and removed the bucket. There was I with a soiled piece of paper in my hand, and nowhere to put it! I folded it into a clean piece of paper, took it indoors and placed it in my handbag for disposal later on. When Frank came home he roared with laughter at the incident. Apparently it was Ken's task every Saturday to dig a hole, remove the bucket, empty its contents into the hole, thoroughly clean the bucket and return it. The operation took ten minutes and he always did the task at the same time so all the family knew they must keep out to the "lav" then. Apparently he grew the best potatoes in the village – and put it down to the quality of the bucket contents." Somehow it puts the problems of French beef into perspective!

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Alf Lawrence has written with more details of the blind man and his gramophone, who several readers have recalled. He writes: "George Pope (Uncle George) was cripple and blind in one eye. He seemed to cope quite well by always wearing wellingtons and with a stick and his cap. He might have been remembered at Maids Causeway, at Midsummer Fair or in the Burleigh street area tin in hand with his gramophone with the horn and his 'Thank you Lady or Sir'.

"He lived in East Road, was married twice and outlived both. He pumped the organ at St Matthew's church for some time and he knew every hymn and would sing to them. I used to walk with him when I was a young lad and sometimes pull his cart with the gramophone on it and would get him gramophone needs from a shop in Burleigh street. I used to help him count his pennies and he would give me 2d or 3d. He also used to play a mouth organ and taught me how to vamp on it, he was a character.

"He died in 1977, aged 81, and is buried in Newmarket Road cemetery. I had a gramophone engraved on his headstone"

Alf and Jessie Lawrence also recall other great characters, sadly missed, including Bowey & Bob Odell of Staffordshire Street, Scot the green grocer with his horse & cart in New Street, Dave who used to stand and open the gate on the common at Garlic Row when the workers from Marshall came home at night, Tarrant with his barrel organ and Silverman with his horse and cart collecting scrap. Did villages have characters too – and who do you remember?

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Mr J.D. Williamson from Romsey Mews, Cambridge recalls a character who used to patronise the Fitzroy Arms in Fitzroy Street. He writes that this pub had an very narrow archway at the entrance about four feet wide, and one regular customer had a horse and cart. "Some of his cronies plied him with drink, while others unshipped the horse, turned the cart on its side and dragged it through the arch, replacing the horse in the shafts. Imagine the owner's surprise when he came out after several beers!" Can anybody corroborate the story.

Mr Williamson also lent me a marvellous photograph of Brunswick Primary School. It was taken in 1928 & shows him next to the head teacher, Miss Jules. He remembers many of the names from all those years ago. The school was in Auckland Road Cambridge, next to the

Star Brewery stables and was later turned into the school dentistry run by Mr Grandison. His mother was an assistant there when it was in Mud Lane. PICTURE SCANNED ON DISK

Just across the river there was another school that some may recall. Chesterton Preparatory School had opened in “temporary” premises at the bottom of De Freville Avenue in 1910 and for over 60 years young children aged from three to 11 learnt their lessons – of country matters, hedgehogs, squirrels, birds and water voles. The school closed in July 1972 with the retirement of headmistress Miss Dorothy Hodder. Did you attend, or do you remember it. PICTURE ENCLOSED

Shirley School in Green End Road opened in 1932, and was the first with up-to-date nurseries for infants. Here youngsters cross the road under the protection of a “lollipop lady” in June 1964. Are you amongst them? PICTURE ENCLOSED

Mention of Auntie Jean and Uncle David in “Memories” the other week has stimulated more reminiscences from Mrs O. Osborne of Comberton. “I well remember them entertaining the children. So Uncle Dennis was a Robin. I was also a Robin and still have the badge in my possession. It’s fairly heavy round metal and the blue outer circle reads “Robin Fellowship Cambs Press & News”. The chubby robin is in the centre red-breast with a copper coloured background. I well remember attending a party at the Cambridge Guildhall for Robins with my brother and sisters about 1931. My memories are of a huge hall with a stage and music. This was the song we learnt quite jolly: ‘I lift up by finger and I say TWEET TWEET CUSH CUSH NOW NOW COME COME’ At the finale we came down the stairs and each was presented with a huge bar of chocolate – Cadburys, ¼ pound costing then in the shops 4d. Parties were few and far between so it really was a great treat for us” Were you a Robin too?

WE WERE TAKING A PHOTOGRAPH OF THIS LADY WITH HER DRESS

Shirley Dodson of Swavesey writes. “Your Memories article about Cambridge shops, particularly the Alley reminded me that I still have two dresses bought from there, as well as my first long dress which I bought from Vogue to attend the ‘Firemans Ball’ held at the Dorothy in the late 1960s. Shopping at Vogue was a very different experience from the Alley. I believe it was run by the Harris family who were also connected to Modiste in St Andrew’s street. I also have a long pink dress which I bought from Wallis when it was opposite Marks and Spencer

Bill Northill of St Matthew’s street Cambridge has lent me a composite photograph of where he used to work – Barrett’s china shops in Cambridge. It was taken when they celebrated their 150th anniversary in 1932. The pictures show the two shops, one in St Mary’s Passage and the other in St Andrew’s street, together with the various departments including the riveting room where Miss Stephens & Miss Bailey are shown repairing broken china. The transport yard was in St Tibb’s Row and Bill started in 1932 by looking after the horses in the stables. After the war he moved on to become a rep, driving a three-gear Bradfield car & touring the villages and pubs in the area supplying milk bottles & plain beer mugs which Barretts would stamp using their machines. He remembers the firm with great affection, especially is old master, Tom Barrett. PICTURE SCANNED ON DISK

Christopher Jackson from the Cambridge Catholic History Group needs your help. Did any of your family get married in the Catholic Church of Our Lady & the English Martyrs during the

war. If so do you have any wedding snaps taken outside the building. It appears that there used to be iron railings surrounding the church which were taken down for the war effort, but nobody quite remembers when. Church railings were allowed to remain after others had been removed and might not have gone until perhaps May-June 1941 or February-March 1942. Perhaps your wedding snap may give a clue. If you can help please contact Mr Jackson on Cambridge 353260

PHOTOGRAPHS SCANNED ON DISK

Brunswick School group 1928

Barrett's china shop 1932 – the riveting department with Miss Stephens & Miss Bailey and/or the whole composite view

MEMORIES 26TH NOVEMBER by Mike Petty

During the draw for the next round of the *League Cup* [PLEASE CHECK I'M RIGHT ON THIS!] on Sunday Big Ron Atkinson, who was choosing the numbers for the teams to play at home commented how he seemed always to be selecting his old teams. The he pulled out Cambridge United.

It is just 25 years since the News reported how Ron Atkinson, then the 35-year-old manager of Kettering and former Oxford United skipper, was to be Cambridge United's new manager.

The story would have delighted football fanatic Denise Langram, aged 15. She had not missed a Cambridge United home match for four years – until she went into hospital more concerned about missing United's home game against Rotherham than about her treatment. But she was given some consolation when two of her heroes, United's longest serving player and former captain, Terry Eades and full-back Ray Seary took her a bouquet. Denise hoped to be out quickly: "And I hope I never have to miss another match", she said.

As Paul Daw records in his history of the club, United had been in the heights of Division Three the season before, and were joint favourites to make their way back following relegation. But the 1974-75 season had started badly, the team winning regularly at home, but losing consistently away. With gates down and the team in the lower half of the league fans turned against the manager, Bill Leivers. Although the team threatened a strike if he were to go, he was dismissed.

So in came Atkinson bringing with him confidence-building training methods. He was quoted saying "I think it is a club with a good chance of going places. I am not the type of guy to float in there and clear everybody out. There are some good players, although possibly they need a bit of a lift. There is still a chance we can get into the promotion race. All I promise is that I shall work as hard as possible to get the right results".

One of his early moves was to bring in Steve Fallon from Kettering town. An unbeaten run of eight league games in early 1975 saw the club close the gap on the promotion contenders – and brought Atkinson the Bells Scotch Whisky Manager of the Month Award. The scene was set for another title challenge the following year.

The 1975-76 season saw the debut of Steve Spriggs and Alan Biley but the hoped-for promotion eluded them and the fans drifted away – not helped by trouble off the pitch.

A new floodlighting system was in place for the start of the 76-77 season, the team was strengthened by the signing of Tom Finney, an Irish international forward, and experienced

defender Dave Stringer. The results followed and United soared to the top of the league. In January 1977 they entered the Guinness Book of Records when they scored after only six seconds of their match at Torquay. They went on both to secure promotion and the Fourth Division Championship.

Ron Atkinson had resisted an approach to manage Watford but succumbed to an offer from West Bromwich Albion in January 1978. He left Cambridge United top of Division Three and John Docherty saw them gain promotion to the Second Division. The impossible dream had come true and champagne flowed.

Memories 3rd December and 10th December 1999, by Mike Petty

“You ought to write that down, mother”. How often have we all said something similar to elderly people when they come out with some special memory of their experiences. Whilst engaged in the most sad experience of having to clear her mother’s belongings June Stittle of Soham was delighted to find that she had done just that. Violet “Tiny” Bullman was 93 when she died a couple of years ago and there amongst her papers were some jottings of her early life

Both she and her husband, Hekla, had worked for Waddingtons of Soham, Hec in the grocery trade, Violet in the drapery. It was a thriving concern with a warehouse at the back of shop from which the firm supplied most of the small shops and almost every pub in the village at prices cheaper than they could buy direct from Cadbury’s and Tobacco wholesalers. They had a china and wallpaper department in Churchgate Street and in 1929 bought the nearby premises of Rhuben Long the Soham millers for their drapery, men’s suits and boots and shoes section. Later they acquired the Wesleyan Chapel, now the Soham Carpet and Bedding centre, and then Morris’s shoe shop. At Wicken Waddingtons had another shop, and also one in Bury St Edmunds..

She wrote: “I started work at Waddingtons on March 13th 1919. At that time everything was delivered by horse and cart or carrier bikes. At Christmas we worked until two o’clock in the morning, we didn’t get extra money; we also worked until eight o’clock on Fridays and nine on Saturdays. I got 31d per week – 15p in today’s money.

“Everything had to be weighed, sugar, flour, butter, lard, soda, even tea. Ernest Waddington was a very good tea blender. How many people remember Waddington’s Tea Tray Tea, one of his special blends? A fly from the Crown Hotel met the trains at Soham station bringing travellers and their trunks of samples to stand on the pavement outside the shop, the travellers taking their turn in the queue, some sporting carnations in their button holes, and seven some with tail coats and top hats. I’ve known Ernest to spend a whole morning just buying towels and towellings. We used to order one gross of men’s boots at a time to sell at 12/11 per pair. Blue Bird toffees were bought by the hundredweight, as was rock. We sold lots of Locas Beans, one never hears of them today.

“The war and rationing forced Waddington’s to sell out, first to Burton’s stores; they later sold to Fine Fare, who have now sold up. The other departments were sold to Duponts who continued to trade as Waddingtons. Sadly they have also sold out so now there is no Waddingtons of Soham”

But the most disturbing of Mrs Violet Bullman's notes are those which relate to a diphtheria outbreak in January 1922

It all started at a farm at Brook Dam, Soham. The farmer's wife had a sister who was a nurse. She came home on holiday and brought the germ with her. When the diphtheria outbreak occurred they were unable to sell milk from the farm. Tony recalls: "the family asked if my sister Doll could go up and sell it in a barn so long as she didn't go in the house. February was a very cold month, and the family felt so sorry for Doll out there in the cold that they asked her into the house to have a hot drink. That was the trouble, she caught the germ, a deadly one causing five deaths. My Grandfather Engledow wouldn't hear of her going to the fever hospital on Newmarket Road. His house was in Clay Street and had a blacksmiths shop behind it which was very isolated. Mum went to look after her there and Doll got over it.

Most folk were frightened even to speak to us, other members of the family were ordered to stay away. I didn't have to go to work, which was at Waddingtons.

Meanwhile at home little Peg wasn't so lucky; she was taken to the hospital. The house we lived in at Brook Dam was on the river mouth, horses used to drink in the river. When Peg was taken ill we had her downstairs in the front room. Mum wouldn't let her friend Kath in but Peg heard her outside, & tapped the window saying to my Mum "Let me see Kath, you know I won't to see her anymore." She was very ill and the Doctor sent her to hospital the next day, that was Thursday 12th January 1922, I can remember it well. The horse drawn ambulance drew up in the river, a nurse had Peg in her arms in a red blanket and Peg's little legs were a purple colour, I knew she wouldn't get better.

Vurdon Douglas, little Jim to the family was the next to get the Dip. He was the youngest, five years old, Mum wouldn't let him go to the hospital. She had a room at my Granny and Granddad's house. It was a big house so mum and little Jim were able to be isolated. As little Jim lay dying in Mum's arms he said to Mum, "Peg wants me to go and sit with her," what a strange thing for a five-year-old to say, but mum knew Peg was dead. She had word from the hospital the next day to say that she passed away at 2:30, just six hours before Jim, both on the 13th January. Both Peg and Jim were buried on the same day on the 16th January 1922 in Soham Cemetery, a sad day. My mother never got over it.

On the 18th of January Cecil Victor, Jack to the family, was taken to the hospital & passed away on February 7th. He was getting on well and we were expecting him home but he was put on a ward with a chap who at the time was covered with sores. Our Jack caught them, he was so weak he couldn't take it, the third one to die in the family

On the 6th of February it was my turn, I didn't have Dip. but I was very ill with Quinsy's, I was in bed until the 15th of February until the doctor would let me get up. I worried Mum who quite thought she was going to lose me, but I made it. On the 23d of February Ivy was taken to hospital with Dip. but she was lucky, she came home, but she had her thirteenth birthday there.

In our family the older ones than Doll - Sam, me and Lon didn't get the Dip. but the younger ones, Ivy, Peg, Jack and Jim did. Only Ivy came home from hospital, that left her the youngest of our family of eight, now only five.

SCAN ON DISK : the late Violet "Tiny" Bullman

PICTURES OF SOHAM FROM THE NEWS LIBRARY WHERE INCLUDED WITH
LAST WEEKS' NOTES

PHOTOCOPIES ATTACHED OF PICTURES OF BROOK DAM, SOHAM, WHICH
COULD BE COPIED IN THE Cambridgeshire Collection

MRS JUNE STITTLE OF 3JS, 6 BROOK DAM LANE, SOHAM – ELY 721001 HAS THE
ORIGINAL NOTES AND ALSO SOME PAINTINGS OF THE HOUSE WHEN VIOLET
LIVED

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Tales of talking dogs seem something that belong to Television consumer programmes – but nearly 50 years ago it brought a Royston man home from the army when Dennis Brissenden was given special leave to be at hand when his famous family pet appeared on television's "Picture Page" in September 1946. "I've never seen more cables than those laid down Green Street for that broadcast", Dennis recalls. Unfortunately the star performer almost "let down the side" by mistaking a fellow artiste's fur coat for a cat

"Ben", the talking dog was owned by Alfred Brissenden of Royston and in November 1949 was about to appear on the BBC Light Programme with his rendition of his catch phrase "I want one"

Alfred had discovered his pet's unique vocal attributes when, on returning from his job as a night watchman, he'd offered the animal a biscuit. What made Ben special was the way he used its tongue to form the words – something that impressed the eminent veterinary surgeons that examined him.

"Ben" was certainly a celebrity. He was headline news in the national dailies and earned himself and his owners a fortnight's holiday at Butlin's Clacton camp. He posed for advertisements, performed before thousands of factory workers at concerts, and gave pleasure to countless children. But nothing was ever certain with a dog. There had been an unfortunate session of "mike fright" when he'd made his NBC broadcast to Canada and it was fingers crossed until the latest performance was "in the can".

Although he was offered a fortune for his pet – even Roy Rogers wanted him to perform alongside "Trigger" – Alfred never sold him. Eventually the animal died and Dennis buried him in the garden of their Royston home.

Do you have memories of special pets – write to Mike Petty

PHOTOGRAPHIC HAVE PICS OF DENNIS BRISSENDEN AND THE DOG

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Sometimes when reading newspaper reports of council meetings it all seems old news – surely we've heard all this before.

Looking Back recently I find a report that seems worthy of fuller perusal. 75 years ago Cambridge council were discussing the question of parking spaces for buses and cars. This was a topic which had occupied their minds for some long time past. Hitherto the buses had been parked on Senate House Hill and now the University authorities had complained. It disfigured a beautiful corner which should not be used for parking purposes.

Drummer street would be a good alternative parking place for country buses which would then not go into the centre of town and block up the traffic there. There would be

accommodation for 12 buses and 35 cars. They would need a few yards off Christ's Pieces but this was practically waste ground and surely could be taken.

But the Commons committee felt this would disfigure Christ's Pieces. Children played there and it was dangerous to attract traffic to a place where children played so much. They suggested Butts Green. Others felt it was out of all reason to expect cars and buses to go so far from the centre of town. They might in the future require a parking place there and elsewhere as well. In fact in the near future they might have to have several places.

One councillor proposed New Square be used as a parking place, it was absolutely waste land. Ald. See disagreed. He had been hoping for years that something would be done to make New Square as beautiful as Christ's Pieces. It would be a perfect disgrace to fill it up with motor cars making an infernal noise. Students lodged in the vicinity and wanted to work. He did not see why motorists should not use Butts Green. He suggested also that the town end of Coe Fen might be used ...

After the debate had rumbled on the council decided the best thing to do – refer it to another Committee for further discussion.

Memories 10th December 1999, by Mike Petty REVISED TEXT ABOUT BLACKSMITHS

While speaking to a group at Swavesey the other day I was reminded of the excellent reminiscences of the late F.C. Wood, which form such an important part of that village's history. Of all his notes my favourite is that of the village blacksmith.

Charlie Colpin, the Swavesey blacksmith was a mighty man, six foot tall and approaching middle age; he wore a flat cap well grimed with soot and smoke, pulled down over his dark hair; he had a straggling black moustache - and usually an overnight stubble of beard. His jacket he wore unbuttoned displaying a leather apron which was belted below his middle-age spread and came down below his knees -Charlie wore it constantly.

The forge was in the High street, next door to the grocer's shop; it had a large door extending from floor to eaves which could be opened and fastened back and a stable door beside it, the top half of which was always open during working hours. Inside the building was open to the tiles. At the far end was the brick built hearth with its short brick chimney. On the left of the hearth stood the huge vertical bellows with a long wooden arm, a steel tank full of water for quenching the hot iron. Two anvils each mounted on a great section of tree trunk faced each other across the floor. Two benches lined the walls. You stepped over plough shares or banged your shins on pieces of a dismantled harrow; a pile of discarded horseshoes and odds and ends of angle iron awaiting the periodic visit by the scrap merchant.

And everywhere there was dust. As you walked from the hard earth floor of the stall to the forge itself so you walked into an ever-increasing depth of dust which reached four inches and more around the anvils. It rose in puffs around your feet at every step, intruded into trouser turnups and infiltrated into laceholes on boots and shoes.

And above was the roof filled with long lengths of all sorts of iron and steel; from every rafter hung huge festoons of dusty cobwebs from whose shelter hairy spiders of large size and ancient lineage maintained a malignant and disapproving watch on the activities going on below.

Spiders were not Charlie's only audience. Whenever he had a cart-wheel to retyre the men of the village would gather to help and the village children liked to peep in during the gathering gloom of a winter evening to watch the smithy at work

Not all boys however looked forward to a visit to the blacksmith. One of Charlie's customers was a farmer who kept a team of huge Shire horses, magnificent beasts whose care and grooming often left something to be desired. In order to avoid any loss of horse power a visit to the blacksmith was deferred if possible until a rainy day when one of the farm lads was told to take one of the horses to Charlie's shops. In most cases the lad waited until he knew the blacksmith would be quenching his thirst in the 'Rising Sun' then quickly tied up the beast in the stall and fled for his life.

Sooner or later Charlie came across the road - to be confronted by a placid monster, its coat steaming gently and the copious Shire feathering round its hooves clogged up with great gobbets of Swavesey clay and manure. Sometimes for good measure the horse would have greasy legs. For a moment Charlie would stand in stunned silence. He knew all the horse in the district and knew quite well where this one had come from. Arms akimbo he would stand on the cobbles and curse the absent owner. "Hah Fred Day! Yew cunning old beggar yew allus leaves your horses 'ere when yew cant work 'em. What a ruddy state. Look at them legs". At this the horse looked round in protest. "And yew can stop staring" roared Charlie.

With much grumbling and puffing through his moustache he proceeded to clean off the horses legs with a piece of old sacking and to find out what shoe replacements were needed. By this time a group of us small boys were looking over the top of the half doors, watching the blacksmith cleaning up the hoof shaping up the shoe and trying it while hot for fit. White clouds of pungent smoke swirled around and Charlie puffed, coughed and blew through his moustache. The horse, an amicable creature, now standing on three legs, decided to rest on Charlie - a roar went up: "Stop leaning on me yew lazy great beggar - You're breaking my ruddy back". As he let the hoof drop Charlie looked up and saw our row of heads staring at him over the door, "What yew staring at? What yew boys want" "Nothing Mr Colpin" Well yew slubber orf 'ome duz yew'll get 'urt. Goo on. Ruddy boys" he grumbled as we vanished. Needless to say we were back again a few minutes later. We knew Charles Colpin for a kindly man - and he knew we knew!

Such tradesmen are a dying breed. In 1937 the directories were listing a variety of "Smiths, blacksmiths and farriers" in the Cambridge area. Do you recall Fred Bloy or J. Day & sons of East Rd, George Borley of Cherry Hinton, William Chapman, Union Road, of Walter Parkington of Ross street, Cambridge. By 1964 the only Cambridge blacksmith was H.E. Webb of Russell Street, who was visited by Erica Dimock in August 1964. She describes what she found then:

"A large gateway leads to the forge and workshop of Mr H.E. Webb, the only blacksmith left in Cambridge. The business was started by his grandfather at East Road in 1865 & before becoming established at Russell street in 1874 had made one intermediary move to Union Road. Much of the work is concerned with steel fabricating for local builders, making springs of various types of motor vehicles and all types of general repairs and metalwork.

Hundreds of horses are shod each year for local riding establishments. His forge is very reminiscent of days gone by, apart from the fact that electricity has replaced the old fashioned bellows." Even then it was a business in decline for it was becoming difficult to get young people to learn the blacksmith's craft

Others may recall another connection with the age of the horse, Runciman's veterinary surgeons who had premises in Downing street until the 1960s. Earlier in the century some of the stable doors opened out onto the pavement so that when horses standing in the stables had

their heads out, over the bottom halves of the doors, people walking along Downing street had to step off the pavement and walk around the horses' heads – something had to imagine in today's traffic choked street. Even towards the end of their occupation of the site it contained a set of horse stocks where awkward horses were put, particularly when they had to shoe them. A forge was part of the premises and at one time the site had room for 20 horses & the firm employed six men. Do you remember it?

Another side of the blacksmith's craft is commemorated in a picture published in the excellent book "Photographic memories of Histon and Impington", the first edition of which has sold out with a reprint being rushed through by the Village Society. It shows Ken Oates and Harold Muncey busily at work in the Histon blacksmith's shop, modifying the Histon church bell frame to accommodate two new bells which were to be added to the original peal of six. Generally however good pictures of blacksmiths are somewhat rare – unless you have some

Jean Potter of the Coleridge area of Cambridge was last week reminiscing to me of her uncle, Percy Day, a blacksmith and wheelwright at the Britannia pub in East Road. Many businesses had their carts made and repaired there. Sometimes uncle Percy who would comment on his wife's "hoity-toity friend" who would pop in to their house for tea. A few months ago Jean was sorting through her aunt Julia's possessions and came across a little booklet commemorating the life of that friend, Marion Seward, wife of the Master of Downing College. Then in "Looking Back" recently I featured this same lady and singled out her involvement with the Tipperary Club. This was set up in 1915 to aid and cheer the sorrow-stricken women of Cambridge during the war. With the coming of peace in 1918 the work continued and Mrs Seward would take a great interest in the welfare of her working-class sisters, as she did the undergraduates at her husband's college. Others may remember her as the founder of the Cambridge Drawing Society.

Tucked away inside the booklet was a scarp from the C.D.N. of 23rd February 1938 of a Tipperary Club Tea. Julia Day is the elegant lady in the right-hand corner – does it spark any memories for older readers?

SCAN ON DISK – BOYS AT A BLACKSMITH'S SHOP – WISBECH – "SMITH"

PICTURES OF SWAVESEY FROM NEWS LIBRARY ENCLOSED

Do you have memories of village tradesmen – write to Mike Petty

READERS WRITE

Mrs Shirley Levill (nee Webb) of Swaffham Prior writes: "I and my three brothers were Robins and Goodfellows. Mother collected ship halfpennies & bun pennies (what were these?) for the Robins Fund, and I laid in Addenbrooke's Hospital in the Robins cot with mastoids"

There was obviously more to the Cambridge Daily News' "Robin Goodfellow" club than I realised – can anybody tell me more please

Mr P.J. Parks of Alex Wood Road, Cambridge was clearing a house when he found a picture postcard which seems to show some of the crowd at the opening of the Cambridge War Memorial. In the background is the Station Road Café, its windows filled with advertisements for Frys & Cadbury's chocolate, Brooke Bond tea and ice cream

SCANNED ON DISK – "WAR" with 2ND SCAN ZOOMED IN ON SHOP

Keith Ward has written from Pickering, Ontario, to thank everybody who responded to his memories of the Central School. Although a lot of the respondents were not in his actual year he did receive a letter from somebody he knew as a boy and this contact will allow him to visit and rekindle boyhood memories next time he's in Cambridge.

Memories, 17th December 1999, by Mike Petty

Last week I was too late to meet Father Christmas. We'd spent much of the day at Aldeburgh, strolling by the sea in the winter sunshine. Then returning to the welcome of the log fire at our Elizabethan hotel near Woodbridge there was the sign: "Father Christmas arrives her today, by boat". So we pulled into the car park at Snape Maltings, along with everybody else, and toured the various shops and galleries. There we glimpsed a red coat – but it was not Santa. I searched everywhere – but he had gone.

Perhaps I will be lucky and catch up with him before the Big Day. Perhaps he will arrive outside Eaden Lilley in his vintage Model-T Ford, borrowed from his pal Dr Who – as he did in November 1983. Except of course that the big Eaden Lilley store in Market Street is no longer open.

So what was Santa shopping for in **1983**. Many stores were bulging with latest wizardry of silicon chip with computer games selling at between £4.95 and £7.85 – just a cult it was thought but "today's youngsters like to feel they are in the swim". If so they would be into Darth Vader or C-3PO masks and costumes - just under £5 – or huge space vehicles from the Star Wars film which were still tops with the boys that year. And if the budget did not stretch to factory-made toys you could make your own from a plastic construction set with a space command centre, mission control and other space age gizmos.

But one of the main hits of the 1983 season was a sonic puppy – a cuddly wriggling bundle who boxes his paws as he rises on his hind legs to be petted. Clap hands and he freezes, another clap and he scampers around in search of more fun. The price: around £13. Do you still have yours?

For youngsters on a budget there were leg-warmers at £1.50 but for the fashion-conscious females Eaden Lilley had a simulated two-tone mink jacket with contrasting edging at just £79.95

In December **1976** you could be guaranteed a visit from Santa when a Cambridge businessman set up a "rent-a-Santa" scheme which brought Father Christmas walking up your garden path on Christmas morning making a personal delivery service. The charge was £1 a house, no matter how many presents were delivered, and there was a considerable response from the Arbury road area. In Comberton Santa arrived by helicopter at the village college - courtesy of the PTA. This was far better than trying to shop in Cambridge where at Christmas 1975 there was parking chaos, with 400 cars going round and round looking for parking spaces

In December **1974** it was the lights in Fitzroy Street that were attracting the crowds, shining out again after the previous Christmas had been blacked-out, along with almost everything else, during the National Emergency that had restricted power supplies. Now however the Fitzroy-Burleigh area, with the best ever display of Christmas lights, two departmental stores and the city's only indoor market, was determined to prove itself a worthy rival to the city centre & traders had entered into the spirit of Christmas. So the traditional lights glowed in defiance of the wintry weather and the general uncertainty hanging over the Kite Area

And there were bargains to be had. Terence Wines of Burleigh street came out cheapest in a News survey - with Booths gin at £2.60, Johnnie Walker Whisky at £2.52 and Double Century Sherry at £1.13 it undercut everybody else. Tesco at their Regent street store had a pack of six Mr Kipling's mince pies for 23p, or a family pack of Golden Wonder or Smiths crisps for 13p. They were facing competition from Beehive 1 which now had a new access from Coldham's Lane, in addition to York St. They had a 7½ oz tin of John West Salmon for 45p and a twin pack of Andrex Toilet rolls for 16p

For the children Ren-Models, of Fitzroy street offered electric train sets from £3.65 to supplement the essential present of "a bumper colouring or painting book, boxes of gaily coloured pencils or perhaps a small toy" as recommended by the "News" shopping expert

For mum to watch the Queen's 1974 Christmas message Wards of Burleigh Street & Bradwell's Court had Pye 170 20" black & white televisions down from £81 to £61. For dads Barney's Superstores of Mill Road had Combie Overcoats - all wool, heavyweight, high fashion at £11.95. But for the ultimate present for the whole family you could pop down to Gilbert Rice of Hill Road where a 1971 Capri 3000E in maze yellow with black interior was marked down from £1079 to £700

Not that Cambridge was a place to come shopping by car. In December **1969** the police had come to the end of their tether with the city's traffic problems when Chief Supt Barlow attacked the abysmal parking facilities. As columns of cars jammed Pembroke Street and Downing Street heading for the piece of waste ground that was the Lion Yard car park police appealed to motorists to keep out: "there is plenty of room at the Cattle Market and on the city perimeter" and Father Christmas was at Mitcham's, the store for fashion and furnishing, on Chesterton Road, where a parcel from Santa was 1/- (5p).

But who could resist driving their new cars - an Alfa Romeo 1300 LT £1199.99 or Fiat 124 for £985.76 from Maloney & Rhodes - for the bargains that year. Roses Fashion Centre, The Colonnade, Sussex Street offered stunning full-length coats in Bri-Nylon, Orlon collared and fleece lined throughout for £88.00 (£84.00) while the Co-op had dreamy night-dresses in frilly, floaty nylon from 29/11 (£1.49). Meanwhile Reeds in St Andrews street offered roll-ons, corsets, girdles, step-ins, (whatever any of those were), bras with straps and bras without

them and Eaden Lilley had Gay Party Frocks for children and teenagers in flock and taffeta nylon from 57/6, (£2.75)

For the great day itself Dewhurst & Eastman, “the modern butchers”, offered top quality fresh-killed turkeys at 3/9 (18p) lb. whilst Dolamore Petty Cury offered the perfect accompaniment with South African sherries from 10/- (50p) per bottle, Yugoslav Reisling at 8/- (40p) & Three Stars cognac 43/-, (£2.15)

What’s more money was no longer a problem as advertisements explained the new way to pay - Barclaycard, now in its 4th year. So out to Renbro, in Mill Road for a Pye 22 inch "Squared Screen" tube tv, with push-button selection of BBC1 BBC-2 & ITV in beautiful teak finish cabinet for £265 or to Coxheads of Regent street Cambridge, Royston & Haverhill for Blue Spot Radiogram, full stereo for records and VHF radio, with £38.1.0 off the normal price - now just £89.

Such advanced music technology would bring new life to those records you’d bought for Christmas ten years earlier. In **1959** Millers of Sidney street had been selling top LPs "Cliff sings" by Cliff Richard, “Lonnie Rides Again” by Lonnie Donegan & his skiffle group or “Conway Twitty Sings” - all for 34/1½ . (£1.70)

Perhaps you still have copies of that December’s top ten, which had included "What do you want", “Little White Bull”, “What do you want to make those eyes at me for”, “Travelling light” and “Jingle Bell Rock”. And while you might recall the performers – Adam Faith, Tommy Steele, Emile Ford, Cliff Richard & Max Bygraves, who now could can recall another Christmas 1959 top ten hit – “Happy Reindeer” by Dancer, Prancer & Nervous

Now that’s a clue – watch out for the reindeer. But despite park and ride the car parks are too full for sleighs. But who knows I might meet Santa shopping for last-minute bargains at the supermarket – like the children who met him shopping in the Co-Op in Burleigh Street in 1979, snapped by News photographer Chris Morton. Even if you never meet him, I hope he comes to you.

Memories, 24th December 1999 – by Mike Petty

Are you dreaming of a white Christmas?

Extremes of weather always make headlines at the time - and are then forgotten.

Who now recalls the very great frost of 1895, which lasted from January to March, the heavy snow of April 1908, or 1916 when trainee soldiers fought snowball fights with townspeople on Parker's Piece?

There was the snow of 1927 that began on Christmas Day and led to the most complete stoppage of road and rail traffic since the coming of the motor car. It was followed two years later by the hardest frost since 1895.

There was more heavy snowfall in 1947 when hundreds of acres of fenland subsequently disappeared under floodwater after it melted, and the even worse outbreak of snow in 1958.

We forget the heavy falls of January 1962, but probably not the great blanket of snow which started in December that year and continued into 1963. For this was the great freeze.

Right at the end of December 1962 Cambridge felt itself fortunate to escape the worst of the weather sweeping the rest of the country. Buses and trains kept running and roads continued open. But it was not to last, by January 1st 1963 snow drifts up to seven feet deep were

blocking access to many local villages and Cambridge itself was cut off for the first time in living memory.

Temperatures remained below freezing for days and the River Cam froze, prompting skaters in their hundreds and cyclists by the score to turn out on to the river. By 20th January Cambridge police station was turned into a temporary boarding home to accommodate 15 people cut off by blizzards from their country homes. Bus services grown to a halt as their diesel froze.

By 22nd January the temperature was 32 degrees below freezing as arctic conditions persisted. Next day the city's water mains froze and fuel supplies of all types were under pressure. A brief thaw saw Parker's Piece turned into a lake, quickly turning into a skating rink when it froze again. Throughout January air frost was recorded on 28 nights. The bitter conditions continued throughout February with air frost on 27 nights. The Lent bumps were cancelled for the first time in 136 years.

Eventually Spring-like weather arrived on 6th March, with temperatures soaring into the 60's and people started to calculate the cost of it all. The winter had been bitter, but picturesque and numerous people took photographs of what was the worst that Cambridge had suffered – up to that time.

Since then the News cameramen have been out and about to capture the changed world that snow brings to familiar landscapes

Do you recognise yourself – or indeed even the places where the photographs were taken. They include : Cambridge : Emmanuel road (no date), Cement Works, Coldham's Lane (no date), & Park street on 23 Oct 1974,
St Mary's street Ely Dec 1968,
Castle street Saffron Walden (no date),
High Street, St Neots, Dec 1981,
Chalkstone estate, Haverhill Feb 1991,
Stuntney horse (no date)

Do you have snow scenes that also show a changed landscape – send them to Mike Petty and the News

Readers write

Beryl Dye writes from the warmer climes of Seaford, South Australia, having finally caught up with a “Memories” article of June 1998. It featured where a class of St Matthew's Infants School, Cambridge, in 1941. For Beryl (nee Cole) was on it. She writes: “I remember during the war we used to go to an Air Raid shelter in Young Street when a raid was imminent. I was brought up in Bradmore Street, my dad was a coalman. If an air raid went off during the night we used to go to the shelter under the Zion Chapel”. Beryl emigrated to Adelaide in November 1968 and has been back to Cambridge a couple of times since, but the house in Bradmore street has been demolished. Do you remember the area? If you would like Beryl's address let me know.

Ann Whitmore (nee Free) from Impington has sent another school picture to tease anybody who attended Richmond Road school, Cambridge, in 1940-41. It shows the school band with their scarlet jackets with white bells and brass buttons and navy skirts or trousers and caps. The material, she remembers was very thick and itchy,

As for the building itself, Ann recalls: “The school was small – one large room with a folding partition to separate the five-year-olds from the six-year-olds. The high windows allowed no distraction during school time. In the winter the only heat came from a large fire in the man room. Very often the milk would arrive frozen and would be placed around the blazing fire, inside the fire guard, to thaw out, which caused the tops to burst open. We used to have our own spoons for the spoonful of malt that was dished out of a large jar to us each morning by the Malt Monitors. I remember the wood block floor was always very sticky after this ritual!

“It had a very dark entrance porch, where we hung up our coats. This was also used as an air raid shelter —we enjoyed air raid practice because we were all given a boiled sweet from a large jar!”

Muriel Talbot writes from Trumpington. “As a child living in Heydon I, too, was a Robin. My number was 345, and I still have my blue badge with the Robin on it! For many years my family and I collected “ship halfpennies” and “blue pennies” for the Robin Cot in Addenbrooke’s Hospital. Happy memories!”

Jim Longstaff is one of that group of people who have to keep finding speakers for his society. Now he is trying to build up a list of people willing and able to lecture on local historical topics in the South Cambridgeshire, North Herts, North Essex area. If you would like to go on his list please contact him at 8B, St John’s Street, Duxford, CB2 4RA. The Reference Library at 7, Lion Yard, Cambridge, CB2 3QD also has a database of speakers and would be keen to hear from you too.

IF YOU NEED TO CUT PLEASE HOLD OVER THIS ARTICLE FOR ANOTHER TIME

Roynon Howes writes from Isleham following my mention of the Dunmow Flitch. “Your article certainly brought back memories. I can well remember my mother telling me about the time when my father had just lost his job (which only paid £2.10s.6d. a week) and we had to give up our house in Chingford and go to live with my grandparents in Cambridge. We were only there a short time before father got another job at the Ortona Bus Company, but at a reduced pay. On this he was able to rent a house in Hardwick Street at 10s. per week.

Money was still tight and when somebody suggested my parents should enter a local competition for happily married couples and the prize was a £10 food voucher, they jumped at it. They won the competition and were then told they would be automatically entered for the famous Dunmow Flitch. All this was in 1935 but I can remember travelling to Dunmow in a car my father had borrowed and we sat all day in a courthouse. There was a judge in a wig, and jury and barristers, just like a normal court.

After my mother had given evidence on how they would react in various circumstances, my father was brought in to answer the same questions and say how his wife would react. As he was led to the dock I shouted out “Daddy”, which prompted the Prosecution Council to leap to his feet and proclaim this was clear evidence that my father was an unfaithful man (I was sitting with a lady who had come to support them). My mother, who was a forthright woman, jumped up and shouted back: “You daft idiot, he’s my baby. Can’t you see he’s got red hair like me?” This caused the court to roar with laughter and from then on the jury were with my father.

The object was to prove to the jury that you had lived with your wife for twelve months with never a cross word. It was all very tongue in cheek, although taken very seriously, but it was to entertain and the best entertainer won. My parents won the “Flitch”, which was a whole side of bacon, which they proudly carried back to Cambridge and distributed among their friends. We might have been poor but we never went short of food.

Memories 31st December 1999 by Mike Petty

On this last day of the 1900s I thought it might be interesting to see how our ancestors commemorated the start of the Twentieth Century, 99 years ago. For to our Victorian forebears the new century started on the 1st January 1901.

The year was launched, like all years had been launched since 1825 – by the firing of rockets. At five minutes to midnight Alderman Arthur Deck strolled from his door on King's Parade across to the space in front of King's College chapel. Two rockets were placed in a crate and just as King's college clock struck the midnight hour the Alderman applied a lighted match to the touch paper. With its flight was symbolised the flight of the nineteenth century. A few moments later a second rocket heralded the arrival of the twentieth and at that moment the bells of the churches near at hand rang out their message to the wider world.

The century was born & Mr Deck was cheered back to his house. Then all adjourned to Deck's back parlour where steaming punch was ladled out with unsparing hand and the Alderman's health was drunk time and time again.

But you do not have to be 100 years old to remember the custom, for it continued. Arthur Deck saw the start of 1908, but not its conclusion; his rockets continued until 1913, then Dora - the Defence of the Realm Act - forbade them for the duration of the war.

In December 1919 those Cambridge people looking forward to a general return to pre-war conditions at the festive season were disappointed to learn that there would be no rockets to signal the New Year.

Sometimes, Mr Deck junior explained, the rocket sticks caused damage when they fell and - perhaps more significantly - the crowd had been rowdy - things not to be tolerated in those days. So he had decided that his father's custom must not be his. It seems a pity said the paper - "there are many losses we -could submit to with less regret than the loss of the rockets and the abandonment of a celebration which was based on good fellowship".

It was the end of a chapter, but not the end of the story. In 1922 the custom was revived in response to continued pressure. But it was thought no longer safe to use Kings Parade for the launch and the ceremony transferred to Parker's Piece. Midnight found a thousand people assembled to watch the rockets. But it was not quite the same, numbers dropped off and people found other attractions in the town on New Years Eve.

So it was that 1929 arrived uncelebrated by any rockets and one of the most celebrated of Cambridge customs fizzled out.

Do you remember the New Year rockets – or does the New Year hold especial memories for you – write to Mike Petty

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As for the building itself, Ann recalls: “The school was small – one large room with a folding partition to separate the five-year-olds from the six-year-olds. The high windows allowed no distraction during school time. In the winter the only heat came from a large fire in the man room. Very often the milk would arrive frozen and would be placed around the blazing fire, inside the fire guard, to thaw out, which caused the tops to burst open. We used to have our own spoons for the spoonful of malt that was dished out of a large jar to us each morning by the Malt Monitors. I remember the wood block floor was always very sticky after this ritual!

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PICTURES SCANNED ON DISK :

RICHMOND ROAD SCHOOL 1940

Memories 2000 in one sequence

Memories, by Mike Petty, 7th January 2000

It would seem as if many people received mobile telephones in their Christmas stockings this year. However the honour of owning the very first telephone in Cambridge was claimed by an Undergraduate at Pembroke College in 1878. He fixed up two between his 'diggings' in St Andrews Street and a summer house at the bottom of the garden. The little retreat was an excellent place for an illicit game of cards and the telephone allowed his landlord to give warning of any approaching Proctor.

In January 1927 came the first trans-Atlantic telephone call to be received in Cambridge when President Lowell of Harvard University spoke to senior members of the University of Cambridge.

The call travelling via Boston and New York, then "through the ether" to Rugby and finally down to the switchboard at the Cambridge telephone exchange in the usual way. Reception was somewhat "mushy" but nothing worse that was often experienced in domestic calls.

Much of the conversation reflected the formality of the occasion, an exchange of greetings and ideals but once others joined in more mundane matters were discussed. It was Sir Ernest Rutherford who introduced the inevitable topic of the weather, informing the New World that in the Old it had been snowing.

When Cambridge Rotary club chatted to their opposite numbers in Ohio in 1948 it was to thank them for their dinner, which had been shipped over by their American cousins and served by the chefs of the Dorothy Cafe

A minute or two after midnight on Christmas Eve 1948 between 60 and 70 men sat down to what must been the first Christmas dinner served in Cambridge that year. They were members of the night operating staff at the Telephone Exchange, and they chose that unconventional hour because their periods of duty make it difficult for them to hold a social function at a more normal time. They were served with turkey, plum pudding and mince pies as they sat at their switchboards.

Were you one of those switchboard operators, or did you used to play your part in providing post office services in the region. If so Betty Eveleigh from St Neots seeks your assistance in connection with an advanced diploma in Local History run by the Cambridge University Board of Continuing Education. She is seeking memories of the post offices and their role in the local communities from 1930 to 1950. She has given me some memories she's already collected, just to jog others.

At Bottisham the telephone exchange had to be kept open 24 hours a day in 1939. Frequently the operator had to get up in the middle of the night to put through manually (by turning a small handle) the red, yellow or green air raid warnings to the police station. Things got more hectic when the United States Army Airforce arrived in 1943.

Evacuees also added to the post office clerk's problems – does anybody remember sorting out the wartime allowances to families of servicemen on active duty. And then there were the wartime National Savings and Post Office Savings Bank.

Linton also had a Labour Exchange on the premises, where the unemployed signed on for the dole. Sub post offices were often a business within a business. At Yelling sweets and some groceries were sold in part of the living quarters. Oakley in Bedfordshire had a very small extra business indeed. A large container of vinegar stood in one corner of the post office, and people brought bottles to be filled. In contrast Cottenham post office incorporated a chemist's business with numbered drawers with Latin names as well as a small library.

Bicycles were generally used for mail deliveries in the villages though in Bottisham at wartime this could be tricky because the tanks that came through the village broke up the road service.

Were local post offices used to advertise village events, perhaps dances or whist drives to help raise funds for National Savings or Warship Weeks? Were propaganda posters displayed inside? Was the post office and general stores a "gossip shop" or a useful meeting place, what did it look like inside and out – this is the sought of thing Betty needs to know

If any of this jogs your memories please write to me or contact Betty Eveleigh direct at PO Box 55, St Neots, PE19 6SJ – or ring her on 01480 880454

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Rodney Dale from Haddenham recently entertained Chesterton Local History Society with his memories of life in the Hawthorn Way area of Cambridge as he first knew them when an evacuee during the war.

He recalls : "Our end of Hawthorn Way was dominated by Hallen's Showroom. To the west was Matthew's off licence (I think run by the Mr Hall who later became a greengrocer), and to the east Alex S Thom, the pharmacist. Mr Thom ('Sandy') was a bird watcher in his spare time; he had a strange Scottish accent and his enquiry as to whether my mother had 'read his pamphlet on the moustached warbler' met with a puzzled stare. Mr Thom's other claim to

fame was playing chess with the stone-deaf lawyer Thorold Gossett , who gave up shaving when his wife died and consequently sported a bigger and bigger beard.

On the Hawthorn Way sides of Hallens were BF Norman, hardware, and Stanley Gibbons, the Lemona Stores (which later crossed the road). You could scarcely get into Norman's shop with its smell of paraffin, firelighters, creosote and oil and everywhere built up to the ceiling with shelves of goodies. It never occurred to me that there might be some items of ironmongery Mr Norman didn't keep. Mr Norman also had a travelling shop, also piled high with goodies, but I'm not sure what area he covered. The Lemona Stores, by contrast, seemed to have scarcely any stock at all. It was a subject of continued debate how he managed to make a living. Mr Gibbons had a peculiar method of locomotion which included sudden sharp turns on one foot to get him where he wanted to be. It was said that he had been injured by a recoiling gun in the Great War, which had affected his muscular control. One tended to buy only prepacked goods from him, as he would open a paper bag by blowing into it, sometimes producing a plosive cough for good measure."

Does any of this jog your memories of out-of-centre shops

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Peter Wells, an enthusiast from Norwich, has written in with additional details about two of the Sentinel steam wagons that were used at the Cambridge Gas Works. One, a tipper, which they bought second-hand in 1945 and used till 1963 is now in private hands in Glasgow. These wagons cruise at 30-40 mph and will touch 60 mph if needed, although the speed limit for lorries was only 20 mph until the mid 1950s. Do you have memories of the earlier days of lorry driving before motorways and bypasses.

The other Gas Works steam vehicle is a Sentinel railway loco. Called 'Gas Bag' she was used to steam coal trucks at the Gas Board's Coldham's Lane sidings and was last heard of at the Steamtown Railway Museum in Lancashire.

**

Eugene Gavin of Cambridge has contacted me with a story of childhood disappointment concerning Royston. Having heard of Alfred Brissenden's wonderful talking dog (Memories 3rd Dec) Eugene and his friends decided to pay a visit on the celebrity animal at its home in Green Street one evening in 1949. They took with them the necessary packet of biscuits to get it to speak and performed the necessary ritual – pretending to eat one themselves, safe in the knowledge that the dog would then say "I want one". Only it didn't. It wasn't that the animal was not hungry, it was just too hoarse to speak!

**

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As for the building itself, Ann recalls: "The school was small – one large room with a folding partition to separate the five-year-olds from the six-year-olds. The high windows allowed no distraction during school time. In the winter the only heat came from a large fire in the man room. Very often the milk would arrive frozen and would be placed around the blazing fire, inside the fire guard, to thaw out, which caused the tops to burst open. We used to have our own spoons for the spoonful of malt that was dished out of a large jar to us each morning by the Malt Monitors. I remember the wood block floor was always very sticky after this ritual!

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Memories, January 14, 2000, by Mike Petty

Just 50 years ago County Planners were preparing to launch a document that would have a profound impact on the development of Cambridge. They had employed planning consultants to consider the future and now Professor W.G. Holford and Mr H. Myles Wright were ready to reveal their proposals.

It would be a Cambridge with several new roads, three new bridges, an expanded university with one or two new colleges and a maximum population of 100,000 people.

One of the major concerns, even then, was traffic. To cope with the increasing number of vehicles two new routes were proposed. One would leave Huntingdon road at Storeys Way and strike south, over Madingley Road & open fields till it reached Barton Road. It would continue towards the town before a new road struck off across Lammas Land, crossing the river on a new bridge before joining Trumpington Road alongside Chaucer Road.

The second major route would strike south from Milton Road, effectively along the line of the present Elizabeth Way, continuing to link with East Road & Trumpington Road.

These routes would be supplemented by a spine relief road from Huntingdon Road through the houses in the Alpha Road of New Chesterton area before crossing the Cam on a brand new bridge and running over Jesus Green and Christ’s Pieces to Drummer Street. The impact of this road across Cambridge’s commons would have been enormous.

More major highway construction would see Downing Street and Pembroke Street continued down Mill Lane and across another bridge to West Cambridge. All this would enable things to continue until outer by-pass roads were constructed.

Later there would be another link from St Andrew’s Street to Guildhall Street where would be a three-storey car park at Lion Yard to accommodate 400 cars, with shops on the ground floor. This bit of the jigsaw was finally implemented some 25 years later, much of the rest never saw completion.

Away from traffic considerations the planners felt that University expansion was inevitable and proposed that all sites west of the river between Huntingdon and Barton Road should be regarded as a reserve for University building.

But the town itself had already grown considerably in recent years and a further large growth of population would have no benefit to its residents, thought the County's planners. Anyway the housing shortage was already so great that the present inhabitants could not be housed within ten years. The area had virtually no unemployment and there were already about 1,800 jobs on offer so industrial development was to be prohibited. Cambridge would remain a small University market town. Not everybody agreed & the stage was set for a battle that was to continue for decades.

Were you involved in the battle to shape Cambridge's future in the fifties – and was traffic really all that bad back then?

This week has come a reminder that not all County decisions always come to pass, with the news that Coleridge school has been saved from closure. When the school opened in 1938 it was the first of its kind with new facilities such as libraries. When it celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1987 its retired headmaster, Freddie Kingston recalled how he had set up a garden laboratory at the school. He bought an old bus for £7 and sold the seats for £25. He fitted it out with gas and electricity and turned it into the laboratory. It gave the school extra space, but it was not long before the planning authority discovered it and it had to be taken away. Now it looks as if it is set to continue well into the 21st century.

Some schools are delighted to turn their back on history. Children at St Andrew's school, Chesterton back in 1981 were delighted to see the end of their old school and look forward to a new one in Nuffield Road. Pupils at Cambridge's Newnham Croft Primary School in 1985 were having to endure overcrowded classrooms, leaky roofs, mildew and outdated lavatories. Their prefabricated dining room had been demolished because it was unsafe and so they brought packed lunches to eat in class. They got their new school in March 1990.

Other schools have closed, never to reopen in communities such as Wicken, Stuntney and Prickwillow. Their children transferred to bigger schools elsewhere.

But was bigger better, or did new buildings lack the atmosphere of old ones. What do you think. If you remember changing schools involuntarily, or had experience of adapting to new premises only to find them not a patch on the old, let me know.

When Beryl Dye (nee Cole) wrote from Adelaide, South Australia about her schooldays in the 1940s she happened to mention that she used to live in Bradmore Street, off East Road, Cambridge. Now three readers have contacted me who used to know her all those years ago. Shirley Turpin (then Horn) used to join her in the air-raid shelters under Zion chapel. Grace Deas (nee West) and her three brothers Harry, Ron and Bryan also lived in the street. Grace is in touch with another childhood friend from the area, who also lives in Australia. Its a small world.

Steven Newport from Worthing is seeking information on the village feast at Milton. It was apparently known as Peas Porridge Sunday and was held in May. Do you remember it, and was there a traditional dish for the feast. At Stretham I believe it used to be frumenty which was made with milk, wheat, sugar, currants and spices. Did Milton or other villages have

other church-related observations such as Easter Sepulchres, Church clipping, Shrovetide or Pancake Bells. Please write and I will pass your letters on.

**

I would like to thank everybody who has contacted me to say they've seen themselves or their relations in some of the pictures in "Memory Lane, Cambridge" and for pushing it to the top of the Heffers best-selling list. Mr G.T. Tyrrell of Cherry Hinton points out that the plaque taken down from the old Drill Hall in East Road was taken to the Territorial Army centre on Cherry Hinton Road (not Coldham's Lane). He knows because he took it there and hung it up himself!

Rosemary Myers from Cambridge has spotted the same mini-car appearing twice in the book. Once parked in King's Parade during a Cambridge rag day and again in Bateman street. She writes: "Cambridge parking has been so difficult for so long I can't believe the same car can star twice!" So does anybody know who owned an Austin Mini registration FER 680D. Did it perhaps belong to the News photographer who took the picture. Can you help.

If you'd like to see something of the book before you buy why not come along to Gresham's club on Gonville Place (beside the YMCA) next Thursday, 18th January at 7 o'clock when there'll be a talk and slide show. Admission is £2 and you can get refreshments and bar food at the club.

NOTE AM STILL WAITING FOR EXTRA DETAILS ON THIS STORY.

More smiling children are pictured in a snap lent me by Anne Cousins of Milton. Amongst them is her mum who is their with her sister. She is not too well just at present and would love to hear from you if you were there too. So where is it, when was it and who's on it. Over to you.

Memories, by Mike Petty 21st January 2000

Anne Cousins from Milton has written to seek your assistance over a mystery picture.

"I wonder what my Mum, Mildred Plumb, would say were she to open the Cambridge Evening News that she reads avidly every day, only to see this familiar photograph smiling up at here from your pages. It would mean a lot to her as she is on the picture somewhere with her sister Daphne I am sure it will also mean much to several other faces appearing here".

We really know very little about the snap, which was sent by a friend. Mildred used to live in the Cherry Hinton area, and it might be a Cambridge Gas Works Christmas party. There's not much to go on, so over to you.

And while you're in the helping mood I have other calls for assistance. Mike Dimambro of the Cambridge University & District Rugby Referees' Society is trying to establish quite when his society started. His research so far show that a Cambridgeshire Rugby Referees' Society was in being in the season 1949-50 when the Secretary was L.H. Elliott of Regent St., Cambridge. The University Society appears in the 1950-51 handbook. But local club members who were active in the 1940s recall the Society appointing referees for their games.

Amongst notes collected by the late Frank Reeve I find reference to the early days of rugby in Cambridge. Apparently in 1861 some old boys of Rugby school joined forces to play the new game of "rucker" on Parker's Piece. "They made a circle round a ball and butted each other". So unacquainted were the sporting fans with the game that they tried to separate the players under the impression they were fighting each other. Then in 1872 a group gathered in a room at Clare College to found the Cambridge University Rugby Union Club and adopted new rules which abolished hacking, tripping and scragging (twisting an opponent's neck round). One early star of the game was R.T. Finch in the

1870s. He was somewhat on the small side and able to dodge through the Oxford backs who were too tall to tackle him – on one occasion he is said to have run between the legs of a large Oxford player!

All this is a long time back – do you have memories of more recent rugby characters?

Rosemary Eason seeks assistance with the early days of the Cambridge One-Act Drama Festival which started in 1969. She believes that an earlier Town and Village drama competition used to take place sometime before the Second World War. Do you remember it, or can you help. Drop me a line and I will pass it on or E-mail her at ken.easton@tesco.net

The recent picture of the Richmond Road school band has brought letters from Ian Worland of Milton and Jean Pilmer of Elsworth. Ian is on the back row in the picture, which was taken in the school yard. He thinks one of the teachers was a Miss Chandler and recalls that the school used to have a big deck chair near the fire that you could sit in if you didn't feel very well. Jean has a photo of the original band, about 1937, and recalls that the uniforms were made for them by a tailor who used to live in Richmond Road. She started school there when she was three! – she followed her brother to school and Miss Chandler said she could stay.

Dorothy Thwaites of Swavesey has written with further memories Bradmore street, off East Road, where she lived during the war. "I remember very well the regular night trips down the air raid shelter under Zion chapel. Our air raid warden was Mr Brown who made sure everybody left their houses and used the shelter." She also remembers our Australian correspondent, Beryl Cole, and the others who lived in the street including the Philpott family, Mrs Palmer and Joan with their dogs. At the other end of the street on the right hand side was the Souter family who ran a small shop, while Tom and Clara Palmer had another shop on the corner. "It would be nice to get in touch with a few people who lived in that area – the houses have all gone – but the memories live on". I will be happy to pass letters on to her.

Ron Smith from Gt Abington has sent me some detailed memories of the East Road area . He remembers an old jam factory with a large brick chimney which was taken over and became the Walls Ice Cream depot. On the corner of Norfolk Street was Ward's cycle and pram shop managed by Bill and Jack Cairns. Ron adds: "My brother Fred was the cycle mechanic, brother Sid was the van driver, first in an Austin Seven which was replaced by an Austin Ten, both vans painted yellow with the wording J. Ward & Sons on the side. Many makes of cycles were stocked and Ward's produced their own called 'The Crown' which was assembled on the premises. Brother Fred brought rims, hubs and spokes home and built the wheels on a payment by number agreement"

"On the corner of Brewhouse Lane stood the remains of an old hand laundry. At the rear stood a huge building called the drying sheds, this became a store for bundles of canes, willows and materials used in basket making. My mother held the key and basket makers would come along, select their requirements and pay my mother. These monies were taken by my brother Len on Saturday morning to the Shrive basket shop on Peas Hill I derive a lot of pleasure going back over 70 years ago down Memory Lane". Thank you Ron, we enjoy reading them.

Miss Pamela Habgood from Waterbeach was thrilled to see last Friday's picture of the Coleridge Girls' School reunion. She tells me that Miss Mabel Waddelow was the Deputy Head of the school for many years, teaching maths and geography and was a greatly loved and respected teacher. Her girls decided in 1988 to hold a reunion to celebrate their having left the school 21 years before. The picture features former head girl Margaret Hagger (nee Smith), with Gina Robinson and Christine Blackwell. Two members of staff are also shown, Mrs Anne Winnick and Mrs Glenys Williams. Mabel died in Waterbeach in 1991. There is an estate in the village named after her father.

Mrs Betty Tweed of Cheveley has discovered a photograph of a Boxing Day shooting party at Moulton Manor about 1956 when it was owned by Mr Lyndsy Lane. Amongst the folks shown at the back are

Eric Tweed who was the gardener & Les Johnson who worked on local farms. In the front row are Mr Green who kept the King's Head in the village and Inspector Lummis of Newmarket police force.

From Thriplow comes a letter from Eva Hall with regard to the old Cambridge Daily News Robin Fellowship. Her brother Alec Wilson and herself both enrolled in the Robins in the 1930's. They used to save bun pennies for the Robin cot at Addenbrooke's Hospital. The coins used to be taken to the CDN office to be counted by Uncle Robin and they would await eagerly for our names to appear in the Robins' column of the paper. Eva's late husband and his three brothers were also Robins so when her son Peter was born in 1950 he was enrolled, as were his sisters Pamela and Jennifer and their children in turn joined up, everybody saving their loose change for the funds. By the mid 1950s the Robin Fellowship had grown so big it was making regular donations to several local charities. Later the Fund was used to sponsor children abroad and people lost interest and the club folded.

Rita Moore of Sutton phoned to tell me of an interesting discovery she had found amongst her mother's things. It is an old brown wallet advertising H. Goodall's 'Leading house for footwear, Sutton'. She has asked local people but nobody remembered him. I have done some checking in the old Kelly's County Directories in the Cambridgeshire Collection and discovered that Harold Goodall was a bootmaker in the village in 1916. He is not listed in the nearest other directories, 1912 or 1922. This is far too far back for anybody to know anything (or is it?)

PICTURES ON DISK

Anne Cousin's mystery picture, perhaps a Gas Works Christmas party
Shooting party at Moulton Manor 1956

Memories, 28th January 2000, by Mike Petty

This week we are back to the dance band days, thanks to two readers' letters..

Charles Sharp from Burwell was born at a cottage in Union Lane, Chesterton which was best remembered as the Wayfarers' Rest, offering tea and a slice of bread to tramps, sometimes consisting of whole families with small children, who were trudging their desperate way to Chesterton workhouse, nearby.

But his memories are of the building next door. He writes: "Recent completion of redevelopment at the junction of High Street & Union Lane Chesterton finally did away with the Premier Hall, which formed part of the site first developed by my old friend, Leslie Hallen. But demolition revealed that the main structure of this once highly popular public venue, much favoured by dancers in the thirties, had survived surprisingly intact.

"My father, Ben Sharp, who was caretaker at the Premier, continued to look after the building when Leslie Hallen moved his business there from Chapel Street. Motor bikes took over the dance floor and a switch to war-work saw a large extension built on the lawn. My dad divided his time between looking after what had become a small factory, being a fireman at Marshall's airdrome and meeting up again with World War I comrades in the Home Guard. But long after it was all over it was still the halcyon pre-war days of the Premier Hall that he loved to recall, when princes from exotic lands vied with jockeys from Newmarket for the privilege of doing the Charleston with the prettiest girls in Cambridge"

Charles has now started some serious research about the Dance Hall, and has his own memories of being pulled up and down on a blanket to polish the marvellous floor on which people danced to the

music of Reg Cottage and Percy Cowell. But he is lacking pictures, and would welcome more recollections. Write to me and I will pass them on, or contact him on 01638 742540

What would be ideal would be posters advertising the events there – but who would keep such items? Well Percy Seeby of Trumpington for one. He has a notice dating back to 1937 advertising a “wonder boy” accordionist – himself! Percy was just 12 years old at the time, a small boy with a large accordion. And on this occasion he did not get to play with other members of the band – he was thrown in as a solo performer. When it came to the interval the band disappeared and Percy was instructed to walk round the room playing the accordion to keep everybody entertained. For a shy young boy it seemed a very long interval!

Because of his age he was not allowed to accept cash, so when he started to play with local bands he was often paid in chocolate bars! This might have made him even more popular with schoolmates at St George’s Senior School.

But by then he was an experienced musician, having won several prizes for piano playing at musical competitions in Cambridge Guildhall. He added the saxophone to his repertoire and formed his own five-piece band, “The Ambassadors” which was later reformed and renamed “The Down Beats” featuring first Timothy Moore and later Ken Stevens on piano & Brian Lister of Lister-Jaguar fame on drums. In 1952 Percy secured a place in Freddy Webb’s band at the Embassy ballroom in Mill Road until it folded in 1957. Two years later, and in his late fifties, he formed a quintet with trumpeter Alan Broad and played at Cambridge Jazz Festivals.

Percy still plays at home with the very occasional public performance, as in 1994 when he and his pals played the night away whilst his wife, Mabel, entertained the guests. It was all very reminiscent of their wedding reception, 50 years earlier, when she had sat as a bride in solitary state whilst her new husband & his band played on in Trumpington Village Hall.

If you have such memories to look back on share them with me at the News

BBC Radio Cambridgeshire has been running a marvellous series of programmes entitled “The century speaks” as its contribution to a Millennium Oral History Project. Radio talks to you in a one-to-one manner and wonderful memories are shared daily but they disappear into the ether and there is seldom any opportunity to hear them again. But now Eva Simmons and her team have published some of the most memorable quotes in a new book “Cambridgeshire voices”(Tempus, £9.99) from which the following are culled.

“Monday was wash day and the neighbours had a competition to see who could get their washing out first. I’m sure one Soham woman cheated and got hers done on a Sunday, because she was always first. The washing took most of the day, You had a blue bag to keep the clothes white and had to scrub the clothes using a brush and a scrubbing board” – John Martin

“We had leftovers on Monday – washday – and Bubble and Squeak. On Tuesday we had rissoles and the leftovers went into the stewpot. We also had milk slop, which was vile stuff, disgusting. We were well off compared to some people. I can recall an old neighbour who used to get pig potatoes, they were the small potatoes (now so fashionable) which were then usually reserved for the pigs. But she was well off compared with the lady down the road who had no family and literally relied on everyone else feeding her. We never threw anything away, even leftover gravy would be saved for her and taken over in a screw top jar, she lived totally on other people’s leftovers” - Judy Fox (born 1955)

“We moved to a new council housing estate in Cherry Hinton, a village just outside Cambridge, in 1952. I can remember the back garden was facing onto yellow cornfields. They had little cottages in the High Street then, and they drove tractors and livestock through the village. All the kids grew up together and played together in the streets” – Paul Crossley

“I grew up in a small community in Ramsey Mereside and work with my grandfather on the farm from an early age. We were all working people and felt privileged to move into a council house with a school round the corner. I had two chances to go to a grammar school, but already I knew I wanted to go into farming, not be academic. I also wanted to continue to play rugby and the grammar school played football!” – Brian Abblitt

“There was an older man living near us who said there was a social dance and he’d walk me down there. The dance was held in a schoolroom, which smelled of paraffin. None of the men would dance and one man I spoke to said ‘I pay my money to see people like you make fools of themselves’” – Dora Tack

If any of this rings a bell with you and you missed telling it on the radio, share it with me.

Roger Coleman seeks your help in tracing the story of a 1937 Austin 6/18 horsepower York 7-seater car, registration number CER 100 which is remembered as “The Mayor’s car” by vintage car enthusiasts

For thirty years it was the property of Herbert T Wing of Huntingdon Road. He was mayor of Cambridge in 1936 &, Roger believes, ran Pratt Mannings’ civil and military tailors in Trinity Street. In 1964 Mrs Jeanne Wing sold the car, then still in its original royal blue-black condition, to local taxi driver Peter Fordham for around £30. By 1968 it was owned by Vic Harris who had it resprayed yellow as a promotion for his new ‘Jentri’ mens’ boutique in Regent Street. Roger photographed it then in Willis Road, Cambridge, when it was up for sale at £110, but parental opposition scotched his hopes of buying it. But he has it now and is busily restoring it. The car is so large and magnificent he is sure somebody must remember it and he would love to hear of any anecdotes of the car especially in its earlier days, or of the Wing family whose mayoral scrap books are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library. Write to me at the News and I will pass letters on.

[PICTURE ON DISK]

[NOT FOR PUBLICATION : ROGER HAS THE CAR IN BITS AT HIS GARAGE 106 GILBERT ROAD BUT IS NOT VERY KEEN TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED WITH IT FOR SECURITY REASONS. HOWEVER I HAVE WARNED HIM WE MIGHT TRY – HIS PAGER IS 01893 755236, HIS OFFICE NUMBER 316481 & HOME 357569]

Memories, 4th February 2000 by Mike Petty

Tomorrow night Robert Manderson will raise his voice as part of the Huntingdon Male Voice choir in the Mayor’s Charity concert at St Ives Free Church.

But just 25 years ago that voice carried him into the Guinness Book of Records for a performance, not in the concert hall, but in the bar of the Square and Compasses public house in Gt Shelford.

On 2nd February 1975 Robert sang for a mammoth nine hours without a break, smashing the then record for non-stop singing by a whole hour.

The world record attempt had started at 6am with a throat pastille and a very quiet rendering of ‘Grandad’. He moved on to a repertoire which included ‘Abide with me’, ‘Now is the hour’, and ‘Where have all the flowers gone’.

Monotony was the worst enemy and Robert kept body and mind together by carefully timing each song, playing with his puppy and trying to beat his invigilators at chess.

He did not eat and paused only long enough to take a breath between songs, choosing mainly low pitched numbers which did not put too great a strain on his voice. ‘Show me the way to go home’ was

the most repeated refrain as its simple melody presented few problems for him as he travelled from place to place by car. By mid-afternoon he had sung it – and several other songs – several times over.

Only once did he appear to be in difficulty, at that was at the crucial half-way point. But he reassured spectators with a scribbled note: ‘I feel all right, except for a tickle in the throat’ and another spoonful of honey fended off the threat.

At 12 noon he transferred to his local and from then on it was plain sailing. The encouragement he received boosted his morale. By 2 o’clock the record was his, but, only slightly hoarse and smelling slightly of lemon, honey and mentholypus, he jumped into a car for a last session with friends round a piano.

At three o’clock he finally called it a day, having raised more than £65 for cancer research and secured himself a place in music history. Not surprisingly he resisted the temptation to join a rehearsal for ‘Half a Sixpence’ at Sawston Youth Centre and went home for a meal and a sleep.

Tomorrow he will be back on the stage, still singing, 25 years after his world-record achievement, which as far as he knows has never been bettered, though non-stop events are no longer recognised by Guinness.

The Mayor’s Charity Concert by Huntingdon Male Voice Choir is at St Ives Free Church on Saturday at 7.30. Tickets are £6 on the door and proceeds will be shared between the British Heart Foundation and the Mayor’s Charity [PLEASE KEEP THIS PLUG – SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED BY MR MANDERSON AS CONDITION OF PARTICIPATING IN ARTICLE]

Music has been the theme uniting many of your letters this week.

Cliff Parker of Thriplow has written of his memories of the Cambridge Railway Silver Prize Band, of which his father, Leonard, was a founder member. The band room was built by railway volunteers and stood on the left side of Mill Road bridge approaching from Romsey Town. Before the Second World War the band competed at the Crystal Palace, won their section and moved up to a higher group, thus the name Silver Prize. Cliff was lucky enough to attend a concert at the Crystal Palace the year before it burnt down.

At the start of the war the band changed its name to the Home Guard Band and played at the passing out parades of the American forces. Once incident stands out: “I well remember seeing my father weaving an unsteady route along Mill Road on my sister’s bike, the Americans having plied him with whisky, something he never drank except at Christmas, and then only a teaspoonful in his tea”

“I attended many dances in the band room during the war. The lights were gas and when the siren sounded the lights automatically went dim. This was due to the fact that the gas supply was connected to the LNER service which was dimmed during the alert. It was said that this was connected without the knowledge of the railway, but I think they just turned a ‘blind eye’ to it”, adds Cliff.

Another reader sharing war-time memories this week is Mr G. Barton of Cambridge. He has lent me a picture of the Richmond Road & Oxford Road V.E. party with the Rev Partridge, vicar of St Luke’s, standing in black on the left.

But his main point of writing was to say that he too attended Richmond Road school around 1938-39 and has lent a picture of himself and playmates together with Miss Chandler and Miss North, her deputy. He is the lad sitting at the front, fourth from the right. Amongst the others are John Moore (3rd left at back), David Carter, John Allen, Richard Newling and Grahame Free. It might also include Mrs Margaret Cooke, (nee Brittain), then of Darwin Drive, now of Fulbourn, who saw herself on the previous picture featured.

Adrian Lemmon of Fordham has written to say he was chastised by his 11-year old daughter when she spotted him smoking – even though the picture of him in the Civic Restaurant was taken in 1968. There he was, right in the front with his friend Alan Ryall, totally unaware of the CEN photographer about to record him for posterity, though the picture was not actually published until I featured it in “Memory Lane, Cambridge”.

In 1963 Adrian had begun work at Gallyon’s of Bridge Street, Cambridge, as an apprentice gunsmith. At his starting wage of £3.15.0 (£3.75) a week the Civic became a regular haunt , providing good basic food at a modest price. By 1968 he had completed his apprenticeship but still patronised the restaurant, as did a wide cross-section of Cambridge folk. Amongst them was his companion at the table who later married one of the girls who worked there!

Do you recognise yourself at the Civic – write to Mike Petty at the News

A recent mention of H.F. Norman’s hardware shop in Hawthorn Way stimulated memories for Fred Miller of Histon for he has a photograph of himself outside that shop in 1934. He remembers that the firm also used to tour local villages, from Barton and Teversham to Bottisham and Toft selling everything from paraffin and Oxo cubes to baths and hardware. Their first vehicle was a Model T Ford which was replaced by an Austin van, to which they transferred the body from the Model T, a job undertaken at Marshall’s garage, Newmarket Road.

Fred started his own apprenticeship as a motor mechanic at Marshall’s in Jesus Lane in 1944 at wages of 25/- (£1.25) a week. He has lent me a photograph of the garage during wartime, with the blackout shutters let down to increase illumination. Mr Layton Smith was manager at that time, do you recall any of the others?

PICTURES

Robert Manderson world-record setter outside the Square and Compasses, Gt Shelford – CEN neg 298/75/17a – appeared CEN 3 Feb 1975 p7
Civic Restaurant, 1968

Richmond Road school c1939 – on disk
Richmond rd & Oxford Road VE street party, 1945 – on disk - both lent by G.Barton
Marshall’s garage, Jesus Lane 1944

MEMORIES 18th February 2000, by Mike Petty

It is always exciting opening the letters that arrive for me at the News, especially when they containing interesting items, such as that received from Mrs Kathleen Twinn of Cambridge. In fact it was more a parcel than an envelope. It was packed full with newspaper cuttings that had been carefully snipped and folded by her late husband over the last 30 years. Some he pasted into a notebook which he titled ‘Old scenes and views of Cambridge’. There are items compiled by a broad range of News reporters – Sara Payne, Pauline Hunt, Dan Jackson, David Waterson and Chris Elliott, plus one or two of my own. Most are on historical topics but some were very topical when they were published.

For instance it was in March of 1970 – nearly 30 years ago, that one of the main spans was being placed across the Cam as the new Elizabeth Bridge began to take shape. One of the biggest cranes in Europe was brought in to lift the 60-foot long concrete section into position, and of course the News was there to photograph it. In the background was the last of the chain ferries which used to ply their way across the river and beyond it something else which will soon be a memory – the gas holder. But as well as looking at the bridge the photographer turned his attention on the onlookers, snapping a group of children from nearby Brunswick School who were given time off to watch the operation. So who do you spot amongst them?

The need for another river crossing at this point had been anticipated back in 1888 when the legal steps to allow Victoria Bridge were being put in place. In the intervening years residents had petitioned for the new crossing, and petitioned against it because of the traffic congestion it would bring to Chesterton. Eventually it was opened in July 1971, though not without a hitch.

The official ceremony was performed by the Master of Trinity College, Lord Butler. Once speeches had been delivered he stepped forward to cut the ceremonial ribbon with the gold scissors – only to find that they would not cut! To everybody's embarrassment it took several hacks before the ribbon parted – and one photographer who missed the final moment shouted for it to be done again! He should have learned from history for when Victoria Bridge was opened with due pomp in December 1889, there was a similar problem when the bottle of Champagne, which had been suspended from a ribbon and was intended to christen the new structure, failed to break.

Strangely a similar hiccup also marred the opening of another bridge that features amongst Mrs Twinn's cuttings. It shows the scene in 1980 when Mill Road railway bridge, was being widened and heightened to make way for the electrification of the main Cambridge to London railway line. As part of the operation a temporary bridge was erected for cyclists and pedestrians. The original bridge was erected back in 1889 and there was, of course, an official opening. To conclude the ceremony the Mayor of Cambridge was to become the first to cross the bridge in his horse and carriage ... only the horse had other ideas and came to a dead stop!

Kathleen would like her cuttings to be shared by others and I already have most of them in my own files. If they would be of interest to your school or old-folks' home or club write to me at the News and I'll pass them on

Peter Wakeling of Cambridge believes he may have solved the mystery of the mini. You may recall that Rosemary Myers wondered how it was that the same car, FER 680D, appears twice in "Memory Lane, Cambridge". Did it, she wondered, belong to a News photographer? No, says Peter. It was used by a District Nurse (whose name eludes him but she married a doctor from Addenbrooke's and went to live in Canada). He distinctly remembers her for the way she changed his dressings and taught him to play Scrabble. (Does anybody have memories of District Nursing they can share?)

Talking of distant places Beryl Dye has written from South Australia to thank all of you who contacted her with your memories of the St Matthews School class of 1941 following her appeal in "Memories". She has even been sent a picture of the VE Day party in Bradmore Street which shows herself and family. Suddenly the world seems much smaller

Claude Ingrey from Wilbraham thinks he can help Jack Raven of Willingham who asked about school attendance medals in last week's Memories. Claude has a medallion presented to his mother, Violet Marsh, in 1911. She used to attend Quy school. He tells me they were awarded by the County Council for good conduct and industrious and punctual attendance. Apparently you got one medal and then a bar for each succeeding year. When you got enough bars you were awarded a watch

More schooldays memories have come from the good folk of St Andrew's church, Chesterton, when I showed them some slides last week. Mrs Ivy Jolley (nee Cream) had dived into her files and come up with a booklet compiled for the centenary of St George's School, East Road that was issued back in 1936. It is such a rare item that there was no copy in the Cambridgeshire Collection, (there is now!). Maudie Page-Croft (Day) can go back even further and lends me a picture of herself and friends dancing round the Maypole at that school back in 1929.

By absolute co-incidence Christine Green (nee Colpus) of Comberton has written with a request for any photos of the Maypole at Richmond Road school. It used to be erected in Mrs Golding's garden, a house called St Albans on the corner of Westfield Lane & Huntingdon Road, Cambridge. She would

also like any pictures of the school in the 1940s and with May Day fast approaching how about more memories of the maypoles?

Mr G.A. Wilson from Newmarket Road, Cambridge has written sharing his memories of the dance band days. He started playing piano accordion at the age of eleven and played regularly for weddings. At fifteen he had a band called The Red Aces who played for dances at the Labour Hall, the Masonic Hall and the open-air dances on Christ's Pieces. After war-time service he formed the Post Office Social Club band. His mention of the Masonic Hall reminds me of that large old building that used to stand in Corn Exchange Street until the 1960s. I remember sneaking inside once and taking a snap, but would appreciate your memories of its role in the social life of Cambridge.

PHOTOS

ELIZABETH BRIDGE NEW SPAN

BRUNSWICK SCHOOL CHILDREN WATCHING

BRIDGE AT OPENING

MILL ROAD BRIDGE RECONSTRUCTION 1980 – 19438010

EAST ROAD SCHOOL MAYPOLE, 1929 – ON DISK

Memories 25 February 2000, by Mike Petty

The Good Old Days were perhaps not so good, as Sid Martin from Langdon House recalls. He writes: "I am now up to the ripe old age of four score years and ten and can recall how the working class people had to cope with old age problems in my young days"

In those days the usual trend was for big families. It was a family tradition that the daughter had to care for their parent until death. There were no state benefits. However as old age crept on sometimes people could not cope and this might bring a move to the dreaded workhouse or union, like the one at Chesterton, which survived as a Hospital till recently. Other inmates were tramps like those Sid used to see as he worked on the farmland that is now Bar Hill village. These men tramped from workhouse to workhouse and always carried a "billycan", an old tin with a wire handle to heat water and brew their own tea. They would call at houses to beg some water and hope a kindly housewife would offer him something to eat.

Provision for the elderly is now much better, he feels. In the 1960s and 70's a lot of large houses were adapted to house old people, their big bedrooms curtained off like hospital wards. But modern residential houses were also being built which offer a standard of comfort far higher than that available in the past.

Housing improvement was one of the major challenges of the post-war period, when more and more people were desperate for a home of their own. Despite extensive building schemes by 1953 there was a 15 year waiting list for council houses. At the same time 1,250 houses were reported unfit for human beings to live in with another 160 condemned before the war. By 1959 there were between 3,000 or 4,000 houses worthy of clearance. As the CDN reported in December, the North had no monopoly of slum problems, for Cambridge could offer conditions almost as bad as those in Leeds and Sheffield. Damp and unhealthy, lacking air and light, streets such as Gloucester terrace on Castle Hill, Saxon Street off Lensfield Road or the depths of Fitzroy Street were condemned and scheduled for demolition.

They were often owned by small landlords with incomes little larger than those of their tenants who regarded the properties as millstones round their necks. They had little incentive to recondition or

modernise and once he demolished a condemned cottage at his own expense, the landlord was left with a most valuable site.

Dr Cyril Eastwood, the City's medical Officer of Health was busily inspecting properties for bulging walls and lack of ventilation, checking whether ordinary household tasks could be carried out in daytime without artificial light and enquiring just how many families were having to share one lavatory.

But the people who lived there did not want to move away to housing estates like Arbury, they wanted new houses in the areas where they already lived, convenient to the town centre.

One man who knew the problem more than most was Mr Edwards, the Chief Public Health Inspector. He remarked that "once the occupiers of unfit houses get into the new housing areas they wonder how they ever stood the old conditions. I am interested in the effect upon the children of the damp creeping up the walls. I am amazed at the patience of some of these people" Do you look back with nostalgia at houses that may have been condemned, yet were home – write to Mike Petty at the News

PICTURE ON DISK IS OF A CAMBRIDGE BACK STREET FROM THE NEWS FILES – BUT WHICH ONE?

My appeal for information on the Leys Laundry in Union Lane, Chesterton, has brought an instant response from Mrs Ruby Hunt (nee Everard) of Cambridge. She has lent me a photograph of it when she worked there for four years around 1935 as an ironer. Ruby's sister Low is first on the right and she is next. The laundry was owned by a Mrs Kay and managed by Mrs Briggs. Her hours were from 8am to 7pm, they were timed when they went to the toilet and not allowed to talk. "We ironed twelve silk night-dresses for 2/- (10p), a dozen socks for a farthing – 'Happy Days' she recalls, adding tellingly "The workhouse was next door"! [RUBY HUNT, 26 WALPOLE RD 245098 – SHE IS AN OLD LADY LIVING ON HER OWN. I DID WONDER ABOUT A PIC OF HER WITH HER IRON TODAY BUT I DON'T THINK SHE'D WELCOME IT]

Barbara Rooney of Edinburgh Rd also remembers the laundry when it was owned by a Mr Wheatley. "When I was young my friend's father was caretaker. They lived in 'Leys Lodge'; the house is still there, but its lovely gardens and the laundry have been sold to make way for Cambanks", she writes

Barbara also recalls Overstream House, firstly as a small child going to Joan Medcalfe's Dancing class, then as a teenager to be taught to Ballroom Dance by Mr Benstead. "It was so lovely then, mirrored walls, polished floors, Victor Sylvester – what more could you want!"

Mrs Rooney goes on: "I also remember fondly the Embassy Ballroom in Mill Road, now a Carpet Warehouse. For a teenager in the '50s it was one of the places we'd go every week. It was a bit flashy, not so plush as the Rex Ballroom, but a great place for having a good time. I met my husband there in 1953. I have heard there are plans to demolish it, wouldn't it be great if the owners allowed one last dance to be arranged there, I'm sure it would be well attended. If only!!" [BARBARA ROONEY 21 EDINBURGH RD - 364603 – MIGHT IT BE WORTH GETTING A PICTURE OF HER OUTSIDE IT?]

One group that found their dancing blocked by bureaucracy was the newly formed Cambridge Rock 'n' Roll Club back in March 1975. They all turned up to their club's first party at the Midland Tavern, Devonshire Road, only to be told there could be no dancing – not singing for that matter. Cambridge Magistrates were not opposed to the jiving, but to the fact that the landlord had only applied for a music licence. So the Rockers had to be content with just listening to the beat, and not joining in.[CUTTING ENCLSOED, NEG NO 618/75/13A]

Another school attendance medallion has been reported by Mrs Amy Robinson of Willingham. It was awarded to the late Mrs Bertha Few, formerly Denson nee Robinson, for good conduct, industry and

punctual attendance in 1906. Bertha not only got the medal she was also awarded bars for an additional seven years. There are obviously several of these still treasured by families – but does anybody have one actually awarded to themselves?

MEMORIES, March 3rd 2000, by Mike Petty

Last Saturday was Rag Day in Cambridge and News photographs took to the streets to record the festivities. Once more it is a traditional part of Cambridge life, a day of odd and various activities, raising money for good causes.

But as a glance at this weeks “Looking Back” for 100 years ago will show that "Rags" - defined as a "noisy disorderly scene" - have been in the past equated with pitched battles with police, destruction and general hooliganism. The bonfires and disturbance which followed the news of the relief of Ladysmith in March of 1900 were blamed on members of the university, though correspondents were quick to point out that the ‘Town’ contingent had played their part too. Heavy fines for felony passed by magistrates on undergraduates enraged students; a mob march to the Mayor’s house in Brooklands Avenue and only massed ranks of police and a contingent of proctors succeeded in maintaining order. Petitions were raised containing names from both town and gown and the Home secretary recommended Queen Victoria to grant a pardon – it would be very hard to make undergraduates suffer for all their lives for what had been done in a rash moment on such a momentous day.

It was horseplay of this sort and the fear of further disturbance so near Bonfire Night that prompted the town authorities to refuse the British Legion permission to organise Poppy-Day collections for a number of years. But then they took the bold step of allowing the University to participate and on the 10th November 1922 the first Poppy Day rag was held. A procession of "animals" toured the town with a police escort and was hailed as one of the happiest Rags ever seen.

It started a tradition that continued until recent times and raised thousands of pounds for the Earl Haig appeal. But in the 1960s everything seemed to fall apart. Many colleges began to boycott the Rag, wanting the money collected to go to other groups as well as the Legion appeal. Following great debate and public concern other charities were added to the list but people became less tolerant of flour bombs, rotten tomatoes, water pistols and eggs and in 1967 the "Poppy Day" rag was held for the last time, its demise marked with fighting between student-s and local youths.

When revived in February 1969 the event flopped - many people did not even know it was on - subsequent years attracted little more support and by 1974 enthusiasm was reported at an all-time low. But Jubilee Year 1977 saw a revival in its fortunes and in 1980 the organisation was taken over by the Cambridge Students Union who succeeded in uniting town and gown and making the Rag a unifying rather than divisive feature of Cambridge life, as News photographers have shown so well.

When Anne Cousins contacted me back in January (Memories 21st January) with a picture of her mother taken about 65 years ago she hoped somebody might come forward who could shed light on the mystery. Now Mrs June Carter of Cambridge has done just that. She was just five years old herself at the time but recognised 20 of the people on the photo.

The picture was taken at the Cherry Hinton Village Labour Party children's Christmas party held in the British Legion Hut on the recreation ground about 1934. June's memories span the years as she writes: "It was a great event for us as we didn't have many parties. In those days Cherry Hinton was solid labour and all the people knew each other like one big family. All the children went to the village school until they were 14 and lots went on to marry. There was very little traffic in those days. We played marbles, hop scotch and skips on the High Street. It was such a lovely pretty village. The cows crossed from one meadow to the other; the length of Chalks Farm Drive was lined with huge walnut trees. Tommy Thompson our milkman from Coldham's Lane had a churn on the back of a barrow, we would go out with our jug and he would measure a pint, & Jess Patteen came from Fulbourn with a horse and cart with our bread, still warm. I'm four generations of Cherry Hinton and I'm always looking for Cherry Hinton faces, but they get fewer. It's not a village, but a small town now & I sometimes don't see anyone I know"

Now Mrs E. Poole of Scotland Road, Cambridge has issued another challenge. She has a photograph that she hopes somebody can identify. The gentleman in the flat cap at the back of the group is her husband's grandfather, Bert Jacobs. He lived with his Belgian born wife, Anna and their four children, Don, Joan, Eric and Marie in Fitzroy Street opposite the Old English Gentleman where he used to drink regularly. Around 1933 they moved to Ashfield Road, Chesterton and he switched his allegiance to the Yorkshire Grey pub in the High Street. The likelihood therefore is that the picture shows a pub outing. That's all we know. Over to you

More school medals have been reported by Dorothy Thwaites, who also has a silver pocket watch awarded to her mother, Nellie King, for perfect attendance at Cherry Hinton Church School. Delving amongst his late wife's treasures Keith Bullen from Orwell has found three presented in that village. Michael Pollard not only has a medal but also a Labour Certificate which was issued to his mother, Gladys Mabel Webb of Litlington who had made 350 attendances at school and was now able to start work – in November 1910

Jenny Lister from Fen Ditton spotted her father dancing round the maypole at East Road school in 1929. "We have never ever seen this picture of him and never imagined seeing him holding a ribbon and looking really pleased with himself. Both our parents have sadly passed away now and over the years family photos have been lost so it was brilliant to see this." Jenny would like a copy of the picture, which has now been added to the Cambridgeshire Collection.

Gerald Smith from Cambridge does not go back that far, but spotted himself amongst the pupils of Coleridge School in 1971 together with other school friends. They include Debbie who wore very short skirts ("there wasn't much truancy amongst the lads in our class!" he adds) and Linda, "a quiet shy girl who went on to marry one of the rowdiest lads in the school & surprised a lot of people".

Last week's "Memories" photos brought a triple bout of nostalgia for Derek Lay of Cambridge. He used to live in Doric Street, his wife worked in Gloucester Street and he thinks the mystery picture was of Leeke street off Newmarket Road where he used to go to a corner shop.

Michael Marshall writes from The Airport, further along Newmarket Road with a wealth of detail generated by the picture of Marshall's garage in Jesus Lane, 1944 which I featured on 4th February. He forwarded a copy of the article to Reg Peacock, now living in Cumbria, who started his own career at Jesus Lane. Reg is on the picture together with Mr Leyton Smith talking to Cyril "Tich" Porter. George Whithead (metal basher) Bertie Baker the carpenter, Len Dean the electrician and Bernard Tabram also feature. Mr Peacock had been called up before the picture was taken but recalls they had several girls training as mechanics then including Mary Mortlock, June & Irene Brown and Dora Housedon

Mr B. Fuller of Cambridge has been prompted to write with his memories of the Oyster House in Garlic Row. "I used to play in that house in the 1940's. It used to belong to Harry Lee who had another big house in Stanley Road. They used to say there was a tunnel between the two, but we never did find it. I've been chased out of the Oyster House a few times by Mr Lee on his way up to the Gardeners

Arms pub, a well-dressed man, with a big watch chain and a flower in his buttonhole. I could tell yu a bit about that area!”

MEMORIES, 10th March 2000 by Mike Petty

Mrs Peggy Shortley of Cambridge has written with an interesting family story. “My father served in the R.A.S.C. during the First World War and drove army officers as a chauffeur. Afterwards he obtained employment as a chauffeur to Prince Arthur of Connaught who I believe was one of Queen Victoria’s sons.

“I remember being told as a child that dad used to receive an order sometimes to drive to Cambridge to rendezvous some evenings with H.R.H. Edward, Prince of Wales, who was at that time an undergraduate of one of the colleges, I believe Trinity. The Prince should not have been playing truant, but he loved the London nightlife and it was to London that dad used to drive him.

“After his evening in town, dad had to collect him and drive him back to Cambridge, usually in the small hours of the morning. Arriving back dad’s help was enlisted to help him get back into college without being caught. I seem to remember this involved dad having to help him climb over a wall or some railings or something.

“In appreciation, the Prince gave dad a cigarette case, which he treasured and never used. It was contained in a cardboard box with a jeweller’s name and address stamped on the lid. The address is rather badly rubbed but I have deciphered it as : ‘L & F. Cole Ltd, Jewellers and Silversmiths, 5 & 6 Market Street, Cambridge, tel.1406’

“My father was living in London at this time, which I believe happened around 1920. It was definitely before 1923. Is it possible to authenticate the story as I should like to write it up and put it in the cigarette case so that it can be passed down the family.”

The jewellers Peggy mentions were indeed in Cambridge from at least 1874 to about 1933 and Edward, Prince of Wales, was indeed in Cambridge in May of 1921 – but only to receive an Honorary Degree, as a picture in the News library shows. He was driven to King’s college chapel, lunched at Emmanuel college and arrived at the Senate House for his degree in the afternoon. Roars of cheers went up to welcome ‘Prince Charming’ to the ceremony at which the Public Orator said: “the only thing he lacks we give him – we make him a Cambridge man”. So he was not an undergraduate and Mrs Shortley’s story falls down.

But there were other Royals in residence at the time. Prince Albert, Duke of York - the future King George VI, and his brother Prince Henry, later Duke of Gloucester, were indeed at Trinity college from 1919-1920, though they resided at Latham Road.

Prince Albert entered fully into undergraduate life. He attended debates at the Union Society including one occasion when Winston Churchill was speaking. As he left the meeting the future King was accosted by a Bulldog – one of the University policeman – and later fined 6/8. His offence : smoking whilst in academic dress. The porter who ‘progged’ him was sent to collect the fine from the Prince himself and found himself quite put at ease by the Royal transgressor. Indeed he told the Prince that he had spotted him smoking on a previous occasion when leaving the Corn Exchange – but had mistaken him for one of the people who had been performing inside – a boxer!

So could the box have come from Prince Albert, and her tale add to the story of Royal misdemeanours, or did Peggy’s father chauffeur the Prince of Wales down to the degree ceremony? Whichever it was it makes an interesting addition to her family memories. [PICTURE OF PRINCE EDWARD AT THE SENATE HOUSE – PHOTOGRAPHIC HAVE A PICTURE OF READER WITH HER CIGARETTE BOX – PEGGY SHORTLEY, 8 GODWIN WAY, CAMBRIDGE – 245536 – DO NOT GIVE THE ADDRESS ON CAPTION]

Did your family have interesting contacts with Royalty – write to Mike Petty at the News

In last week's "Memories" I featured a mystery photograph of a pub outing, which had been sent in by Mrs Poole of Cambridge. Now R.J. Palmer of Trumpington has come up with the answer. The picture showed a darts club outing from the Crown public house, Wellington Street, Cambridge about 1936-37. They went to Gt Yarmouth by charabanc, just one of many such trips that were organised by Albert Braysher, the landlord. He is shown in the centre of the picture together with Jack Palmer & Reg Chapman, both well-known darts players, Bower Odell the greengrocer and Albert Waller who managed the Freeman Hardy & Willis shop on Market Hill for 50 years. [PICTURE ON DISK]

An even more difficult challenge has been set this week by Jenny James from the Burleigh street branch of Oxfam. The picture must date from the very early days of the 1900s and shows an intriguing group of what appear initially to be children, but are apparently very short adults. The donor thought they were an old Cambridge family, but not one known to me. How about you? [PICTURE ON DISK]

Chad Ashman from Stretham wonders if you recognise whether it was him in the bobble hat and mittens in the centre of a group of snowball-throwing youngsters in Chalk Grove, as featured in the "Memory Lane, Cambridge" book, page 157. Certainly he remembers that the man in the background clearing snow was Mr Bocock, a butcher. Can you put Chad out of his misery – he thinks he remembers the picture being taken but it was all a long time ago - November 1969! [PICTURE ENCLOSED]

A recent picture of Gloucester Street, off Castle Hill, Cambridge, has prompted memories for several readers. Connie Asplen of Cambridge lived in Gloucester Terrace, a small row of 18 houses. "It was just a dirt road – very muddy when it rained. It was gas light, there was no water in the houses – we shared two taps between nine houses in the back alleyway. We used to bath in a zinc bath in front of a coal fire. Then the water was bailed out into the toilet into buckets which we emptied into the toilet – thank goodness we had our own "lavvy". We eventually got permission to have electricity put in which a friend did for £10. Finally we all had a sink and one tap installed – but the pressure was poor.". The accommodation may have been basic but the rent in 1952 was 9/1 (45p) a week

Dawn Butler from Histon also lived in the Terrace; she remembers the 'fairy godmothers' to the children – the American servicemen who used to drink at the Sir Isaac Newton pub. Dawn also recalls the people who traded from there, including Tansleys typewriters, Dickersons & Sindalls. Mr G. Murffett [SUBS – THIS IS THE RIGHT SPELLING – MIKE] worked for the latter; he joined them as plumbing foreman in 1949 and the firm stayed there until about 1955 when they moved to The Paddocks on Cherry Hinton Road.

Mrs Mary Walker from Cambridge has other memories of the "Good old days". She writes: "In the early 1950s we considered ourselves fortunate to rent three rooms at the top of a very tall house that stood in Park Street at the junction with Round Church Street. We shared a toilet and washbasin with the people on the floor below, and all water had to be carried up and down from there. We had a gas ring, but any other cooking was catered for my going down two flights of stairs, along a passageway and into a room with three gas cookers in it. Imagine trying to cook a meal under those circumstances with a two-year-old toddler. Incidentally the passageway housed the coal which had to be carried to the top of the house. When the house was due for demolition we moved to Gothic Street – a whole house to ourselves. Looking out of the back bedroom window onto a small paved yard containing a toilet and tap I wondered why you would want a tap outside. I went downstairs – no sink, no water inside. Every drop had to be carried in and out. But we survived and at least we were together with a roof over our heads. And we had an added bonus – our own toilet – albeit outside"

Pat Reevel writes from Chesterton to say that it was her father, John Sturgeon, who designed the interior of the Leys Steam Laundry in Union Lane, and supervised the installation of the plant, subsequently becoming their steam engineer. Mrs Jean Clements (nee Rumbelow) of Campkin Road, Cambridge worked in their receiving shop on The Broadway, Mill Road during the war, together with Mrs Ethel Peachey. "Most of our customers had men in the forces and often one would come in to say they'd had a telegram from the War Office. The hardest hit were those who had someone in the Far East, many had written for 2-3 years only to find they had written to someone who had been dead all the time. Mill Road was a real community during the war, everyone helping each other. They were happy working days to me"

Compiled Eve

Memories, 17th March 2000, by Mike Petty

The Government's plans for more houses in the countryside are the latest attempt to meet a problem that has always seemed to be with us. In March 1950 it was a dilemma that was facing the planners in connection with the village of Barton where an estate of 200 houses was being proposed for land in Cambridge Road. The issues raised seem to have been echoed elsewhere at other places.

The developer contended that Barton was far from being attractively rural, because of the large numbers of council houses that had already been built in "yellow lavatory brick". Of course it did have a certain village life and there was the objection that the social services would be swamped by people on the new estate – but the developer would supply both electricity and mains water from a private plant. There was no gas supply nor mains sewer but they would construct their own sewage disposal station as soon as there were enough houses to justify it.

The county planners were adamant that Cambridge itself should not grow too large and acknowledged that there would be pressure on outlying settlements such as Barton and Cherry Hinton which would eventually become dormitory villages. If the development was in small units in the village itself the people would automatically take part in village life & become part of the social structure of the communities, then facilities such as shops and schools would be improved. This was not the same as dropping a London suburb of 200 houses bodily half a mile away. Now, 50 years later, Cambourne is in course of construction.

In March 1975 however Huntingdonshire planners were grappling with recommendations to prevent the town centres of St Neots, St Ives and Huntingdon from becoming "deserts of industry" where nobody lived. Until the mid 1950's the three town centres were mainly residential, except for small cores of commerce. Then came the dramatic house expansion of the 1960s and 1970s with shops and offices following hard on their heels. Commercial activity, together with worsening traffic conditions made centres less desirable places to live. Attempts to get developers to include flats and houses in town centre developments were unlikely to succeed & it would be difficult to provide private gardens or residents parking.

In Cambridge city-centre accommodation has always been at a premium, with much of the land acquired throughout the centuries by the colleges for their students, which makes your memories of town-centre living most welcome.

Did you used to live in the centre of Cambridgeshire's towns – share your memories with Mike Petty at the News.

Christine Green from Comberton adds her memories of V.E. Day as celebrated in Richmond Road, Cambridge and also lends a snap of the school's May Queen parade in 1944. She recalls how "All our mothers would stand by their gates on our journey from the school to Mrs Golding's garden, via Richmond Road, Halifax Road, Canterbury Street and then down "Piggy Wiggy Lane" to Westfield Lane and on to the Maypole". Christine's grandparents used to keep the White Horse Inn, Castle Street, Cambridge until 1934 and she has snaps of them with chickens and pigs in the back garden – impossible to imagine today! It now houses the Folk Museum, a veritable treasure chest of local objects and artefacts.

One day it might also house a very treasured medal preserved by Sylvia Clark. It was presented in February 1913 to her grandfather, Charles Corbey who was chief warder at the County Gaol on Castle Hill, Cambridge, and witnessed the last two hangings there before leaving Cambridge for Wakefield. The gaol closed in 1916 and was demolished in the 1930s for the present Shire Hall. This would have been remembered by Charles Asplin who used to live at no.17 Gloucester Terrace – the "mystery

street” featured in “Memories” on 25th February and now positively identified by Jack Reynolds of Cambridge.

More memories of Overstream House, Cambridge, have come from Jean Garner (nee Spicer) of Cambridge. “My sister Sheila and I started dancing classes (tap and ballet) around 1936 with the Martin School of Dance, then run by Michael Walsh. When he was called up the school was run by Valerie Redfarn and her mother Joyce was pianist. We carried on throughout the war, doing over 1,000 shows for troops. Even when the school closed we had not seen the last of Overstream House. My husband and I held our engagement party there in 1951. It has seen many happy occasions and I for one would like to see it returned to its original use”. Mrs Jean Mitchell also has happy memories of Overstream House and has lent me some snaps of a Jazz Club meeting there in 1956. One shows her husband, Tony Mitchell (in suit), with saxophone player Bert Waller in full flow, while other musicians performing that night were Mick (or Nick) Parmenter on piano and Bernie Stubbings on drums. Do you recognise anybody else?

H.G. Benstead of Victoria Homes, Cambridge writes of his memories of the Tivoli cinema, Chesterton Road, which was opened just 75 years ago. “When it was built the news spread that they wanted young people to help test the circle on the following Sunday, and a gift would be given. I and several mates went along and joined a long queue. When the doors opened we went up the stairs and were told to sit down until every seat was full. A man came at the front of the screen and asked us to stand up – sit down – stand up and mark time – sit down – stand up and then leave. When we got to the bottom of the stairs we were given a shilling (5p). We were well pleased!” And doubtless many returned to spent their coppers on seats for the films.

Mr Charlie Denston of Abbey Road, Cambridge is seeking a picture of the 250th Field Company Royal Engineers marching down Station Road, Cambridge when they were returning from a fortnight’s camp at Canterbury in late August 1939. The photograph appeared in the CDN at the time. He writes: “My brother Cecil and I were among that column of men, but unfortunately I was in No.3 Section at the rear, or else I might have been spied wearing my best blue suit, though with all my kit and rifle. I had been issued a uniform but it was miles too large and the QuarterMaster’s Stores didn’t possess a smaller one. Of course I didn’t wear the suit at camp, we had denim overalls”. He has written an account of his war years and would like a copy of the photograph as one of the illustrations. Can you help?

Bryony O’Hara of King’s Heath, Birmingham has send me a cutting from the News of April 1972 about Louisa Salmon, then 100 years old and who ascribed her long life to hard work. “I used to go out cleaning until I broke my ankle when a motorcycle knocked me down. I was about 80 at the time”, she said. Mrs Salmon was then living with her daughter Mrs Hilda Webb in Norfolk Terrace. Bryony thinks Louisa might have married a Horseheath man, Edward Salmon and so be related to herself. It is all a bit complicated but as Bryony has traced the Salmons back to the 1700s she would appreciate any help in tracking down other relations. Write to her at 24 Wyche Avenue, King’s Heath, Birmingham B14 6LQ

PICTURES

Barton/St Ives/ St Neots / Huntingdon – from News files

Picture of Sylvia Clark with her grandfather’s medal – photographic have pic
County Gaol, Castle Hill – prison staff c1913 & view of gaol – on disk

Overstream House Jazz Club 1956 – 2 – from Jean Mitchell - on disk

Memories 24th March 2000, by Mike Petty

In March 1975 a group of undergraduates published “The Cambridge pub guide”, rating them from grimy to gracious. Grime, according to the guide, was synonymous with the Locomotive pub in Mill Road, and grace one of the virtues of the Plough Inn at Fen Ditton. Praise was lavished on the “thematic scheme” of the Galleon bar in the Burleigh Arms, Newmarket Road while The Free Press, a tiny back-street pub in Prospect Row had “exceptional character” and the Baker’s Arms, East Road, was a “refreshing surprise”.

A glance at the section on the city centre pubs is a reminder of just how much has changed over the last quarter of a century. Here is a selection of those now just memories.

The Still and Sugarloaf, Market Hill: “The recently-renovated Queen Vic Bar is very large ... the cellar bar is dark and stuffy and tends to become crowded and the loud juke-box does nothing to enliven the ‘skeleton in the cupboard’”

The Rose, Rose Crescent: “... the carpeted floor, the ample seating, the plush wallpaper and the piped music make this a comfortable but characterless pub”.

The Turks Head, Trinity Street. “This Berni inn consists of three restaurants and two bars. The first of these is the Cellar Bar which is dimly lit but nonetheless gay. At the far end of the room improvised dancing takes place to the strains of juke-box music. Sherry seems a popular drink here and beer is expensive”.

“The Bun Shop, Downing Street. “stands out as one of considerable character, and has an atmosphere all of its own. The two bars provide numerous diversions for the mainly young customers – including a dartboard, table-football, pin-ball and a fairground slot game. The walls are bizarrely decorated with paintings and murals or bright colours. The Bun Shop is something of a Cambridge institution and is well worth a visit. The pub does not open on Wednesdays”

The Heneky Tavern, Sidney Street. “More suited to meals than drinks. The Steak and Schnitzel Bar with highly effective Victorian décor ... the Chop House which is more rustic with beams and whitewash much in evidence. The large Alexandra Bar is entirely given over to drinking, it houses a superb collection of advertising mirrors, which in itself is worth coming to see – as are the signs to the toilets”.

If your taste was for wine, rather than beer, the students commented on Shades winebar in King’s Parade: “the custom tends to be cliquy and loud, there is a distinct lack of elbow room but if you are part of ‘the in-crowd’ you will appreciate what the establishment has to offer”. Over in King Street was Le Chien II “one of the few cocktail bars, styled on Continental lines with high-quality furnishing and Venetian blinds. The candles on individual tables lead to an intimate and seductive atmosphere. The brighter lighting of the semi-circular bar makes it the focal point of the room, but serves only to enhance the privacy of its darker parts”

Not all approved of the students’ efforts. John Williams, chairman of the Cambridge Licensed Victuallers’ Association described it as “a minority view for a minority of people”. What do you think, looking back 25 years? [PICTURES ENCLOSED OR PRINT FROM NEGS LISTED ON ATTACHED PHOTOCOPY]

More memories of Overstream House, Cambridge, have come from Jean Garner (nee Spicer) of Cambridge. “My sister Sheila and I started dancing classes (tap and ballet) around 1936 with the Martin School of Dance, then run by Michael Walsh. When he was called up the school was run by Valerie Redfarn and her mother Joyce was pianist. We carried on throughout the war, doing over 1,000 shows for troops. Even when the school closed we had not seen the last of Overstream House. My husband and I held our engagement party there in 1951. It has seen many happy occasions and I for

one would like to see it returned to its original use". Mrs Jean Mitchell also has happy memories of Overstream House and has lent me some snaps of a Jazz Club meeting there in 1956. One shows her husband, Tony Mitchell (in suit), with saxophone player Bert Waller in full flow, while other musicians performing that night were Mick (or Nick) Parmenter on piano and Bernie Stubbings on drums. Do you recognise anybody else? [PICTURS SCANNED ON DISK]

Charlie Denston's request for assistance in locating a picture of his colleagues in the 250th Field Company Royal Engineers in August 1939 for his personal scrapbook sent me delving into the back files of the News, which are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection, Lion Yard Library, Cambridge. The picture appeared twice, once in the CDN of 21st August 1939 and again in the Cambridge Independent Press of 25th August. The "News" also contained a report of the camp at Canterbury when the troops had fully satisfied their commanding officer, Major King, on their ability to "put their backs into it". They had practised demolition, barbed-wire fencing, & water purification techniques but liked the demolition part of the business best, especially the few heart-throbbing minutes before "up she goes". Charlie and his pals had Reveille at 6am, lunch at 2pm and despite the attentions of Sergeant Major Tabor there was only one appointment they were always on time for – pay parade! [C. DENSTON, 48 ABBEY RD . 352284 - WOULD IT BE WORTH GETTING A PICTURE OF HIM EITHER LOOKING AT THE PHOTO IN THE NEWS OF 21ST AUGUST 1939 OR WITH THE CUTTINGS I'VE MADE?]

I've received a most interesting letter from some O.A.P.s who have also posed various questions. They are interested in when the last Mammoth Fair, was held on Jesus Green. This great attraction was a mixture of a mini agricultural show with displays of decorated carriages etc. One year there was even a parachute descent from a balloon, when one of the jumpers ended up in a blackberry hedge and the other – a woman – just missed a ducking in the Cam. It hit all sorts of financial difficulties & finally closed down in 1926. Stourbridge Fair, once one of the greatest trading fairs in Europe lingered on a few years after, being finally abolished by the Secretary of State of the Home Department in 1934. One important part of the fair used to be a horse fair which was also held on Midsummer Common if my memory serves (I don't go back quite as far as my correspondents!). But I am beaten on one of my inquisitors' questions: what did warrior springs have to do with them?

They also ask about the connection of Professor John Hilton, St Regis House in Chesterton and the News of the World. This jogged a memory for when I was working in the old Reference Library at the back of the Guildhall, 30 years ago, we had visit from a very irate gentleman who had felt so annoyed about something in the John Hilton Column that he had come up to Cambridge to track the gentleman down. Only he didn't have his address. The obvious answer was to check Kelly's directory and together we searched the various sections, while the enquirer continued to explain just what damage he was about to commit. Sadly we failed to locate him, and the enquirer departed. Only then did I discover that somehow we'd been checking the Kelly's for Oxford – not Cambridge! (How did that happen?)

Had he been successful perhaps we would have been treated to another headline such as that of June 1930 when a Cambridge undergraduate shot his tutor, a Cambridge detective and himself at King's college. Paradoxically this was the same year that the old gallows at the County Gaol, Castle Hill, were sold off, just across the road from the Three Tuns Inn where on 12th January 1739 Dick Turpin is said to have left his velvet coat. This later found its way to Mr E. Rutter, the Cambridge antique dealer, who discovered coins hidden in the lining. My correspondents also remember how an old coat, thick with dust, was discovered in a bedroom of the inn and ended up in Roger Roe's antique shop, Bridge Street. As they say – this is Cambridge history, and I hope they will share more of it with me.

Anne and Roger Leonard from Sheringham have written to confirm that it was indeed Chad Ashman amongst youngsters in Chalk Grove, Cherry Hinton, that I featured on 10th March. The others were Tim Fitzgerald, Tim French, Simon Utteridge or Steven Barber, Brian Leonard, & Paul & Nigel Barber.

Sir Arthur Marshall has shared some of his memories of the Newmarket Road area and the multiplicity of public houses leading up to Cut Throat Lane next to the football stadium, which became the entrance road to the original aerodrome at Whitehill Farm. “There was my father’s old house “Whitehill”, built in 1880. It was a very large house with double stairways, a fountain and a summerhouse, lawns and woods, and a paddock on about a ten acre estate, originally known as Kent’s Folly – virtually a palace of a building in that area, and within 100 yards of Cut Throat Lane!”

Memories, 31st March 2000, by Mike Petty

On Saturday I met some of the people in the Coleridge area of Cambridge, at a community day organised by the City Council to bring people together and give them an opportunity of expressing their opinions on how their area could be enhanced.

When he surveyed Perne Road for his “Down Your Street” articles in 1989 Dan Jackson chatted to Arthur Howard who had moved into his new home near Cherryhinton Road in 1932 when it was virtually isolated. The next year he had ten new neighbours, and within four years he was in a street with 191 houses – the new Perne Road.

It was built wider than most because it was deliberately built to be a ring road, so the houses were set well back from the road in anticipation of the traffic due to thunder past. Doubtless traffic and ways of coping with it will have been high amongst the present residents’ concerns.

The land on which the houses and roads were built was formerly open farmland which was sold off throughout the 1930s with blocks of land bought by various developers, including Ridgeons, Twinn, Starr and Sindall, and all built houses in similar style. Those on the east side had long narrow gardens with plots about 100 feet long. When the houses were first built they commanded views of open fields stretching as far as Cherry Hinton. Now the views have gone as more houses have been built.

The growth was encouraged as one way of combating the scourges of that period, slum housing and unemployment, making work for people in building new roads, laying new water mains and building the houses themselves. In 1933 the Master Builders and Decorators published an advertisement: “Do you realise that 1,653 able-bodied men are totally unemployed in your own town. Do you realise that of this appalling total 543 men are of the building trade”. They then went on to urge people to spend money on home improvements or having their houses decorated.

Later with housing still a priority pre-fabricated bungalows were erected in the Golding Road area, designed to last for just a short period. Inevitably they continued to use used much longer than forecast, finally being demolished in 1974.

Now the needs for more and more houses are being addressed by the Labour Government with proposals for growth which will inevitably put more pressure on local councillors who have to identify just where the houses should go, and represent the needs and fears of their constituents.

Just who are these people? Well for Coleridge residents the answers are now available with the publication of a new booklet published by the Coleridge Ward Labour Party which interviews some of the individuals who have performed this often difficult and unappreciated task. ("Coleridge Ward from Tory to Labour" by Lucy Munby and Marie Ferguson-Smith – phone Cambridge 247162)

Some of them joined in my "Lucky Dip" session on Saturday, picking slides at random and talking about them. Several saw members of their family, and of course one councillor picked a slide of himself busily protesting against some new proposal!

One of the audience was less forthcoming when confronted with a view of a group at the Perse School for Girls in July 1963 – so can you help in putting names to faces of young ladies.

Names are of course not always easy to recall. Percy Seeby from Trumpington kindly wrote to me correcting the names of those members of the Jazz Club at Overstream House in 1956 and then phoned up to say one of the "corrections" was itself wrong. So as far as we know it was Chic Parmenter on piano, Mike Waller on sax and Colin Edwards on drums.

Mention of Edwin Rutter in last week's Memories, brought an instant response from Rodney Dale of Haddenham. My correspondents had described him as having an antique shop, but Rodney recalls him as a tailor – indeed by 1994, aged 94, he was being hailed as the oldest working tailor in Cambridge – who used to trade as "Stuart" opposite the Fitzwilliam Museum.

But it was a tailor's shop with a difference, for it included a Black Museum containing a mass of macabre exhibits including a mantrap, a scold's bridle, cats o' nine tails, knuckle-dusters, truncheons, tongue clamps, bone crushers – and skulls reputedly from Bosworth Field. Rodney got to know them well for the collection was brought by his father, Dr Donald Dale for his own private museum.

But there was more, including a hat left at Constable's hat shop at no.8 Petty Cury after its old owner had bought a new one. Although the owner is long dead, his head is still in his old college, Sidney Sussex. His name was Oliver Cromwell. Rodney's dad also had his hat, gloves, glasses, sword and boots. Just for good measure he also acquired various items from the old county gaol at Castle Hill, including the door of the condemned cell and the gallows on which Cambridgeshire villains were hanged – including those whose last moments on this earth were overseen by Sylvia Clark's grandfather, whose medals I featured a couple of week ago.

Dr Dale disposed of his museum in June 1970, though nobody wanted the gallows – the bidding stopped at £17.10.0, so he took it back home to Histon before disposing of it privately. The going price thirty years ago for a tongue puller or a cast-iron gag which was rammed down a prisoner's throat to stop him screaming was £49, while a double wrist crusher was £26.

Happier memories of the Castle Hill area have been shared by Laine Simmons from Cambridge. A recent picture of Gloucester Street reminded her of the Tansley Typewriter Company. She writes: "My husband, John, started working there as a lad before the last war helping to rebuild typewriters. This involved dismantling then re-enamelling the bodies, replating the shiny bits, regrounding the platens (rubber rollers) and replacing worn letters, springs etc. The company also went round the area servicing typewriters and adding machines."

Ron Griggs of Cambridge has sent his memories of swimming in the River Cam, or Granta. He recalls: "There used to be an annual Granta swim which initially started at Grantchester Mill and finished at Scudamoor's boatyard at Silver Street, a distance of some 2½ miles. This was a much longer swim than the Swim through Cambridge and was only attempted when the water temperature was approaching 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Nobody trained for this race except, perhaps, "Deafy" Hempstead. He was a remarkable character who obtained his nickname because he was a deaf-mute. He was a tailor by trade and used to amuse the swimmers at Sheep's Green by walking about the lawns on his folded knees, which was the position he adopted when tailoring. He represented England at swimming at the disabled Olympic Games". I have a picture of the start of a Swim through Cambridge – did you take part?

Derek Fuller of Coronation Street, Cambridge, seeks your help. He writes: "When I was about six years old (I am now 72) I can remember my father taking me on the crossbar of his bike to a Motor Cycle Cinder Track Race Circuit just by Marshall's Airport, the other side of the old Teversham Road and Newmarket Road junction. As I remember it was an evening meeting. I've no idea how long racing lasted there or if it closed with the approach of World War 2."

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Memories 7th April 2000, by Mike Petty

Twenty five years ago next week Cambridgeshire was to welcome visits from two people, both of who would attract vast crowds and cause police problems.

First to arrive was the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson. He was no stranger to Cambridge having attended a Labour rally in October 1955 and more recently in October 1967 during which Police Sergeant Kenneth Paige had been injured in the ensuing student riot. Now he was back.

Civic leaders and Labour party officials entertained the Prime Minister and his wife at the Guildhall before the meeting. Here Councillor Peter Wright stressed the problems that cuts in financial aid for housing improvements had caused, and explained the plans for the £2 million improvement programme for the Corn Exchange – a building which he was now to see for himself.

A full-scale security operation was put in place, with 20 police providing protection. As the PM walked from the back of the Guildhall and across the road to the Corn Exchange he passed protestors from the Cambridge Anti Common Market & World Development Action Groups, the Civil and Public Services Association upset about pay, and the National Federation of Old Age Pensioners.

Once safely inside the Hall Wilson was further harassed by hecklers – anxious to get full value from their 15p admission fee – and experienced the notorious Corn Exchange acoustics, as he went through a list of election promises and outlined how each had been fulfilled. By the time he had finished he received a standing ovation from the majority of the 1,000 audience.

The main issue of the day was the Common Market. There would, Wilson stressed, be a referendum but both he and his Government were in favour of staying in the EEC. Meanwhile at Sawston Hall the

Cambridgeshire MP and opposition spokesman on agriculture, Mr Francis Pym was attacking the referendum as the biggest blow suffered by parliamentary government in this country. It had been forced on the government by dissident elements in the trade union and Labour Party. There was hardly a better example of Party interest being put above the national interest. People elected MPs to take decisions of this kind, he believed. "There is no alternative to the Common Market which makes sense in the middle of the twentieth century", he claimed. The problems faced by farmers were caused by high prices of fertilisers, the market price for cereals and the rising costs. Consumers had got to pay an economic price for food which had been properly and efficiently grown. Cheap food would not work in the conditions which existed in the mid 1970s.

Whilst all this was occupying the minds of the politically active in Cambridge, something far more exciting was taking place at Haverhill. A new record shop would be opened by BBC Radio One DJ and television personality Noel Edmonds.

A screaming crowd of 2,000 teenagers blocked the High Street and as they rushed the shop where their idol was appearing the main window broke under the pressure and police had to evacuate the building. Police Sergeant Michael Pepper confessed "I have seen nothing like it in Haverhill before. We had to seal the High Street for half an hour".

Inside the shop 26-year-old Noel, suavely dressed in open-necked brown pattern shirt, cream jacket, brown flared trousers with turn ups and brown Cuban-heeled boots to boost his 5ft 6inch height was completely unruffled. After six years as a DJ, the last two on the breakfast-time slot, and with regular appearances on "Top of the Pops" he was used to it. "They really enjoy the creaming and the crush and it is good fun so long as no one is hurt. It makes a memorable day for them" he said.

For an hour he signed autographs and distributed LPs and posters, then he was smuggled out of a back door and driven away hidden under the back seat of a white Range Rover.

Sadly no one noticed how Harold left Cambridge.

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Ian Cruddas from Uttoxeter in Staffordshire has written to remind the people at Cottenham that just 150 years ago their community was devastated, not by rampaging youths, but by fire. For on the night of the night of Thursday 4th April 1850 it was the scene of one of the largest conflagrations ever known in Cambridgeshire. Flames raged along the High Street, consuming houses, inns, breweries and shops. In all some 35 houses, 26 farms and seven shops were destroyed.

Both the Church Mission Hall and the Wesleyan Chapel were then housed in adjacent barns and a fight broke out amongst members of the two congregations as to who should have use of the limited supply of buckets. The Wesleyans lost and their building was burnt to the ground.

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Thomas Taylor of Newton writes following mention of Roger Roe's antique shop on the corner of St Andrew's street and Christ's Lane, Cambridge. "Next to it in St Andrew's Street was a toy shop, further along a wonderful bakery and bread shop owned by Mr & Mrs Collier. Opposite it on the other side of the street was the Queens Arms Public House

"In Christ's Lane there was Ladd's grocery shop and a cutlery shop. I was born and lived in Christ's Lane from 1919 until 1947. My parents moved on in about 1963. Please keep your Memories of things well into the future. They make for wonderful reading for an oldie like me"

Thank you, Mr Taylor, but I can only report what people send me, so keep those letters flowing please.

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learn the trade of a hair dresser, His wages were to be three shillings (15p) a week for the first year, six for the second rising to ten shillings (50p) in the third year. For that he was to work from 8.30 am to 8 pm (9 pm on Saturdays), though he was allowed a half day on Thursday. Having successfully completed his training he had a barber's shop in Magdalene Street, Cambridge from 1929 to 1956.

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Kay Thomas from the Cambridge Nursing Centre in Chesterton has started the excellent scheme of compiling memory diaries for some of their residents. She has one lady, Rosalie, who born in 1909 in Kingston Street, Cambridge. Her father, Cornelius Gilbert, had a butcher's shop in Fitzroy Street. Later she moved to Brookfields where they had a large house with a balcony. She attended St Barnabas and St Philip's schools, was married in the late 1930s at Christ Church, Newmarket Road & later moved to Whitehill Road. When Rosalie left school at the age of 14 she went to work at "The Tapestry" where she did some embroidery.

Do you have any snippets or pictures that might fill out he memory diary? Send them to me and I'll pass them on.

PICTURES

News pix of Wilson and Edmonds from negatives as listed on enclosed cuttings; pics of Wilson at this or other rallies from News library files

Cottenham Fire – scan of the High Street in April 1850 – and a more modern pic from Library if there is one

Christ's Lane, Cambridge as remembered by Mr Taylor

Memories 14th April 2000, by Mike Petty

It is now some time since we saw elephants walking through Cambridge en route from the railway station to their circus encampment on Midsummer Common, and today attitudes to performing animals are no longer what they were.

But on 11th April 1950 the prospect of Bertram Mills' circus saw Cambridge in a frenzy of anticipation.

The "News" reporter described the spectacle: "Here in the well-known romantic atmosphere where, strangely fascinating in its queer compound smell of sawdust and canvas, elephants, dogs and lions with bright spangles and brighter lights adding to the more conventional kind of glamour – here there is paraded for us an amazing display of human and animal talent.

"Have you ever seen dogs play football? Or a lion walk a double tightrope? Or elephants that do the elephantine equivalent of a handstand. It is surprising how graceful even an elephant can be when well-trained, though I hope that when they come again and see me sitting in the half-crowns they will shift me by trunk to the twelve-and-a-tanners."

The writer found himself captivated by performing horses which wheeled, turned and galloped with astonishing precision, & was entranced by Angus, an amusing animal clown. There was bare-back riding and the Cumberlands who leapt on their galloping steeds with ease. Coming down the animal scale were the acrobatic and footballing dogs with their somersaults and skill.

Amongst the human performers he enjoyed Edouardo the juggler with his spinning plates, the tramoplinists and Cavallini's Crazy Car. But others took to the air, the Raspinis, climbed ladders balanced against nothing at all, whilst high above the ring the Trio de Riaz, two men, a girl and an aeroplane swung at speed & kept the audience taut in their seats.

Today we have the Millennium Dome, where once more it is the aerial gymnasts who provide the spectacle in what some consider a white elephant.

Do you have memories of the circus – write to Mike Petty

Paul Taylor from Stuart, the University Tailor and Outfitter of Chesterton Road, Cambridge, has written with more details of his great uncle Edwin Rutter's magnificent "Olde Curiosity Shoppe" opposite the Fitzwilliam Museum. He has sent a catalogue which records some of the wonderful things it contained – Queen Victoria's stockings, a pirate's cutlass, a naval cockade worn by Admiral Nelson, a Chinaman's opium smoking cloak and various prison relics. There were several items relating to Dick Turpin including his hat, coat, mask and spurs, complete with a document dating from 1738 written by the innkeeper of the Three Tuns, Castle Hill, Cambridge, stating how these articles had been left there.

Edwin Rutter liked nothing better than to recall stories from bygone years, and those of no so long ago, such as how one evening he had become trapped in his Black Museum with a tourist after the door slammed shut behind them. As the entrance was a condemned cell door, it had no handle on the inside and the two of them were imprisoned until the early evening when the local "Bobby" tried the shop door (as they used to in those days). Finding it open he'd entered and discovered the captives in their macabre prison.

Mr Rutter's knowledge of Cambridge, his customers and his trade as a tailor was second to none. One of the great Cambridge characters he died in January 1997.

SCANS OF PAGES OF CATALOGUE

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Another Cambridge character is recalled by Ros Shepherd (nee Audley). Miss Longbottom a formidable lady with a heart of gold. She was the teacher in charge of the Chemistry Laboratory at the Perse School for Girls in 1963 when a Cambridge News photographer snapped a class in progress. I featured the picture in "Memories" on 31st March and Ros has come up with most of the names, including Gillian Heatley, Celia Hatton, Susan Hill, Christine Hallam & Susan Milstein. She would be very interested in hearing from them, or any of the other Perse girls of the period. Write to me and I'll pass your letters on.

**

SUBS PLEASE USE THIS NEXT PIECE IF YOU CAN AS IT WILL GIVE ME AN INTRODUCTION FOR NEXT WEEK

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Memories of the John Hilton Bureau have come in from Isabel Munro of Cambridge. She writes: "In August 1946 my husband answered an advertisement in the New Statesman for a solicitor to join the staff of the John Hilton Bureau which had been running for three or four years. It was financed by the

News of the World to provide for its readers the same sort of advisory service that Professor Hilton gave to listener in his BBC broadcasts.

“After Prof. Hilton’s death the bureau was directed by Kenneth Barrett and 1946 saw a great increase of staff. The original offices in John Hilton’s old residence in De Freville Avenue were no longer big enough & the Bureau overflowed into accommodation in Quayside and then Bene’t Street Eventually sometime in the 1950s everyone was reunited under one roof in St Regis, Chesterton Road.

When Ruper Murdoch took over the News of the World he was not interested in running a free advisory service for readers and in the summer of 1974 the John Hilton Bureau was closed down.”

Thomas Taylor of Newton writes following mention of Roger Roe’s antique shop on the corner of St Andrew’s street and Christ’s Lane, Cambridge. “Next to it in St Andrew’s Street was a toy shop, further along a wonderful bakery and bread shop owned by Mr & Mrs Collier. Opposite it on the other side of the street was the Queens Arms Public House

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PICTURES

Cottenham Fire – scan of the High Street in April 1850 SCANNED ON DISK – and a more modern pic from Library & Christ’s Lane, Cambridge as remembered by Mr Taylor – SUPPLIED LAST WEEK

MEMORIES, 21st April 2000 by Mike Petty

Reference to the Cambridge Tapestry Company in last week's "Memories" struck a spark for Sylvia Clark of Cambridge, for she used to work there from 1924 until the war. The firm was originally founded at Ickleford, near Hitchin by Walter Witter and built up a great reputation for the quality of their repair work to valuable old tapestries and for the production of "period panels"

When Sylvia started work at the company's premises in Thompson's Lane, Cambridge, she was 15 years old. The workroom had formerly been a garage & had open doors looking out on Quayside. She was one of some 80 girls who worked in the tapestry section, while another 80 did needlepoint. Tapestries used to be brought in from around the world to be repaired, having been cut about where they had been fixed on walls. Some needed great research to piece them together again.

In 1934 Lord Fairhaven commissioned a completely modern design for Anglesey Abbey, near Lode. It was to depict the Abbey as seen from the air, with a view of the surrounding countryside, including the Jockey Club at Newmarket, St Ives, Ely & the Cambridge University Library – which was remarkable for that building had not then been complete, and they worked from the architect's sketches. A full size painting was made in colour to guide the weavers giving instructions as regard to the colour and the direction of every stitch to be woven. The coloured silks and wools had to be matched up with those from the artist's palette which meant that the company had to keep nearly a thousand different colours always in stock.

Sylvia spent many hours on this tapestry, working from the back and walking round to the front of the loom periodically to ensure everything was accurate. Like all the other girls she worked in silence as so many important visitors were always popping in.

One of these was Queen Mary who arrived in 1934, saw Sylvia & her colleagues engaged on the Fairhaven tapestry and congratulated them on for the beauty of their work. Next year personal friends of King George V and Queen Mary commissioned the firm to design and weave a tapestry of Windsor Castle for presentation to Their Majesties as a Jubilee gift. Although the King did not live to see the completed panel, the preliminary drawings were submitted to him and he commanded it should hang in the Guard's Chamber at the Castle. Queen Mary visited again in 1936 to see the work in progress, and to count every window in the tapestry to make sure they were all in place – of course they were!

The Cambridge Tapestry Works closed in 1941 and Sylvia went on to other war work. But she never lost her love for tapestry, nor her skills with the needle, and a recently-finished Millennium tapestry decorates her living room alongside reproductions of those she worked on for Royalty over 60 years ago.

PICTURE SCANNED OF THE TAPESTRY WORKS; PHOTOGRAPHIC TOOK A
PICTURE OF MRS CLARK AND HER TAPESTRY IN EARLY MARCH – NEG
NUMBER AROUND 1599M18

On Saturday I spoke to a meeting of the Dorothy L. Sayers Society at Shuttlesworth, near Biggleswade where there is a wonderful display of early motoring and aviation memorabilia. One of the papers was devoted to the author's references to motorcycling in her novels and discussion took place on the women who rode such machines before the war. One whose name came to me was Dorothy Grainger, the Burwell photographer, who would travel by motorbike to the wedding, take the photographs, bike back to her studios to develop the plates and return to take orders at the reception. Do you recall others – or were you a lady motorcyclist in the more recent past?

Perhaps you took part in motorcycle scrambles or races such as that held 50 years ago this week at the first open meeting on a new racing circuit at Bedwell Hey, near Ely. It was run jointly by the Cambridge University Auto Club and the Ely Motorcycle clubs and was open to all members of the British Motor Cycle Racing Club. The course record was set by George Brown on a 500 cc works

Vincent, touching 98 mph on the 500-yard back straight, though his machine seized up half way through.

Another news story from April 1950 was the unveiling a new type of luxury double-decker motor coach by Premier Travel. It was designed for long-distance travel, could carry 53 passengers on its two decks and featured a pneumatic door normally opened by the driver. This most modern vehicle was christened “The County of Cambridgeshire” by Alderman Frost, the chairman of the County Council, who tore off an adhesive strip covering the small nameplate. Having wished good luck to everyone who drove it he and other guests went for a ride in the coach. Do you recognise any of the dignitaries who made that initial journey – or remember what became of the coach. [PICTURE SCANNED]

Staying with buses in the 1950s, Mrs R. Minns from Cambridge writes: “My late husband Colin was a bus driver in the 1950’s. Whilst driving in Chesterton he swerved to avoid a dog, and ended up colliding with a house. This I believe was almost opposite a fish and chip shop”. A picture of just such an accident appears in the best-selling book of old photographs compiled by the Chesterton Local History Group, but I cannot yet trace the date. Do you remember it? [PICTURE FROM BOOK SCANNED]

And whilst on bus accidents, one of my class at Ely recalls how a bus crashed into a row of cottages opposite the old “Royal Oak” pub at Stretham Ferry (now the “Lazy Otter”). When the bus was removed the cottages fell down. Once more do you remember the incident, and do you have a picture?

Kathleen Phillips of Cherry Hinton is able to solve the mystery of how Harold Wilson left Cambridge following one of his talks in 1972. He travelled by United Taxis to take the train back to London. Kathleen and her late husband John owned the company then and she’s sent a picture of the Prime Minister relaxing in the back of the cab to prove it. [PICTURE SCANNED]

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Mrs Sylvia Howell (nee Bavester) of Landbeach is prompted to write following mention of the Tansley Typewriter Company in Gloucester Street, Cambridge. “I worked there during the last war, helping doing a lot of different jobs on the floor. There were only about six girls, the rest of them boys and men but I don’t remember their names. I also did fire watch duty with the boss’s wife at night, and was fire watching when we heard bombs drop and found they had fell along Huntingdon Road.

Eagle-eyed Jean Potter phones in to say that she spotted her son in last week’s picture of the elephant parade along Hills Road, a photograph taken in May 1971. She also tells me that she had a box of old music that they used to enjoy at the Tipperary Club which she’s be happy to pass on to any reader who can make use of it. Write to me and I’ll pass details on.

Can you help an Oldham lass whose trying to write a story about life in Cambridge in the early 1970s. She’s finding it difficult to remember just which cafes and restaurants were used by the students at that time. Do you have an old guide book or tourist map to jog her memory that I could post on to her?

Diane Scotting from Witcham has discovered a not-so-old photograph which I’m having some difficulty in identifying. It shows a gathering of gentlemen about to enjoy a meal, and a bottle of beer in a hall, probably in the Ely area. On a small table at the end of the room there’s an impressive shield and a variety of trophies. Can you identify the place, the occasion or yourself? [PICTURE SCANNED]

Memories April 28 2000, by Mike Petty

Twenty-five years ago the Cambridge Evening News was lamenting the decline of a Cambridge tradition – the King Street run. Like many traditions its origins seem obscure – or is it just that by the end of the day the participants were unable to remember anything.

The event involved drinking eight pints of beer in two hours, one in each of eight different pubs, though by 1965 it was varied to one pint in four pubs and two pints in two. Originally King Street had enough pubs of its own, but as numbers declined, and others declined to take part, so the organisers needed to look further afield for landlords willing to support the event.

As well as achieving a hangover, those who completed the course were entitled wear a coveted blue tie embroidered with a crown and tankard. But there were other symbols as well: a letter P was added to the design for each time an entrant was obliged to use the toilet or was sick. And that was the trouble.

Perhaps the beer was stronger, or the students had not undergone the necessary training, for landlord after landlord objected to the mess unruly contestants left behind them. "Once you have downed the first four pints you are over the worst", one entrant confided, but you had to drain every drop or risk being disqualified.

In 1975 there were said to be some 200 people, men and women, who were entitled to wear the tie. Are you one? But there was apparently an even greater academic honour. If your tie was also inscribed DD you were amongst the boozing elite. To earn this accolade the recipient needed to drink 13 pints between opening and closing time in any pub in the country. Now with all-day opening this is much easier to accomplish, but there is a snag. To earn the Drinker's Dozen tie you had to be accompanied by somebody else who had performed the feat, and in 1975 nobody knew of anybody in Cambridge who'd done it!

PICTURE OF KING STREET

SCAN OF STUDENTS DRINKING IN KING STREET PUB, ONE WEARS THE KING STREET RUN TIE – BUT WITH 2 "P"S.

Some things crop up so frequently that they deserve the accolade of a tradition. Members of the Hill Top Club in Primrose Street took part in my "Cambridge History Lucky Dip" last week and pulled one picture out of the hat which could apply to virtually any year. I promised I would share it with you. The comment on Cambridge traffic conditions was published in the old C.D.N. on 30th January 1948! One answer to traffic chaos was the construction of multi-storey car parks, as in Park Street snapped by a News photographer in August 1965

1948 CARTOON ENCLOSED; SCAN OF PARK STREET CAR PARK

Hundreds of Burwell villagers flocked to their village museum on Sunday. In addition to the usual attractions of a blacksmith's forge, a windmill, old carriages, cars and even a bus, not to mention the wartime display, telephone exchange and country life exhibits (and not forgetting the schoolroom where children chanted their tables, toddlers wrote their name in sand and older visitors recalled when they had learned to write on slates), there was a marquee. It contained the real attraction of the afternoon, the first chance to really look at a remarkable collection of village photographs that has been compiled by Jim Neale and features the people and places of Burwell. This project has so far taken him two years to amass, and been generously supported by East Cambs District Council. There were albums and albums of pictures to browse through of village industries, the school, sport, streets and houses as well as a tribute to those who fought in the two world wars, and survived.

The project was not however complete, and can never be complete. Whilst dozens saw pictures of themselves they had never seen before, and hundreds found their house when it was somebody else's home, there were others who did not. During the afternoon however many gaps were filled, with more pictures brought in to be photocopied for addition to the files. If you have snaps or postcards take them

with you when next you visit the museum which is open afternoons on Sundays, Thursdays and Bank Holiday Monday until the end of September. Park in the Gardiner Memorial Hall car park in the High Street and follow the crowds.

BURWELL PICTURES FROM THE NEWS FILES

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Mrs Pam Barlow of Impington has responded to my appeal for circus memories with a letter which really captures the excitement of the occasion.. She writes: "My husband was a police officer and always had complimentary tickets for his family. We always sat on the very first row and so were always in the thick of things. At one performance the clowns were fooling about as usual, and one appeared to be a "witch. Her head was on the top of a broom-stick with a long thin nose. This head and long neck kept being raised to an alarming height. My young daughter was terrified, and I bent over her to protect her, I had this awful head thrust down the back of my neck. Rather nerve-racking at the time,

"On the front row you could actually put your foot up on the ring. This was where the elephants used to circle around, put one foot on the ring and raise the other front foot in the air. All the elephants had beautiful girl riders who used to be picked up by the elephant's trunk and placed on their backs. The cages with lions in used to be erected during the performance, whilst we were all looking up high at the trapeze artists. The horses used to be spectacular, sometimes all pure white with pom-poms on their heads. They had bareback riders, leaping on and off & running from one side of the ring to leap and stand on their backs. There were also very small ponies. Their riders used to be monkeys, dressed up and doing various tricks"

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Mrs Ella Challis of Barton recalls more memories of Overstream House, where she learned to dance in 1918 when a little girl of four years old. "Mr and Mrs Derby lived there. He worked for the Ortona Bus Company and she taught be dancing in the big room. We learned to do the Lancers, Scottish dancing and lots of dances they don't do today. I wonder if anyone else in Cambridge remembers this?" Do you?

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A reminder of the hardship of previous days has come from Mrs L. Hind of Histon. She treasures the apprenticeship indenture of Richard Betson way back in 1841. Richard bound himself to James Presland of Cambridge, a bootcloser and shoemaker for four years, during which time he was restricted in what he could and could not do - "he shall not commit fornication nor contract Matrimony ... nor play at cards or dice tables, nor haunt taverns or playhouses". In exchange he received the generous payment in the first year of nothing at all, rising to one shilling a week in the second year & right up to three shillings in the fourth. But for this he was expected to work eleven hours a day!

**

John Lester from Grantchester has been reflecting on the cost of living – or more accurately dying – back in 1912. He has found a bill for the funeral of his father's young sister which shows that for a polished elm coffin with all the trimmings, and a baby hearse, the total charge was £1.17.0. The undertaker offering the service in those days rejoiced in the unmournful name of Ellis Merry.

COPY OF THE BILL

Memories, 5th May 2000 by Mike Petty

Ernie Tyler as has lived, eat and slept boats all his life – it has been his job, his hobby & his enjoyment for over 75 years. He started on the river when a lad at Fen Ditton. His mother worked as cook for the vicar whose daughters wanted a new boat so she scraped together £7

to buy the old one, on condition that Ernie, then ten years old, was given lessons on how to sail it.

Fen Ditton was a great place to be a boat boy, especially during the Bumping Races. Ernie can remember when people in punts four deep lined the riverbanks to watch the races. Others made the journey in one of the party boats such as the Enterprise, Glenrosa or Viscountess Bury. And however many people went to the races on the Viscountess, even more returned with her. For after the day was done & she cruised sedately up the river dozens of punters would hook their punts on to the boat and be towed back to Cambridge in splendour. When they were half-way there the Vi's skipper would pass his hat back to collect the fares!

Ernie went to Bottisham village college on the day it opened and left as soon as he could. When 14½ he attended school on the Monday morning, to tell them he was leaving on the Tuesday – for he had a job. That job was at Banham's boat yard.

Mr H.C. Banham took one lad a year, twelve months later he took another. Sometimes if there were two promising candidates he took both, but then missed a year's recruitment. Some of the lads had the necessary skills, some did not and were put back on the job Ernie started with – sweeping up the wood shavings. Then he progressed to pumping out bilge water from old boats, and other mundane tasks. It took two years for a lad to learn his tools and his trade. Ernie was put with some good tradesmen like old Mr Harris, if you showed an interest in the work he would show an interest in you, if you fooled around you had no chance. Ernie worked. After two years he was summoned to see the Governor. Go upstairs, he was told, and build some clinker pram dinghies. There's a bloke on the other side, ask him if you have any problems.

From pram dinghies – which sold the in the showroom for £8.10.0 - he went on to stem dinghies and then it was downstairs to where the craftsmen were making motor cruisers. He joined a team of four – two men and two boys - who hand-made the boat, any more and they would get in each other's way. If it sold well and good, if it did not it was added to Banham's hire fleet until somebody took a shine to it.

The boatyard built boats to order, one 'mad professor' came in with a model of a boat carved from a bar of soap, it looked hideous to Ernie, but they built it. Then came the war. Banham's switched to war-work, building lifeboats for minesweepers, fast runabouts to take navy officers to shore, wooden frames for the first radio location devices built by Pye of Cambridge and an 80-foot high wooden mast for Duxford airfield. One of Banham's boats was a casualty of the war. The prospect of air raids forced the authorities to plan for the possibility of fire in the colleges alongside the river. They would need a fire-fighting boat, Mr Banham offered the Duchess. But it was too high to get under the bridges, so Ernie cut it down to fit. Banham's workmen joined the Auxiliary Fire Service and trained to use it. In the event the fire boat was never needed.

When the war was over, and Ernie had been demobbed from the Merchant Navy he wandered back to Banham's. "What are you doing Ernie – you can start back here Monday". There was another lad starting at the same time, Mo Tyrrell, who was soon building racing eights.

The two of them came together for the first time in 1963, building the Jasmine, an African

mahogany cabin cruiser. The pay was not of the best, but it was a family firm and the atmosphere was great. You were never told what to do, you were asked if you'd do it. But the world was changing. Wooden boats were giving way to a new material, fibreglass, and the Banham family firm became part of the Pye group. Whereas Mo used to sing on his way to work, now he sang only on the way home.

In 1969 the two boatmen left Banham's, with no idea what lay before them. Ernie thought about a job with Grays, making cricket bats, Mo contemplated a building job. Then Brian Lister, the engineering industrialist, offered them an opportunity to resurrect an old neglected, run-down boatyard in Water Street, Chesterton. Then he asked if they'd like a chance to start on their own – "we nearly tore his arm out", says Mo and Two Tees Boatyard was born. The first thing was to clear up.

For thirty years wooden buildings had rotted, trees had grown up and slipways deteriorated. There was piles of junk to be thrown out. And underneath it all Ernie found a little notebook. It dated back to the 1890s, and it had been kept by Ted Mathie who had used to work for Banhams before even Ernie started there. It contained his dimensions for Canadian canoes, for whiffs and skiffs, the prices he charged and the people he built for. Ernie still treasures it together with another kept by his old boss recording the boats he built and the prices he charged.

Mo and Ernie have continued to work on those same boats, many of which are still cruising up and down the fenland rivers. They even bought some of them when they started a hire fleet which they continued till Ernie finally got too old to go chasing boats that always broke down in the most inhospitable places in the fens, even though for some holidaymakers the prospect of helping him to strip down and repair a venerable piece of machinery was the highlight of their voyage.

But Ernie Tyler still has his own boat – one of those that Mo Tyrrell built all those years ago - and even when it is in dry dock he can cruise in his mind the river he has loved all his life.

SCAN OF BANHAMS BOAT YARD in 1969; PRINT OF ERNIE TYLER & MO TYRRELL WHEN THEY STARTED THEIR BOATYARD IN APRIL 1970; PHOTOGRAPHIC HAVE TAKEN A MODERN PICTURE

Note: original audio interview – MPC08

A picture of the Viscountess Bury, taken in 1919 when it carried members of Barham's brush manufactory on a trip to Ely, has been lent by Mr M. Rolph of Cambridge. They appear to have been accompanied by musicians. Did you ever take a boat trip on it, or hire a cruiser from Banham's. – SCAN – ONE SHOWS DETAIL

Mr Alan Bates of Cambridge has kindly responded to my appeal for an old guidebook to help a researcher trying to remember just what cafes and restaurants there were in the 1970. This particular guide dates from the mid 1960s. A browse amongst the advertisements recalls the Hong Kong Garden Chinese restaurant in Fitzroy Street, the "fashionable – and reasonable" Dorothy, the "ultra modern" Pagoda in regent Street which would serve a 3-course luncheon for 5/6 and offered a dinner and dance each night on the 1st floor. There was the Seven Star Grill on Market Hill, the Civic of course which offered a high tea from 3.30 pm, the Bombay

restaurant in Bridge Street with “the finest selection of Pakistani, Indian, English & Continental cuisine”, Camsnax “the most pleasant coffee shop in Cambridge” and the Copper Kettle and Copper Dive on King’s Parade. Most are only names to me, did they mean something special to you? SCAN OF DOROTHY RESTAURANT AD

80-year young Mrs P. Miller has written to say she would welcome the old music that another reader is trying to find a good home for. She goes in for the talent shows at the Guildhall and was on Look East recently.

Mrs V.S. Pennell of Fowlmere writes: “I was so pleased to read your article about Premier Travel’s luxury double decker coach, the ‘County of Cambridgeshire’. My late husband, Sid was the driver of the coach. He is in the photograph to the side of Mr Lainson, but I can only see his cap.” More details have come by e-mail from Darren Kitson of Blackpool who used to drive for the company. He tells me the coach was one of only three double-deckers ever bought new by Premier Travel and they were not a success. They were fitted with bodies built by Messrs Wilkes and Meade but shortages at that time meant they were built using timber frames of poor quality, unseasoned wood. In consequence the bodywork was a major problems and expensive rebuilding had to take place. They were soon demoted to local bus work and all had gone by 1966. The County of Cambridgeshire was dumped behind their garage in Godmanchester where it quietly decomposed in the undergrowth until broken up during the 1970s.

Two people researching their family story have written to me. David Green of Rhyd yr Harding, Castle Morris near Haverford West, Pembrokeshire SA62 5EJ is trying to find details of his grandparents, Thomas and Jane Green who used to keep the Falcon Inn at Littlebury near Saffron Walden. One of their daughters later married a saddler who ran a shop near Clare College Cambridge in the 1900s. Its not much to go on but if you’re a Green and can help please contact him.

From Chesterfield USA comes an e-mail. Susan Oberman is desperate to trace any living soul with memories of her grandmother Dorothy Haines Baker. About all she knows is that Dorothy was born in Hereford, married in 1912 to somebody perhaps called Babstock and may have been an actress. “Perhaps an old admirer of the theatre will remember this lady!!” she writes. If so write to 14546 Tradmore Drive, Chesterfield, MO 63017 USA or e-mail Subake@aol.com

Memories 12th May 2000, by Mike Petty

Derek Harris of Histon has sent me some of his Memories of the 1950s, looking back on life in Ely just after the War. He writes: “When you married in the late 40s you would not own your own house unless the money was readily available or, an inheritance favoured you. Homes were at a premium; rebuilding had begun after WW2 but there was a tremendous queue for the Council built rented house, which the Government of the day was concentrating upon. Rooms with a parent or relatives was the nearest to independence that a young married couple could normally hope for. The problem was exacerbated by details of your length of residence at, or workplace in Ely, whether you had one or two children etc. etc.

Housing had become the top priority throughout the country. Ely UDC had it's share and new estates were being laid out but, they had a long waiting list. One redeeming feature was that they had acquired jurisdiction over the now redundant Prisoner of War Camp, on part of Barton Fields. The entrance was

at the Cambridge Road boundary of the City. A concrete road, wide enough for one vehicle, remained throughout its length, terminating in a parade-ground like square at its eastern extremity. The Camp contained some 50 or so Nissen Huts, single and double size, for the detention of German, then Italian, prisoners of war.

These buildings had been standing for about seven years when the council was given leave to recondition the huts to house local families. The intention was to tide over the move to a rented council house and we applied for one (by this time we had a baby son and were still living in rooms).

The day dawned in June 1950 when we moved into our first complete home, the rent being 6/- (30p) per week. The Camp, by this time, had quite a large population. We had acquired one of the last batch of huts to be converted and these were situated around the back of the private houses, at the far end of Cambridge Road. Ours was semi-detached with a double brick division in the centre of a double sized hut.

Three rooms had been built into the interior of the two parts, with a separate pantry, inside toilet, a coal burning cooking range and all the fresh air the site had to offer. All the mod. cons. of the time, I would hasten to add but no bathroom! Hot water came from a kettle, always on the simmer in the winter months. Fortunately the electricity supply had been upgraded to full amperage and the building rewired. The earlier conversions had a supply, but only for lighting, so that was a bonus, and we were able to install an electric cooker! - a green enamelled "Jackson". Our black cooking range was also intended to provide the heating. This was 'improved' by removing the top, in the colder months and placing an upside-down "U" shaped sheet of tin over the open section. This enlarged the fire and heated the iron chimney to excess! The two bedrooms were kept aired with small electric heaters.

The living room had one fair sized window (but no view!) The two bedrooms had a window each about nine feet wide, the divisions being made by single brick wall. The flooring throughout was solid concrete.

The interior, of course, was half-moon shaped and had a layer of stiff asbestos sheeting covering the corrugated iron which had been freshly decorated with apricot emulsion. Outside repairs had included a coat of protective black stuff, with an iron chimney poking through the apex of the roof.

Considering that between us and the elements, was a barrier of 2 sheets of tin and a quarter of an inch of asbestos, we were, quite cosy. Which leads to the provision of fuel.

We were in the grip of a coal shortage. The Coalman would only come once a week but didn't on several occasions because of the limitations of his supply. So, an enforced rationing of deliveries throughout the town applied and, the 'Camp' seemed to be at the extreme end of the round. He was always very sympathetic and offered an invitation "... to come to the yard and collect a bagfull !! " which meant a potato sack filled and tied; then walked home, balanced between the bars of your bicycle. Quite a normal and efficient means of carriage, unless you had an old pram. A supply of coke from the Gas Works could also be obtained (to mix with the coal) and was transported in the same manner. This place had a queue of people every Saturday morning, in the winter months, for what was considered a supplementary method of eking out the coal ration.

A garden, of course, there had to be and a fence: not only to prove that it was ours but to protect our lad from wandering off. We were fairly isolated and had a large part of Barton Field at our back door; thankfully the City Council didn't mind if we dug it up.

Our daughter arrived during this period of our life. We remember it well ... at dead of night in October 1952, 'phoning an obliging friend for transport to the Grange Maternity hospital. The phone, by the way, was situated about a mile away. I was obliged to remain at home with my small son until daybreak. This birthday brought back the need to use the pram again...

Walking to shop was the norm. Most people in Ely had their 'shopping day' to top up the pantry for the weekend carried mainly in a large basket, or two if you could manage it, unless you had a bike. Bread and milk was delivered but groceries etc., were collected. The pram was a godsend, so much could be carried on or in it.

All the 'stores' were busy on most days of the week. Many must remember the Co-op in St Mary's Street where the provisions were fetched from the shelves behind the counter by the two elderly assistants who, it seemed, had been there all their lives. The clatter always evident at the Maypole when a pound of butter was knocked up and wrapped, so professionally, by the men there. And Bennett's, which was always perfumed by the aroma of their own personally ground coffee: all now but distant memories. We did most of our food shopping on a Friday, which was pay day for the majority of people and we all used cash, no cards or cheque books. With children on and in the pram with our weekly goods, the strain was taken out of the walk back home.

We were settled at the camp until after the Queen's Coronation in 1953. There was a party and games for the children to mark the occasion and Councillor Adams, who lived next door, presented the children with decorative mugs. It was during this period that the Camp was being cleared of its tenants and we moved into a brand new Council Semi-detached in St Ovin's Green which cost us £1.1.0 (£1.05) per week ... haven't things changed!

[NOT FOR PUBLICATION : DEREK HARRIS, 45 MERTON ROAD, HISTON – 234989]

One person seeking memories of her first home is Margaret Owen (nee Utteridge) of Cambridge. She tells me: "I am proud of the fact that I was born at no.31 Cambridge Place in 1931 – we moved when I was three to Bateson Road. I cannot member my family's time there and would be very interested to know more about it. The only information I have is a copy of a page from a local newspaper dated January 1937 titled 'Whole street of houses to go?' Over to you.

Reg Darley of King's Hedges Road, Cambridge has lent me a picture of the VE day party in Ditton Fields, 1945. He tells me that Curly Smart is right in the front – but do you recognise yourself, or others?

PIC SCANNED

John Wakefield of Gt Shelford can add more information about the Premier Travel luxury coach "County of Cambridgeshire. It was one of three they bought, the other being named after West Suffolk and Essex. They were intended for use on express services but due to Ministry of Transport licensing restrictions the routes were confined to only 60 miles. He remembers travelling on one in the mid 1950s during a Sunday School outing from Sawston

Roger Cork of Stretham has shown me some other pictures of the Cambridge Tapestry Works, where his mother Dorothy used to work. One is particularly interesting as it seems to show the designer of the tapestry of Windsor Castle, which was woven for Queen Mary, and gives some indication of the scale of the work [PIC SCANNED]

Mrs J. Haywood of Willingham has really been delving back into the family archives to find a photograph of the Perse School in 1924 which has been rolled up in its tube for over 75 years. Second from the left in the rear row is her late husband, Thom Hayward – the great, great nephew of Tom Hayward the cricketer. [PIC SCANNED]

Memories 19th May 2000

25 years ago this month Cambridge was preparing to take on the world, or at least that part of the world represented by its oldest rivals Oxford and its bitter rivals, Peterborough. At stake was not just glory, it was the knowledge that what Ely could do, Cambridge could do too.

Such an enterprise needed support and as early as March 1975 51 girls had volunteered their services. Thus Judith Slater of Sawston, a part-time model, Lynne Crussell of Conington, a nursery nurse along with Haddenham student Debbie Haddock and ballet student Anne Pretty were amongst those preparing to attend a vital meeting at the Cambridge Guildhall. Would they be amongst the selected few?

It was April before they were put to the test and by then nearly 20 contenders had already dropped by the wayside. They were soon touching their toes, kicking their legs in the air, running on the spot, doing press-ups and most importantly, smiling, all to the refrain of: "Two bits, four bits, six bits a dollar. All for Cambridge stand up and HOLLER!" By the end of a gruelling session fourteen were selected, their dream of cheerleading for Cambridge still intact.

And if they needed to train, how much more effort had to be put in by those athletes who were to carry the name of Cambridge to glory. Charlie Tennant, a rugby player, Eddie Sharp, non-playing captain, women's captain Linda Roberts and the rest would have to be at their best, but then eleven of the team had earned county, regional or national honours in a variety of sports, including hockey, swimming and javelin.

For this competition would take place in front of television cameras that would beam their efforts around the world.

It was the first heat of that most important of sporting events, "It's a Knockout".

15,000 supporters crammed into the Cambridge City Football Club ground as the Cambridge sporting heroes balanced, tugged, splashed, climbed and tumbled their way through a variety of crazy games to romp home to win. In a close-fought contest the home team scored 22 points, two more than Peterborough with Oxford languishing at the bottom of the pile with just 18.

Now triumphant Cambridge were through to an International round of "Jeux sans Frontieres" where they would be the only British team against contestants from six other countries. A win might see them into the grand final in Belgium, with the chance to emulate Ely's success of two years before.

Now thoughts turned to the glamorous venue for the tussle against teams representing Italy, Holland, Germany, France, Switzerland & Belgium. Prospects of a foreign trip loomed, and receded. This contest would take place in Southport. Now was the time for training and more training.

The rehearsals for the Southport contest in August were hit by a power failure. It was not an auspicious start. The Cambridge heroes, dressed in pirate costumes rescued damsels in distress from galleons, balanced on anchors, fought and splashed themselves to exhaustion. At the end they had beaten France by five points. Sadly Steenwijk of Holland had amassed ten points more.

The team were deflated, their travelling supporters (all 34 of them) disappointed. But they had given of their best, "Every minute has been worth it" said team member Angela Maxted. They returned to a Civic Reception hosted by Mayor Bob May, not champions of Europe – but at least they'd taken part.

PICS : SANDRA HAS PRINTED A SELECTION OF PICS TAKEN AT THE MAY CONTEST AT CAMBRIDGE CITY FOOTBALL CLUB GROUND. THE NEGS ARE IN HER FILING CABINET IN HER OFFICE. OTHER PHOTOS APPEARED IN THE PAPER THAT AUGUST – CUTTINGS ENCLOSED

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My copy of last week's "Memories" article had not been delivered before Robert Stevenson from Cambridge was on the phone to tell me he recognised the soldiers shown outside a Nissen hut. Like him they were members of the Cambridge Territorial Army Unit who went to France in June 1940. Amongst the names are Kirby, Walston, Robins, Fowler, Hones, Wright and Chandler. And if the Nissen hut looks different to those you remember it may be because he thinks the picture was taken at Camier in France, though it might just be Lugan in Ireland. As it says, it is all a long while ago. On the other side of the page was the headline "Can you remember Cambridge Place?" "Yes", says Mr Stevenson, "I was born there!"

John Jenner of Bassingbourn writes following my article on river memories and the "mad professor" who ordered a boat to a design carved from a bar of soap. John writes: "The 'mad professor' was none other than the headmaster of King's College Choir School, C.M. Fiddian, 'Fid' to everyone, who was certainly mad on the river and water activities and invented all sorts of things. Over more than fifty years I forget the full details but he told us of this boat and he took it at least once on the sea to get it to the Broads among other places.

"He also revived the pre-war school outings, with swimming and a picnic, on the Viscountess Bury to Clayhithe, when we towed two punts loaded with canoes for use when we got there. Once I remember that the wheel had to be taken off as the water level was so high that we would not otherwise have got under the Railway Bridge at Chesterton. Alas in these days the whole day would break Health and Safety Rules, and I am certain we did not have the present ratio or staff to pupils, but we all survived even with an eccentric forgetful but excellent headmaster".

The Viscountess Bury may have disappeared from the rivers now, but John Norris tells me that she is currently being restored to her original glory at the International College of Boat Building in Lowestoft. A group of friends have started a trust to ensure its survival and return to the fens. If you'd like to help then contact John at 19 Gedge Close, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 2HD.

Paul Carter from Wadhurst, East Sussex, has finally caught up with my picture of the Premier Travel 'County of Cambridgeshire' bus and sent a list of names. He also says the bus accident in Chesterton High Street took place in 1963 and that the crash that demolished houses opposite the former Royal Oak at Stretham Ferry involved a Premier Travel Coach, number BGV 401. Paul should know as he writes books on buses and is now researching one on the smaller operators. If you have memories of firms like Haddenham and District, Leverett of Ashwell, Long of West Wrating, Reliance of Cottenham or others he, and I, would love to hear from you. Write to me and I'll pass letters on.

Do you recognise yourself – or anybody else – on this photograph of staff from the Cadbury / Fry Depot in Hills Road Cambridge about 1936 which has been lent me by Mrs B. Adams of Cambridge. [SCAN]

Going back even further is this photograph of a group from St Matthew's School, York Street in 1924. Dick Roberts, of Dry Drayton is there, he's now 84 but would love to hear from any surviving schoolmates or any old members of St Matthew's scouts. Write to me and I'll pass letters on. [SCAN]

Memories 26 May 2000, by Mike Petty

Last Sunday was Stretham village feast, always held on the third Sunday in May. We had our decorated floats, Friendly Society banner, a band and a parade, pausing at half time for a service in the church, when the congregation included a variety of characters in colourful costume. There were children – and adults - dressed as people from other lands, people from other centuries, people from other worlds & a variety of naughty nurses who must have been frozen to their stocking tops!

For the May-time weather is no respecter of village traditions. But at least were spared the excesses of 50 years ago when on 21st May 1950 something that, according to meteorologists, never happened in Britain did. The News reported it as a "whirlwind", but it wasn't. It was an unprecedented tornado that

cut a path about 70 miles long, starting in Buckinghamshire, sweeping across Bedfordshire and finally assaulting Sutton.

The tornado swept up Sutton High Street, through Pound Lane, Church Lane & Ely Road, damaging chimneys, roofs, walls and fences. One building was shifted from its foundations and Church Lane was completely closed by trees blown down along its entire length. Then in an awesome demonstration of its power it overturned a double-decker Eastern Counties bus onto its side. It was just leaving the village en route to March, carrying 14 passengers, one of whom, Mrs Coutts of Doddington, was injured. Whilst the driver escaped uninjured his conductor was knocked unconscious. [PIC OF SUTTON HIGH STREET?]

Elsewhere in the county many houses were struck by lightning and several cellars flooded rain battered down for an hour. At Papworth Everard the storm was described as one of the worst in living memory. Mr C.A. Benstead recalled how the sky turned completely dark except for incessant flashes of lightning which struck a house in Ermine Street North whilst its owners were in church. Elsewhere torrential rain brought the worst flooding in Alconbury Weston since 1910, with some seven feet of water in the basement of one public house. Emergency services responded to flooding in properties in Huntingdon and Newmarket and Cambridge was drenched.

Judy Wynn (nee Easy) of Histon was a teenager then. She recalls that 1951 was The Festival of Britain Year, with the Skylon and Exhibition in London, bringing colour and hope after the deprivations and greyness of the aftermath of the Second World War. "In Histon we were aware of these momentous happenings, but in the pre-TV days London seemed very far away and our young lives were centred around school and Church.

Along with most of my friends, we attended Methodist Sunday School and Church regularly, entering a full schoolroom on Sunday morning and afternoon to have our 'Star Cards' marked. I have fond memories of such saintly teachers as Miss Lincoln, Elsie Wolfe, Miss Morris and Olive Swannell. We didn't always behave well and must have been somewhat of a challenge to them as we sat on 'Bentwood' chairs behind our brown serge curtained cubicles, wearing our Sunday best clothes.

"The highlight of our mid-week activities, when we were younger, was the Inters' Club led by Reg Frost, ably assisted by the youthful Margaret Easy (Wilson). I remember a programme of games and quizzes with summer outings usually on our bikes. I learned to swim at the Green Plunge Pool in Royston. We had all cycled there in a group and I was obviously so exhausted by my efforts in the pool that everyone had to take it in turns to push me home. We did have memorable trips to London & what stands out most sharply in my memory of those visits to the Capital, is climbing to the top of the Monument, and to my dismay discovering later in the day that I'd left my hard boiled egg and lunch at the top!

"We progressed to Youth Club in due course, and the leader in those days was Charlie Love, who ruled in a kindly, friendly and very human way. He was a real gentleman who engendered great respect and affection from the members. It was a successful and thriving Club and among those who belonged in my hey-day were Brian Chapman, 'Brock' Diver, June Gawthrop, Pam Halls, Terry Howard ('Custard'), Mary Love, Margaret Thomas ('Target'), Mick Waters & Ray Wynn. The Minister of the day was the Reverend Follows, a very precise man who visited regularly to conduct Epilogue, carefully locking his cycle in the Vestry, but when his back was turned the boys could be seen riding it around the schoolroom and car park!

We met on Tuesday evenings for 'ping pong', billiards, darts, music and chat, and every Sunday afternoon and evening we would go for long walks in a group, with many outings and social events in between, again mostly using cycles, although some of the boys had motor bikes. When we ventured further afield, punting and swimming at Orford and Hemingford, Motor Cycle Scrambling at Elsworth etc., we would all pile into Ray's van and sit on forms in the back! One cold gloomy Good Friday, I

have to confess, we climbed in through a schoolroom window, girls lifted through by the boys, and had a mini-youth club meeting as we had nowhere else to go.

Concerts and full-length plays were rehearsed and produced, with the highlight of the year for all ages being the Sunday School Anniversary Day, when a new dress was a must. Excitement mounted as we anticipated the summer outings to Hunstanton, when great fun was had on the train journey as well as at the resort. Photos reveal happy beach scenes, some featuring swimwear, some mackintoshes, which conjure up many nostalgic memories of the swimming pool, donkey rides, boating lake - all long since disappeared along with the railway. On the return journey I seem to remember girls being hoisted into the luggage racks, and carriage blinds being pulled down for privacy.

“There were many youth club romances - the boys were so chivalrous - they would make sure that no girl went home alone. Ray came to the Methodist as an interloper from the Baptist upon hearing that there were more girls at the Methodist! My fate was sealed when they tossed up with a double-headed penny to decide who should see me safely home, and Ray called tails.

“These were happy carefree days although we had to grow up fairly quickly - most of us started work at 16, and the chaps went into the Forces at 18 or 21. Ray and I were married in 1958 by the Reverend Alan Creber and settled down with our family, who I am pleased to say followed in our footsteps, enjoying the social life and fun the Church had to offer through-out their young lives”.

These and other memories of Histon life are included in the Millennium Magazine produced by Histon Methodist Church which like all other churches in the village will be open for a major flower festival on Histon feast weekend 1st-3rd July, when hopefully the weather will be kinder!

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My request for memories of Cambridge Place has bought a response from Monica Smith of Cambridge. She writes: “The houses were owned by Cambridge Borough Council. My grandfather, James Saunders, who was a house demolisher, brought about 20 of the houses from the Council in 1939 on condition he demolished them. The price paid was £5 each house!

Although the houses were unfit to live in & been condemned, it took some while for the council to rehouse some of the tenants. During that time my Grandfather received the rent of two shillings and sixpence per week (12½ p). As it took nearly two years before some tenants were found new homes he got back the money he’d paid for the houses!

Sometimes demolition was done by others, as in June 1940 when German bombs hit a row of houses in Vicarage Terrace. The bricks were salvaged and sold, 800 at a time, by Mr Saunders who trundled them to their new owners in a handcart. But as well as masonry there were mementoes, pillows, bed-linen scattered in the wreckage of the homes. Theses he stored in his garages just around the corner in Gas Lane, carefully cataloguing them in pencil in his notebook, which Mrs Smith still treasures. [PIC OF VICARAGE TERRACE BOMBING RUBBLE] [MONICA SMITH, 22 PEROWNE STREET – 369262 HAS THE NOTE BOOK AND IS ALSO LOOKING FOR A CUTTING OF HER GRANDFATHER DEMOLISHING THE HOUSES IN CAMBRIDGE PLACE]

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More boating memories have been e-mailed from Basil Bonner of Whittlesford. He writes: “My wife Beryl has reminded me of an occasion in the early 1970s when she had taken Dr John York Moore’s daughters out for a trip in our wooden boat “Mallard”, which had an elderly marinated Ford engine. “Mallard” broke down near Baitsbite lock and the lock keeper kindly told the crew of The Viscountess Bury when she passed through the lock on the way back upstream to Cambridge. As the Viscountess swept past “Mallard” at around seven knots, ropes were exchanged without a moment’s delay and our boat was towed all the way up to Banham’s Boatyard, where the tow rope was released and

“Mallard’s” crew were left to get clear of the river Cam and into the mooring with the aid of our boathook”.

June Carter has also written from Cambridge: “Your recollections on the river brought back memories of when as a child I stayed for weekends with my Nana, grandfather and Aunt Ethel & on a Sunday summer evening we would walk down from Bermuda Road to the river and take a trip on the Viscountess Bury up to Clayhithe where we stopped at a public house for drinks. I had lemonade & crisps, then late evening we made our way home. It was pure magic.” June has lent me a picture of another form of travel. It is, she believes one of the first motor cars in Cambridge. The man driving it was her great uncle, Joe Cullup, who worked for the family who owned the car. But what is the car, and who was the family – can you help? [SCAN]

Mrs Clarke of Hundon has also written to say that the article sparked memories for her mother who used to live in Walnut Tree Avenue, off Newmarket Road which was demolished for Elizabeth Bridge. [PIC OF WALNUT TREE AVENUE]

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Mr A. Bates of Cambridge has been racking his brain for the names of more 1970’s cafes. They include Cam Snax at 100 Regent Street run by Mr Loubell, Thurstons in St Andrew’s street, the Milk Bar, Market Hill, El Patio in Sidney Street and the Eros in Petty Cury. There was also a café in St Andrew’s street which was entered by a staircase between Roe’s antique shop and a toy shop run by Mr & Mrs Flesch. They did very good lunches – but he cannot remember the name. He also recalls that there was also a large coffee house on the first floor of Alexandra House, Petty Cury – before it became the Hang Chow - which used to feature a pen of live chickens!

Louis Garvey has written all the way from County Galway in Ireland. He is a circus fanatic with his own collection of circus memorabilia that he has been amassing for 40 years. He even joined Tommy Duffy’s circus for a fortnight, living the life of the showpeople, hearing their stories and witnessing their dedication. If you share his fascination for the big top he’d love to hear from you at Ross Lodge, Headford, County Galway, Ireland.

**

Do you recognise yourself – or anybody else – on this photograph of staff from the Cadbury / Fry Depot in Hills Road Cambridge about 1936 which has been lent me by Mrs B. Adams of Cambridge. [SCAN]

Memories 2nd June 2000, By Mike Petty

Whilst speaking to a meeting of the Cambridge Antique Society recently memories were stirred of some of the personalities who used to be prominent in the Alexandra Street area of the city, not so long ago.

Alexandra Street was the grand name for a lane which ran from the south side of Petty Cury through to Post Office Terrace before emerging opposite Bradwell’s Court. It had been formed in 1870 from the Red Hart & Antelope Yard where farmers used to leave their horses on market day. The area was redeveloped by Corpus Christi college & two and three storey houses with shops and offices replaced the inn stables and barns

For Joan Summers it will always be associated with her father, Eric Stanley Summers. He was a heraldic artist who occupied a one-room office-cum-studio in the Street for some 40 years. Over that period he painted coats-of-arms and shields for many famous people and organisations, for Prince Philip, Churchill College and Sir Barnes Wallis of the bouncing-bomb fame. It would take him a fortnight to do a shield, which had to be gilded, lined in & coloured using the finest of sable brushes. But he also had his own silk-

screen printing press on which he would produce posters for May Balls. One item used to dominate his workshop: a cut-out of a naked girl, one arm upraised, her hair flowing in the breeze, her feet in the clouds. He had designed it for the Cambridge Health Spa many years before, one of his daughters being the model for it. Eric Summers died in September 1986 [PIC – THE LAST OF ALEXANDRA STREET, DEMOLISHED 1972, OTHER ENCLOSED FROM CEN LIBRARY]

One of his near-neighbours was also an artist, in her way, in the ramshackled premises which surrounded a hidden courtyard which were the home of generations of Cambridge photographers for over 100 years. The names of Nicholls, Bliss, Blanchard, Lunn, Lee and Lofts were amongst those who traded from Post Office Terrace. Usually their businesses were established, flourished and declined in a relatively short space of time. Two firms became particularly well known: J. Palmer Clarke and Ramsey & Muspratt.

Helen Muspratt was the young lady with the technical knowledge, Lettice Ramsey brought the contacts when they set up business together in 1932.

Miss Muspratt had studied photography at the Regent Street Polytechnic in London and had already attracted critical acclaim for her work at a successful studio in Swanage. After five years she left to set up her own studio in Oxford in 1937, and left the Cambridge side of the business to her partner.

Lettice Ramsey was born in County Sligo in August 1898 and studied at Newnham college where she read moral sciences, captained the 'Varsity lacrosse team and spent much time in trying to get the strict rules of the college relaxed. After graduating she took a job as an industrial psychologist in London until she became bored and moved to Cambridge. Here she met and married Frank Ramsey, a brilliant mathematician and philosopher, who died just five years later leaving her a widow with two young children and in need of a job.

She was introduced to Helen Muspratt, liked what she did and after just one term studying photography, invested £250 in apparatus and a darkroom in St Andrew's street. They made a profit of £600 the first year - much to the chagrin of the man who ran the nearby firm of Palmer Clarke who'd predicted that they wouldn't last for six months only to find them taking over his business in Post Office Terrace within the year.

In 1937 "L'avantgarde" Ramsey & Muspratt were the subject of an article in The Granta that felt Lettice belonged "to that class which gave the England of yesterday its scientists and that of today its artists and left-wing writers and higher Civil Servants". Certainly this class of people flocked to have their portraits taken in her studios. Vanessa Bell, Alistair Cook, Magnus Magnusson, C.P. Snow and Lord Rothschild placed themselves in front of her lens at one time or another.

The studio then was unlike the traditional old-fashioned curtained room with heavy arc-lamps and elaborate cameras. Granta described its "whitewashed walls, a glass roof; bare floor, light-coloured seats and divans and a tubular steel chair". The room was sunny and hot and "Mrs Ramsey sits in a tyrolean peasant dress, blue with red cornflowers; she is tanned because she has been abroad, she looks competent and strong and slightly flamboyant"

In 1970, aged 71, Lettice Ramsey decided to visit Cambodia but found herself banned because of her profession as photographer. She applied for another passport, describing herself as housewife and was successful and returned with hundreds of photographs. Her first foreign trip had been to Stalin's Russia in 1933, at about the time when young men such as Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean and Anthony Blunt - later to be exposed as Russian spies - were being captured by her camera in Cambridge.

Many thousands of people who booked an appointment for a portrait between 1932 and her retirement in 1978 have gone on to distinction in other fields; some of the American servicemen who arrived to fight during the Second World War had their pictures taken in the famous studio.

Many thousand of these negatives are now deposited and available in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library, from where prints can still be ordered.

But Ramsey and Muspratt were much more than just portrait takers. They offered a complete commercial service, recording window displays, building projects such as Addenbrooke's Hospital and Lion Yard and much more. Many hundreds of these are also lodged in the Collection.

Lettice Ramsey died in July 1985 and Muriel Morley another of the Cambridge Antique Society audience had the task of clearing her flat.

It cannot have been quite as exciting as discovering the thousands of glass negatives taken by each of the photographers who had once called Post Office Terrace their base that were packed into every nook and cranny of the outhouse. These too were sorted in the Teaching Area of the Cambridgeshire Collection when it was still housed on the third floor of the library and where some of Edward Summers heraldic shields were used to prop open the books I read over docky-time in those now-disappeared days. [PICS FROM CEN LIBRARY, ENCLOSED]

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Another piece of artwork has been puzzling Richard Herbert of Ickleton. It is a board that he found forming part of the attic floor of his house. It is headed "H.G. Harford, Job Master & Dealer in Horses; Station and Market Work. Manager B. Day". I've checked some of the Kelly's County Directories for Cambridgeshire between 1864 and 1916 without result, and also tried those for Norfolk & Suffolk in 1883 & 1916 without result. One of Richard's neighbours remembers a family called Day who were in Sawston in the same type of business, but can you help? [ENCLOSED, SCANNED ON DISK]

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Sheila Proctor, (nee Crisp) from Girton has been rummaging in her scrapbooks to unearth a faded cutting from the News of 19th March 1955 when Coleridge Girls School held their annual gymnastic display in front of parents and friends. Eight classes took part under the eagle eye of PT teachers Mrs Rogers, Miss Dobson & Miss Watts and Wendy Woollard received the trophy as captain of the winning form, 3A. Sheila is standing centre right – but are you amongst the others? [SCAN ON DISK]

**

Jean Clements of Campkin Road, Cambridge has recognised her uncle, Reginald Summerfield in the picture of St Matthew's school (Memories 19th May). He joined up in April 1939 and went into the Tank Corps, fighting in the tank battle of Abbeville and later in the North African desert. He was killed in the retreat from Tobruk in November 1941, aged just 21 years.

**

Mr S.A. Hunt of Bar Hill has sent me colour some snaps taken by his son in the 1970s. Like memories they have started to fade but one remains bright. It shows another Cambridge character, Trevor Hughes, in his accustomed spot near the Cambridge Market Hill fountain in February 1978. Does it jog memories for you? [COLOUR PIC ENCLOSED, SCANNED ON DISK]

Memories 9th June 2000, by Mike Petty

May Week is upon us, that celebration of the end of the Academic exams with all its thrills and flounces and the glittering spectacle of the May Balls – surely an unchanging aspect of Cambridge life.

Back in 1950 H.G. Hodder recalled that how in the early years of the 1900s the real impact and excitement was the descent of bevvies of charming and demure sisters and cousins, fully chaperoned by mothers and aunts), on what was then in effect an all-male world of almost monastic exclusiveness. Until 1914 the rare women students of Girton and Newnham were almost completely segregated from members of the male colleges, they were not only chaperoned to and from lectures but their guardians sat with them to ensure they did not engage in frivolous conversation during class.

When in the first week of June large numbers of tight-laced, elegantly-gowned, blushing young damsels stepped elegantly out of the Great Eastern Railway Station to be escorted in hansom cabs into the flower-bedecked town, the undergraduate population gave way to a spirit of coy abandon. But in those days the main activities revolved around the river with its bumping races, to be watched from punts moored beside the bank with picnics of cucumber sandwiches, cherries and ice-cream.

By 1925 the highlight of the May Week season was the First and Third Trinity Boat Club's Ball, attended by over 1,400 revellers. It was a dazzling and imposing spectacle with a marquee erected on the riverside lawns, lit with clusters of electric lights with yellow shades and decorated with crossed oars around the walls. The Clifford Essex Band provided the music. This ball remained the premier event but by 1949 it was the only one that was still purely a rowing function. It differed from all the others, too, in that it formed part of the London season. Dancing went on until six in the morning in a large marquee on Brewhouse Lane and there was an open-air floor on the other side of the river. The gaiety and music attracted the usual sight-seeing parties, and there was a crowd outside the main gate to see the guests - they numbered about 900 – arriving.

In 1950 the Cambridge Daily News reporters captured the spirit of the time as the dusk to daylight part of the May Week festival began. Downing College was that year celebrating the 150th anniversary of its foundation and made an especial effort to make it an occasion to remember. Fireworks were a major feature; "scintillating fountains spraying sparks, gorgeous aerial cascades of magnificent colour", night was turned to day by brilliant red light which brought a fresh beauty to the classical dignity of the college buildings, while a frost-like effect of artificial moonlight added to the charms. It was all marred slightly by rain.

In a marquee with a specially-laid floor there played in turns Cryil Stapleton and his orchestra and Paul Helman and his band. From ten until six dancing continued, the fox-trots, quicksteps, waltzes and old-time dances alternating with South-American rhythms.

"The flow of dance melody rarely ceased, the energy of the bands never flagged. In fact it seemed to gain in vigour as the sun rose and to impart that vigour to the guests for energetic dances like the Gay Gordons, the palais glide and the hokey-cokey filled the marquee". There was a second venue for dancers with the Junior Combination Room, designated "Salon Intime" for the occasion where Derek Tozer and his band dispensed music of a slower beat for those who wanted an excuse for a more intimate atmosphere. It was, said the *News*, the outstanding ball of the year, but one typical of those being offered by other colleges.

Michelle Spring in her novel "Nights in White Satin" (Orion books, 1999) records the May Ball atmosphere of more recent times with its champagne and oysters, full-length gowns and high-heeled sandals, bow ties, pulsating pop music – and fireworks. But there is, she claims, another side to Cambridge student life. For in Cambridge there are two universities, that of the East Road as well as the West Road, and the students of the one do not always enjoy the

privileges of the other, as her real-life researches have revealed and her fictional detective discovers.

All of this was then, as it is now, largely hidden from the prying eyes of those not privileged, or rich enough, to obtain tickets, but then, as now ordinary folk could glimpse the fashions. Outside the great gate of Trinity in 1925 a crowd assembled to watch the arrival of the guests. They noticed many fashionable peculiarities in the ladies' attire, and one fair guest was wearing one silk stocking of white and the other of a deep shade of blue. By morning as business folk hurried to work they met occasional stragglers in evening dress returning home after the ball. Most of them wore the traditional "morning after" look and seemed quite spent as the result of their all-night activity. Those people walking into work over the next week or so may glimpse their modern equivalents

Some of the revellers, having danced the night away will still, like generations before them, make their way to the river for a punt ride to Grantchester and breakfast, though in 1974 May Ballers sought another venue – Waffles Restaurant in Fitzroy Street, an unlikely place to witness queues of the smart set. [NEG REF 1487/74/24]

But did you ever go to a May Ball – either as guest or caterer and will you share those memories with me?

[ILLUS – POSTERS DESIGNED BY E.S. SUMMERS OF ALEXANDRA STREET FOR MAY BALLS IN THE EARLY 1950S

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Ann Hood, (nee Painter) writes from Whittlesford with her personal memories of the Sutton tornado of May 1950. She lived at 14 High Street and remembers the damage the storm caused in High Street, Pound Lane & Church Lane.. "Our garden stretched from High Street to The Brook, We had two beautiful mature Walnut trees growing in the Orchard garden. One of these was lifted and dropped by the hurricane, so that it lay across the fence between us and our neighbour's field. One of the smaller neighbouring apple trees was also lifted and dropped back almost in the same hole. Most of the damage in the village was to the Elm trees in Church Lane where branches fell causing some traffic problems until they were cleared. Our own trees, apart from a few branches, all survived, even though they were now at very odd angles and so provided easier shapes to climb. What fun we children had after the storm. The double-decker bus on its side caused some childish smiles as we girls had just been taught in science that Double-deckers were more stable than single!"

**

The story of the bombing raid on Vicarage Terrace in June 1940 has been told several times, but not before by Mr G. Murfett of Cambridge. He writes that the article brought back a lot of memories for him.

He recalls: "I was about 18 years old and never went down the air raid shelters that night. We lived in a three storey house, I was on the first floor, my twin brother was on the top floor, my mother upstairs. 'Get up, a bomb has dropped beside the house', she called. I called back that it had dropped at Marshall's, then we both went back to sleep.

The next morning I went to work at P.H. Allins in Bridge Street. Fred Turkentine stood in the garage, he was always a joker. He said 'you had a close one last night'. When I got to the workshop Arthur Oliver who lived in Sleaford Street said the same thing. I didn't believe him, so he said 'When you go home, cycle down Norfolk Street'. I found St Matthew's Street roped off, police, firemen, ambulance, wardens, sorting through rubble. The bomb did not stop St Matthew's church clock.

“The plane that dropped the bomb was shot down over Fulbourn. It passed over my sister’s cottage and crashed one side of Balsham Road, then bounced to the opposite side. On the Saturday we cycled out to collect bits.

“A few days later I met up with my pal John Hammence, he had been firewatching at a factory on East Road, so he had to help clear up the mess & parts of bodies.”

I WILL ALWAYS BE GLAD TO RECEIVE YOUR PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF
WARTIME OR OTHER MORE RECENT LOCAL EVENTS, PLEASE WRITE

* *

Gwen Norman from Impington has been inspired to send me some most interesting reminiscences of her own childhood, with picnics and cycle rides, of tea made with condensed milk enjoyed in the confines of Anderson shelters in deepest Kent. For her a trip to the local Officer Cadet Training Unit camp for Saturday night dances was an exciting way to spend her time. “My grandfather said I was ‘soldier chasing’, but I considered it ‘entertaining the troops’, she writes.

**

Anthony Bevan of the Cambridge Olympic Appeal has written to identify three of the Cambridge “It’s a Knockout” team featured on 19th May. Those with the giant ball include Chris Heron on the right, Charlie Tennant and Anthony himself, all members of the Cambridge Rugby Team

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Sheila Proctor, (nee Crisp) from Girton has been rummaging in her scrapbooks to unearth a faded cutting from the News of 19th March 1955 when Coleridge Girls School held their annual gymnastic display in front of parents and friends. Eight classes took part under the eagle eye of PT teachers Mrs Rogers, Miss Dobson & Miss Watts and Wendy Woollard received the trophy as captain of the winning form, 3A. Sheila is standing centre right – but are you amongst the others? [SCAN ON DISK]

Memories 16 June 2000

Brenda Theobald from Ely was somewhat surprised the other week to open the News and find a picture of herself and her bridesmaids, taken just a week or so before her wedding back in June 1936. She’s lent me another snap, this time of the entire group – you can tell it’s the same time because they’re wearing the same clothes. [SCAN OF OUTING]

They were all part of a group snapped on an outing from the Cadbury-Fry depot in Cambridge, a firm she’d joined in 1930 when aged 19. This was based beside the Hills Road railway bridge and Brenda was in charge of the Fry showroom with Mr Charlie Sunday, ensuring the right number of bars of Fry’s Chocolate Cream, Bournville chocolate and other delicacies were delivered to the shops that had ordered them.

It was a job sure to appeal to a girl with a sweet tooth, but she was soon cured of a love of excess chocolate when she was sent to the Bournville factory to be trained. As she was shown round the works she was encouraged to taste the products at the various stages of production. They had a recreation ground and in dinner time she went on the swings and was soon sick as a dog.

She retained her fitness participating in productions organised by the McKenzie School of Music and Drama at the Festival Theatre, swam in the Cam at the ladies bathing place, played tennis and hockey

for Cambridge & when she first started work at Eaden Lilley's rowed for a ladies boat club on the river, getting up at 6am so she could row and be back at work by 8 am.

The family home was in Union Road, off Hills Road. She used to run errands for a neighbour who repaid her with a drive in his new motor car, whisking her off to the seaside at Hunstanton – a tremendous journey in the early 1920s. After her marriage they moved to houses newly built by her father, Harry Bicheno in Roseford Road, among the open fields off Histon Road. A stream ran across the back of the garden, there were fields on either side and at the back where horses roamed, and the children could walk through cornfields and pick greengages to take to Chivers factory. The countryside is now swamped under the Arbury Estate. [SCAN OF ROSEFORD ROAD WHEN NEWLY BUILT]

The family moved on to Ely where her husband set up the fabric shop that is still remembered by generations of dressmakers, and enjoyed a spell as Mayor. A photograph of Ely High Street in the 1960s shows cars lining each side of the road – soon to be banished altogether when the street becomes pedestrianised for part of the week. [SCAN OF ELY HIGH STREET 1960s]

Amongst the treasures in her photo album is one of an Eaden Lilley Christmas party in December 1952. Her daughter Valerie is the very smart young lady in glasses beside Santa Claus – do you recognise others? [SCAN OF EADEN LILLEY PARTY 1952]

Ted Mudd of Cambridge has also been sorting out pictures of beautiful ladies. Do you recognise the starlet causing excitement at the Tivoli Cinema, Chesterton Road in the 1950s, or did you even get to see Diana Dors yourself? [SCAN OF DIANA DORS AT THE TIVOLI CINEMA]

Any souvenirs of her visit would by now be collectors' items, eagerly sought for by people who browse in antique shops. But there were none on show at John Beazor's shop in Cambridge the other week when the firm celebrated both the 125th anniversary of the firm and their 60th anniversary in Regent Street. Amongst the works of art & very fine furniture memories turned to when the street was less dominated by yellow lines and estate agents.

When the *News* surveyed the street in the mid 1960s they found a tremendous mixture of trades and shops. The Singer Home Appliance Centre were stocking records, tape recorders and radios as well as selling sewing machines. Nearby G.G. Woodward were selling and servicing typewriters but finding that times were changing; undergraduates could no longer afford to buy them and were instead having to rely on their own handwriting for writing out their lecture notes! If essays had to be churned out wholesale students could turn to the Roneo duplicating machine company which had the newly developing photocopying machines while Regent Photo Print.

Books could be read at the Christian Science Reading Room or borrowed from Regent Street post office, until 1959 known as Eastern Counties Libraries supplying local shops with the books they needed for their own individual libraries and running their own mobile library around the countryside. If you were into philately then Mr J. Filby specialised in stamps of the British Colonies, Western Europe and the United States. It was a growing hobby and "even the British Post Office is waking up to the fact and bringing out more interesting stamps than in the past" he commented.

Fashion needs were catered for by Stylebeat, then the Mecca of Mods, Rockers and other other young men who liked their clothing to be in the modern vogue. Pointed cowboy boots, tartan jerkins, brightly coloured shirts and sweaters, slim-fitting pants were sure to attract the fashionable. Nearby Milletts stocked army and navy surplus clothes with great coats and khaki trousers always available, just a few doors from the Refuge Aid Shop selling goods in aid of world refugees. Charity shops are one aspect of the street that have flourished in the last 35 years.

John Howes, the long established cycle dealers were one of the few companies in Regent Street not concerned about the arrival of parking meters which others saw as marking a dramatic decline in business. One firm was offering to pay the meter charge while customers were in his shop and Keith

Beazor tells me this is something that his firm will still do, at least for customers who actually purchase one of their fine antiques!

One of the oldest things in the street are the doors through which customer enter their shop. They date back to the reign of George III and were brought to Cambridge when the shop opened here 60 years ago. Embedded in the wood were numerous pieces of shrapnel, souvenirs of wartime bombardment of the seaside town. [REGENT STREET PIX FROM FILES]

Cambridge too has suffered from airborne attack, with fears of Zeppelin raids in the First war and German bombs in the Second. But in October 1965 some 150 students had to be evacuated from Magdalene College when an R.A.F. barrage balloon broke away from its base at Cardington and drifted over the county trailing its 2,000 feet steel tethering cable beneath it. The college porter rang police to say "Something is drifting in the sky and there is something swishing about in the college grounds. The fire brigade trained searchlights into the sky to locate the balloon which was found stationary, its cable wrapped around scaffolding on a building site in St John's college.

The job of winching the balloon down took some nine hours and fears mounted that the hydrogen gas inside might explode if its envelope were pierced as it neared the rooftops. The balloon bucked and reared as the wind became stronger, crashing into the tops of two tall trees, but finally it was brought to land, the gas vented and all made safe.

Students could return to their studies, including Prince Richard, son of the Duke of Gloucester whose rooms were within a few yards from where the giant balloon finally flopped. They had a true tale to tell of when something went bump in the night. [BALLOON PIX FROM FILES]

Memories 23 June 2000 by Mike Petty

This has been the week of the Cambridge Festival of Cycling with free cycle health checks, exhibitions, a free cyclists' breakfast and various organised bike rides. One feature was a seminar on Cycling in Cambridge, past present & future at APU, which set me thinking about the relationship between Cambridge and the bike

That cycles dominate Cambridge traffic was proven in August 1986 when streets in the centre of the city were narrowed. With no room for motor vehicles to overtake them bicycles would regulate the speed of progress. The amount of traffic using the central roads dropped. It reduced still further when the centre became pedestrianised and cycles themselves banned from certain streets at certain time. However when the first one way restrictions were introduced in Market Street and Petty Cury in 1925 there was one category of traffic that could go against the flow as they have done legally or illegally ever since.

Various rules have been made to govern the machines. In May 1819 the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners issued a notice "that any person riding a Machine entitled a Velocipede upon the foot-pavement ... is liable to the penalty of twenty shillings". In the Cambridge Chronicle of August 1857 there was a letter of complaint about two undergraduates on a double velocipede running down a child watching a Punch and Judy show in Barnwell. The attack on "this dangerous and ever-growing evil" prompted another correspondent to describe the machines as ridiculous and immoral - whenever he met one he went "as close to upsetting it as possible ... I long to send it and its lunatic piped propeller to immortal smash"

The velocipede was defended by John Howes: one might imagine they were "miniature cars or Juggernauts and that broken arms and legs were of frequent occurrence". However he had had the management of them for 14 or 15 years and could positively state that no accident had occurred except such slight ones "as the clothes-brush, soap and court plaister" could remedy.

The machines were already popular in 1843 for when Queen Victoria visited Cambridge in October her progress was greeted by crowds in carriages, "spring van, tumbril gig, and even the eccentric velocipede for which these parts are famous".

Proper bicycling increased in popularity with the invention of pneumatic tyres but these suffered problems. In 1906 one particular cat was reported to be adept at puncturing them as people biked past and in 1910 the flints put on the road to provide footholds for horses during snow were also complained of for similar reasons. Cyclists petitioned for their own cyclways as early as 1913 but the campaign reached a crescendo in the 1970s with mass rallies resulting in dedicated routes, and even a cycle bridge across the railway, the longest of its type in Western Europe, which was opened in 1989

Cycling was a popular pastime in Edwardian times and various Societies were established whose members would enjoy communal rides in the countryside, similar to those that have been in operation this week. Others achieved fame for their long-distance speed riding. One such was Arthur Markham who in 1907 held the world endurance tricycle record of 307 miles in 24 hours. He is commemorated in Markham Close on the Arbury estate.

But the speed of other cyclists were the source of concern in 1904: "A few years ago the bicycle was looked upon by pedestrians as a real terror and accidents were frequent. Those that grew up with the machine now simply regard it as one of the ordinary dangers but still watch out for the "wheeler" who comes scorching by at the phenomenal speed of 20mph".

Machines then were expensive; a second-hand machine sold for 35/- (£1.75) in 1910 when a professional gang of bicycle thieves were detected shipping stolen bikes to London by train. Those who could not afford their own bikes could hire one. W.J.Taylor recalled in 1931 that he had hired a machine from Messrs Dean Bros of East Road at the rate of 1d an hour in the early 1870s. Since then various firms have followed suit. One such was Herbert Robinson who by 1911 were doing good business hiring to undergraduates, and demonstrated good business sense or good luck when in 1938 they took delivery of 500 machines just before a bus strike. More recently you may recall how in 1979 4-wheel 'cyclomobiles' were hired out to visitors, and more recently still we had the cycle-rickshaw experiment.

The livelihood of bike hirers seemed to be threatened when the City Council conceived the idea of refurbishing the large numbers of abandoned machines, painting them green, and parking them in various parts of the city. The idea was simple. You could merely borrow a bike from one rack and return it to another when finished. Like most ideas it half worked. People did borrow them ... Within a few weeks however the sight of a green bike in Cambridge streets was as rare as sightings of Nessie!

But why has Cambridge gained its reputation as cycle city. Without doubt the University regulations of the 1920s that prevent undergraduates using motor cars is one big factor. But there is another. The *News* of 90 years ago was adamant, there were so many bikes because house prices were so high that

ordinary folk had to live far from the centre and needed the machines to get to work. [VARIOUS BIKE PIX]

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Mr T.W. Skeels (a famous name in Cambridge cycling) has discovered an old photograph of Cox's Garage and staff in the late 1920s or early 1930s. The garage stood on Quayside. His uncle, Alfred Crisp is second from the left but who are the others – and what is the car? [SCAN ON DISK]

On a slightly different theme I have had a letter from Colin Nunn, secretary of the Cambridge Matchless Motor Cycle Club who are soon to celebrate their 50th anniversary. They were formed as predominately a "scrambles" club and until recently were involved in Moto Cross at both national and local level, as well as being active on the trials scene. To celebrate their half-century they are holding a sporting and social day at Elsworth Moto Parc on Saturday 8th July kicking off with a demonstration ride at 3pm and ending up with a pig roast. So if you are or were interested in scrambling and would like to go along contact Colin on Cambridge 860829 or Dave Simons on Cambridge 23220. And if you were a scrambler, or have any snaps why not drop me a line and tell me about it?

How often do we all take photographs and forget to write the date on the back? Well, even the professionals can slip up sometimes. Peter Dumbleton has found some photographs he took of two local schools in the late 1960's. The question is – which school, when – and are you on them. [PICS ENCLOSED]

Percy Seeby of Trumpington has responded to my request for May Ball memories. He writes: "As a musician (tenor sax) I once played at Trinity and had to walk through the line of people waiting to see the guests arrive, carrying my sax case, to cries of "Here comes the band" (guffaw, guffaw). I think the Ted Heath band was the main act that night. In 1950 I played at Selwyn with the Chic Applin band and wore a red bow tie instead of the usual black, which caused quite a few comments. They gave us bacon and eggs and Champagne for breakfast, and I rode home with my sax case balanced on my bike. I wouldn't like to do it now! In the late 60's I played with a small jazz group at Pembroke and the pianist, a somewhat extrovert character, played the Whole evening with a flap hanging down at the knee of his dress suit where he had somehow torn it. No one seemed to notice, how times had changed!

My pictures of staff on the Cadbury/Fry outing have prompted memories for Ernie & Vera Ostler of Cambridge who feature on the snap; Vera (nee Kefford) used to be secretary to Mr Sunday. Doris Maltby of Chesterton remembers them along with Nancy Long & Molly Mott who she says also used to work there.

Memories, 30th June 2000, by Mike Petty

Last week I was entertained to a lunch by members of my WEA class at the Mitchell Centre off Mill Road, Cambridge, where for the last few months we have been exploring various aspects of Cambridgeshire's past. They choose the topics, I supply the slides and together we do the commentary. We've covered aviation, pubs, floods and architecture and I've learnt from them as much as they've got from me. Lots of people provide similar activities – but I was the first lecturer to be invited to lunch!

The company was great, John and Brian entertained me with their conversation – and I even beat Dave at a game of pool (though I suspect he was not really trying!). Afterwards there would have been music, although the grand piano so well played by those attending the Centre is now needing replacement and if you happen to have a better one they would love to hear from you.

The dining room was decorated with murals from the art class, the menu was sausages, potatoes and peas, followed by banana cream and washed down with a glass of lemon squash. It was a feast, though some will recall how vegetables tasted better when grown in the hospital grounds at Fulbourn.

It may not quite be the sort of feast that Stanley Chown would have prepared, though at times he would have been proud to have been able to serve it. He too cherishes his memories of menus – and for 50 years he assisted in preparing some of the best food Cambridge has to offer. Indeed when Prince Charles was at Trinity College, and wanted a good meal, he went to Pembroke, for Consomme Celestine, le Homard Americaine (lobster soup), le Grouse a la Pembrokia and le soufflé a la Whibley, just one of many dishes named after college Fellows. A copy of the menu signed by Prince Charles is amongst Stanley's treasures. It made such an impression that when the two met at Buckingham Palace the conversation ranged about the history of crème brulee and other recipients of the MBE had to wait longer than usual whilst reminiscences were aired.

Stanley was born in Cambridge in 1912. His father was a soldier, badly wounded during the Great War, who dissuaded his son from embracing a military career. Instead he went to college. Of the three colleges open to him he rejected St Johns & St Catharine's and opted for Pembroke where turtle shells decorated the walls – for of course they had live turtles to make turtle soup. The tears which welled up on his first day were understandable – he was given the job of peeling onions, but he knew this was the life for him and for the next 50 years Pembroke became one of the three loves of his life. The others were his wife Dora, who he kept waiting 15 years as colleges did not pay enough to get married (though having seen the scars of war he put off any thought of marriage not knowing whether when his war came he would come back an invalid & a nuisance). The third love, the one that has been his life and may have saved his life, was food.

The young Chown (“like ‘Clown’ but with an ‘h’”) served his apprenticeship in the college kitchens in the days when there were no fridges and the college got two big lumps of ice from McFisherries morning and afternoon to keep food fresh. Some food was not served fresh for during the shooting season several undergraduates supplied their own pheasants to supplement the loaf of bread each student was entitled to every day. The experience of dining well was part of their Cambridge education. Dinner was compulsory five nights a week, they had to sit in the same seats and porter John Cronk was responsible for marking them in.

During college vacations Stanley worked in grand hotels where the pay was infinitely better, but the quality and ambience far worse. Throughout the hardships of the depression he was part of the team keeping the college fed.

But then came the war. Stanley volunteered for hospital cooking. Wherever he went he found himself in demand. He was offered a job as cook on an American ship transporting soldiers to the war but kept with his hospital unit. They found their way eventually to Singapore in time for the final abortive attempt to repel the invading Japanese Army. Such were the casualties that Stanley was responsible for feeding some 2,000 wounded in a large hospital. News came that the Japanese were forming new convalescent hospitals up-country to which his companions were to be moved. Stanley however was to remain in Singapore. This did not appeal, he got his name on the list and for the next 6 days they travelled in cattle trucks deep into the jungle. Then it was forced marches, cholera, dysentery, repeated bouts of malaria and all the horrors of forced labour. Somehow he survived, despite playing his part in an escape attempt by raiding the Japanese cookhouse for supplies for the escapers and lying like mad when called to account.

When the shattered remnants of his group returned to Singapore Stanley's expertise was needed in three places. He elected to cook in a new hospital for allied officers at Karanji keeping up morale through creative catering with whatever ingredients he had to hand, producing his own substitute wines from colourings found in the pharmacy and writing imaginative menus to describe the fare.

Though supplies were few he contrived a Christmas dinner in 1944 and was summoned before the Colonel of the Australian contingent. There he was presented with a scroll, painted with colours made from the surrounding soil with brushes made from human hair and signed by the officers. It was a magnificent testimonial to his skills, it was also one that could cost him his life. For his Japanese captors would see it as part of yet another escape attempt, and he had been lucky to survive last time. He was ordered to destroy it. Stanley disobeyed the order. It was buried in a piece of bamboo beneath the floor of his hut together with another token of appreciation – a pencil sketch of Dora, copied from a treasured snapshot by a badly wounded artist he had helped regain his confidence by assisting in the kitchen.

The framed testimonial decorated the kitchens at Pembroke to which he returned once liberation came. He went back to his old job as second chef and rose to the very top, cooking regularly for lords, ladies and royalty, as well as changing generations of undergraduates. Many of them remember him with great affection and return to the college kitchens in the hope that he might be there.

But Stanley can get down to Pembroke less often now, for sadly his wife Dora has lost her sight and his place is at her side, his cooking skills now required at home.

His photo albums and scrapbooks are full of snaps and menus, his memories are of fantastic feasts, of swans made in icing sugar, a bust of Thomas Gray and the undergraduate whose head went wrong. Well how do you make a head in icing sugar? Stanley's recipe is to take one balloon inflated to the appropriate size. Cover it in icing sugar and allow to set. Then prick the balloon. But no matter how hard he tried he could not just get the features right, at least not to his perfectionist's eyes.

Dora recalls that a chef's working day often extended far beyond the hours for which he was paid. She too served Pembroke as landlady of one of their hostels in Panton Street which, like all the others used to be supplied with breakfasts from the college kitchens, delivered by porters on wooden trays carried on their heads. But often by midnight there would be no sign of her husband and she would find him engrossed in his kitchen putting more final touches to a special cake – perhaps one of the giant wedding cakes which were another of his specialities.

When the time came for him to retire after 50 years service in 1976 the college raided its treasures for a very special presentation and have chivvied him into writing his own "Memories of Pembroke College 1926-1976" which he has just finished. Now the man who ensured the college's culinary reputation at numerous grand receptions is often a guest of honour. But the greatest accolade he has received, is the one he got so used to: "just seeing them all enjoying my meals was enough for me"

PIXS SCANNED OF STANLEY CHOWN WITH ICING SUGAR BUST OF UNDERGRADUATE & AT A MAY BALL WITH ICING SUGAR SWAN AND STAFF WHO INCLUDE CHEF JOHN GRIGGS, GEORGE DUNN & MRS CLARKE; KEITH HAS TAKEN OTHER PICS OF CHOWN WITH HIS SIGNED TESTIMONIAL FROM THE JAP HOSPITAL CAMP AND A MENU SIGNED BY PRINCE CHARLES & OTHERS

We may not all be privileged to dine at Top Table (or at the Mitchell). But another grand event is open to all. Trumpington has two great houses, Trumpington Hall, home to the Pemberton family since 1675 and Anstey Hall, once home to the Foster family.

Early last century both played a major part in village life with village fetes being hosted as well as private parties. During the war the first was a Red Cross Hospital, the other a base for the auxiliary fire service and soldiers lived in Nissen huts in the grounds. Later Anstey Hall was taken over by the Bata Shoe Company and the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service. Now it is being restored to its former glory as a private house. As part of the Trumpington Parish Church's Millennium Weekend there will be a cheese and wine party at Anstey Hall on Friday 7th July, tickets for which are available from David George, on Cambridge 840191 at £5. Next day, Saturday 8th July there will be a garden party in the grounds when visitors will be able to retrace the steps of the high society ladies who took

their ease in the summer house – and witness the progress of the new supermarket now being built in the old pleasure gardens.

One of last week's mystery school pictures has been identified. Margaret Hobbs from Caldecote saw her daughter Jo with her classmates at Dry Drayton school about 1967 – but we need other names and details please.

Memories 7th July 2000 by Mike Petty

George Blows of Queen Edith's Way, Cambridge has responded for my appeal for material on motor cycle scrambling with a photograph taken of a Centaur Motor Cycle Club meeting at the chalk pits, Lime Kiln Road, Cherry Hinton about 1952. He recalls there were several German prisoners there from the camp at Trumpington.

Information on the sport seems scarce though I have a cutting of when the first inter-club team championship scramble was held at Hill Farm, Buckland, near Royston. The course of about 1½ miles had been marked out chiefly on a long hill-side field, but a steep gully at the end of the straight and another near the crest of the hill were severe obstacles. The names of some of the riders were given as Brian Stonebridge, J. Hubbard, H.D. Halsey, M. McNally & A.S. Cox. It seems that in those days the sport was highly popular with events most weekends.

By 1977 schoolboy scrambling was described as one of Britain's boom sports and Cambridge had its one Junior Scramble Club with about 75 members. Its meetings were held in Fen Road, Chesterton. Twelve-year old Kelvin was one of the founder members who described the buzz: "I like going fast and doing jumps" he told a reporter. His bike could do 70 mph (though not on the scramble track). The Suzuki had cost £450 and there was the protective clothing, transport to and from meetings and other expenses which forced youngsters to save every penny of their pocket money and do odd jobs to keep them going. All that of course is nearly 25 years ago. Did you used to take part, then or earlier. Somebody must have memories, please share them.

The prison camp George Blows refers to was established in 1941 to house Italian prisoners of war. It was set up in fields to the west of Hauxton Road, Trumpington & comprised a single-storey buildings surrounded by a high wire fence topped with barbed wire. Towards the end of the war the camp was used for German prisoners who were only allowed out to work on local farms when escorted. By 1948 they were allowed to use the village shops, though they were still easily identifiable by their armbands. These details are included in a new book on 20th-century Trumpington, just compiled by Shirley Brown. It is full of memories of the Royal Shows held in the 1950s and 60s, of Ted Peacock opening his council house gardens and attracting thousands of people to see his wonderful displays of dahlias. Perhaps you remember Kitty Willers, the supreme toy maker. Every year she would hang some new design of toy in the bedroom window of her High Street home and children going past to school would chose the one they wanted. Then their mothers would have to join the queue at the Church Missionary Society sale well before it opened, in the hope of being successful. There were never any toys left.

Other older members of the community played their part in different ways. Trumpington Elderly Action Group was set up to discuss how to improve life for the over-sixties and carried their campaign to Cambridge itself when the city centre was pedestrianised – how could older people do their shopping without some form of transport. They picketed the newly-installed gates, organised petitions and were rewarded with the introduction of the free green shopper bus that now trundles between the Grafton Centre to King's Parade

Amongst the hundred of people mentioned in the name of Jack Overhill, the well-known local author and broadcaster whose journals of back-street life in Cambridge are preserved for all to read in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library. Jack had a remarkable memory and a remarkable way of recalling and bringing to life events of the past. He had a tale of a disturbance in the dining hall

at the Leys School which got so bad that police had to be called and the Riot Act read, but he claimed the event had been hushed up.

When I received a copy of the newly-published history of the Leys school I turned immediately to the chapter 'Boys will be boys'. There they document the occasion in 1923 when every pupil was served two mackerel for breakfast. Without any visible conferring the Top Table got up and filed out, carrying their mackerel. They were immediately followed by boys from other tables. In perfect order they marched to the Bursar's office, deposited their stinking fish on his desk and marched back to the Dining Hall where Grace was said, and they were dismissed. The Bursar found 520 fish on his desk when he arrived for work. No comment was ever made and no disciplinary action was ever taken, but there was a noticeable improvement in the food from that time. Then there was the cockroach-eating incident when during a biology practical in the late 1950s boys were given the task of removing the mouthparts of a cockroach and mounting them on a microscope slide. The Master in charge was not surprised when one pupil came to ask for a fresh specimen. He was surprised when the lad promptly swallowed it and held out his hand for the payment of a 2/6 bet he had made with his classmate! But of the Riot Act there is no proof, though they have tracked down a note from the Headmaster of the time which claims no such incident ever happened. Unless you know better?

There is also a fascinating insight into the visit paid to The Leys by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother in 1961 to open a major rebuilding project. The occasion went like clockwork but after Her Majesty had gone it was discovered she had left her bouquet behind. The Headmaster's wife, Jean Barker carefully undid it and presented a flower to every boy who had met the Queen. Hardly had she finished when the telephone rang. It was Clarence House: "Her Majesty is most upset – she left her flowers behind – please could you send them on to her". Jean Barker replied "Of Course" and then had the job of regathering each bloom, reassembling the bouquet as best she could and taking it down to London with an accompanying letter. She received a charming letter saying that the Queen Mother apologised because she had guessed what had happened, "but goodness – she had enjoyed the strawberries and cream!"

For anybody connected with the Leys this account of "Well-regulated minds and improper moments", so well put together by Geoff and Pat Houghton, is essential reading. But it has far from just a parochial interest. During both the World Wars The Leys was in the front line in treating casualties when its buildings were requisitioned as hospitals, including maternity cases as both military and civilian personnel were treated. Very recent research has however discovered another role earmarked for the school. Secret Government papers show how in 1963 the school had been earmarked to play a supporting role in the government of the Eastern Region should a nuclear strike have been mounted on Britain which caused the collapse of Central Government.

Such secrets of wartime are still being puzzled over. How often have you spotted a wartime pillbox in the corner of a field, or along some river bank and wondered why it was placed there. Some of the answers are to be found in a new "Atlas of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire History" just issued by the Regional Studies Centre at Anglia Polytechnic University. According to the text Cambridge itself was designated a Defended Place capable of being held by its own garrison consisting for the most part of Home Guards. Roads & railway would have been blocked by steel rails dropped into prepared sockets, vehicles immobilised and stocks of fuel destroyed. The city was surrounded by an anti-tank ditch, pillboxes and fieldworks whilst the Shire Hall complex was fortified as the focus of last ditch resistance. The Castle Hill site has had a history of fortifications but in other places military preparations were constructed, as at Godmanchester in Roman times, and Linton during the Civil War when in June 1648 Royalist and Roundhead forces clashed. Other maps show the development of fen drainage, road transport & railways whilst Margaret Spufford has plotted the schools and schoolmasters in old Cambridgeshire between 1574 & 1628.

One of the places to have schools in those far off days was Dry Drayton whose pupils in about 1967 featured in these columns a couple of weeks ago. Mrs Elsome, now of Somersham, was shocked when she opened her paper to see the faces of her children looking out at her. Graham Bilton who now lives

in Stretham named two of the teachers as Mrs Jordan (centre) and Mrs Mascrow (left) together with various children including Philip Parfitt, Mandy Bilton (now Carter) and Linda Searle who he believes is now in the USA. Mrs Ruth Searle from Dry Drayton has also written to confirm the location. So thank you, problem solved.

I have selected another school picture to test your powers of observation and memory, this one from the files of the News. So where, when and who?

Two readers are appealing for your help. Mrs Joyce Pryke of Willingham is searching for a photo of her late father, Frank Lawrence who used to work for Eaden Lilley and rowed for them in the late 1920s or early 1930s. She's tried the Cambridgeshire Collection, Folk Museum and County Record Office for a team photo, can you help?

Mrs J. Potts from Histon asks whether anybody can enlighten her as to the whereabouts in Cambridge of "Nazareth House Homes" which were run by nuns for children in care. If so write to me and I'll pass letters on.

PIC SCANNED OF SCRAMBLING AT CHERRY HINTON CHALK PITS c1952 TAKEN BY
GEORGE BLOWS
OTHERS SELECTED FROM NEWS LIBRARY

Memories 14th July 2000, by Mike Petty

Sometimes it seems that things just go round and round. The Saturday shoppers in Cambridge's Lion Yard pick their way through the debris of a building site wondering just what new delights will be revealed once the scaffolding has gone and the new development is revealed in all its wonder.

Exactly that question was being asked this week 25 years ago when in mid July 1975 the first shops were starting to move into the brand new development. In those days the rent for a prime shop on Petty Cury would be some £16,000 a year, in the centre of the Yard prices would be down to between £7-£10,000, whilst individual small boutique units could be snapped up for about £5,000.

But then, as now, the question was who could afford them. Businesses must have a high turnover and high profit margins – selling goods such as clothes, jewellery and electrical goods. They would probably be wealthy national companies who could afford to speculate for a few years. Certainly few local traders were expressing any hopes of moving into Lion Yard.

The design for the new area dated back to 1950 when the Holford & Wright planning report proposed two large shopping streets in the Lion Yard area. This was rejected, so too was another proposal in 1959 and it was 1968 that the basic outline of the present scheme was accepted and Arup Associates were commissioned to prepare it. The design was approved in January 1970 and work started by the end of the year. First to open was the car park in July 1972 to be followed by a new Central Library on three floors, three floors of office accommodation and 40 shops of varying sizes. It was all officially opened by Princess Anne in December 1975.

But in July 1975 the burning question was who was to occupy them. Not Millers Music, Ken Stevens or Remu Television. The first two found the rents too steep, the third was unsuccessful in his bid. Manager Alan Umer was quoted as saying: "I am disappointed that local traders did not get a much more lenient hearing, and a bit more consideration". But in spite of the austere economic conditions then applying Cambridge's allure as a shopping centre was overcoming any reluctance to rent. Harry Fenton menswear were already open by July 1975 & Mike Barry menswear, Chelsea Girl, Etam, and Plumbs fabric cover furnishers were likely to be open soon. As were Rumbelows the electricians, Dixons photographic, Ernest Jones jewellers, Peter Lord footwear and Salisbury handbags.

Within the precinct itself fashion-conscious ladies could look forward to Alley Boutique, Hammells, Van Allan, Evans Outsize & Mothercare – with Miss Selfridge due later. If shopping made you hungry there was refreshment to be had at the Golden Egg where you could scan the latest fashion magazines bought from W.H. Smith.

Outside there would be entertainment, a chamber group in dinner jackets, a solitary flautist or a washed-up busker offering Scottish ballads on his accordion depending on the day. There would always be something on offer to delight the shopper, as Cambridge roared into the new retail age.

Were you amongst those who pioneered this exciting expansion of the Cambridge shopping scene & do you look back with nostalgia on the Old Lion Yard.

When you talk shops to Tom Caldecoat it is the Cambridge Co-op that he remembers, the shop he joined as a driver before he could drive – though he had practised on a hired motorbike. But in those inter-war days transport was in its infancy, his Vulcan truck had a petrol tank under the seat and he pumped the petrol by hand whenever the engine faltered.

Talking with Tom is like leafing through a picture history of Cambridge last century. His boyhood memories are of the East Road – Mill Road area. He describes fetching coke in a pram from the Gas Works, of queuing for potatoes down Mill Road and for margarine from the Maypole in the days of wartime rationing, though it is the Great War he remembers. He played football for Cambridge Town and was poached to play for the great London club Walthamstowe Avenue claiming £8 a match for his train and taxi fares, though he moved to live near the ground – well Town only gave him socks and a shirt and in those days of depression times were very hard. It was here he met his late wife.

But Tom could not stand London and came home to Cambridge and a job at the Co-op. By the time he enlisted in the Second War he was an experienced transport engineer & went to fight with the Cambridge-based 30th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, finding himself based at Sawston Hall & trundling the guns into Fowlmere & Bassingbourn to guard the airfields. He was in charge of the transport that saw those guns through the African deserts and up into Italy and witnessed the body of Mussolini suspended upside down over a garage forecourt. He returned to repair and return vehicles that had been commandeered from buildings at Quy Hall and then it was back to the Co-op where from its base at Sleaford Street he was responsible for vehicles of all types, from milk floats to lorries, which kept the branches supplied.

If anybody has seen the changes in transport then it is Tom. The nightmare of traffic, the disruption of the 1963 winter when vehicles were snowed in, & always the never knowing when he would be called out to keep the wheels rolling. But when every morning the Co-op pinta arrived on the doorstep it was proof that the system worked.

Tom Caldecoat retired in 1973 but remains as alert and bright as ever, making the regular journey to Sturton Street for meetings with his old colleagues in the Co-op Pensioners Fellowship. These include comparative youngsters like Doug Williams who has a picture of himself as an errand boy outside the shop in High Street Chesterton in 1936, with his first manager, Mr Ives, Charlie Haynes, provision hand Charles Dimock, Maurice Curwain and Jack Bateman. The Co-op staff parties at the old Dorothy were the highlight of the social year, the entire complex being booked for two nights to accommodate the large numbers wishing to attend. Now they live on in the memory, and in the occasional snap, such as this from the News files of a party about 1967. Do you recognise yourself, or anybody else? [SCAN OF CHESTERTON CO-OP 1936, & CO-OP STAFF PARTY 1967]

My appeal for scrambling memories has brought a response from Dave Dunn of Chesterton, one of the four families whose sons were founder members of the Cambridge Junior Scrambling Club. Their first track was in Fen Road, Chesterton where they were not entirely welcomed by neighbours; they moved to Chippenham and then Elsworth and saw their youngsters go on to achieve British Championship success. It was hard work, but very rewarding. Dave still attends motor-cross events, though now just a

face in the crowd, his memories are of his own scrambling in the great days of the 1950s and of names like Andy Lee. Jonathan Wright from Swaffham Bulbeck contacts me to say he saw his late brother, Gerald, in the picture of the finals at Chippenham in 1980. Gerald went on to Expert class but has sadly since died. There must have been videos or amateur film footage taken at the time, or perhaps other snaps that might show Gerald wearing his distinctive number 5. If you have any Jonathan would love to have a chance to take copies for his family's archives. Write to me and I'll pass letters on.

Other sporting memories were sparked last week for Mrs Margaret Barker of Cambridge. She writes: "I was delighted to see a very familiar photo. It was of a coaching session by one of Britain's top coaches, Charlie Watson from Bedford. Swimmers were drawn from the Cambridge area and spent half-term at Chesterton School being put through their paces. My daughter, Alison, is the girl nearest the front. She went on to become one of the country's best Butterfly swimmers (still holds the county record for 100m Butterfly) and won a swimming scholarship to Nebraska in the USA. She now lives in Greece. Some of the others are Shaun Levitt, Tom Blackburn-Maze (son of Peter the News gardening correspondent), Joanne Turner, Rodney Badcock, Amanda Christy, Simon & Mark Pauley & Louise Chambers. Robert Warner of Histon is also there, right in the foreground.

I have selected another old school picture from the News files to tease the memories [DETAILS ON SHEET]

Mrs Margaret Mason of Cambridge has been clearing out a house and has come across some pictures of St Luke's school so far back that even Tom Caldecoat would have problems remembering. There's also an advertising card for a production of "The Arcadians" at the New Theatre in about 1926. I will pass them on to the Cambridgeshire Collection

Eric Algar of Cambridge has kindly sent me his memories of flying as a Flight Engineer with Stirling bombers. He has encyclopaedic knowledge of the conversion work that saw the planes undertake work for the Special Operations Executive, dropping containers for the French Resistance and despatching spies behind enemy lines in Norway, Denmark and other European countries.

Jean Pope writes from Comberton to say the picture of Ted Peacock in his garden brought back happy memories to her, as her husband Richard used to grown and show dahlias as well.

Mrs Ginn from Cambridge spotted a snippet in my "Looking Back" column for 1925 about the swim through Cambridge that used to be held. Her late mother, Gwen Snelson was a member of the Cambridge Amateur Swimming Club who used to take part in the race and she still treasures the certificates that were awarded. I have found a picture of the start of the swim through Cambridge race in the 1950s – do you recognise anybody? PICTURE SCANNED

Continuing with the transport theme it is just 25 years since Britain's first & only tracked hovercraft made its last journey – by road. The 21 ton machine, code number RTV31, was trundled at a maximum 25 mph the 40 miles from its hangar at Earith to the College of Technology, Cranfield where it was to join other transport "has-beens", including the remaining TSR2 aircraft, that suffered the same fate – axed by the Government as an economy measure when still in its early prototype days. The development and testing of the hovercraft took place out at Earith, where a special track was constructed between the Bedford Rivers. Did you have any connection with it, or make a trip out to see it in action. Do you have any snaps – if so drop me a line.

SCHOOL PHOTOS & OTHER PIX AS LISTED ON SHEETS

Memories 21st July 2000, by Mike Petty

My mention of scrambling has kick-started memories for many people throughout the area. Lloyd Rolph of Reach shares his motorcycling memories of when he, aged 3 and his big brother (4) would spend hours charging up and down the disused airfield at Wilbraham on an ex army 'parachute' 50cc Corgi motorcycle attached to a platform sidecar that his father had assembled for them. Later they progressed to riding solo scramblers either on the airfield or at Quy park. In the mid-sixties they took part in organised schoolboy events with their first scramble at Iwade in Kent.

He recalls: "We didn't have the machinery of today, my machine was a 125cc BSA bantam engine in a Greeves frame and as for clothing it was a helmet, ACU (auto-cycle-union) approved shirt, two pairs of jeans (unless you could afford leather trousers!), any form of gloves and finished off with a pair of army-surplus dispatch rider boots". Nor was it just the racing – there was all the engine tuning to be done at home, usually in the kitchen.

Later came purpose built machines and in about 1967 his father took him to a schoolboy 'grass track' meeting, which became his chosen sport. In 1973 Lloyd left the schoolboy ranks and progressed to adult grass track racing until after 12 years of competing the finances finally said 'give up'. "Looking back I realise how much my parents must have 'given up' to enable my brother any myself to take part", he adds.

This feeling of involvement of the whole family was reinforced when I talked to Dave Dunn who told me of the start of the Cambridge Junior Scrambling Club. Pictures of his son's prowess dominate their Chesterton living room, though the cuttings which chart Mark's progress are no longer in this country – he's taken them with him to his new home in Italy. Yet such is the interest that he'd faxed back copies showing himself powering to take first prize in the intermediate section of the Cambridge schoolboy scrambling club's opening meeting in January 1980. There is also one of the time back in 1977 when the eight-year old Mark learned of the danger of playing with matches when he set fire to the family's garage which contained his dad's practice scrambling bike. Fortunately Mark's own bike, with those of his friends were not in the garage at the time!

Dave Dunn, together with Doug Jilks, Len Laker, the late Paul Butcher & their wives were the parents who first gave up their time and money to encourage the schoolboy scramblers. They soon had over 300 lads on the books & top-name stars like Andy Lee came to support the youngsters and award the trophies at the annual presentation nights in the Guildhall or University Arms.

Mrs D. Belcher from Sawston has memories of Andy Lee "who always seemed to be riding a machine made up of parts which regularly broke down". This was in the 1950s when she and her late husband attended many cold, wet but exciting meetings organised by the Matchless Motorcycle Club. She treasures a programme of a scramble meeting at Hawkstone Park, near Shrewsbury in March 1960 dedicated to the memory of Brian Stonebridge. Riders from around the country, and from the Continent gathered to pay their own tribute to Brian, a Cambridgeshire man "with a shy, slow smile, a mop of fair hair and legs that seemed at times to have no connection with his body" whose exploits on his 250cc Greeves bikes made him the hero for thousands, young and old. He became one of the most celebrated riders in scrambles, representing Great Britain in many international moto-cross events. Beryl Ginn from Cambridge tells me her father, Gus King, who managed the Motor Cycle Department of King & Harper took a keen professional interest in the young Brian Stonebridge's career, which ended suddenly when Brian was killed in a car crash in October 1959.

Mr P.J. Collins of Woodhurst has recollections that go back to this time. He has sent me some negatives he took at a scramble meeting at Arrington in 1953, now somewhat fading like the memories themselves. I HOPE WE CAN GET PRINTS FROM THESE – ASK KEITH]

Alan Saunders of Sawston was a lad in those days and he saw himself in last week's "Memories" at the start of a "Swim through Cambridge" race on 22nd July 1955. He had gone to the race with his cousin and his uncle Eddie Anstey, who now lives in Cambridge. Uncle Eddie had taken the lads for a practice swim at Baitsbite Lock to ensure they had the stamina for the race, which started at Mill Pool and

continued under all the bridges of the Backs till the finishing post at Jesus Green. The training worked; Alan has photographs of himself at the end of the race, and treasures the certificate he was awarded – in fact he found them again them just the other week and has now got them framed. There is another memory of that event for his uncle had advised him to grease himself all over before the swim, which he did – except for that part of his body covered by his swimming costume. That night he joined a school trip to Jersey with a very painful reminder of just how cold the Cam can be in July! Mike Richardson of Cambridge recalls another problem with that race – bleeding finger-tips from the sandy bottom of the river. But it was a small price to pay for the greatest achievement of his swimming career – coming first in the race. The top two amateur swimmers of the day were Brian Stearn and David Barker who were so intent on battling against each other that they failed to notice the youngster slip past them to win.

The race no longer takes place, but any memories you have would be welcome. It was stopped in the mid 1970s, a victim of river pollution.

It seems hard to think of the Backs as being polluted, though of course the colleges used to discharge all their sewage into the river. If one area has remained unchanged over the centuries it is surely the stretch from Queens' SUBS NB "S" college to St John's? Not so. Just 25 years ago the area along Queen's [NB "S" Road was a disaster area, the famous trees struck down by Dutch elm disease. Chainsaws were ripping through branches and trunks and the area resembled a battlefield. Replanting took place and now it is tree-lined once more. But were you involved in the fight for the elms, or did you plant a replacement tree? Your memories please.

Giles Edkins is at Parkside College doing a history project for his GCSE and would like further memories of student behaviour during bonfire nights in the past, or other information on town/gown disturbances. I've sent a copy of my Memories article and one or two other ideas, but can you help with your recollections too.

Mrs Paddy James from Bottisham is concerned about changes to bus timetables and routes which have removed traditional transport links between villages and smaller towns. Have you any memories of how and why certain bus routes were established – I recall something about how a driver was courting a girl in a certain village and used his bus to get there – so the boss said he might as well take passengers while he was about it. Details please.

John Wallage of Trumpington writes to tell me that the old gentleman watching re-thatching at Trumpington, featured in Memories of 7th July, was his late father, Frederick Charles Wallage. He worked on farms in Grantchester and Trumpington for 40 years for Sir Francis Pemberton and in his latter life was responsible for the upkeep of Trumpington parish churchyard.

PICTURES

Brian Stonebridge in action – cover of programme for a memorial meeting 1960 – scan on disk

Andy Lee with Cambridgeshire youngsters, 1981
Cambridgeshire Junior Scramblers, 1981

Hopefully pictures of scrambling at Arrington in 1953 taken by News reader P.J. Collins – see Keith

Picture of Alan Saunders, 5 High St Sawston – 833162 – with certificate for Swim through Cambridge 1955 and himself at end of the race – see Keith

Dutch elm disease – felling trees on Backs, July 1974

Memories 28th July 2000 by Mike Petty

News that The Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album is now worth more than £100 has left me wondering where my old copy is.

A couple of the tracks formed the opening numbers of the gigs performed at that time by Forever Amber, one of the leading groups to originate in Cambridge in the mid to late 60s. They played alongside bands such as The Toby Jug and Washboard Band and The Swinging Blue Jeans, with one of their ardent fans being a young man called Dave Gilmour - who later achieved fame with Pink Floyd.

Forever Amber was formed from the remnants of a local band called the Country Cousins. A close harmony group, they specialised in the American West Coast sound and soul music. The line-up was Mick Richardson, lead singer, with Chris Parren on organ, Dick Lane, lead, Tony Mumford, bass, and Chris Jones on rhythm guitars. The drummer was Barry Broad, who took over from the late Graham Jenkinson.

They were all local lads in their 20s, most holding down jobs during the day and turning out three or four times a week to play gigs at venues such as Hiams' Social Club, and the Dorothy. Their publicity photos show a group on their way to the top, except they were friends first and pop stars second.

At the end of 1968 they made a demo tape and sent it out to record companies. Philips Records liked what it heard and wanted more. Their manager Derek Buxton introduced them to songwriter John Hudson, who had an idea for an album. They travelled to the recording studio in Hitchin to cut the disc and eventually they had their 100 copies of the recording, *The Love Cycle*. It had cost £200. Somehow the album was never sent to the record company, the copies were sold off at gigs. Soon after the band started to fall apart, its members pulling in different directions.

Mark still sings, Tony still plays and Dick only hung up his guitar last year after playing with many local bands. Chris Jones runs a video production company and Barry is a finance firm's manager. Chris Parren is a session musician, playing on records made by the likes of George Michael, and appearing on *Top of the Pops*.

Forever Amber became a band that faded away. But then came the approaches from international record collectors. *The Love Cycle*, described as "A cross between early Pink Floyd and the Zombies" was now sought-after and became the second rarest album in the country, with copies changing hands for £1,200 each. Today it features on a web site of the rarest of record covers. Then, years after it was cut, it was reissued on a CD, itself a collectors' item.

Last week some of the band met up to swap memories and pose for the camera. One brought a copy of the LP. Somewhere there are another 99 copies of *The Love Cycle*. If you have one, perhaps you might like to deposit it in the bank against a rainy day - or you could make an almost-famous pop star very happy!

You can write to Mike Petty -
Memories, Cambridge Newspapers Ltd,
Winship Road, Milton,
Cambridge CB4 6PP

Forever young . . . Forever Amber's original line-up pictured in Beech woods 1969, from left, Dick Lane (lead guitar), Graham Jenkinson (deceased), Mick Richardson (singer), Chris Jones (rhythm guitar), Chris Parren (organist), and Tony Mumford (bass guitar).

Reminiscing . . . Forever Amber pictured at Stretham Red Lion, 2000, clockwise from left, Chris Jones, Barry Broad, Dick Lane and Mick Richardson. Picture: Matthew Power 6161M9

Memories 4th August 2000, by Mike Petty

News that the Scout movement is to adopt new uniforms set me wondering about the earlier days of scouting.

The Boy Scout movement in Cambridge started at a meeting in the YMCA addressed by General Baden-Powell on 21st February 1908. It was followed by a public meeting at the Perse school the next month following which "monkey patrols" of boys were formed, playing at scouting without being under any proper control. These were soon formed into Troops in Cambridge, Cherry Hinton, Chesterton and at the Higher Grade and Perse schools.

In May 1910 200 scouts were inspected in the grounds of the Perse school and a meeting inaugurated the Cambridge Boy Scout Association. Later 125 members of the local troops made their way to Windsor park for a Coronation Rally where they were inspected by the new King, George V. The excitement of meeting the King could surely only be equated with that of seeing the hero of the defence of Mafeking - Robert Baden-Powell himself.

Yet in 1911 Baden-Powell was at Cambridge. It was a bitterly cold day and the wind howled across Parker's Piece where 400 scouts assembled before marching off - with cyclists and mounted scouts in the rear - to the University O.T.C. ground where the great man inspected them. At the sound of a bugle call the apparently empty field became filled with scouts, saluting their Chief with their staves, Zulu fashion, and shouting their patrol calls. Further rallies followed in 1912 and 1913, but then came war.

In July 1914 a mixed group of scouts left Cambridge for camp at Lt Downham. They camped on a splendid site on a hill overlooking the rich Fenland. They explored the great Cathedral, gave a display at the village fete, were inspected by the Principal of the Ely Theological College, and listened to the rumours of War. As soon as it was declared they started keeping a night watch, sent messages in Morse code to Littleport, 4 miles away, and gave a concert for the local troops. Then came the telegram from General Baden-Powell, ordering them back home. Next day they struck camp and marched to Ely station, arriving just behind the Ely territorials then leaving for Ipswich. Anxious women, standing at cottage doors were heard to ask : "What are they going to send those little chaps to the front too?"

Whilst they did not leave for France they did play their part, guarding bridges during the passage of troop trains and guarding the water tower and pumping station at Isleham - though what, some asked, could they do against German spies trying to blow them up. In June 1915 the Perse troop joined the Volunteer Training Corps in a military field exercise between Cherry Hinton and Gt Shelford, attempting to penetrate a defensive cordon thrown around Cambridge.

Next year "Wolf cub" packs were formed and in June 1922 they succeeded in ambushing the Chief Scout himself at Queens' college. B-P was en route to present Kings Badges to a number of senior scouts when a large group of cub scouts leapt over the wall of Cloister Court to surround him and reaffirm their pledge "Achela we will do our best". Then in 1931 the Chief Scout was awarded an Honorary Degree by Cambridge University.

All that is a long while ago, but what are your memories of Scouting? Write to Mike Petty at the News [PIX OF SOME OF THE FIRST SCOUTS IN CORN EXCHANGE, BADEN-POWELL RECEIVES HON DEGREE AT SENATE HOUSE, 1931

Memories of the Swim through Cambridge continue to flood in.

Ken Drake from Cambridge says his father, Oliver B. Drake, taught many boys to swim at Coleridge School in the 1940s & 1950s. He was keen to see them progress, encouraged them to enter for the Swim through Cambridge, & would stand on one of the college bridges and cheer on his youngsters as they swam beneath him. All his pupils could be assured of his support, except one. In 1950 Ken decided that he would take part in the race, without telling his father. He tried to imagine the look on his dad's face as he passed beneath him. It didn't quite work out as planned, for in the crush of competitors Ken passed unnoticed and he needed to produce his certificate to prove he had actually done it!

Trevor Gill from Burwell has proof of his participation in the race in July 1949, for his scrapbook includes a photograph taken by the C.D.N. in July 1949 that shows him, aged 13, half behind the large lad with the badge on his trunks in the front row. Do you recognise yourself, or others? [PICTURE SCANNED ON DISK]

Ted Austin from Over tells me that his son, Richard, has another tangible reminder of participating in the race – a lifetime hatred of chicken soup. Ted says that by the end of the race competitors were so cold they shook violently for some 20 minutes, but the soup supplied to warm them up was just too unpalatable to stomach.

Alex Cook used to train for the race at Sheeps Green with the president of the Granta Swimming Club, Dr H.A. Webb. The late Ray Barker, a former RAF officer in the war and for years the top Cambridge swimmer was their role model. Alex won the Swim through Cambridge most years during the 1950s and also participated in an annual swim from level with the Red Lion in Grantchester to the rollers opposite the Garden House Hotel. Fellow swimmers of the period included Chris Fowler, (later to add a hyphenated Brocklebank to his surname and become a Norfolk MP) and Dave Miller who was later Mayor of Saffron Walden.

Derek Ashman of Cambridge recalls how during the war a substitute course was used, swimming from the Ladies Bathing Sheds on Lammas Land to the Garden House Hotel and back again. It must have led to the river being somewhat congested. Sharyn Bord, Shirley Emerson & Patrick Schicker from Cambridge, Peter Oakman from St Ives & Alan Moore from Bar Hill are amongst others who have written, thank you all.

As many recall there was a separate race for ladies. Betty Rayner (nee Dewey) of Norwich took part when she was a girl (she's now 86!) and Brenda Kelk of Rampton swam more than 20 times, "much to the disgust of my mother as I always came out of the river with green slime all round my mouth". Eventually the races were stopped due to river pollution. [PICTURE OF LADIES RACE 1962 SCANNED ON DISK]

It seems hard to think of the Backs as being polluted, though until the 1890s the colleges used to discharge all their sewage into the river. If one area has remained unchanged over the centuries it is surely the stretch from Queens' SUBS NB "S" college to St John's? Not so. Just 25 years ago the area along Queen's NB "S" Road was a disaster area, the famous trees struck down by Dutch elm disease. Chainsaws were ripping through branches and trunks and the area resembled a battlefield. Throughout the county 25 elm trees a day were being lost, the situation being worsened by hot dry weather. Replanting took place and now the Backs are tree-lined once more. But were you involved in the fight for the elms, or did you plant a replacement tree? Your memories please. [PIX OF DEVASTATION ON BACKS]

Rosemary Fisher e-mails from Ellicott City, USA to say she's sure one of the people featured in a picture of a Co-op Party (Memories July 14th) was her mother. But she cannot think what her mum would be doing at a Co-op staff party & asks if I have any names of the people, but as yet they are all a mystery. Rosemary goes on: "Even though I have lived in Maryland USA for over 30 years the Internet is what keeps me current on what is going on in town. I really enjoy reading the Cambridge News websight. Keep up the good work of jogging our memories!"

Mrs Paddy James from Bottisham is concerned about changes to bus timetables and routes which have removed traditional transport links between villages and smaller towns. Have you any memories of how and why certain bus routes were established – I recall something about how a driver was courting a girl in a certain village and used his bus to get there – so the boss said he might as well take passengers while he was about it. Details please.

One bus mystery has been solved. Thanks to the News' photo archives I have now tracked down just that it was 19th December 1962 when a Premier Travel Coach skidded on a bend near the Royal Oak (now Lazy Otter) at Stretham Ferry and crashed into the home of Mr C.H. Brown. Nobody was hurt but, he said, "The cottage is in a terrible mess and the annoying part is that I had just finished decorating the room last night". [SCAN OF BUS CRASH ON DISK]

Ted Tyndall recalls a more advanced system of transportation. He was employed as mechanical systems engineer on the Tracked Hovercraft project from April 1970 to its demise in February 1973 and then carried on working at the test track at Earith till June 1974. One of his last duties was assisting to load the vehicle on the last remaining track beam ready for transport to Cranfield. But, he tells me, the story does not end there. During 1994 he was contacted by "Railworld" at Peterborough who wanted the Hovertrain for display there, where it can still be seen [PIX OF HOVER-TRAIN]

John Wallage of Trumpington writes to tell me that the old gentleman watching re-thatching at Trumpington, featured in Memories of 7th July, was his late father, Frederick Charles Wallage. He worked on farms in Grantchester and Trumpington for 40 years for Sir Francis Pemberton and in his latter life was responsible for the upkeep of Trumpington parish churchyard.

Memories 16th August 2000 by Mike Petty

The first time Shirley Hoffman saw Stretham it was through a veil of tears. She didn't want to be there, she wanted to be at home in London with her mum and dad. He hadn't wanted her to come, but her mum and her gran had lied. They said she was five, she was only four, she was really too young to be evacuated.

They'd also lied to her. They said she would only be away for a day, but it was going to be years before she went back home to live.

It had been a long train journey with her schoolmates from the Robert Montefiore school & their teachers Miss Cicely Barnett and Miss Frances Levi. Now she was standing in a field miles from home and staring at a pair of boots. Unbeknown to her at the time they belonged to Jack Reeve. He had been sent to pick the evacuee they were to have at the old Crown inn, by then de-licensed and the home of sisters Cis and Ethel Reeve.

When Shirley arrived at her new home the first words she heard were: "I thought we wanted a boy". But she was a girl, a girl on her own. Being just the one she was easier to farm out.

Inside there was the old tap room and big room and 'this room where I used to dry dishes' and then front room & a cellar down a few steps. The ceiling was falling down in one room. There was no electricity, just gas lamps.

She was given a bed at the front of the house. Out of the window she could look across to a field and see sheep. "I saw the sheep in the fields and was a little won over", she recalls. "Next day was Sunday and I said 'I want to go home today' and they said 'trains don't run on Sundays'".

But like many of her fellow young Jewish evacuees Shirley was made to feel welcome; "they adopted me, treated me as if I belonged to them". They took her to the Post Office shopping with them, she fetched the milk from a dairy at a little farm just around the corner, played ball in the yard where there were fruit trees – truly a world away from her East London home. And she was close to her new schoolroom, in the Methodist chapel, the village school being too small for both local and evacuated children.

The Methodist chapel was used for their Jewish services on Saturday, but on Sunday Shirley went to the Baptist Chapel. "I went to the Baptists because Ethel took me – that was her church – every Sunday. Ethel always had a grey coat on when we went to church & gave me a piece of candy for the sermon.

"They always made food for when we came home from chapel – every week cooked a big dinner, Ethel came out and stood in front of the chapel and only Ethel & I knew the importance of that chapel, no-one else cared"

Sometimes her parents visited: "I used to cry – I thought they were going to take me back, I didn't want to go – I tried to hide it but I was crying and Cis came into other room and said 'she's crying'. I was crying into my porridge and it was getting bigger and bigger" Once she did go back; "I went home one weekend and had to sit under the table because of the bombing, it was scary; but I was safe in Stretham"

When the time finally came for her to go home "I remember thinking my heart would stay in Stretham; I was crying – crying when I came and when I went home; I said goodbye to those people – they couldn't cry but they wanted to"

"My father hated them, me as a Jew going to live in Gentile family, they had influenced me. When I came back to London I went to a Temple, but my heart wasn't in it. It took me years to decide what I wanted; I drove past churches but couldn't have it as I was married to a Jew; I never taught the children anything as my heart never in it – he was right, they changed me"

Shirley went off to America to start a new life, but decided to return for a visit. Now Mrs Hersh she wandered the village streets and recognised the outside of the house that had once been her home. But there was nobody there. So she waited outside till the present owner returned and welcomed her inside. But it was virtually all unrecognisable, a new home created inside an old building, though there was still one room as she remembered it. Part of her pilgrimage had been realised.

But there was another goal. She had told her Minister back in California of the village chapel where she had worshipped. Would that still be there? Indeed it was. But the congregation that had once been so numerous had now largely dwindled away. Nevertheless there was to be a service and Shirley's presence would nearly double the numbers attending. At first she chose a seat at the front, then moved to the back, where she had always sat. And she cried. The other two ladies there had also attended the

chapel during the war, they remembered that the Miss Reeves had welcomed a young girl and treated her as a daughter. They made her welcome and gave her tea after the service.

And then somebody dredged up an old newspaper cutting of the Baptist Sunday School class of 1941. Shirley was not amongst them but she recognised some who were. And there were snaps too of the home in Read's Street and even of a young fair-haired girl on a tricycle outside.

Now Shirley has gone away from the village once more, her memories of a small fenland community refreshed, with something more to tell her grandchildren.

Have you ever returned to a former home and been welcomed, or found it changed beyond recognition – your memories please

[SCAN OF STRETHAM BAPTIST SUNDAY SCHOOL CUTTING AUGUST 1941& THE HOUSE AS IT WAS, WITH CIS]

Cambridge's Bridge Street is one that has changed over the last 70 years. The West side was redeveloped in the 1930s when old properties were ripped down to be replaced by St John's college music school, and to widen the street by a few extra feet to cope with the increasing traffic flow.

By contrast the buildings on the corner of Round Church Street seem to be as they always were, fine examples of 16th-century architecture, now well preserved. But by the mid 1960s they were just a decayed shell & in 1967 there were plans to replace them with a supermarket. Although these were rejected, so too were recommendations from the City Planning Committee that the structure be preserved. "The sooner we get the bulldozers in, the better" said one councillor.

Various plans were put forward for the crumbling buildings to be pulled down for a shopping, parking and residential complex but these brought protests from the Cambridge Preservation Society. Finally they were declared of Historic Interest and not to be demolished. It was agreed that there could be redevelopment, but it must retain the historic frontage.

In August 1975 scaffolding went up around the surviving facades as behind mechanical diggers began excavating foundations for an office complex that would be built, almost unseen, at the back. Today it is hailed as one of the successes of modern architecture, and has won a Civic Trust award. Yet the pictures in the News files reveal just how run-down they had become and how nearly the city lost one of its architectural gems. [PIX FROM NEWS LIBRARY ENCLOSED]

Mrs E.G. Wilkin of Cambridge is trying to help a friend researching the Swynford family. It appears that Catherine Beaufort was the second wife of John of Gaunt. Her first husband was Hugh Swynford of Kettlethorpe, a knight in Gaunt's retinue. There is a tomb to a John Swynford in the cemetery in Spratton, Northants, but is there any connection. Its all a bit complicated & a very long way back, but its amazing what News readers can come up with. If you can help drop me a line and I'll pass it on.

Ron Griggs of Cambridge recalls how after an early Sunday morning's swim some of the lads used to swim up river holding their clothes above their heads. They landed at the Perse Girls' bathing place & proceeded towards Grantchester where they were treated to a hearty breakfast in the garden of the Red Lion by the President of the Granta Swimming Club, Mr Webb, a University professor. After breakfast they went in search of punts that had been abandoned by undergraduates the night before. These they returned to Scudamores where they were thanked for their trouble. As well as swimming the lads became expert punters.

Mike Dawson from Chesterton writes following a recent article about Fulbourn Hospital. His father was salaries officer there from just after the war until December 1978, during which time he met hundreds of people, many of whom remember his nick-name 'Sefton'. Mike has a photograph showing

the children of members of staff of the Hospital that was taken at a Christmas party in December 1954. He's there in the middle of the picture, were you? [SCAN ON DISK]

Memories 23rd August 2000, by Mike Petty

I have been privileged to spend more than 30 years working with old newspapers. When I first started the Cambridge Central Library was at the back of the Guildhall, the building now used for the Tourist Information Centre. In those days the library workroom had a balcony running around three sides. Underneath the upper walkway – where some said the first librarian, John Pink, used to patrol (he'd died in 1905) – were volume after volume of old files of the Cambridge Chronicle, Cambridge Independent Press & Cambridge Daily News, standing to attention in their leather bindings. In a small room just behind the Reference Library other volumes lay stacked one on top of the other on shelves that reached high to the ceiling. When readers wanted back files of the Cambridge Weekly News it involved extensive manipulation, lifting heavy volumes from above head height whilst precariously perched on the upper rungs of a rickety ladder.

All that changed 25 years ago with the opening of the new Lion Yard when all volumes could lay flat in much less cramped conditions, and at a much lower level. Now they are cocooned in humidity-controlled luxury, crumbling to dust somewhat more slowly than they did previously. Elsewhere researchers can peruse old files of the Cambridge press in the major research institutions such as the British Library Newspaper Depository in North London, or in the academic calm of the Cambridge University Library.

But newspapers continue to come out, day by day and week by week filling up shelves with amazing rapidity. These days most libraries rely on microfilm or increasingly CDs to preserve the stories that the papers cover. But the Cambridgeshire Collection continues to collect and bind the current issues. If they did not, who on earth would?

The answer amazingly is Keith Mann of Girton. For more than 30 years he has been reading his copies of the *News* each evening and like many other people he has been keeping stories that have interested him. His home is awash with files and folders showing how Cambridge has developed, and how it used to be. It is a wonderful record. But that is not the half of it.

For as well as taking cuttings Keith takes whole pages. He keeps them flat and he keeps them dark. And when he has accumulated enough he binds them into volumes, just like the professionals – but better!

True he does not take every page, but what he has amassed is the essential essence of the Cambridge Evening News – the local stories, the headlines and bylines since 1966. He can just open a large volume and be transported back to the pre-decimal days, the days before Lion Yard, before Elizabeth Way and when Bar Hill was just an infant.

Keith has lent me some of his cuttings volumes from which the following stories caught my eye, not all are dated. Perhaps you remember November 1967 when four babies were baptised in a builder's hut that was being used as worship while the church at Bar Hill was being constructed (perhaps you were one!)

“Bricklayers return to normal work” reads the headline over an undated story about a work-to-rule at the new Addenbrooke's Hospital. It is illustrated by a picture of Bill Clark talking to the bricklayers on the site – but when was it? When Burwell brickworks closed the *News* ran an article summarising its history and how a shrinking order book, old plant and the high cost of production had led to its demise. 50 men were to be made redundant – were you one? Once more there is no date but whenever it was you could buy a spacious three bedroomed semi-detached house at Sawston for £6,250, or at Bar Hill

for £4,950. And perhaps you could help Mr R.B. of London who was seeking a 2/3 bedroomed house in Cambridge, close to the station. Finance was no problem – he had £9,000 to spend!

Did you queue to see the moon rocks at the Senate House in November 1969, or wait at the gates of Trinity College to see Prince Charles arrive in his mini-car to start his academic career in October 1967. If so you may be in Keith's private albums – but remember that the Cambridgeshire Collection has similar newspaper cuttings to these that you may browse through on request in Lion Yard.

PHOTOGRAPHIC TOOK PICTURES OF KEITH MANN AT HIS HOME WITH HIS BOUND FILES; IF THIS IS NOT BEING USED AS A NEWS STORY – OR IF THERE IS A VARIANT – PLEASE INCLUDE IT. OTHERWISE I ENCLOSE COPIES OF CUTTINGS THAT MIGHT BE USED AS A MONTAGE

Whenever we think back on the Cambridge of not-so-long-ago we will recall the shops that were and are no more. Macintosh's, Pigotts, Lauries, Joshua Taylor and – of course Eaden Lilley, except that they are still with us. But the closure of their prestigious store in Market Street in June 1999 brought to an end their first 250 years of trading. No longer would blazers, sweaters, trousers, wraps and ties be sold as they had in 1939; you would have to look elsewhere for the comfortable 3-piece suite upholstered in Moquette which would have cost you all of £21.10.0 once upon-a-time. Even Father Christmas would need to seek another retailer of the fairycycles (29/6 to 59/6), trotalong pets – horses, donkeys and dogs from 10/6 - and the dolls prams with their upholstered laced hood, apron and mudguards on which he could spend up to 63/-.

But shops are more than commodities, they are workplaces for hundreds of staff over the years. Now the memories of some of those staff have been included in a celebration of 250 years of retailing. People like Pauline Rutterford (nee Impey) who started straight from school in August 1954 and stayed to the bitter end, making her the longest serving staff member, recalls how life was very formal. When customers were around assistants were referred to by their surnames, they were not allowed to rush – all must be conducted at a proper pace.

Such memories bring the past to life, & although author Ian Ormes cannot rely on such accounts for the early period of the shop's establishment he still manages to describe how John Purchas pulled his short waistcoat over his rounded stomach, adjusted his white stockings, donned his dark blue frock coat, checked his fob watch outside The Globe, and stepped aside to allow a lady to pass – all based on the evidence of a single billhead of 1750!

The final chapters of both the book and the company describe the battle for survival from the 1980s of a family firm dominated by a major shareholder who would insist on reopening past discussions, ensuring any decisions took a great deal of debate. It records the background to the changes its customers will recall, the opening of 'The Greenhouse' restaurant and the attempts to redress the perception of a 'fuddy-duddy' store, the 'place for granny to buy her frocks'. It all led to the massive redevelopment of the 1990s, when the magnificent grand staircase was ripped out – and mourned by William Baker, one of the carpenters from Kerridge's who had installed it 60 years earlier. Betty Boothroyd heralded the redesigned store in 1993 as 'The re-birth of Eaden Lilley – a fresh new chapter in the history of this very famous business'. Sadly it was to be a short chapter as commercial pressures, and an offer the board could not refuse, led to the announcement to Pauline and her colleagues in March 1999 of its imminent closure. Many staff burst into tears and could not believe what was happening. It was, in the words of the Chairman 'a major tragedy for some and an unexpected and traumatic experience for everyone'.

However the store continues with branches at Saffron Walden and Douglas of Shelford, as well as its photography department in Green Street and a new food hall in Sussex Street, Cambridge. But the days of the great department store founded in 1750 are gone for good and Cambridge will not be the same without it.

Did you work for Eaden Lilley and have memories to share. Write to Mike Petty. 'Eaden Lilley: 250 years of retailing' by Ian Ormes is available from their shops at £13.50

[PICTURES OF EADEN LILLEYS FROM NEWS FILES]

Last week's picture of the Fulbourn Hospital staff party has brought memories for Mrs Puddick of Cambridge who saw herself, her sister and brother, and for Bob Raines who worked at the Hospital for 50 years, ending up a chief administrator. The picture shows his daughter who has just returned home to Canada – but can read about it on the News websight. Bob recalls how the Hospital used to be self-sufficient in most things with their own cows, pigs, poultry & vegetables; they even pumped their own water and disposed of their own sewage – but the gas came from the Cambridge University & Town Gas Light Company (at least in his early days).

Trevor Gill has added more details to my story of the coach crash at Stretham Ferry in December 1962. He writes: 'Charlie Brown and myself were working on the same building site at the time of the accident. We received a telephone call from head office explaining what had happened and asking me to get Charlie home. When we arrived the fire brigade was there. The coach had knocked out the ground floor window and the brickwork above & below it. The bedroom joists had dropped and were resting on the coach.

'The landlord of the Royal Oak was looking after Charlie's family. He had a great sense of humour; yes he did comment about the decorating, but also added how much drinking time he had lost doing it'

PICTURE OF BUS CRASHED INTO FRONT OF THE HOUSE SCANNED – THESE ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE FIRST USED

All of this is nicely shown by another picture taken by the News at the time. Trevor goes on to say how much he enjoys the Memories articles as they bring back so many memories to him. But I can only write what people will share with me so please keep writing.

Kathleen Skin from the Arbury writes with her memories of the scout movement. "In 1933 scout troops were started in the villages of Whittlesford, Harston, Haslingfield & Sawston by Cambridge University graduates and undergraduates, aided by local headmasters & others. My brother joined the Haslingfield troop. The headmaster, Mr Eric Cole, was enthusiastic and they met in the school hall. At the same time in Harston a Guide company was formed and I left the 1st Orwell Guide Company to join the 1st Harston whose captain was Bunty Bisseker. Together the Harston scouts and guides put on a Ralph Reader Concert or two."

Memories 30th August 2000, by Mike Petty

A letter appeared in the News last week from former Cambridge councillor John Hughes, now in Victoria Australia

He had been browsing through Sara Payne's 'Down Your Street' volume on Central Cambridge and noted her comments on the Lion Yard: "You either love it or hate it".

John was at one time chairman of the Central Area Development Committee that oversaw the building of the new Lion Yard development. He makes the point that by the 1960s the Lion Hotel had already slipped into a state of dilapidation and the area behind it was mostly a slum, apart from a lovely old solicitors' office. He was convinced that the new design was superb and that future generations would think the centre worthy of Cambridge.

The old Petty Cury has featured often in these columns – and this is too good an excuse to miss, as the selection of pictures from the News files testifies.

But there was another point he makes. The Lion Yard rebuilding was “by far the best of any contemporary development in historical city centres”.

So what other changes had Cambridge seen since the war and what has happened to them?

The first post-war office development was the Prudential building on the corner of Emmanuel Street, thought at the time to be a rather dull building. Then redevelopment spread north along St Andrews Street with the demolition of Rance’s Folly, a Hollywood style mansion in St Andrew’s Street. It had been built in the 1850s by Henry Rance, one-time Mayor of Cambridge. His reputation for hospitality was lavish and he spent many thousand pounds a year entertaining his friends in his magnificent dining room – so grand that council meetings were held there in 1882. There was a superb ballroom and a magnificent collection of paintings. After Rance moved away it was used for a while by the Liberal Club until ripped down in May 1957. In 1960 Bradwell’s Court, Cambridge’s first new shopping arcade opened, providing a connection with Drummer Street bus station & completing the transformation of the street.

Other changes in the late 1950s saw the construction of Highsett on Hills Road – whose original design was described in 1956 as ‘the highest private residence block yet proposed in England’, and was rejected. In Station Road the opening of Great Eastern House was followed shortly afterwards with the construction of a new Kett House in place of the old works of Rattee & Kett near the corner with Hills Road.

There was controversy in the city centre when plans were announced for the demolition of the Central Hotel in Peas Hill in 1958, but despite objections the scheme went through. Across Market Hill Macintosh’s was demolished and a new ultra-modern block of shops and flats built in its place. Heffer’s bookshop relocated from Petty Cury to new premises in Trinity Street, formerly the site of Matthew’s grocers, part of a programme of wholesale redevelopment which kept the old frontages largely unchanged. Across the street the Queen Mother opened Trinity College Angel Court in 1960 and she was back again in 1961 for Queens’ college Erasmus building

It was the University & colleges that were leading the modern architectural trend. A brand new college, Churchill, started to emerge off Madingley Road & the University Centre was built on Granta Place. There was more modern architecture at Gonville & Caius’ Harvey Court and St John’s college Cripps Building, while King’s & St Catharine’s colleges combined to rebuild on King’s Lane. New blocks of faculty buildings were constructed in Sidgwick Avenue including the most controversial History Faculty Building which won awards for its architecture but soon revealed design faults, its glass structure being too hot in summer, too cold in winter. There was great debate on whether to demolish it completely and start again, but it was decided instead to initiate a programme of repairs instead. To the west of Corn Exchange Street the University was undertaking massive rebuilding on its New Museums Site.

But by now demolition was starting in earnest on the other side of Corn Exchange Street for the new shopping precinct and car park. The Masonic Hall disappeared in 1968, the Bun Shop on St Andrew’s Hill followed in 1975 & shortly afterwards and the new Lion Yard was a reality.

“We did have doubts about the multi-deck car park” confessed John Hughes, but this is now scheduled for redevelopment once more as another massive shopping scheme gathers pace. This is in addition to all the new work in the ‘old’ Lion Yard, just 25 years after the ‘superb’ design was completed. When next John returns to Cambridge will he, I wonder, recognise what is left of the vision he helped to shape?

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Anne Anderson from Surrey has been told that her father's photograph appeared recently in some publication about the history of Cambridge. In fact the picture of Mayor Horace Ives on the Guildhall balcony with Petty Cury & its line of parked cars beyond appears in my 'Memory Lane, Cambridge'. He was shown entertaining a party of athletes from Heidelberg in June 1965 – perhaps it is not inappropriate to remember that Lion Yard redevelopment was described in 1959 as 'the biggest redevelopment scheme yet in England is we omit the blitzed cities'.

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My appeal on behalf of Mrs Wilkins for information on the Swynford family & Catherine Beaufort has brought a significant response. Suzanne Langford from West Wrating is amongst readers who recommend a book entitled 'Katherine' by Anya Seaton published in 1954 which is based at Kettlethorpe in Lincolnshire whilst Ron Shaw of Waterbeach has sent great details selected from his notes on his own family tree. I will forward them to Mrs Wilkins and also to Mr C. Barker of Saffron Walden who is also interested in Catherine Beaufort.

Ted Austin from Over reappears in my letterbox with his memories of the earlier days of scouting. In the 1920s he was a member of the Perse School 5th Cambridge troop under scoutmaster Gavin M. Macfarland-Grieve, universally known as 'Mac'.

"Once a term we had a field day at some suitable wooded site. The highlight was always the fire-lighting competition. Scouts worked in pairs and had 30 minutes to collect brushwood. I always worked with my pal 'M.O.' Gardner & we invariably won this competition since as good scouts we were always 'well-prepared!' Hidden in my shirt was a miniature whiskey bottle of paraffin & 'M.O.' had Swan vestas in his. We were nearly caught one day however as it rained cats and dogs just before the exercise and everything was soaking wet. When the weather cleared our fire was blazing away – everyone else's was non-existent or a wisp of smoke! 'Mac' looked very suspiciously at our fire – 'M.O.' like lightning said 'We were very fortunate Sir to find a completely dry wooden box under an old sheet of zinc!'

Ted has a host of other scouting memories of the annual camp at West Runton where the girl guides were based just two fields away – 'a dare after lights out'. He also recalls how the toilets consisted of a smooth telegraph pole fixed about two feet off the ground on which you balanced over a trench dug in the grass. Ted also remembers how on train journeys they would unwind the toilet rolls out of the windows and the train became festooned with paper. Presumably, being prepared, this would have been on the way home!

Memories 6th September 2000, by Mike Petty

Throughout the county Millennium projects are drawing to a conclusion and the results are being displayed. So it was at Madingley the other weekend when the village hall was packed with residents and visitors for an exhibition looking back at life in that community.

On the opening evening old residents mingled with new to view photographs and maps, videos and artefacts and read snatches of the many pages of reminiscences compiled as part of the Madingley 2000 project. This will see the production of village maps showing the change over the last 100 years and the compilation of a parish archive to be copied onto CD.

While across the road the village pub echoed to the music of a smart jazz band and the dining room wine glasses glinted on the tables, in the hall talk turned to the times when life in Madingley was not all good living and fine china.

Frances Ison was born in the village just after the Great War; her memories are of a community very different from the one in which she still lives. .

“When I was a little girl, before the Autumn mists rose, the farm horses clopped and clattered past with their horse-keepers and lads, who had risen at 4 am to get ready for the day’s work. The carts creaked and the voices echoed – there were not many cars then in the early 1930s. So it had been when my great-grandfather, Barnett Barlow was a horsekeeper and farmhand. Then the golden fields fell to scythes and not reapers and the women followed to ‘tie up’. The scythemen in a long, diagonal row, swept across the fields, each man slightly behind and to the right of his neighbour ahead in the line. Grandfather used to say the farmer always chose the fastest scytheman to lead the line, hoping he would ‘drive’ his followers to work more quickly.

I watched Grandfather many a time; short step, swing of scythe, short step, a lovely smooth, forward rhythm, which soon covered a stretch of grass or corn – but to imagine doing that all day, almost from dawn to dusk – it must have been a Herculean task.

The women twisted bands of corn straw to tie up the sheaves of grain, working behind their men. The children helped too, standing the sheaves in ‘shocks’ – the local name for them, just as ‘gotch’ was the name for the jug the beer was in. Then came carting with the trolley-cart and stacking in the back garden until the ‘threshing tackle’ came round to the nearest farm, where Grandfather could get it threshed. Later by trolley drawn by ‘Tommy’ he would take his little harvest of sacked corn to French’s Mill where apart from wheat kept back for poultry feeding, it was ground into flour

When the sacks of flour were brought home, they were stacked in the corner of my Grandmother’s big kitchen to keep them dry and mouse and rat free.

My friend and I used to spend almost every weekday leading the carthorse in the harvest field. When the binder was actually cutting the corn we would stand round the edge of the cut area, chasing the rabbits that ran out as the corn was cut, holding sticks as long as we were tall.

But the best part was always leading with a short rope the big ‘shire’ horse from shock to shock while the farm men loaded sheaves on the cart. There used to be a steady procession of carts back and forth to the rickyard. Once we had steered horse and cart safely between two gateposts we were deemed to have passed our ‘leading’ test and we were allowed on the short stretch of road between farm and field. With a full load we walked, unless a farmhand was ‘leading’, in which event we were heaved unceremoniously onto the top of the corn load – an enormous height to us.

Going back to the field empty, we sat on the front of the cart, with the long reins in full control of cart and horse, a most important position! But there were problems. A cart that has been loaded with barley or ‘Rivet’ wheat – the latter seldom heard of now – is usually somewhat prickly to sit in; my socks used to be full of small, sharp ‘ails’ – and jeans still hadn’t come in so there were many other, more painful discomforts.”

Now, Frances muses, it has all changed and one who knows all about that, from the farming side, is Alan Clarke who with John Wiseman had contributed material to the display’s farming tent. Wartime regulations about what to do with livestock casualties caused by bombing, and application forms for the purchase of rubber boots - which had to be endorsed by the repair agent confirming the old ones were beyond repair – painted a graphic picture of farming difficulties in the 1940s.

Post-war Alan Clarke recalls how the old-fashioned harvest practices were replaced with more modern machinery. He first purchased a second hand Grain Marshall combine which was very heavy and slow before in 1956 buying his first self-propelled Massey Harris 780 Special combine in 1956. Before this the sheaves had to be stacked, the stacks had to be thatched to keep out the weather until they had time to thresh the corn. This was a very labour intensive operation, entailing up to a dozen men and

neighbouring farmers used to help each other. Such stacks used to be commonplace throughout the area, now like the horse-drawn carts they have disappeared, but live on in the *News* picture files.

The men who worked the land have also largely gone – Alan comments: ‘it has been an eye opener for me to observe that many of the old farm cottages are now inhabited by professional people with families’. But they are the villagers now and projects such as that at Madingley gives them the opportunity to discover something of the people who formerly lived in their cottages when the front garden was devoted to vegetables, not lawn.

If you would like further information on the Madingley 2000 project then contact Sue Baldwin at The Old Wood Mill, Church Lane, Madingley CB3 8AF.

[PICTURES FROM NEWS LIBRARY]

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Villages did not grow up where they are without a reason. One of the essentials for life is a supply of water and early maps reveal a myriad of rivers and streams meandering here and there throughout the landscape. But as the centuries progress so progress changes the landscape. Ditches are straightened and improved, rivers are recut to supply watermills and more and more houses are built. More houses need more water. Boreholes are constructed to draw water from underground sources, these in turn dry up rivers.

Wilbraham River is one of a number of streams rising from the low chalk hills to the east of Cambridge. It has two sources: springs in the grounds of Wilbraham Temple and those that original below Shardelows Well in Fulbourn. Within living memory it was a significant feature of the landscape but within the last 25 years its flow has become intermittent and it no longer provides the conditions necessary to sustain aquatic life. As the river dries so its banks crack, when the flow returns the water leaks away.

While many villages have a Preservation Society, so has the Wilbraham River. Its co-ordinator is Dr Desmond Hawkins of Greyfriars, Church Green Little Wilbraham CB1 5LE. Dr Hawkins has researched the story of his river and published a detailed assessment entitled ‘The drainage of Wilbraham, Fulbourn and Teversham fens’, a wonderful insight into the mysterious land of ditches and reed beds that will form a model for other conservation groups concerned about their natural environment. Copies cost £6.80 including postage from Dr Hawkins. [SCAN OF THE RIVER ABOUT 1930, EVEN THEN FLOW WAS MUCH REDUCED.]

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My story of Shirley Hersh, the evacuee who returned to Stretham in search of her wartime memories has brought a response from Jane Freeman of Cambridge. She also used to visit Cis & Ethel Reeve in their former pub when it still had oil lamps – but then they never did get around to putting in electricity! Mrs P. Darling from Papworth Everard was most surprised to read the story for she is related to the Reeves and has a number of family photographs, including one of Shirley herself with the two ladies.

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Bob Raines of Cambridge has lent me a picture of a Married versus Single cricket match played at Fulbourn Hospital in 1929. He can name every player in the teams, which included both staff and patients. They include W. Dewey (carpenter), E. Hancock (plumber), Jack Wheatley now aged 92 and living in Linton & Bob himself. I have the complete list if you think you recognise someone. [SCANNED – IS THIS TOO OLD?]

Memories 13th September 2000 by Mike Petty

Throughout the county at present it appears that coping with cars is making the headlines once more.

In Ely the council has implemented restrictions on shoppers cars in order to enhance the shopping experience, with traffic banned in the High Street on the Thursday and Saturday market days. A glance back into the News photo files reveals just how congested the street used to be back in the 1960s when cars and shoppers mixed. But look at the names above the mixture of shops – how many of them are still there, and which do you remember.

In those days Ely Market Square was full of vehicles each day, apart from the Thursday market day when stalls took over. Except of course for the period when the market stalls were banished by the arrival of the fair, and then took up residence in High Street, replacing cars for a while. Now neither cars nor fairground rides disturb the refurbished market place and the stalls have it to themselves. Nearby what used to be the Cattle Market has now become the new Cloisters development, with larger shops and its own car park.

In St Ives too consideration is being given to banning traffic in Bridge Street and to the erection of models of sheep as a reminder of that town's past, though some may wish to forget the bustle, noise and smell that used to characterise a market town.

Newmarket's streets echo to the sound not of sheep but hooves, but this can be drowned out by the roar of motor engines. Except on occasions such as that in July 1950 when an accident on Bury Road brought traffic to a standstill. High Street was lined for its entire length with stationery vehicles on one of the busiest days of the year after an army convoy was brought to a stop just past the war memorial when a string of racehorses crossing the road caused the leading driver to pull up. The rear lorry was hit by a following taxi and this in turn was struck by a third vehicle.

Then twenty-five years ago all that changed and the town relapsed into a stunned bemused silence. Weekend shoppers faltered in midstride, uncertain, while the significance of the insistent silence gradually dawned. Pedestrians hovered at Pelican crossings, unwilling to break the habits of a lifetime, despite the fact that their way lay clear for as far as they could see in either direction.

It was as if no one could believe the impossible had finally happened - the £9.5 million 15-mile Newmarket bypass had been officially and unceremoniously opened by the last of the Wimpey men who had been working on it for two years. The long-awaited bypass immediately took 75% of the traffic out of the town. But would it take the prosperity too.

The manager of Laings sad the bypass would help shopkeepers as people wouldn't be so scared to come out and shop on both sides of the road. It would, he thought also encourage holiday traffic to stop and shop – the people who could now drive past would choose to come in to shop – because there was less traffic, it would be easier to park.

When Cambridge started seriously to cope with its parking problems in the early 1960s it was the parking meter that would be its salvation. In 1963 it was announced that charges would be 1s (5p) for one hour in the inner zone or two hours further out. They would make a profit of £10,000 a year and pay for themselves within three. Their arrival the next year emptied the streets as motorists queued for car parks, which were soon full. Conditions became frightful as shoppers drove round and round looking for somewhere to stop. Some traders in the centre said their takings dipped by 78%. Yellow lines followed, meter charges were doubled, parking was banned on Market Hill as the new Lion Yard car park opened. In December 1969 it was gridlock and police invoked emergency powers to deal with the chaos.

But if people could not park in the Cambridge city centre, there was always Fitzroy Street and Burleigh Street where parking was easy – until restrictions were imposed there too. So people chose to shop elsewhere, where parking was easy – like Ely.

[PICTURES SCANNED OF ELY & SELECTION FROM NEWS FILES]

Dr Eddie Whittley writes from Cleethorpes with an account of childhood memories recently brought vividly to life. “During the war I lived as a small boy in Ditton Lane, Cambridge. At that time Marshall’s Aerodrome was used by the RAF to train the pilots desperately needed for the Battle of Britain. The pilots were trained in Tiger Moths, or as we called them Marshcallschmitts, and their flight path took them directly over Ditton Lane.

As they passed over the pilots were often required to practice ‘Engine failure on take off. I and my school pals John Mayle and Geoffrey Kitchen, thought that the engines had really failed and used to dash into the back gardens to see the planes come down in the fields between Ditton Lane and Ditton Fields. They never did of course.

Although since that time I had some flying experience in Cessnas it has remained my life long ambition to have a trip in a Tiger Moth emulating my wartime heroes. Unfortunately I have recently been diagnosed as having cancer and so it seemed that my wish would not be granted. However during a brief holiday I recently spent with my sister at Cherry Hinton I noticed the Tiger Moths flying over and mention my ambition to my nephew Bryan Cantle who himself learned to fly at Cambridge Airport.

The Cambridge Flying Group based at the airport, which still trains pilots in Tiger Moths, is naturally booked up well in advance but when informed of my situation they kindly agreed to help. They kept the flying school open two hours after normal closing time and arranged for a pilot to come in specially to give me a pleasure trip. It was a warm summer’s day, just like those of the 1940’s so you can imagine how delighted I was not only for the flight but for the kind and friendly way the staff treated me. It was lovely to find that in this materialistic world there are still some people who go out of their way to be really helpful to an elderly person. [PICTURE SCANNED OF DR WHITTLEY WITH THE TIGER MOTH]

Do you have memories of flying in a small plane from a local airstrip – write to Mike Petty

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Ian Hinton of the Whittlesford and Duxford Scout Group. has e-mailed some notes following a recent “Memories” piece on the early days of scouting.

“In Whittlesford we have a photo of the Victory celebrations after the first world war showing scouts in the crowd. Later details are hazy but Whittlesford Sea Scout Troop was very active in the years before World War II. Led by Geoffrey Cockell of The Lodge (now known as The Manor) and supported by his uncle Mr Richards, the District Commissioner, they met in the coach house.

In 1937 the Scouts sailed across to Holland at the time of the World Scout Jamboree and even took Baden Powell for a trip in the boat. The Cubs were also very keen: Mrs Cockell with Edna Merry (now Wight), Joan Sergeant (now Scotcher), and Phyllis Smith were the leaders.

Mr Sherwood was Vicar during these years and he did a lot to help the Scouts. Mr Proctor was Tutor of the Whittlesford Theological College, and it was he who asked Norman Touborg, Wally Awkit, Bill Matthews and Mr Mason in 1938 to form a Rover Crew which met in a hut in the garden of the Mason's house "Hawthorns". Arthur Sanderson and Norman Touborg were now helping Mr Cockell to run the Sea Scouts. A photograph shows some of the boys on RRS Discovery for a weekend in

London. Other activities included canoeing on the Cam, kayak building, sailing on the Broad, Whitsun camps at Hinxtun Hall (where the "Battle for the Island" was a feature of the last day) and helping with the harvest while all the men were away at the War. They also had joint activities with the Guides led in those days by Mrs Rita Arbon.

The fortunes of the Troop fluctuated during the War. The Cockells moved away, Arthur Sanderson joined the Navy with the Russian Convoys. George Rookes and others were in the Fire Service. The boys now included John and Neville Pedley, Charlie Herbert and some of the boys evacuated to Whittlesford from the London bombing.

Norman Touborg started Air-Scouts who met in the loft of a barn behind his nursery garden at 22 Duxford Rd up until 1954, and Geoffrey Lloyd and Neville Pedley revived the Scouts again in a hut they built on the old recreation ground at the end of Vicarage lane."

93-year-old Hubert Wilkins from Gt Shelford was a member of the 17th Cambridge Catholic Scout Troop before the First World War. He joined the troop when 11 years old and recalls how in about 1921 they ambushed General Baden Powell, as he visited Cambridge, springing out of undergrowth chanting an African war cry. "After that I was dressed up as a witch, thrown into the river by the Mathematical Bridge to demonstrate life-saving. I remember rather overdoing the act, shooting down to the bed of the river and swallowing rather more river water than intended. After reaching the surface again my rescuer, a fellow scout and an expert swimmer, pretended to disable me with his knee, turned me over and pulled me to the bank, although I must admit to giving him certain assistance in the process". As Mr Wilkins says his memory of events so long ago is remarkably clear.

Patrick Mills from Cambridge also has memories of the 5th Cambridge Scouts, though much later than those of Ted Austin I featured the other week. He recalls: "Mr Macfarlane-Grieve was very active in many fields. He had purchased a field at West Runton as a permanent campsite and it had a big hut, and even an outdoor oven for Sunday roasts. I went to the first camp that was possible when some wartime mines were cleared on the beach, and the hedge had to be cut back six or seven feet where it had grown unchecked during the war".

Patrick also has clear memories of Rance's Folly and the other shops along St Andrew's Street which were demolished, including a toy shops and a ladies; dress shop called Anne's. Helen O'Donovan from Comberton has also written that the article interested her very much. "I grew up in Duxford before and during the war and remember the 'new' Drummer Street being built with its central island shelter. Since 1949 I have lived in or near Cambridge so your photographs revived many memories". Thank you Helen – here's another view from the News files – can anybody recognise the people waiting in the shelter?

Memories 20th September 2000, by Mike Petty

During the 1920s Cambridge undergraduates indulged in some very odd activities, elaborate stunts, hoaxes & escapades; they played marbles on the steps of the Senate House, organized football matches with teams of 'Victorian' gents, & started touring the town in various guises to raise funds for the Poppy Day funds.

On 7th June 1927 one daring young man dressed up in running shorts to attempt a feat that was later to achieve world-wide fame for somebody else. He ran around the Great Court of Trinity College at noon, while the clock struck 24, (it chimes twice, once for Trinity and once for its neighbour St Johns). He beat the clock by a stroke and a half, recording a time of 42½ seconds. The young man was Lord Burghley, later Marquess of Exeter. It was by all accounts not the first time this had happened and was hardly a world-shattering event, just one of those quirky things that happens in Cambridge from time to time.

It only achieved great prominence when filmmakers decided to include their version of the event, substituting another runner, the Olympic athlete Harold Abrahams, and filming at Eton, not Cambridge. Their phenomenally successful picture was entitled “Chariots of Fire”. It should perhaps have been called “The Caucus Race”

In August 1967 Trinity Great Court was the venue for a similar race – though the rules were slightly different. For a start the clock would only be striking four times – yes the race was at 2pm. Fifteen competitors were dressed appropriately for the race, two were not – for they were girls and while the men wore gowns, they chose not to, claiming to be citizens of the King of the Swedes and thus exempt. When the chimes started so did the race and each competitor set off to weave around the 18 rectangles formed out of the courts six grassed areas – apart from the women who, holding their skirts in a most ladylike manner, competed only half the course. In case there should be any misunderstanding of the rules the whole thing was supervised by the college’s Master, Lord Butler, perched in cap and gown on the Trinity college fountain.

It was billed as the 397th annual running of the Caucus race, first described in “Alice in Wonderland” as a means of getting Alice dry after she had been swimming in a pool of her own tears - which may give some excuse for the bizarre rules and confusion. But it seems to have been run for the first time earlier that decade – the *News* was there to report it in August 1964. [PIX OF THE 1967 RACE ENCLOSED WITH CUTTING TO GIVE CAPTIONS – IF ITS NOT USED I WILL RUN IT NEXT WEEK AS A FOLLOW-UP]

Then in 1988 two of the country’s most famous runners, Steve Cram and Seb Coe staged a re-run of the fictitious ‘Chariots of Fire’ race in a bid to raise funds for Great Ormond Street Children’s Hospital. It attracted world-wide attention and was supervised by Norris McWhirter, the keeper of fascinating records. But despite all the benefits of digital timing and freeze-frame reruns nobody is really sure whether Coe actually achieved the feat before the final chime had died away. The real result was that the Hospital and Cambridge Children’s Hospice shared some £50,000 in donations [PIX ENCLOSED & SCANNED]

One further mystery remains – what was a ‘Chariot of Fire’?

It was a Cambridge hansom cab, commandeered by undergraduates as part of their bonfire night celebrations in 1920 and 1921. The vehicle was then set on fire – and then sent careering round and round Market Hill, being pulled of course by a most frightened horse!

The cabman was handsomely compensated for the loss of his vehicle – in fact some say that they jostled to get their most decrepit conveyance taken off their hands – but I’m not aware anybody asked the horse’s opinion! [PIC – CABS AT CAMBRIDGE RAILWAY STATION SCANNED]

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Memories 26th September 2000 by Mike Petty

Can you help solve a Catherine Cookson mystery?

When Mrs Elaine Barron from Cambridge found time to sit down to read the Catherine Cookson story she’d picked up in a Charity Shop she found she had more of a bargain than she realised. For tucked amongst the pages of ‘The Parson’s Daughter’ were four old photographs. Now the search is on to find out something – anything - about them, and possibly even who they belonged to.

One was taken by the Cambridge Daily News and its negative reference seems to indicate it would have been taken about 1953. It shows a procession of children dressed up in Elizabethan costume with two heralds escorting what may be a Queen. Pencilled on the back is the cryptic message 'Anne, Queen Elizabeth. Aged 11'.

Now I know the real Queen Elizabeth I visited Cambridge in August 1564. Students had been recalled early from vacation, so they could line the streets as she passed, and various colleges made arrangements to cope with her extensive retinue. The Queen herself stayed at King's college and took the opportunity to visit the college chapel to attend services and watch a play. She enjoyed her visit and decided to extend the stay by a day and 'if provision of beer and ale could have been made' would have stayed longer still. Before she left she toured the various colleges – apart from Jesus which was too far out of the way - before addressing the University in Latin. After many of the courtiers had received honorary degrees she set off again on the next stage of her journey en route to Longstanton where she was to dine with the Bishop of Ely and then on to Hinchbrook House to stay with members of the Cromwell family.

Sadly the News was not there to record the scene, so the event in Mrs Barron's photograph was obviously a reconstruction. Do you know when, and by whom?

Two other of the photographs were taken by Edward C. Weller of Marshall Road, Cambridge. One shows a children's tea party inside what might be a Nissen Hut. The Union Flag and the Stars and Stripes are displayed at the end of the room, one lad has his face painted red white & blue. Halfway along the hall on the right-hand side there is a notice, but it is not readable. Could it be a Coronation party, or end-of war celebration; were you there or do you recognise the venue?

Mr Weller also photographed, probably at the same time, another group of children. These are dressed up in fancy dress. There is a pirate, a cowboy, a nurse, a witch and a fairy, together with a lad dressed in academic costume, a gypsy dancer and – the best clue a lady appropriately attired with a bicycle labelled 'G. Holt, Chimney Sweep'. One clue as to the event is that one girl is wearing a sash labelled 'Peace'.

The fourth picture is another group of children, this time lined up in the street. They range from tiny tots to quite mature young ladies. They are posed beside two shops whose names above the door seem to read 'D. Whithouse' and '208 Hosiery B. Be...' – the rest is off the picture. Could it be taken in Cherry Hinton road where Miss B. Bennett still had a draper's shop at no.208 in 1974?

Presumably there is some common theme, perhaps one person who features in each picture. Is it you? Your help please

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More photographs have come in courtesy of Martin Howlett who has lent an autographed album produced by Cambridge City Football Club for their 1965-66 season. It contains photographs taken by Mr L.E. Fernandez of each member of the squad, including manager Tony Marchi and captain Brendan McNally. There's Scottish International Jackie McGugan, ex-Arsenal player Gerry Ward and top goalscorer Eddie Bailham who had hit 42 goals the previous season. There also snaps of trainer Tommy Dawson and groundsman Claude Archer, then in his 14th year with the club. How many others can you recognise from the squad picture? [PIX SCANNED ON DISK]

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The mystery lady in the bus shelter featured a recent Memories has been identified. She was Mrs Agnes 'Aggie' Banyard who lived for years in the gatehouse of Fulbourn Hospital where her husband was head gardener.

**

Mrs M. Merry (nee Ayres) from Teversham has written with her memories of working at Eaden Lilley: "I was employed there in 1937 as a cashier for the sum of 10/- (50p) a week. I started work in the Millinery Cash Desk (this being the less busy one) and eventually finished up in haberdashery (one of the busiest, especially at sale time). At Christmas time I was in the desk in the toy department on the top floor which dealt with the Father Christmas ride and the money for the toys. I worked from 8.45 am to 6pm (7pm on Saturday), with half-day on Thursday.

The promotion from the cash desks was into an office where I worked with a Mr Gadsby until I left in 1939 to go to Freeman Hardy & Willis (opposite) for a rise of 5/- - a lot in those days. I enjoyed working there and when the war started all the shop staff had to do fire watching – the centre for that was Eaden Lilley. I was on duty the night a bomb fell at the top of Jesus Lane. Marks can still be seen in the college walls opposite the Lane"

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Some headlines just seem to come around and around. Take this story: "Cambridge is desperately short of rented accommodation and as students join those already searching in vain for somewhere to live, the situation is likely to deteriorate. Already landlords advertising property to let are embarrassed and often upset by the number of applicants who plead for a room. One ran an advertisement in this paper earlier this week and in three days received around 100 applications for the flat. Another advertised a flat to let and in three days received 60 replies".

So desperate was the housing crisis that people were taking out small-ads to plead for homes. Their messages are poignant: 'Extremely depressed bachelor looks for flat ...' 'Getting Desperate. Council employee seeks house / flat for two or more people ...' Professional couples were willing to pay three or even six months rent in advance while a Haverhill couple, with a child, were willing to pay up to £75 for a 2-bedroomed flat. But there were numerous empty properties as later surveys in 1977 and 1979 showed, largely in the Kite area when planning indecision over proposed redevelopment led to people being unwilling to invest in property that might be demolished. Squatters moved in.

Only the rents being asked shows that the story is not one from a recent paper. In fact it was published on 1st October 1975 – 25 years ago.

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Memories 4th October 2000, by Mike Petty

"In the evening of Thursday the 2nd of July, the lofty wooden bridge over the Cam ... frequently called the Mathematical Bridge broke down. It had been in a decayed state for a considerable time, and boards had been put up several days previous to its falling in, to prevent persons going over. The bridge was erected in the year 1768, from a design by the late Mr James Essex, an eminent architect"

In these words the Cambridge Chronicle of 12th July 1810 records one incident in the story of the bridge at Garret Hostel Lane. The same issue contains a notice of proposals for a cast-iron bridge proposed near Queens' College in place of the 'New bridge'. It would be adjacent to the other Essex bridge, the wooden structure he had erected to designs by Etheridge some 20 years previously. This was later rebuilt in 1902 and is itself now known as the "Mathematical Bridge"

The collapse of Garret Hostel caused a problem for travellers, for whereas the college bridges are principally for college people, Garret Hostel was for everybody. The lane had been given to the town by King Henry VI so that its citizens might have access to the river – for he had closed many of the

other lanes that used to lead to the riverside wharves when he commandeered the land needed for his new King's college.

Time after time the bridge needed repair and the bills were shared jointly between Trinity Hall and the town of Cambridge. Finally the college had contributed their half of the expense of building Essex's 'Mathematical Bridge' on the understanding that they would be free from all future claims. So the town paid for it to be patched up. It was soon in trouble again – a wooden bridge just did not have the permanence required.

In 1835 tenders were sought for a cast-iron bridge. The contract was awarded to the Butterley Iron Company and the work undertaken by Finch's iron foundry, a local company famous for such work. The result was a fine bridge in the Gothic style which featured on as many postcard views as some of its older college neighbours. Despite their earlier agreement Trinity Hall contributed over a quarter of the cost of £960 19s 6d with other colleges joining in.

But by 1959 the bridge was in the news again, settlement having caused the cast iron to fracture, making repairs essential but uneconomic. This time it was not the college but one of its students who picked up the bill. The Trusted Family had been associated with Trinity Hall for 50 years and Sir Harry Trusted, Q.C., decided that a tangible way of recognising the link would be to build the new bridge.

His intention was a bridge that would be an honest example of twentieth century craftsmanship, aiming to please present and future generations. The result was unveiled in October 1960. It won praise for its design, but not from cyclists – some felt the gradient was so steep that only the fittest could bike over it, another that it was an ideal training ground for mountaineers. 40 years on it still taxes the muscles of all who cross it.

SCANS OF VIEWS OF THE ORIGINAL MATHEMATICAL BRIDGE AT GARRET HOSTEL LANE AND ITS 1835 REPLACEMENT; PIX FROM FILE OF PRESENT BRIDGE

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Mrs J.A. Rowell of Sutton writes with her memories of flying in a small plane.

"Over 70 years ago, about 1929 or 1930 a man named Sir Alan Cobham did a display at Ely; they did flying stunts and anyone could have a flight. It cost 5/- (25p) so 'I went up'

"I don't think there was an air strip in Ely and as far as I can remember it was a football or playing field they flew from. I can remember there was an awful lot of people there, because we had to queue up to get a ride

"I'll never forget it. We flew over the Water Tower, the Cathedral, the railway station, then followed the River Ouse and over the sugar beet factory. I can't remember if there were windows along the side that we looked through, or if we just looked down over the sides. The plane held about 12 or 14 passengers; we were seated along the sides of the plane and there was a passage down the centre.

"I was about 15 or 16 at the time, it was a wonderful experience – in fact I'd quite like to do it again!"

Mrs Rowell mentions the Ely Sugar Beet Factory, which was opened just 75 years ago. It provided farmers with an opportunity to grow a new crop and also provided a large amount of employment during the season. But it has now disappeared and there seems little written about it. The News photo files have several pictures taken about 30 years ago. Did you use to work there and can you identify any of the people or processes depicted?

[PIX FROM FILE]

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Memories have been flooding in following last week's mystery pictures, found in a Catherine Cookson novel

First to the phone was Mrs Jenny Parks of Cambridge who can claim a connection with each of the four pictures —in fact as her mother, who died seven years ago, was a great Catherine Cookson reader she wonders whether the pictures may have once belonged to her. If so where were the pictures in the meantime.

She tells me that two of the snaps were taken at St John's Church Hall in Blinco Grove at a VE Party in 1945. Her brother Charles Wisbey is in the second row in his sailor's suit, her sister Thelma (now Hill) is there under the flag, When the cameraman moved indoors he caught Jenny herself, cradled in her mother's arms on the extreme right. She confirms that the bottom picture was taken in Cherry Hinton Road where the family ran the shops shown and to complete the set it is her dad, Charles Henry Wisbey on the left in the background of the 'Queen Elizabeth' picture

Mike Gates has added other names to the line-up in the street, taken he is sure as part of the VJ Celebrations. He is there, (third left, back row), his sister is right in the front. Mary Chapman of Oakington saw her bridesmaid Janet Blows (five from right, top row). Greta Forsdyke (nee Ridgeon) thinks she may be the girl with the pigtails and can certainly name others, whilst Roger Cork of Stretham and John Cook of Cherry Hinton have also come forward with many of the names. John also has a companion picture, this one showing the parents, taken at the same time.

PIC EITHER SCANNED OR WILL BE DELIVERED ON MONDAY AM

Mary Jones (nee Fox) of Impington knows all about the 'Queen Elizabeth' picture, for she is shown on it, just behind Anne Walker who is playing the Queen. Jane Becket is the right-hand herald. It was probably taken in 1952 and was certainly organised by the Morley Memorial School

Gill Wordingham from Fulbourn can put names to virtually every one of the 1965-6 Cambridge City Football team – but then her father, Len Wordingham was a Director of the club for which he had played in his younger days. In fact she believes that he scored the first ever goal at the new Milton Road ground way back in the early 1920s. Doubtless some enthusiast will be able to confirm or challenge the claim.

Memories 11th October 2000, by Mike Petty

This Saturday it is our village's turn to be the subject of the News' weekly *Community Spotlight* feature. Later this morning we are all invited to assemble around the cross and be photographed. But the day is dull and overcast and I wonder how many will actually turn out to be snapped. You will have to wait for Monday's paper to find out.

By absolute co-incidence the feature coincides with the publication of our village's Millennium history for, like many other communities, people have been struggling to condense a thousand years or more of history into a few dozen pages. Now the fruits of their labours are coming to fruition.

Hinxton is one small village who have produced a big contribution to scholarship with their 150-page illustrated commemoration book. History and homes, trades and industries, church and charities, those who died for freedom and those who now learn of their sacrifice all come together in a publication that is essential for anybody with any connection in that part of Cambridgeshire. Virginia Walker of William House, 66 High St, Hinxton, CB10 1QY can supply copies of 'The life and times of Hinxton' for your shelves for just £10.

My eye was particularly caught by reminiscences of when the village had its own butcher, baker, grocer, shoe repairers – indeed the range of resources to sustain the community. Miss Moule had a grocery and general store just opposite the butchers, which had a slaughterhouse at the back. In earlier times the general stores had been a laundry with a copper and ironing boards. If you wanted your washing mangled then Alice Hardwick would provide the service for 2d. Miss Moule stocked a wide range of goods and one day Susan Morgan came in and requested a halfpenny candle – and then asked ‘how much is it?’ Mr & Mrs Clifton ran a bakery and grocer’s and Dennis Jaggard, known as Stan, would ask at the grocery if there were any broken biscuits. If the reply was positive he would quip: ‘Well mend the bloody things then’. Mrs Gee who lived in a cottage in High Street kept an unofficial sweet shop, selling sweets to the children which were kept in a kitchen drawer. When the children were asked where they had obtained their sweets they would at once reply, ‘from Mrs Gee’s drawers!’

Its all good gentle humour, typical of the banter that used to prevail when villages used to have plenty of shops. If it rings a bell with you then drop me a line.

Talking of forgotten traders I spoke at a meeting in Lode the other night when one lady in the audience recalled how her mother used to buy peat from a man who came around the village. It was not for putting on the garden, it was for burning on the fire – just like families had done for generations before. Does anybody else recall the peat-man, or any of the other vendors who used to come around the streets.

It is not just shops that have now deserted the village; all too often the school has closed as well. Yet the school will always be etched in the memory, as Sarah Holmes recalls of her time at Quy: “I can still picture every room, every nook and cranny, every tree in the small waste area of the playground, even down to the outside toilets which in winter meant a very quick dash. I remember the winter most, the pushed-up bottle tops of the small bottles of milk that had been left out in the freezing cold – much better than the hot horrid milk we had in the summer days. I remember the large oil burners, one in each classroom, with the big fire guards around them, good for drying paintings on. I’d love to turn the clock back and revisit it with my daughter Alice, point out my peg and where I used to sit and show her just how special our small village school was and why my memories will live with me forever”. Sarah’s recollections – of the 1970s – form part of a booklet of “Memories of Quy school” compiled and sold by Peggy Day, 8 Orchard Street, Quy, CB5 9AE for the huge price of £1.50 including postage.

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But to go to school you need a home in the locality. Allan Brigham recognised part of an advert he had published in the *News* in October 1975 that I featured in *Memories* two weeks ago. “Getting desperate: council employee seeks house” he had written. It had, he tells me, no effect. So he tried again, this time signing it ‘A graduate’ and received a better response. “I was lucky. I found a room in the blighted Kite area, and eventually could afford to buy a house in a Romsey town that few then wanted to live in – ‘over the bridge’ and with an outside toilet. Married friends qualified for council housing”, he writes.

Since then Allan’s wages as a road sweeper have risen four fold, and the price of his house is ten times what it was when he bought it. “It was possible to find accommodation in 1975”, he writes. But: “I know from the experience of colleagues that it is impossible today. The cheapest former council house costs £100,000 and bus drivers are expected to live on £6 an hour”.

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The photographs of the VE and VJ celebrations in the Cherry Hinton Road area of Cambridge, which I published a couple of weeks ago have continued to attract letters. It seems as if almost everybody on the picture has now come forward!

Trevor Johnson who still lives in the area saw himself in fancy dress and can put names to several of the others. Mary Hicks (nee Clark) recalls how houses were decorated for VE day with a competition for the best house – some people even planted red, white & blue flowers to make a display – does anyone have a snap of their street or village so decorated? Patrick Mills was there as well, as was Janet Blows (now Chapman), of Houghton who had already been identified by an earlier reader. Janet recalls that the proceedings were not entirely incident-free: “For several days leading up to the party we had worked tirelessly building a very big bonfire on a spare piece of land at the bottom of Coniston Road which was to have been lit on the night of the party. But whilst we were having tea in the St John’s Church hall some older boys from a neighbouring district lit it – and we were left with just ashes on our return!”

Many correspondents remember the Wisbey family who later took over Doug Whitehouse’s greengrocers shop outside which both children and their parents posed and Charles Wisbey has also written in. He himself ran the business from 1966 until earlier this year

Mrs M. Morton took part in the ‘Queen Elizabeth’ pageant, but is not on the snap. Incidentally Marion Colthorpe, whose excellent book on ‘Royal Cambridge’ gave me the background to the original Royal visit of 1564 tells me that her continuing research has shown that the Queen dined at Fenstanston and not Long Stanton as was previously believed.

But can you help with details of another Royal visit, that has puzzled even Clarence House?

George Snelson from Dewsbury, West Yorkshire writes: “I am seeking information about a visit of King George VI and Queen Mary (presumably he means Queen Elizabeth) in the period May-June 1943. My wife Muriel was a nurse at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary and came to Cambridge to stay with the family of a soldier she had nursed in 1943.

The soldier’s father worked in an office in Cambridge and took Muriel to see the King and Queen drive past. There must have been hundreds of people who watched them drive by, some may have recorded the event in their diary.”

George has written to Clarence House but they are baffled: “Unfortunately all war-time records are somewhat inadequate as very little paper was used and stored. There is, I fear, no visit of a visit by The King and Queen to Cambridge during 1943. Their Majesties visited airfields in the area around Cambridge at the end of May that year and it is possible that a brief time was spent in Cambridge, although we have no details about such a visit” the Royal information officer has replied. So can you add to the royal records?

There’s less doubts about the way the country celebrated the Coronation of the new Queen in 1953 and Herbert Ayres can quote chapter and verse for the celebrations in the Cherry Hinton Road area that built upon the now-famous VE & VJ celebrations. For he has a set of the minutes of the organising committee, on which he served, together with some letters on headed notepaper from some of the shops and businesses who supported their celebrations.

Herbert has also lent me a couple of other snaps to tease. This time we are in the early 1950s and once more in the Morley School catchment area. There is one face that might be familiar to pop fans for hiding under the red-indian head-dress and carrying a bow is a young Roger Walters, later to achieve fame with Pink Floyd.

Achieving fame with Cambridge City Football Club in the 1965-66 season were the fine body of lads who also featured two weeks back. Phil Moore from March, Terry Dunn from Cambridge and Alan

Barker, the builder, from Hardwick have all come up with names. In Alan's case it is quite easy, for he is one of the squad.

Sadly Mrs J. Pryke of Willingham is having less success in trying to track down a picture of her late father Frank Lawrence who used to work for Eaden Lilley way back in the 1920s. She knows he is shown on a view of their rowing club but nobody can come up with one. Can you?

Memories 18th October 2000 by Mike Petty

As we advance further into the computer age more and more information becomes available. All you need it a computer connected to the Internet and the world is, apparently, at your fingertips. Today libraries are full of computer screens like some intellectual games arcade. Merely type in whatever you seek and the information will appear in front of you.

But what happens if you don't type? But surely everybody can now type, is this not a skill with which everybody is endowed at birth, taught at the cradle, or at least in primary school. But I never had a typewriter while I was at school. When I started work in the 1960s at the Central Library in Wheeler Street the Librarian's secretary had a typewriter, and there were other in the Administration Department. But they were always busy. I needed to type catalogue cards, so I 'borrowed' the Assistant Librarian's typewriter and after I had 'forgotten' to return it on a number of occasions I was finally found a second-hand machine on which to work. Nobody taught me where to find the 'c' on the keyboard, I had to muddle through myself. When eventually the typewriter was succeeded by an 'Amstrad' word processor I never had the heart to throw it away. It stayed on a table out the back as a memento of an earlier world.

Miss Minnie Pate also kept an old typewriter in her office, but her's was far more important. For it was the very first typewriter in Cambridge and had belonged to Oscar Browning. It just one of many such writing machines she acquired as her typewriting business boomed. The service had been founded in 1892 by Mrs Marion Marshall & under Miss Pate built up close links with the University and its students. But there were careful matters of etiquette to be observed if one of her girls was sent to a don to take dictation in the 1930s. She would be expected to stand while taking dictation, and what is more she was expected to have her back to the gentleman concerned.

In October 1950 Miss Pate herself made history when she became the first local woman to be awarded an honorary degree by Cambridge University. She was receiving recognition for her typing and secretarial skills, having been for more than 50 years director of the University Typewriting Service whose staff had typed for Vice Chancellors, heads of colleges, tutors, dons and undergraduates – who of course did not type themselves.

Miss Pate was a local girl, born and raised in Cambridge and it was seen as significant that amongst all the worthy candidates the University had chosen to honour first somebody who had served them in an ordinary, everyday working capacity. Numerous friends and clients gathered in the Senate House as her achievements were summarised by the Orator; she had presided over the "difficult task of recording our words by shorthand, however badly enunciated, or by typewriter, however badly written. She herself attended to every detail, corrected the spelling and altogether took the greatest pains that our work should emerge perfect on every county. In short, for many of us, the door to academic preferment was, so to say, opened by her". And all this in the days before automatic spellcheckers!

Since then the world has moved on rapidly, the manual machine on which adult students at Impington Village College were being taught in the 1970s, has been replaced by the electric, as demonstrated by the picture of students at the Studio Secretarial School way back in 1980. But nothing moves faster than the computer, as a picture in the News files of a modern office shows – taken in 1986!

Do you have memories of your earlier days in an office environment, before photocopiers and modern gadgetry?

[PICS MANUAL TYPEWRITER, PHOTO'D AT IMPINGTON VILLAGE COLLEGE, THE STUDIO SECRETARIAL SCHOOL 1980 & A MODERN OFFICE – MICROLOGIE SOLUTIONS LTD, 1986]

revised Minnie Pate article – unused 2 June 2013

IN June 1963 – 50 years ago – the News paid tribute to a remarkable lady who had influenced the careers of generations of undergraduates through the applications of skills which are virtually universal today – the art of using a typewriter keyboard.

Miss Minnie Pate had developed the ‘Cambridge and University Typewriting Office’.

In the 1870s there was little work for young women and the opportunities for earning a living were limited. A number of schools for teaching typewriting and shorthand were being started in London but while the commercial world had started to recognise their value, the University regarded them purely as something for businesses. Miss Pate and a few other girls taught themselves Pitman’s shorthand, but the typewriter was unknown to most people.

One evening the News carried an advertisement from Doctor Courtney Kenney, Fellow of Downing College and Lecturer in Law who was seeking an amanuensis for copying manuscripts. Minnie applied and got the job, becoming one of the first women to be employed on secretarial work in a college.

One day Dr Kenney asked if she would like to try his ‘typewriter’ – one of the first to be brought into the country. It was a tall black object looking decorated with coloured and gilded designs, something like a Victorian sewing machine but it was capable of producing (with great noise) a very readable copy, all in small capitals. It had once been owned by Oscar Browning and carried on the lid a handwritten note saying it was "seen with much interest and tried by George Eliot" when visiting him .

In 1892 Mrs Marian Marshall opened an office for typewriting and shorthand in Trinity Street and Miss Pate became a member of staff whose numbers slowly increased as new machines such as duplicators and Dictaphones appeared on the market. Minnie acquired the business in 1900 when it had a staff of two ladies; by the time she in turn retired, more than 40 women were employed.

But there were careful matters of etiquette to be observed if one of her girls was sent to a don to take dictation in the 1930s. She would be expected to stand while taking dictation, and what is more she was expected to have her back to the gentleman concerned.

Miss Pate and her team compiled a monumental album of testimonials from many Cambridge academics including Sir Horace Darwin, Lord Keynes and A.E. Housman. Fellowship dissertations were a great part of her work and often involved all-night sittings to complete; so much might depend on the accuracy of the typing, even if the text was literally all Greek to the typist.

Then the Master of Trinity, when Vice Chancellor, started using Miss Pate as ‘secretary’; the idea spread as other colleges followed suit.

There was soon a rush for lessons in shorthand and typing and a separate school for teaching was established to teach students to examination standard. It continued until the end of the Second World War when it had to close through lack of help.

In 1950 the University conferred upon Miss Pate the honorary degree of Master of Arts in recognition of her services over a period of more than 50 years. She was the first woman to be so honoured. Numerous friends and clients gathered in the Senate House as her achievements were summarised by the Orator; she had presided over the “difficult task of recording our words by shorthand, however badly enunciated, or by typewriter, however badly written. She herself attended to every detail, corrected the spelling and altogether took the greatest pains that our work should emerge perfect on every county. In short, for many of us, the door to academic preferment was, so to say, opened by her”. And all this in the days before automatic spellcheckers!

Even after her retirement she kept in constant touch with all ‘her girls’ and thousands of former clients were saddened at her death.

A scrapbook full of cuttings and letters relating to Minnie and the Typewriting Office she established is housed in Cambridge University Library

Since then the world has moved on rapidly, the manual machine on which adult students at Impington Village College were being taught in the 1970s, has been replaced by the electric, as demonstrated by the picture of students at the Studio Secretarial School way back in 1980. But nothing moves faster than the computer, as a picture in the News files of a modern office shows – taken in 1986!

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What was the Dug Out in Guildhall Street, Cambridge, I asked. In have come the replies

Pearl Reed from Cambridge writes: “When I started work in 1943 at Barrett & Son Ltd, the china & hardware shop in St Andrew’s Street, their back entrance was on St Andrew’s Hill. The ‘Bun Shop’ public house was further down towards Downing Street and just by the pub was a flight of steps going down to ‘The Dug Out’, where would could get a nice cup of coffee or tea, which was useful to men coming in from Hildersham to work on the bus as it used to be cold in the winter months”. Later the Dug Out moved nearer to the Guildhall, which meant it wasn’t so handy for her.

Mr E. Shrimpton from Bar Hill knew of it when he was a policeman in the early 1950s, though he never had occasion to visit it, either on or off duty. Its attraction he recalls were its snooker tables

Malcolm Pratt of Lode remembers it as a friendly place where you could enjoy a cup of coffee and sandwich, cake or light snack without feeling there was pressure on you to eat up and go. He also recalls a milk bar next to Weatherheads on Market Hill – do you?

Tony Challis from Gt Shelford recalls that it was a coffee bar or Espresso bar which formed a mecca for racing cyclists. He writes: “Around that time a rebel organisation had been formed in the country called the British League of Racing Cyclists (BLRC) which opposed the National Cyclists Union (NCU). A club was formed in Cambridge, Cambridge Olympic R.C. under the leadership of Ike Saul, a name well known in local cycling at that time and also up to his tragic death a few years ago. The object of the ‘League’ was to promote road racing on open roads as opposed to the ‘Union’ who raced on closed circuits.

“Most weekday evenings, after a training run to Bury or Bishop’s Stortford, the club would end the evening with a coffee in the Dugout (which he recalls as one word), the ‘fast’ men getting there first and then waiting for the stragglers. At any given time there could be some 30 racing bikes leaning against the wall, and not one of them locked – try that today

“I can remember the Dugout well, down a few steps and you were confronted by those great chromium coffee machines, steaming and gurgling away. Those really were the days and anyone that can recall them will remember the call, ‘Up the League!!’ as rival clubs met, and if you were an ‘Union’ member back would come the cry – ‘Yeah, right up’. [PICTURE LOOKING ACROSS LION YARD CAR PARK TOWARDS GUILDHALL STREET 1969, SCAN OF GUILDHALL STREET 1937]

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While we are in that area does anybody have a picture of Pilbeam’s hairdressers shop in Corn Exchange Street, Cambridge. They were there from the First War to the 1950s.

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Even more names have come in for the Cherry Hinton Road VJ party, thanks to Janet Chapman of Houghton and Gerard Holt – the ‘chimney-sweep’ boy - while another picture of the event has surfaced that Mrs Jean Pettengell (nee Shadbolt) of Cambridge has treasured amongst her snaps. She saw herself, her brother and “we have been surprised at the number of children we have been able to name on the main group”.

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Sometimes stories seem to come round and round. Take this report on reaction to the closure of a street in Ely on Thursday market day which was greeted by a storm of protest by traders.

Councillors said it would be of advantage to the public if the road were closed to traffic as it would enable pedestrians to walk without crossing the traffic stream. Market stalls could be resited in the roadway.

Traders described it as ridiculous, pointless and impossible. Mr France Kempton, fruiterer said: “We have people making regular deliveries every day. There are enough restrictions in this town anyway and the council are just chasing trade away”

Bowgens, the bakers, would certainly come to a standstill because they relied on seven van deliveries a day from the bakery, said the manageress, Mrs J. Brown. Next door Mr Percy Newstead, the fishmonger, said a closure was likely to cause a loss of trade because people would not be able to park outside the shop. The manager of Green and White, the off-licence, Mr E.G. Chapman said: “This is impossible. I have two drays and about 10 other deliveries on Thursdays. I shall fight this and I shall have some of the big companies behind me”

Shops in the partly-empty Market Place block, whose communal service area has its only access from the road on the west side of the Market Place would also be affected. A spokesman for Radio Relay, the television rental firm said access to the front of their shop was already closed to traffic on Thursdays because of the market. Now it looked as if the service area might be cut off as well depriving them of their vans: “We will have to carry the television sets all over town to get to them”, he said.

The date road concerned was Dolphin Lane, the date 6th November 1968. [PIC OF DOLPHIN LANE NOV 1968]

Memories 25th October 2000, by Mike Petty

Last week my projector seemed to have been constantly switched on. From the Cambridge Folk Museum to Royston, Comberton to Stretham, Barrington to Earith and finally Stuntney the slides churned through.

At Earith Women's Institute the theme was ghosts and witches and the usual contingent of ladies were supplemented by somewhat burlier and beardier members of the community – they had opened it up to men too. That in itself is not unusual, but it was the first time I had been introduced by a witch – complete with black pointed hat, long scratchy fingernails and a broomstick. Afterwards a number of the audience confided their memories of encounters with things that went bump in the night. Robert Halliday and Alan Murdie have compiled a Cambridge Ghost Book (Fern House £6.50) but most of their accounts go back into history. Do you have any more recent experiences to share?

Then at Stuntney things that went bump in the night were on the menu again, only this time it was the crump of wartime bombs and the crash of both British and German planes making forced landings in local fields and drains. What little I could tell was overshadowed by the experiences of those listening, for the audience comprised folk who had actually been there at the time and witnessed the events for themselves. They had first-hand accounts of how the crew from a crashed German plane had emerged from the wreckage and made their way, pistols drawn, on Mrs Ashman who stood watching some alarm – and then promptly surrendered to her. They had chatted for a bit until the Soham policeman arrived to take them into custody.

But given the hardships of country life wartime was just another inconvenience. Amongst those who had braved the rainy evening were members of the Benton family who have recorded their memories of life in one of three isolated cottages that comprised the hamlet of Dunstalls.

There were eight children in their family. Their father was head pig man on the Cole Ambrose estate in charge of one hundred and fifty pigs. Trevor remembers taking them up on the hill. "It was like a rodeo bringing them home". Sometimes one hundred and fifty pigs would be turned out onto the stubble or they would be put in the orchard to eat the rotten apples. But the pigs went very thin and had to be killed by their father, he remembers seeing a pile of dead pigs as high as a house

Water was fetched to their bungalow using a horse and cart. A big galvanised two hundred-gallon tank was filled from a tap on Stuntney village green. It was then taken across two fields, splashing out of the sides as it went over the ruts, even though it was covered. This would probably last the family from ten days to a fortnight.

Their toilet was a big hole in the garden and a shed would be moved over it. Mum used to get onto dad about the toilet. "If you don't move it soon we'll get it in our shoes". But he could rarely see the urgency.

The dykes and drains were the children's' playgrounds. They used to go 'tiddling' in the dykes with a jar tied round with a piece of string which they dipped in the water. Once Audrey fell in. She had a wool dress on. It was normal length before she went in but when she came out it was really long and full of chickweed. When she came home she walked the long way round her dad's pigsties, as she knew she'd get a hiding. Another sister, Doll, fell in a dyke carrying matches on her way to school but she knew she had to keep those dry, so she held them up

In winter when the ice was thick enough they played ice hockey at the Old Hall & went skating. If not quite sure about the thickness they played a 'dare game' - who could walk on the ice under the bridge where it never froze. Ron Peacock drew the short straw and as he walked along he slowly sank under the water.

Life was terribly hard & their father was ill for twenty years. One day their dad was missing from the old dog box where he used to sit outside for hours. Trevor and Ken went down the drain and found him with his pockets full of stones and they were sure he was going to drown himself. He had an illness caught from the pigs & it meant he could no longer work with them.

Despite it all they all agreed that it was a hard but good life and their mum looked after them really well.

The Benton family's reminiscences have been collected as part of a project to record life in Stuntney as it used to be. If you have memories or snaps to share please contact Wendy Fox at The Keyes, Soham Road, Stuntney, near Ely, CB7 5TL, or phone 01353 664676 [PICTURES SCANNED]

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Is there a Green Man lurking in your church? One of those images of a human face intertwined with vegetation. There are thousands of churches across Europe in which carvings of the Green Man outnumber images of Christ by up to a dozen to one. But what do they represent, who carved them and where are they? Clive Hicks has just produced a field guide to the faces. He's found them in Balsham, Bluntisham, Buckden and Burwell. They're in Kings college chapel and at least four other colleges. You can find them in Ely cathedral, in the porch at Gt Shelford, on the roof at Landbeach, in St Mary's churches at Huntingdon and Over, St Andrews' at Sutton and Swavesey as well as the chancel at Trumpington. But there must be more, tucked away just waiting to be discovered. He found one in a Lincolnshire church to the absolute amazement of an elderly man who was doing chore in the church. He had known the building all his life, having been a choir boy there but had never spotted it. Another was found in Ely cathedral's Alcock chapel a short while ago. Clive Hicks' book "The Green Man: a field guide" is published by Compass books at £8.99. Can you help in his search and make the next edition even fuller? [PICTURE SCANNED]

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Miss Daphne Foreman has written from the Barnwell area of Cambridge with her own account of the problems of finding a home in the 1960s. She recalls: "Having lived in rooms in other people's houses since the mid 1950's I longed for a home of my own. I applied to the council for a flat, only to be told they were only for married people. So I wrote a long article in the *News* entitled 'A plea for the single businesswoman' and was offered by the council a flat in a house. But at the same time I was offered one of the Probus (Professional and business women's) flats. I accepted this and lived there happily for nine years. But it was rather like renting a 'tied' cottage, in that one of the conditions of tenancy was attendance at the Probus Club meetings and the flats were not big enough to 'put up' a guest. So while I still had twenty working years I decided to buy a house.

"After paying room and flat rents for many years I had very little savings, so I found myself going down the lists of properties until I found one which I could afford. But none of the Building Societies would give me a mortgage. In the words of one, 'I wouldn't touch it with a barge pole!' But I applied for a loan and it was almost agreed when I had a telephone call asking when I was getting married. When I said that I was not getting married I was told that mortgages could only be granted to married people. I replied that if I were getting married I thought that my husband would be buying the home and would provide something better than this! But I was trying to do the best I could for myself.

"Later in the day I had a call to say that some money had been found which would allow one single person to have a mortgage. I think that the agents were so anxious to get rid of the house that they begged for a mortgage to be granted!

“After much more struggling with red tape, and paying off the mortgage I am delighted to say that after 30 years and several thousand pounds I now am repeatedly receiving letters from agents begging to buy my home! Over my dead body!” [PICTURE FROM NEWS FILE]

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Did anybody see the King and Queen in the area in 1943 asked George Snelson from Dewsbury. Yes, writes a regular reader: “With my classmates from Ely High School, Bedford House, Ely, we were on our way to the outdoor swimming pool, close to Ely station and had to walk down Back Hill. On this particular day somehow word had leaked out and our teacher told us that is we liked to forgo our swimming lesson we could line the path and see the King and Queen being driven on their way to Witchford airfield to present some medals to the air crews”

Mrs P. J. Anderson from Cherry Hinton Road saw them a bit later when they came to Cambridge in 1947 to attend the 400th anniversary celebrations at Trinity College. She writes: “I was working in a Government Office in Station Road at the time and as they came by train we all trooped into the road to cheer them on. To make it seem more impressive our departmental flag was flown along with the Union Jack and it wasn’t until the royal couple had passed that we realised it had been flying upside down”. The Queen returned the following year to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the foundation of Queens’ college and again to receive an honorary degree. Then in 1951 King George VI made his final visit to Cambridge when with Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret they drove up the avenue at King’s College and over the bridge to the very door of the college chapel. They were there to celebrate the completion of the project to return the great stained glass windows that had been removed at the start of the war for fear of German bombing.

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Harry Bye from Ely can add to Mrs Rowell’s memory of her flight from Ely with Alan Cobham’s air show. His extensive diaries record that visits took place in September 1932 and September 1933. He went up in a Tiger Moth to watch a parachute descent from the air, which proved a bargain as they were airborne for ten minutes before the parachutist even left the ground. Harry also spent 4/- (20p) to fly in an open cockpit Avro 504K. He recalls that there were other larger aeroplanes there, including a former Imperial Airways passenger plane which was probably the one Mrs Rowell flew in. The event took place on a field in Downham Road, where the Community college now stands.

Memories 1st November 2000, by Mike Petty

This morning the rain is sleeting down and the poor postman who makes his way up to our door is drenched – and all to bring us a circular and a bill. At least he is being well recompensed for his efforts – or at least compared to the wages being offered in Chatteris in 1814!

For then the assistant postmaster, William Brooks – who combined the job with that of grocer and draper – was finding it difficult to get anybody to do the job of letter deliverer. He wrote (by letter) to the Postmaster General: “I beg to observe that I have not at present engaged a letter carrier, but deliver them myself. I have asked three persons who I thought to offer and one wanted 10/- a week and neither of the others would do it under 9/- but I think it is probable I may get one for 7/- but not under which sum I hope will be allowed me. You are mistaken in thinking this is a small town, the street is near two miles long and certainly is not half the town and a letter carrier must take all weathers”. But his masters were adamant – 5/- was top rate for the job.

Then in 1824 he had further problems when he received a complaint from William Hurstwait that a letter delivered to him had been opened. A full investigation was put in train when it was decided that the most likely explanation was that the seal had been broken accidentally when another letter had got caught up with it. Hurstwait was not placated, for he too was a draper and, he claimed: "there are many respectable gentlemen in Chatteris ... of the same trade, they know I had been in town, and I believe they were envious of my goods; ... I think their motives were to see what they cost". And, not to put a fine point on it, he was convinced that the postmaster himself was responsible for "violating the seals of his invoices to counteract him in business".

All this forms but a small part of the information discovered by Martin Evans in his researches into the postal history of the area around Doddington, Benwick, Manea and March. He has discovered letters sent on the first day of the Universal Penny Post, he has located and illustrated postmarks, delved into postal archives and personal collections, museums and libraries to compile a 170-page book.

But there are significant gaps which no official record can fill. For though Martin knows the names of the postmasters of Manea from 1850 to 1937 he has no names between then and 1998! The same applies to the other villages, including Benwick where Wilfrid Morris was sub-postmaster in 1937 and he knows C.E. Fisher was appointed in 1983, but not those in between.

If you can help Martin Evans in his researches please contact him at 75 Fox Road, Exeter, EX4 8NB. His book, 'The postal history of the March and Chatteris areas of Cambridgeshire', with its cover picture of a letter sent in June 1840 from March to C. Pemberton Esq., Cambridge - (no other address or postcodes needed in those days) - can be obtained from the marvellous March Museum at £15 or from Martin himself (though you will need to add £2 for postage!) [PHOTOGRAPHIC HAVE TAKEN PICTURE OF EVANS & HIS BOOK, SCAN OF LAST-DAY COVER ON DISK, OTHER PIX FROM FILES]

And if you have tales to tell of experiences as a letter-deliverer in more recent times I should be pleased to hear from you.

One person who knows all about answering letters has E-mailed me with her memories of office work. Jennifer O'Dell from Bar Hill says she worked in an office environment on and off since 1955 and has seen the development of office work from the manual typewriter to the word processor.

"I learnt shorthand and typing, as I am sure many more of your readers did, at the Central School (now Parkside Community College). One of my memories from my very early years is walking down Melbourn Place and hearing the rhythmic tap of typewriters from the typing room. Once we had learnt the fingering we had to type rhythmically to music, slow music at first getting faster as we progressed and we had a board over our fingers so we could not see the keys. It really worked, to this day I cannot type accurately if I look at the keys!

"My first job was at Catling & Son Estate Agents. Their office in 1955 was in St Andrew's Street opposite where Bradwells Court now stands. The office was really old fashioned even for then, we had an open fire which was lit by the cleaner in the morning and I had to work on a manual typewriter in a corner of the office after I had been given dictation by one of the senior estate agents. I remember the names of Mr. Brady and Mr. Brittain. The 'telephone exchange' was a box with buttons on it, when a call had to be transferred to another number the button was pushed down and a handle at the side was turned to make the extension phone ring. In another corner of the room was a big press, this was used to copy letters into a book. A special type of carbon paper was used and every night it was my job to put the copy of the letter into a book which consisted of sheets of tissue-like paper. Each page was inter-leafed with a damp cloth, the book was put in the press and a big wheel-like handle on the top was used to clamp the book tight. When it was removed in the morning the pages were dry and a copy was imprinted into the book. I can't remember (even if I ever knew) how it actually worked but it did.

“The other job most people in an office used at this time was the Gestetner machine. It was a really dirty job; a 'skin' had to be typed up. This was done by using a typewriter but with the ribbon removed, the letters were cut into the 'skin' rather like a stencil. This skin was then attached to a drum on a machine, this had to be done very carefully because if you got creases in the 'skin' they printed out on all the copies made from the machine. Ink was put into the machine, a handle at the side was turned and as the paper fed through the machine the ink printed onto it through the stencil. The ink was very black and sticky and seemed to get everywhere.”

After a few years Jennifer found herself adapting to electric “but I found these quite difficult to use as first because the keys did not have to be manually pressed and it would type a letter several times instead of just once. Eventually it was all word processing and photocopying. Word processing is much easier to use than the old manual typewriters but because of this, and knowing how easy it is to correct something, accuracy seems to have gone downhill”. [SCAN OF ST ANDREW’S STREET IN 1964]

Ruth Thompson from Cambridge was trained up on another piece of advanced office equipment. In the early 1950s, she writes, “I was sent to the Sumlock Comptometer School in London for one month by my firm, it was my first time staying away from home – aged 17. The comptometer was the forerunner of calculators and after seven years with the Danish Bacon Company and four years with Sindalls (both at that time on Cherry Hinton Road, I left to have my family. Comptometers were being replaced with calculators by the time I was ready to return to work, so I had to adapt. However I still have all my charts and can still remember many decimal equivalents of fractions which we had to learn by heart at training school”

Not everybody learnt typing at an early age. Molly Jones, from March, writes to identify her husband, Evan, as the lone male amongst the ladies pounding the old manual typewriter at Impington village college that I featured the other week. Molly herself was taught at a business-training course at the Cambridgeshire Technical School. She graduated from manual to electric and then to golf ball typewriters. When she retired the research group she worked for had a symbol head gold-leafed for her as a leaving present.

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Eighty-year-old Robert Stevenson from Cambridge has put his own typing skills to use in compiling a volume of “Thoughts from Home”, being poems he wrote during the war. This took him from his first posting at Kimbolton Castle to France and Dunkirk. He went back with the D-Day invasion forces and then on to India. In those days a letter meant everything to somebody as:

“Through dark troubled days, where seemed no end
Defeat, setbacks, parting of family and friend,
Hearts were lifted when came a new refrain
A voice that sang “We’ll meet again”

Now,
“As the years pass by and one grows old
Pals are remembered and event are re-told.
Ranks get thinner, yet each year is the same
Re-union dinner and “We’ll meet again”.

If you’ve set down your memories, of war or peace, I’d be pleased to receive a copy

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Can you help find more Green Men, I asked. Yes says the Rev Christine Sindall, who numbers Kirtling amongst her parishes. They have recently had some drawings done of the church and some of the interesting carvings, including one of a roof boss in the north aisle. She has sent a photograph taken with a telephoto lens which reveals details not apparent from ground level of a green man with his tongue sticking out. [SCAN ON DISK]

There are other discoveries too for research work on the forthcoming Victoria County History volume together with restoration work has revealed the foundations of a central tower and other features which have prompted archaeologists to now date the original building to pre-1050, and Saxon in origin.

But not all Green Men are old. Paul Hibbitt from the stonemasons in Victoria Road, Cambridge says his firm is even now carving a new Green Man for a church in Toddington. So they are even now multiplying! [THEIR LETTER ENCLOSED, CAN WE USE THEIR PIC OR GET ONE TAKEN]

Memories, by Mike Petty, 8th November 2000

Last week I had the opportunity to lead two 'field-trips' into the fens around Ely – a grand name for a pleasant potter by coach from Cambridge to Stretham Old Engine, Lt Thetford, the Board Street dig and the old Bishop's Gaol Museum at Ely.

Later everyone was mightily impressed by the still-largely unknown marvellous collection of war-time memorabilia at Witchford airfield, especially when one of the passengers confessed to having been involved in its creation and could bring very personal touches to the very personal items on display.

Then it was on to Sutton Gault, where one can get a unique appreciation of the civil engineering work of the seventeenth century that led to the creation of the Old and New Bedford Rivers, and the wash-land in between.

But there were differences between the two trips. For on Monday, following the ferocious overnight gales, the day was bright and clear, but Thursday dawned wet and windy. The sun broke through however by the time Sutton was reached, but the road across the washes had disappeared under a mass of water. Where we had motored three days before now we had to proceed on foot, taking advantage of the elevated walkway above the waves. When we were halfway across a group of four swans flew towards us, four pairs of wings beating the air. Then one pair stopped and the bird plunged like a stone into the water with a loud splash. Its body was caught by the tide and swept beneath our feet and down towards Denver.

That the road should have disappear came as no surprise, it is intended that the washlands will flood and the people on the other side get used to the fact that periodically their little community will have to look to Chatteris rather than Sutton for their daily bread.

Fenfolk have always been aware that flooding is part of the way of life and that once the water starts to rise there is nothing they can do about it. They wait for the weight of water making its way to the sea from the highlands of Huntingdonshire and Bedfordshire and hope that the tides will be kind, that the water will get away and the banks will hold so that the floods come only where they are supposed to.

But a glance through the News photo files show that flooding can affect communities throughout the region. Sudden storms, a blocked ditch, a broken water main and homes become inundated. Do you recognise yourself or your home – and have you memories to share. [PICTURES FROM NEWS FILES]

Given the frequency of flooding it is perhaps surprising that Robert Simper does not feature more of them in his newly-published photographic survey of the rivers that run through the fens. But his illustrations show boats of all types, from Victorian tugs to modern cruisers and feature some of the

characters of the riverside, such as Bill Leach with his steam launch and Harold Sennitt of Wicken, probably the last of the fenland peat-diggers.

Many of the photographs have come from a newly unearthed collection taken by the family of the famous Cambridge photographer F.H. Sanderson, who had a studio in Post Office Terrace. In one of those wonderful discoveries Robert found that the family had amassed a unique photographic record of their fenland trips. From a box in a cupboard they produced old snaps, some damaged by damp, and these have now been published for the first time. 'Rivers to the fens: Rivers Cam, Gt Ouse, Nene and other waterways' is published by Creekside Publishing at £18.95 [PICTURES SCANNED ON DISK]

Great & Little Eversden residents are this week preparing themselves for a unique event in their community's history. For soon each house will be presented with their own copy of a visual archive of the 'Quiet Lanes and Orchard Ends' that comprise their villages. A team of village researchers has been sifting and searching for old photographs in the files of the Cambridgeshire Collection, County Record Office and the News, as well as those of individuals like the late Frank Fossey. The result will be unveiled this Saturday at a grand launch in the village hall.

Their's is a magnificent hard-back volume of over 140 pages, full of pictures and captions, notes and names. It covers schooldays and wartime, football and threshing, industries and church graffiti, and of course the cottages. In one of these in Lt Eversden High Street lived Enid Mary Barraud, a most interesting character who wrote some of my favourite books of rural life in the 1940s, including 'Set My Hand Upon the Plough' and 'Tail Corn'. In the latter she describes her cottage, previously the village shop, and in its day a little gold mine. Its former occupant was described to her:

"Ah, now she were a proper sort. She niver kep' 'er thumb in the scale time she weighed you an ounce of baccy. And 'er' ams – melt in you mouth, they would an' all!" And for children she had a weak spot, never failing to pop in an extra bull's eye for generous measure.

But inevitably places change. Miss Barraud looked forward to progress – to the coming of electricity and clean safe lighting at the turn of a switch, with no danger of a flare up and smoked glass and sooted mantle. "But it would not be all gain when the lamps and stoves are put up on the top shelf and then relegated to the tool-shed against the day when they finally reach the Moat, last resting place of all incombustible rubbish. I shall miss the not unpleasant faint aroma of burning paraffin wafted through the place while the early morning tea kettle boils, and the soft glow of an oil lamp adds warmth as well as light to the scene.

"After electricity, I suppose it will be main water. Again we shall miss something. The pump stands just opposite the cottage and the pump is a focal point of village life.

"We are never short of water here. The stream with its useful dipping holes for washing water may be reduced to a trickle after a long spell of dry weather but the pump reaches down to tap the never-failing supply at the greensand level. There is always plenty of water, but we have to pump it". And sometimes the pump would go hard, and the buckets of water once full had to be carried home, being careful not to splosh precious drops over the path.

Today we are used to turning a tap for limitless supplies of water, but if the village still had to rely on wells just how many of the neatly-tended and most attractive village cottages would now be crumbling shells instead of comfortable homes. For anybody who has ever known the Eversdens the book will reveal a place at once familiar but imaginably remote, when the pace was less hurried, but life much harder. For further details contact Mary Green, the chairperson of the Eversden Millennium Group, at 'Mole End', 40 High St, Lt Eversden CB3 7HE [PICTURES SCANNED ON DISK]

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Who was Hudson Boileau Cane of Brackenhurst, Kenya and what was his connection with 'Meadowlands', Trumpington Road, Cambridge. Roger Foster, who has now converted the former Red Cross home into a sumptuous hotel tells me that his name is carved into one of the fire surrounds and that there is a plaque in the entrance hall. I can track down a Charles Hudson Boileau Cane who was admitted to Pembroke College in 1886. He was the son and heir of John Brette Cane, Rector of Weston, near Newark, but what he would be doing in such a property. And is there any connection with the Boileau family since a Col Frank Ridley Boileau who served in Central Africa and was Assistant Commissioner after 1896, dying in 1914. And do you have memories of the house. Any information would be gratefully received

M. Gibbs from Ely writes: "It was very interesting to read 'What goes around comes around' referring to pedestrianisation in Ely. None of the shops mentioned in Dolphin Lane are there anymore. True we have one either end turning the corners into High Street and Market Street, the Nationwide Building Society occupies the remainder. Is this the future for Ely High Street in 10-15 years time?"

What shops do you remember in your community – write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories 15th November 2000, by Mike Petty

Throughout the country over the weekend thousands have turned out to honour the memories of those men and women who lost their lives in war. Although they did not grow old, those left behind have & while the memorials remain little changed the faces paying homage have aged. As a tribute to the memories of those who have turned out in all weathers to pay their remembrance I have selected some old pictures from the News photo files. If you recognise yourself or your dad then write to me.

Impressive though these ceremonies were perhaps none matched that at Ely Cathedral in May 1965. "A once-in-a-lifetime event" was how it was described at the time by Mr E.B. Macgregor, secretary of the Eastern Area of the, now Royal, British Legion.

Indeed Ely, scene of many parades in the past, had never seen anything like it. Long before the event was timed to start 160 coaches and cars in their hundreds converged on the city. Out of them spilled nearly 7,000 legionnaires from counties in the eastern area. About 3,750 of them went to assembly points from which, joined by 15 bands, they marched to the cathedral.

Inside the cathedral every available inch was taken. As the congregation sang the opening hymn the Queen's old standard, which was being paraded for the last time, was handed to the Dean of Ely, the very Rev C.P. Hankey, for laying-up in the cathedral. The new standard was unfurled and dedicated by the Bishop of Ely.

Outside hundred who had listened to loudspeakers relaying the service saw the new Legion standard head a long parade, covering three decades of British military history and three generations of ex servicemen. "I shall be surprised if ever there is another parade like this in the area." commented Mr Macgregor. Let us hope that never again will the situation arise where so many will have to respond to the call to arms – but if you did and have memories to share please write to me. [SCAN AND PIX FROM FILE]

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As a taxi driver to take you to Ram Yard and he may look at you askance. Yet it used to be the base for a taxi firm (whose name escapes me), and was certainly one of their regular stopping places, collecting and delivering passengers to Prziborsky's hairdressing shop (a name that one can never forget) [SCAN & PIX FROM FILE]

Ram Yard was attacked by a correspondent of the News in November 1900. "Sir," he wrote, "Among the many urgent improvements needed in Cambridge stands that of abolishing the old, worn-out buildings and improving the thoroughfares of the town. Disease is prevalent to a large extent and is to be found in districts with narrow thoroughfares and tumble-down houses. In any other towns these buildings would have been demolished long since but here, in the very heart of an important University town, we have a thoroughfare which would be a disgrace to any village, and should not be tolerated even in conservative Cambridge

"I refer to the buildings (?) situated between Round Church street on the one side, and Ram Yard, looking into Park Street on the other. Here a collection of bricks and wood in the shape of miserable cottages, bar the way to what might be a worthy continuation of Trinity and St John's streets to Park Street, bringing into touch one of the busiest parts of the town. It is only a matter of a few hundred pounds to buy these cottages and I am sure that were the owners approached they would have sufficient patriotism to let their property go for a consideration.

"One wonders whether the authorities will rise to the occasions and effect this easy and cheap improvement, or whether they will let yet another golden opportunity pass away and sink again into their dreamy sleep of contentment – leaving things as they are".

"W", as he signed himself was to be disappointed. The buildings continued to provide much-needed homes in the centre of the city until the spring of 1961, although many of them had been condemned. They were finally swept away to widen Round Church Street and provide access to the new Park Street car park, that opened in October 1963. Shortly afterwards an extension saw the demolition of Cambridge's last thatched cottage in nearby Clement Place. [SCAN & PIX FROM FILE]

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Ram Yard and Clement Place do not feature in a new book of Cambridge street names, produced by Ronald Gray and Derek Stubbings. But Park Street does – it used to be called Garlic Fair Lane till about 1830. Perhaps it was becoming confused with Garlic Row – named after the goods sold at Stourbridge Fair, as was Cheddars Lane and Oyster Row, which commemorates the Oyster House where the mayor and councillors would dine after opening the Fair. Nearby Stanley Road probably commemorates Henry Morton Stanley the explorer, who lectured in the Guildhall in 1878. Football fans however may know it better as the home of Cambridge United, for apparently the club can trace its origins back to a football match played under a street lamp in Stanley Road in 1912. Not all names refer to ancient history. Many commemorate the achievements of politicians, academics or scientists; several are named after the people who built them and one, apparently, after a stapler. For according to a reliable account when Councillors were not able to agree on a name, one of them produced his Velos brand stapler, said 'call it that', and they agreed! Cambridge Street-Names, their origins and associations, has just been published by Cambridge University Press.

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The villain of the piece, he claims, was not the drainage engineer, but the mole. The riverbanks are the homes of thousands, and possibly millions of moles, as a result they were honeycombed with mole-runs and tunnels. As the rivers rise in the winter months, the flood-waters reach the mole tunnels and every mole-run serves as a streamlet finding an outlet in the lands outside the beneath the river level. To combat this invasion the farmers and water board employed mole catchers, skilled men like my

grandfather, who could find a run, set a trap and both destroy a pest and earn a living, for the moleskins provided a useful income. And in those days the price for moleskins had soared, up from 2/6 (12p) to 12/6 (62p) a dozen, as furriers wanted them to make into ladies muffs and hats. But however good the mole-catcher was, some moles still escaped. Of course they did – they had to leave a few for seed, destroy them all and there was no more income! It used to be a common thing to see moleskins strung up beside the riverbank as proof of the catchers prowess – but has this become a thing of the past. And are the banks still honeycombed with tunnels – we will probably only find out when the river levels rise high enough.

A policeman's lot is not always a happy one but Frank Mansfield from Orton Longueville, Peterborough, has only pleasant memories of his time as village bobby at Wicken. He knows something of the story of one of his early predecessors in the past, Richard Peak who originated from Caxton and arrived in the village in the 1850s. On 17th August 1855 he was on duty at the Red Lion inn until the early hours of the morning, then when all was quiet, he set off to walk back to his home in Burwell. He never made it. A search was made of ponds and brick kilns, some brass buttons were found – but Peak had not been wearing any on the night of his disappearance. It seems certain he was set upon and murdered. Wicken's historian, Anthony Day has featured pictures of the policeman, his wife and children in one of his books on the village. But Frank would still like to know more. I did once ask a senior policeman if the murder case was closed. No, he said, we're still looking out for a 180-year-old man to help in our enquiries! If you have any clues – or tales of more recent policing – then let me know.

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Anne Langley from Milton Road, Cambridge thinks she may have spotted her father in a photograph of Guildhall street, Cambridge that I featured on 18th October. The picture showed Musk & Company's premises where he used to work as a delivery boy, often taking sausages to the railway station for the Royal family. This would account for the Prince of Wales' feathers above the shop. Her dad never told anyone the recipe for the special Musk sausages, which tasted unlike any others. Anne used to work in the shop, selling the famous bangers – perhaps you remember them?

Memories 22nd November 2000, by Mike Petty

A unique insight into wartime Cambridge has come my way in the shape of a number of snaps taken secretly by Mac Bedworth, when he was manager of H.J. Gray's sports company. They show the inside of their building behind the shops on Milton Road where groups of ladies, and a few gentlemen were engaged in war work. The photographs were found in a family album by Mrs Gill Morgan who lived near Solihull in the West Midlands. She showed them to her friend Isobel Butler of Leeds who in turn passed them to her sister Beryl Ginn of Gilbert Road, Cambridge and they have now been deposited in the Cambridgeshire Collection.

But just what was the company up to, and did you take part? Informed speculation implies that some of the ladies were assembling the components of barrage balloons whilst others were working on armature winding for electric motors. Can anybody put the record straight, before it's too late.

Two other photographs show members of the Home Guard, including one of a column of men that apparently numbers Mr Bedworth amongst them. Is it far too long ago for anybody to fill in more details.

Chris Jakes, librarian at the Collection, also seeks your help on behalf of another researcher who has found letters addressed to members of a Czech Training Centre at Great Shelford in 1945. Does anybody have any information as to where it was, how long it was there – or anything! [SCANS ON DISK]

**

As a taxi driver to take you to Ram Yard and he may look at you askance. Yet it used to be the base for a taxi firm (whose name escapes me), and was certainly one of their regular stopping places, collecting and delivering passengers to Prziborsky's hairdressing shop (a name that one can never forget)

Ram Yard was attacked by a correspondent of the News in November 1900. "Sir," he wrote, "Among the many urgent improvements needed in Cambridge stands that of abolishing the old, worn-out buildings and improving the thoroughfares of the town. Disease is prevalent to a large extent and is to be found in districts with narrow thoroughfares and tumble-down houses. In any other towns these buildings would have been demolished long since but here, in the very heart of an important University town, we have a thoroughfare which would be a disgrace to any village, and should not be tolerated even in conservative Cambridge

"I refer to the buildings (?) situated between Round Church street on the one side, and Ram Yard, looking into Park Street on the other. Here a collection of bricks and wood in the shape of miserable cottages, bar the way to what might be a worthy continuation of Trinity and St John's streets to Park Street, bringing into touch one of the busiest parts of the town. It is only a matter of a few hundred pounds to buy these cottages and I am sure that were the owners approached they would have sufficient patriotism to let their property go for a consideration.

"One wonders whether the authorities will rise to the occasions and effect this easy and cheap improvement, or whether they will let yet another golden opportunity pass away and sink again into their dreamy sleep of contentment – leaving things as they are".

"W", as he signed himself was to be disappointed, despite support from other correspondents. Several of the buildings were unoccupied, one was being used as a shoemaker's workroom and another had been a blacksmith's shop. "But the whole block is uniformly hideous and obstructive. No one has a good word to say for it. The relief of the congested traffic in Park Street is a matter of moment to many residents in the locality".

But despite these criticisms of 100 years ago the buildings continued to provide much-needed homes in the centre of the city until the spring of 1961, although many of them had been condemned. They were finally swept away to widen Round Church Street and provide access to the new Park Street car park that opened in October 1963. Shortly afterwards an extension to the car park saw the demolition of Cambridge's last thatched cottage in nearby Clement Place.

Do you remember Ram Yard, did you perhaps live there. Write to Mike Petty at the News
[SCAN & PIX FROM FILE WITH LAST WEEK'S TEXT]

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refer to ancient history. Many commemorate the achievements of politicians, academics or scientists; several are named after the people who built them and one, apparently, after a stapler. For according to a reliable account when Councillors were not able to agree on a name, one of them produced his Velos brand stapler, said 'call it that', and they agreed! Cambridge Street-Names, their origins and associations, has just been published by Cambridge University Press.

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Ian Seeley of Bottisham has responded to my appeal for flood stories with a picture of horrific floods in Linton in September 1968 – do you recognise anybody. Ron Bidwell has a picture of himself and his mum, Jessie, at the doorway of their house in Annesdale, Ely, during the floods of 1937. [SCAN OF LINTON FLOODS SEPT 1968]

Mr R. Chiswell from Lt Eversden used to know first-hand about fenland floods. For his father once kept the 'Fish and Duck' pub at the junction of the Rivers Cam and Old West, near Lt Thetford, and he has snaps showing the building surrounded by water. He also treasures an old newspaper cutting from the Daily Herald of March 1937 about fenland flooding. The writer condemns the scandal of repeated floods which sees farmland inundated and women who 'find their way to the village stores once a week along roads knee-deep in mud for three miles at a stretch. The children cannot be sent'.

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Anne Langley from Milton Road, Cambridge thinks she may have spotted her father in a photograph of Guildhall street, Cambridge that I featured on 18th October. The picture showed Musk & Company's premises where he used to work as a delivery boy, often taking sausages to the railway station for the Royal family. This would account for the Prince of Wales' feathers above the shop. Her dad never told anyone the recipe for the special Musk sausages, which tasted unlike any others. Anne used to work in the shop, selling the famous bangers – perhaps you remember them?

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A policeman's lot is not always a happy one but Frank Mansfield from Orton Longueville, Peterborough, has only pleasant memories of his time as village bobby at Wicken. He knows something of the story of one of his early predecessors in the past, Richard Peak who originated from Caxton and arrived in Wicken in the 1850s. On 17th August 1855 he was on duty at the Red Lion inn until the early hours of the morning, then when all was quiet, he set off to walk back to his home in Burwell. He never made it. A search was made of ponds and brick kilns, some brass buttons were found – but Peak had not been wearing any on the night of his disappearance. It seems certain he was set upon and murdered. Wicken's historian, Anthony Day has featured pictures of the policeman, his wife and children in one of his books on the village. But Frank would still like to know more. I did

once ask a senior policeman if the murder case was closed. No, he said, we're still looking out for a 180-year-old man to help in our enquiries! If you have any clues – or tales of more recent policing – then let me know.

Another appeal for assistance comes from Christ's College, Cambridge where Richard Barlow-Poole is compiling a list of college employees killed in the Great War. Six of Christ's workers lost their lives, including George Stevens. But which George Stevens was he. There seems to be a choice for three: one was a married man who lived in Suez Road, Cambridge. He joined the 2nd Battalion, of the Suffolk Regiment and fell on 26th August 1914. The second George Stevens was a native of Ramsey, Hunts who became a Lance Corporal in the 7th Battalion, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Regiment and died on 23rd November 1916, whilst the third lived in George Street, March. He left a widow, Elizabeth Stevens, when as a Sapper in the 7th Field Company, Royal Engineers, he was killed in October 1918. Can any readers help to solve the mystery?

Memories 29th November 2000, by Mike Petty

The visit of the Queen to Cambridge last week was by no means her first trip to Cambridge. That had taken place in October 1955 when, with Prince Philip, she arrived at the railway station and drove through pouring rain to the Guildhall. Bedraggled spectators, waving wet Union Jacks, were enchanted – “Isn't she super! Isn't she smashing!” they were heard to exclaim. All the stalls on the Market Place had been cleared away and a dense crowd watched the Queen make history, by becoming the first Sovereign ever to visit the Mayor and Corporation in their Guildhall. The royal couple later appeared on the balcony to wave to the people below and were greeted by deafening cheers. Then it was off through the rain to Newnham College, to lunch at Trinity and then to the main event of the day, the opening of the new School of Veterinary Medicine where the Duke wore the scarlet robes of a Doctor of Law, an honorary degree that had been conferred on him in November 1952.

But the day was not yet done. There was another visit, this time to Girton College where the Queen met members of the newly founded third college for women, New Hall. Finally they departed for the London train – that they boarded at Histon station.

Since then the Queen has been a regular visitor, opening many buildings and new developments, including Addenbrooke's Hospital in May 1962 and the Grafton Centre in 1984. [PICS FROM NEWS FILES – PERHAPS INCLUDE ONE FROM LAST WEEK AS CONTRAST]

But it was her daughter, Princess Anne, who was in the local headlines 25 years ago with the official opening on 4th December 1975 of Lion Yard – one of the subjects for next week's Memories – so if you have a story please let me know.

Do you remember Ram Yard, I asked. Yes replied several readers

Jean Potter, now of Golding Road, Cambridge, lived there between 1951 & 1952, in a house just behind Prziborsky's. With her husband, a policeman, she rented a downstairs flat with half-panelled walls whose sitting room, bath and kitchen windows looked out into Ram Yard. They were never short of company, for two police beats passed their walls, one taking in Round Church Street, the other Ram Yard, so the coffee pot was constantly hot to revive passing Bobbies. They stayed until purpose-built police houses were available in Walpole Road, though one of them was set on fire just before they were due to move in.

Mrs P. Pryor of Stapleford was nearly a neighbour, for her mother and father moved into number 12b Ram Yard in 1952. It had a paved yard and her father was a keen gardener he lifted all the slabs and planted flowers, creating a little haven of colour – of which she has sent a snap. It was wonderful to live in the centre of the city, she recalls, although there was one problem: “The yard light went out at midnight and if I was too late back on a Saturday night from the ‘Dot’ of the Guildhall dance, I had to run down this “black hole” to get home!” Her dad, Jack Vickery, managed the shoe repair business ‘Thrussells’ next door. [MRS PRYOR’S SNAP OF HER IN THE GARDEN AT RAM YARD]

Molly Sekulla of Campkin Road, Cambridge, remembers Thrussells and also the Spiritualist meetings that were held in another building nearby. She worked as a tailoress for R. Buttress & Co of St John’s Street between 1946 and 1956. They had premises at 5 Round Church Street and in Ram Yard where the room was above the Cambridge University Cruising Club. Molly and some other dozen or so girls and men used to undertake bespoke tailoring, making men’s and ladies’ suits, blazers, University scarves, ties, gowns and hoods as well as zephyrs – old fashioned tee shirts – which were trimmed in college colours for the boat races. [CAN WE FIND & USE THE PICTURE OF RAM YARD DUG OUT FOR MEMORIES TWO WEEKS AGO]

**

The snaps of Grays workshop, that I featured last week, have attracted memories from two of the girls who used to work there during the war years, Ruby Ketteridge and Joyce Catlin, both now living in the Cherry Hinton area. They had little option for girls then had to undertake work either in factories, the forces, nursing or on the land. Joyce had started work at Chivers when she was 15, but with the war the Company was unable to insure people under 16 so she had to leave. Both recall that working winding armatures was hard on the hands, Ruby developed blisters despite daily inspections, but Joyce says it cured her from biting her nails since handling the wire left an awful taste. Ruby treasures a copy of a photograph showing over 90 of the staff who used to work there, complete with a list of the names. Joyce is amongst them, along with the Manager, Mr F. Ashley and Mr A. Bedworth, the buyer and costing accountant who we believe took the newly-discovered snaps.

But there is still a mystery, for neither of the ladies recall anything about barrage balloon making – so was that somewhere else?

**

Stella Cornell of Bottisham has responded to my appeal for memories of village shops with a poem dedicated to Polly Watson’s store at Swaffham Bulbeck:

“The things she kept within that shop
From sugar mice to spinning-top.
Pear drops and aniseed balls
All mouth-watering lined the walls

The counter all was made of wood
And lifted up as counters should
Upon it stood the old brass scales
On which she weighed her many sales.

Although a shop no more it is
Selling sweets and fizzy fizz
In memory I step again
Into that shop near Quarry Lane”

Do you remember it? [PIC OF SWAFFHAM BULBECK FROM NEWS FILES]

**

It was a long-shot when I appealed for assistance in tracking down the story of Cambridge's Meadowcroft Hotel, in Trumpington Road and its connection with the Brackenhurst Hotel in Kenya. But within days a response had been received from Barbara Blake of Barnet who had actually visited the rambling Tudor-style building on the hills outside Nairobi. Now, thanks to her, Roger Foster tells me he has heard from an Oxford lady recounting details of its owner, Hudson Cane and his wife. The Cambridge University Library even has in its Commonwealth Society Library a guidebook from the 1930s with a picture of the hotel. So if you have a piece of research and need help, don't ask the audience – ask the News readers! Write to Mike Petty at the News.

**

Whilst visiting the Cambridge University Library map room the other week I noticed a display of photographs of Cambridge inns that have now vanished. They pictures are part of a collection built up by J Palmer Clarke and later Ramsey & Muspratt, and are quite well known in local historical circles. But one seems to have baffled the experts for this view of the Castle Inn (demolished about 1880) surely shows the west side of Guildhall Street – the Guildhall side, and not the east side, the bit redeveloped for Lion Yard as the caption claims. Are there any 120-year-old drinkers out there who can confirm it! [SCAN]

**

Another photograph from a much more recent period has come to light amongst the *News* files. It shows the Red Caps Rock Band and was taken in August 1960. But who were they, and did they make the big time. If you can help please let me know [SCAN]

Memories 6th December 2000, by Mike Petty

Amongst my personal mementoes at home I have a little folded card brochure commemorating the occasion when on 4th December 1975 the Lion Yard redevelopment was officially opened by The Princess Anne. The once-pristine front cover has now started to discolour slightly, but can it really be 25 years ago that the bold new initiative to bring Cambridge shopping into the modern age was given a Royal send-off.

The initial ideas for such comprehensive redevelopment dated back to 1952 when two large new shopping streets were proposed – and later rejected. Another scheme in 1959 met a similar fate and it was not until 1968 that the basic outline of the present scheme was accepted. Arup Associates were commissioned to prepare a design which was approved in 1970. Then came negotiations to acquire the land.

It had all been followed by many months of demolition, rebuilding, noise and dust as the south side of Petty Cury, together with Alexandra Street and Falcon Yard, were razed to provide a site for the new shopping centre and car park. Work on the first stage – the car park - had begun in December 1970 with the first section opened in July 1972. A year later work started on the main commercial development and the new Central Library.

By December 1975 Library staff, like those working in the many new shops, had been acclimatising ourselves to the new world, getting fitter as we walked further across carpeted floors and climbing more stairs than ever existed in the old Wheeler Street building. Now we had a library to be proud of, and we were getting a Royal visitor to boot.

Outside stood the Lion on his pedestal looking down on the centre of the new development's shopping centre. Believed to be the original wood carving for a cast lion which stood over the old Red Lion brewery at Waterloo station, it had been discovered at the Woburn Abbey antique centre and completely refurbished at the city engineer's workshops at Mill Road. Now it had been put up in what was believed would be its final home- the Lion Yard. It would oversee a development where people could chat to their friends, gaze at the shops or lounge in the open-air Heidelberg Garden.

An estimated 10,000 people packed the Market Square and stood eight deep each side of Petty Cury as Princess Anne, making her first official visit to Cambridge, walked into the Lion's den accompanied by the official party of councillors, developers, architects and dignitaries. But she found time to stop and talk to the delighted shop girls who were crowding their doorways and also to the eager shoppers who pressed forward to get a closer look at her.

Inevitably criticisms that had been voiced about the architecture of the Lion Yard were referred to during the formal speeches. The city council's Labour leader, Coun Peter Wright, spoke of the 'dissension' which still existed over the complex. Princess Anne, who declared herself a "VI – that means very independent" observer of the architectural scene, said she would report back on the project to two "former students" at Cambridge University when she returned to London.

Then having unveiled plaques and signed visitors' books she was off to lunch at Christ's College and everybody prepared for the rush of people who would, in the Princess' words "come to appreciate this new centre and to love it". [PIX FROM NEWS FILES]

**

Whilst on the subject of Royal Visits Margaret Pearce Higgins has e-mailed to say she was surprised to see a picture of herself with the Queen at the opening of new Addenbrooke's in 1962 in last week's *Memories*

"I was at that time a student nurse, and my name was Margaret Earl. I don't know why I was chosen to represent the student nurses, except that I was local from Fenstanton and attended Ramsey Grammar School. I was working on the Children's ward and told about my selection two days before her visit. My family were vetted and a new uniform prepared for me. The day before I practised my curtsying with the senior nurse tutor, Miss Tennant, in the place of the Queen. Today I am President of the Addenbrooke's League of Nurses. I married the undergraduate that I took to the Matron's Ball (Miss Puddicombe) in 1963, and have lived in Cambridge since, working as a District Nursing Sister for many years. I still love nursing as much today as I told the Queen I did 38 years ago!"

**

Photographs of war-workers at Grays factory have continued to jog memories. Mrs P. Marsh from Arbury Road, Cambridge was the store keeper there for four years, Mollie Chamberlain (nee Saunders) worked on the barrage balloon side of the works, getting covered in silver and the awful solution used for sticking seams together. Then she worked winding coils for Spitfires, Wellingtons and, she thinks, Lancasters. They had RAF aircrew come round to see they work they were doing and stress how important their tasks were for plane engines. Once the war was over it was back to making tennis balls and racquets.

The definitive account of Grays' war work comes from Richard Gray, one of the Directors. Their records confirm that during the war the firm operated a factory on the site of Grays Court on Milton Road, Cambridge, producing fins for barrage balloons and armature winding which were sent to Woods of Colchester. Their main factory at the time was in Benson Street where they also engaged in war work, producing control panels for the Mosquito aircraft, ten pegs, mallets, water troughs and a variety of other wooden items. The Milton Road site had been used as tennis and badminton courts and was sold to Pyes in 1961 when it was used as a warehouse.

Grays Cambridge factory closed in 1986 when the market shifted from wood to graphite racquets and the head office moved to East Sussex. However the company continues as the only remaining manufacturer of racquets for Real Tennis and Rackets at their former saw mill in Coton & is now controlled by the great and great great grandsons of H.J. Gray, the work champion rackets player in 1861 who founded Grays in Cambridge in 1855.

**

My picture of the Red Caps Rock Band in 1960 brought an immediate response from Nick Winnington, landlord of the Wagon & Horses at Milton, who remembered them as a Birmingham based group that had several hits. He's right – but there was another band of the same name based in Cambridge, as Ken Waterson has been telling me. Ken should know because he played for them for a while, before going on to bigger things. Their line up changed from time to time but included Tony Clark, Ned Bishop, Alan Baker and the late Jimmy Graham. The group played many gigs at the Carlton Club in Newmarket as well as in Cambridge and the villages around.

Ken thinks they also played at Littleport and, if so, they may have performed at one of their 'Miss Littleport' competitions such as this one in January 1964. Do you recognise yourself or anybody?
[SCAN 24 FROM ENCLOSED CD-ROM]

**

The mystery of the bus that crashed into a cottage in High Street Chesterton has now been solved by Mr P. Clarke of Rampton. He was a police Traffic Sergeant at the time and numbers this amongst just one of the incidents he had to deal with. He has sent me a copy of the report from the News that confirms the date as Tuesday 1st October 1963. The house, which had been due to be demolished anyway, was almost wrecked as the bus crashed through the outside wall pushing tons of bricks into Mrs Rhoda Stanford's living room. She was away at the time and considered herself very lucky to have escaped injury. [SCAN OF CUTTING]

**

Ted Mudd of Victoria Road, Cambridge tells me his brother was a sergeant in the University of Cambridge Unit Home Guard during the last war and thinks he recognises himself in the picture I featured the other week. Their HQ was at the Fort St George on Midsummer Common which they would have defended to the end.

David Beynon has e-mailed to seek your assistance. He writes :

“Having made contact with an old schooldays chum of mine of whom I had not heard since 1948, we were recalling events in the Cherryhinton Road area in the period 1943 - 1944. As schoolboys, we were very much impressed by the Daimler, Humber and Staghound armoured cars that were parked in Lichfield Road and other side streets at the Perne Road end of Cherryhinton Road and which were operated by the 27th Lancers. We recalled particularly the Unit HQ & cookhouse that were located in the grounds of a large old house on the site now occupied by Lilac Court, and the morning parades in Hinton Avenue. We believe that

the Regiment subsequently moved to the Linton area, before [presumably] embarking for D-Day and the war on mainland Europe.

Since our conversation, we have both tried in vain to find out any of the history of this Unit. Do any of your "Memories" readers recall the 27th Lancers? What happened to the soldier who was [according to local beliefs at the time] severely injured/killed when unfortunately crushed between two of the armoured cars in Lichfield Road?"

You can contact David at djbeynon@amserve.net or write or e-mail me at the News

Memories 13th December 2000, by Mike Petty

Dry Drayton has come under the spotlight with the publication of their millennium history, entitled 'Gallows Piece to Bee Garden'. It is a comprehensive village history of the highways and byways, priests and parsons, farmers and landowners, people and places – but it has something more. For one of those parsons, Francis Walker was a keen observer of village flora and fauna way back in 1876 and his own History of Dry Drayton included a comprehensive list of plants and animals to be found among the lanes. Since then the countryside has changed out of all recognition, with war and agricultural revolutions obliterating the landscape he knew. Now as part of the new history Val Perrin has made a new survey of the insects and birds, plants and shrubs in the parish to provide what may be a unique record of the changing face of the natural history of an English country village.

It is was a village well served by itinerant tradespeople, some of whom have been recalled by its elder statesman, John Hacker. He remembers several gentlemen who would walk or cycle round the district with bulging suitcases stuffed with soft fabrics or other articles of clothing. One dapper little man, a Mr Dewsbury cycled, leaning over the handlebars with his heavy portmanteau strapped to the carrier behind his seat. Mr Onyatt, a heavily-built man, always wore plus-fours, knee length stockings and a tweed jacket, while Henry Cooper was always known as 'Willy Whiskers' – for obvious reasons. 'Old Skinny' was a lean rakish figure, wearing cloth cap and grubby mac, whose tradesman's bike carried a basket of kippers, bloaters, mackerel and herrings on behalf of Mr Chapman, Fishmonger. He also bought rabbit skins for which he would pay as much as sixpence, making the skin the most expensive part of the animal.

Travelling hardware shops like those of Robert Brown of Sturton Street, Cambridge dispensed soaps and paraffin, delivering one week's supplies and taking orders for the following week at the same time. The visiting grocer had perfected a patter of gentle reminders which he would sing or chant: 'Soap, soda, candles, matches; salt mustard, vinegar, pepper; butter mar, lard, suet' – varying it at this time of year to include 'Currants, dates, sultanas, raisins'

Christmas too would be a busier time for the village post office whose one-time postman Fred Walker always rode a lady's bicycle, because he said it was easier to mount and dismount. When he died his third wife, Janet Scambler, took over the post round, but she delivered the letters from an old pram. She also took out telegrams for which she received sixpence for delivering the message and returning with any replies required. But when the post office was shut distraught husbands would throw stones up at the rectory window to get somebody to phone for the midwife on one of the only four telephones the village possessed.

Now with mobile telephones, and internet communication it all seems so long ago. But is only the day before yesterday, & the story is well caught in the 180-page book, obtainable from Rosemary Gardiner at Honey Hill Cottage, Pettits Lane, Dry Drayton CB3 8BT (01954 780679) for £9.95 plus £2 postage. [PICTURES FROM NEWS FILES]

**

One distinctive figure in the streets of Cambridge is the sandwich board man. In May 1961 the CDN photographer snapped Mr Robert Doggett in St Andrew's Street. He was advertising Castle Hill Driving School whose expert tuition was available at the rate of 15/- (75p) per hour. Mr Doggett had not always been a sandwich man, he had worked in college kitchens, on building sites and as a newspaper vendor. He was fit, for as he told the News, strapped between his boards he could walk about the town for three or four hours without feeling the least bit tired.

Do you recognise him – or anybody else in the picture? [SCAN]

**

Roy Gifford has set us all a challenge. He inherited from his grandfather, Mr Frederick Gifford (1865-1952) an ancient long-cased clock made and signed by T.E. Murfitt, a Cottenham clockmaker, dated 23rd April 1842.

On the face it has the inscription "W. Furbank, Loxpit-Hall". Roy knows Mr W. Furbank was his granddad's father in law. He remembers him saying that they were farmers who farmed both sides of the river. They would often have to take two horses, one at a time, in a flat-bottomed boat, across the river to do a day's work and then bring them back by the same method at the end of the day.

Also on the clock face are five paintings. Two show a two-storey thatched house, two a smaller thatched property. The biggest view shows two figures are approaching a thatched cottage beside a river with what appears to be a hill in the background. Do any of these represent Loxpit, or Lockspit Hall a remote farm that stood on the banks of the Old West River, half way between the Aldreth Causeway and Twentypence Ferry. The name comes from the small trenches that divide fenland and is found in Littleport, Willingham & Cottenham parishes and probably dates back to the 1630s.

Roy would welcome any clues & I'll be happy to pass letters on. [COLOUR PICTURES ENCLOSED – PLEASE RETURN MIKE PETTY]

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More memories of the Redcaps rock band have come in by e-mail from Dave Parker who confirms the line-up in the 1960 photograph as Grahame Smith ('Smudge') on Rhythm Guitar, Grahame Bishop ('Neddy') on Bass Guitar, Jimmy Graham, Lead Guitar. The drummer was Robin Bailey and the lead singer Tony Clarke.

Dave took over as lead singer in 1961 after Tony Clarke, known as 'Tony Earthquake Collino' had left to join 'The Prowlers' and has the definitive story of the group. Towards the end of 1962 they were signed by Decca Records (just after they had turned down 'The Beatles'), Dave changed his name and the group became 'Dean Parker and the Redcaps'. They put out a single, 'Stormy Evening / Blue Eyes and Golden Hair' written by Cambridge undergraduate Paul Williams, who went on to become a BBC Radio 1 producer. It was featured recently on BBC Radio 2 on their 'Sounds of the Sixties' programme.

Mick and Barbara Rooney of Chesterton remembers the group: "one summer evening a group of us met in the Robin Hood pub, later to go on to the Roman Woods where we had a party, cooking sausages over an open fire. Someone worked for a Company who supplied us with equipment for lighting and amplification for the Redcaps who entertained us till dawn. 'Living Doll' was a big hit at that time. It was all good fun, nobody getting drunk or using drugs. We just laughed and danced the night away"

**

The war-work done by Grays at their factories in Cambridge, has been largely overlooked by historians, but now thanks to *News* readers far more details have come in. Dorothy Musson (nee Green) from Ely worked at the Benson Street works off Huntingdon Road where they made fins for barrage balloons on ships. They were long wooden poles with two smaller ones called toggle arms that were jointed and fastened together to form a triangle. These were sandpapered and given several coats of varnish – the smell made the girls yawn a lot. Each balloon had three fins which were folded up with silver material by the girls at Milton Road. After the contract finished most of the girls transferred to Pye Radio to continue their war work. Dorothy is still friends with another of the Grays works, then Peggy Wilson.

Mrs Gill Morgan (nee Bedworth) from Solihull, whose dad's pictures have prompted such interest, thinks that parachutes were also made and folded, as she has memories of seeing them hanging from the ceiling – but it is all a very long time ago. She also recalls how her mother took bundles of wires and coloured thread to housewives who were paid one penny for each twelve wires they threaded – sometimes the children would do some as well, to add to their pocket money.

**

Last week David Beynon asked for memories about the 27th Lancers during the war, who had their headquarters in a large house in Lichfield Road. Now Marie Burrows of Hinton Avenue, Cambridge, has written in to say that she lived in that very house, 'Falconhurst', until 1940 when her family moved to a smaller property in Luard Road. The house was requisitioned on the day they moved out. She adds: "The house is still there & so is the site of the cookhouse which was my father's garage. The property was sold after the war & several years later part of the garden was used for Lilac Court and its garages".

**

More Ram Yard memories have come from Phyllis Peck (nee Stratton) of Cambridge who was firewatching at Thrussell's Shoe Shop when a German plane bombed Ram Yard – does anybody remember this? Jeanne Barker from Hardwick says the articles have brought back many memories to her. "My best friend, when I was at the County High School, Madge Cadwallader lived in Ram Yard. We used to have such wonderful parties in the old building. I remember endless staircases, landings and almost forgotten rooms in the somewhat ramshackled building. My teenage years seemed to be full of parties in large houses. Gordon Laurie's mum in her big house on the rise in Chesterton Lane baked the most wonderful cakes at least two feet square, and it was a super place to play 'sardines' (quite daring in those days). Other parties were held at 'Kenmare' in Trumpington Street."

Jeanne also recalls how Prziborsky's was the hairdressers to go too before the ar. Her late husband Roy, being still at school, could not afford to go, but his older brother Brian, who was always 'with it' was proud to be a client.

**

Daphne Foreman from Sturton Street is reminded of the visit of the King and Queen to Cambridge in 1947. "It was a roasting hot day and I was working as an office junior in the office of Denton-Smith the architect, over Dolby's gown shop at 40 Regent Street. I went out of the long drawing-office window on to the flat roof over Dolby's works, It was lead-covered and threw up the heat from the sun, and one of the men made me a flag from drawing paper. The King and Queen were in an open-topped car and I had a super view, looking right down into it.

"It must have been later that summer when there was a terrifically heavy storm of rainfall and Dolby's basement was flooded. The youngest trainee architect and I were told (not asked in those days) to go

down to help bale out the basement. We had to take off our shoes and wade in about a foot of water with buckets, baling out into a sink or toilet. Dolby's was later taken over by Currys"

**

Can anybody help Margaret Smith of St Ives. About two years ago she heard a story on Radio Cambridgeshire about Thomas Allen of Fenstanton, who was a highwayman. Apparently Thomas and a cohort held up Oliver Cromwell on the Cambridge Road. Thomas was shot in the leg and his partner in crime killed. Margaret thinks it extremely likely that he was an ancestor of hers and would like more details. Sadly nobody can help her track down a book that tells the story. Do you have any ideas?

**

Memories 20th December 2000 by Mike Petty

The reputation of this column for solving problems has received its greatest challenge to date. Father Christmas has a present he is anxious to deliver, but doesn't know who to.

The great man has a number of little helpers of all sorts all around the world, but his main assistant in Cambridge for the last 30 years has been Donald Patman, and it is he who has made contact with the 'Memories' column.

Donald tells me that the real Father Christmas always looked forward to his visits to the Eaden Lilley store in Market Street, Cambridge where he met so many children, some good, some a little naughty, some shy, some boisterous. But they all recognised that the big cuddly man with his red coat and trousers, his shiny black boots and snowy white whiskers, was somebody they could trust with their secrets. There was always a present from out of his sack and to go with it a souvenir photograph of their meeting with Santa. One of these pictures, taken about six years ago, was so good that Santa arranged for a large mounted print of it to be made that he could take back to his own home, but now he would like to pass it on to the little girl concerned. He has gone through his lists, poured over his diaries, racked his brains – and even asked Rudolph, but to no avail. So now he has turned to us for help. Do you recognise the tot on Santa's lap. If so please contact the Newsdesk immediately.

Years ago as in 1925, Father Christmas arrived in Cambridge by train. Crowds of young and old alike would assemble outside the station to see him arrive. Waiting for him was a coach like one from a fairy tale. He had a coachman resplendent in green and gold livery, a footman in blue, & two trumpeters attired in old gold facings and velvet breeches. To the sound of a fanfare of trumpets and the strains of the band he would start on a triumphal tour of the town, en route to his temporary home at Heyworth's stores in Burleigh Street he was officially welcomed to 'Treasure Island'.

In 1943 Santa's arrival was not heralded by the traditional sound of sleigh bells but the roar of an aeroplane engine when he landed at Marshall's airport to attend a Christmas party being held there for children of the reserves on the station. It was then he first appreciated how useful such a large open space would be for him to feed and rest his reindeer while he popped into to Don's house nearby.

Then in 1950 he remembers several hundred children standing in the Cambridge streets & gazing with admiring and speculative eyes as he rode round the town in a lorry from the New Theatre to Mitcham's shop, where he eventually took up residence at the annual toy fair. Many children ran after him for varying distances, but none was so energetic as the youngster dressed in green who ran after the procession from start to finish – a total time of some 50 minutes. When the procession reached Mitcham's Corner, Father Christmas did his traditional disappearing act of climbing down the chimney of the store – but nowadays, with so many houses having central heating he has developed new ways of gaining entry to the homes of little girls and boys. Not even Donald knows quite how he does it, but

he asks me to pass on Santa's especial plea that as well as a mince pie and small glass of sherry (not too much because he easily gets tipsy these days!) children should also remember a small piece of apple or carrot for Rudolph.

Gone are the times when kiddies could have breakfast with Santa at Eaden Lilley's with Rice Krispies and pop, sausages and beans while their parents had to make do with more boring things like smoked salmon and Bucks Fizz. In those days Father Christmas used to arrive on a variety of transport, sometimes on sleighs pulled by dogs or reindeers, sometimes by traction engine and once in probably the most famous car in the world, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. That really was a treat, even though it took so much petrol that he had to keep popping into the garage to top up the tank.

These days you may glimpse him driving around Cambridge in just an ordinary-looking little car, peering through the gap between his furry hat and furry whiskers, as he visits house to house. One little girl on Arbury Road was walking with her dolls' pram when she saw him waiting at the traffic lights. There was even one occasion when he tried to deliver a present at one house but was unable to get in. So he knocked at the house next door, to ask if he would leave the present there instead. The door was opened by a teenage girl who took once glance at the figure on the doorstep and fled upstairs, screaming hysterically, totally unable to believe her eyes.

But it's not just the young who might meet the famous man. For last week he was mixing with older boys and girls – some in their 90s, at the East Barnwell Community Centre. This is a place that holds many memories for Donald, for it was there at its opening in 1945 that he glimpsed the young lady who has been his wife now for over 50 Christmases. He was a railwayman in those days, a fireman on hospital troop trains, he then went to work at the University Arms as a buffet chef, before becoming a removal man for the Co-op where he really became interested in being one of Santa's helpers. Afterwards he worked at Pye TVT whose staff would take toys to work so there would be an extra present to be delivered to children on Christmas morning.

So where do all the presents come from these days. Though many are made by Santa's helpers themselves, he does really appreciate all the toys and teddies that are collected throughout the year by people like Don who has bags and bags of goodies ready to be loaded on to the sleigh in a few days time. And of course sometimes you might spot Father Christmas topping up his basket in the local supermarket.

But wherever you see him, or even if you don't, I hope he'll find you wherever you are and bring you a very Happy Christmas. And if any of this jogs your memory, then settle down after the Xmas pud and drop me a line about your memories of the Christmases you remember

PICTURES

USE THE COLOUR PIC OF FATHER CHRISTMAS WITH THE GIRL ON HIS LAP. THIS IS A SMALL COPY OF THE BIGGER PRINT THAT DONALD PATMAN WANTS TO GIVE TO THE GIRL CONCERNED. IF ANYBODY APPIES PLEASE CONTACT DON AT 26 THE HOMING (NEWMARKET ROAD) – PHONE 292724

PHOTOGRAPHIC HAVE PICTURES TAKEN LAST WEEK OF 90-YEAR OLDS AT THE EAST BARNWELL COMMUNITY CENTRE

PLEASE INCLUDE THE CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG PICTURE FROM AMONGST THE OTHERS ENCLOSED

Memories 27th December 2000, by Mike Petty

85-year-old Mrs Frances Tebbit has watched with interest the news of the possible move of Marshall's airport to allow more space for housing in Cambridge. She used to live in Whitehill Road, on what was the first airfield, before it moved just a bit further down Newmarket Road. From there she could see the comings and goings of the various planes that flew in – and on one occasion thought one flown by a lady ferry pilot was going to land on her! Now that she's moved to nearby Quy Frances is still in the flight path and enjoys seeing all types of planes.

The sound of aircraft engines reverberating across the countryside is one that can annoy those who live below. But on the night of 16th/17th December 1943 that noise was far greater than experienced today, especially in the area around Bourn. For etched into the landscape were the runways from which Lancaster bombers took off for their perilous journeys deep into Europe. Villagers counted them out and counted them in again.

The planes were crewed by men who had done it all before; they were also crewed by those for whom it was the very first trip, including Peter Mack, always known as Joe. He climbed aboard his Lancaster alongside his pilot, Ted Thackway, Jack Powell, Sandy Grant, Leslie Laver, George Grundy and Tony Lawrence.

The aircrew had made their way to the briefing room to discover their destination was the big city itself, Berlin. Once the briefing was over came the waiting. There was nothing to do but laugh too loudly at small jokes and smoke too many cigarettes. Then one by one the great engines were started, one by one the bombers lumbered, fully laden, down the runways and clawed their way into the sky. It was five to five when they left the ground, it was eight o'clock at night when they arrived over Berlin, along with 450 other bombers.

The journey was eventful, their spell over the target brief, but horrifying as they added their 10,000 lbs of bombs to the inferno beneath. Then it was done, the searchlights and flak were behind them and it was time to head back home, watching all the way for more searchlights, more flak, more enemy aircraft. As they crossed the North Sea Ted brought the aircraft down so they could remove their oxygen masks and breathe a sight of relief. Joe assumed his usual role of crew clown and cracked a joke over the intercom. Everybody exploded with laughter. Their first, very dangerous, raid was over. They had made it back to Blighty. They were minutes from home. They were minutes from death.

Twenty one Lancasters returned back to Bourn, all would land within a space of 90 minutes. One by one they arrived but none could find the field. For thick fog blanketed the area and there was no way of illuminating the runway. One by one the pilots, the navigators, the rear gunners – everybody – peered into the murk, trying to spot a landmark. And they listened as those planes before them in the queue tried to land. As they circled, waiting, so the fuel drained away until there was no more left & the engines died.

Joe's pilot made a landing, but not on the runway. The plane ploughed across a muddy field in a horrible, grinding impact, shedding splinters of its structure as it did so. The fog-bound night shuddered and reverberated, then silence fell. They were down. Joe was alive, but trapped from his waist in twisted metal – and that metal was getting hotter. The fire that broke out set off the unexpended ammunition, bullets whistled everywhere, parts of the fabric melted in the heat.

Joe was lucky, he was pulled out by a passing airman, who'd been making his way back to base after an illicit visit to Cambridge, and by his only other crewman to survive, Leslie Laver. But he was horribly injured and rushed off first to the Leys School, which had been taken over as an annexe for Addenbrooke's Hospital. Later he was transferred to the Royal Air Force Hospital at Ely. At the time

of his admittance it had been opened for some three and a half years and was regarded as the most modern and well-built of all the RAF hospitals. A two-storied brick building it was designed in the shape of the letter H with the wards running out at right angles from the cross stroke. Its most striking feature was the large area of window space facing south to obtain the maximum sunshine. It was surrounded by large and beautiful grounds which by 1944 incorporated large numbers of Nissen huts in anticipation of a flood of casualties from the D-Day landings. It was here that Joe was treated in saline baths for the severe burns and fractured legs he suffered in his crash.

There were two orthopaedic wards. Ward 2 was known as the 'clean' ward and Ward 3 was the 'dirty' or 'stinking' ward. Here the smell from fractures that had become infected could be unbelievably awful, especially during hot weather. Joe recalled how masses of flies would descend on the sheets of the worst cases.

Joe Mack was Jennie Gray's dad. She used to listen to his story of that terrible night, when so many other lives were wrecked in fog. Now she has told his story, returning to the field where it happened, walking the furrows and locating fragments of metal and Perspex that marked the site. Her account of Black Thursday brings to life something of what war meant to the thousands of people who flew from Bourn and the surrounding airfields, now almost entirely forgotten. But it does more than that since the book records also the wartime role of the Ely RAF hospital, itself now just a memory. Thanks to her a forgotten tragedy has been recalled and the courage of those who flew, and those who stood and waited for their return, recognised.

Fire by night: the dramatic story of one Pathfinder crew and Black Thursday, 16/17 December 1943, by Jennie Gray is published by Grub Street at £17.99

Do you have memories of the RAF Hospital at Ely – write to Mike Petty at the News [SCAN OF PICTURE FROM THE BOOK, SCAN OF MORE MODERN PICS OF THE RAF HOSPITAL]

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Can you help trace the story of the 27th Lancers Regiment based in Cambridge during the war, asked David Beynon. Yes, answers Kenneth Horton of Wulfstan Way, for I was one of them.

Can you help trace the story of lonely Loxpit Hall, asked Roy Gifford of Cottenham. Yes responded Edna Burgess of Haddenham – I have the deeds. Yes responded John Furbank of Gt Shelford who has researched the family story and actually visited the Hall before it was demolished.

Do you recognise anybody amongst the nurses meeting the Queen at the opening of New Addenbrooke's. Yes replies Margaret Culver, (nee Parkin), e-mailing from Binghamton, New York, USA. She writes: "A school friend sent me a copy of your column with photos of past visits of the Queen to Cambridge. The main photo was of her talking to a nurse in the guard of honour. I thought you might be interested to hear of the whereabouts of two of the nurses in the photo. I am the person standing just behind the nurse being presented and Christine Fallee (nee Place) is the person whose face only is showing between the two nurses in the front row". Margaret has lived in America since 1963 and her friend Christine is now in New Jersey. She adds: we have many friends from our days in Cambridge. It is always good to hear news from one of our favourite cities and of course I was totally surprised to see the article! I have two regular photos of it purchased back in 1962 and one is proudly displayed in my office"

Lucy Peck has e-mailed to say she was amused to see a photo of her husband, Phil, delivering the milk at Dry Drayton back in 1978.

Peter Feast from Milton Road, Cambridge, has written to say he has a copy of the record issued by the Cambridge band, Dean Parker and the Redcaps. But he asks: “if there anything you can turn up, photowise, on The Phantoms. They were also very big around the local venues and made one record issued in 1961 on Palette PG 9014. But they did go on to make a number of others when they went off to Sweden, and I believe got fairly big over there. I first saw this group around the winter of ’58 along Newmarket Road in a pub I believe called the 5 Bells, near the junction of Coldham’s Lane. There was a stage in the main room and when I walked in the place was packed and rockin’. It’s a vision that’s stuck with me forever. This group had a singer by the name of Johnny Cullen or Cullum, but he cut no records with the band as far as I know.”

MYSTERY PICTURE

Can anybody help identify this picture, which I believe was taken at Ely Post Office, probably about 1965 [SCAN]

Memories 2001 in one sequence

Memories, 3rd January 2001, by Mike Petty

replacement first paragraph

The recent frost and snow has reawaken memories of old-time pursuits. Somebody in our village even built a snowman, there is some evidence of a snowball battle and various youngsters have been seen on make-shift toboggans. There are even some who hope that roller blades may be able to give way to ice skates.

But despite global warming we will have to go some way yet to meet the conditions of the great frost that lasted from January to March 1895, unbroken except for very brief thaws. From January 18th to the 25th there were snowstorms, floods & north-west gales. Frosts of 15 to 20 degrees turned hundreds of acres of flooded land into skating rinks & for two months it was possible to skate from Cambridge to Grantchester or Ely. Three fields at Newnham were flooded & illuminated by electric lights, which allowed skaters to flock there in evenings.

The National Skating Association, which had been established in Cambridge in 1879, organised races on the ice at Littleport, when 4,000 people assembled to see the most famous skaters of the day. From Cowbit, Southery, Upwell and Whittlesey they came to compete against southerners from Cottenham, Waterbeach and Landbeach. Then there were outsiders from Walthamstowe and Leicester and even an international challenge.

The names of the old skating fenmen are well-known: William ‘Turkey’ Smart, George ‘Fish’ Smart, William ‘Gutta Percha’ See and the rest. Now their achievements are once more revived in a new illustrated history of fen speed skating. It features biographies of the

professional champions, men like Sid Greenhall of Landbeach who became British Professional Champion at his first attempt in 1908 & Don Pearson of Mepal – a mere 19 years old when he won in 1929, beating 57 year-old Walter Housden of Upware who had been Amateur Champion was back in 1891.

The first Amateur Skating Championship was held in 1880 at Hendon, but it was a fenman who took the title. Fred Norman was a gentleman farmer from Queenholme Farm near the Old West River, later moving to Lynden Farm, Haddenham in 1917. One of his achievements was to skate around the Isle of Ely in a day. Starting down the Old West River and the Ouse to Denver Sluice and returning on the New Bedford River to Earith and back home.

Normally races have to be held quickly, before the thaw comes but in 1895 there was plenty of time over. So in February they decided to hold a special event: a skating race from Cambridge to Ely and back. The interest was intense and amongst those attending was W.G. Grace, the famous cricketer. In the event the starting point had to be moved to Bottisham so it was decided to make the race from there to Ely, back to Bottisham and on to Ely again. By the time they reached Upware for the first time several of the lesser competitors had fallen behind but the lead was being closely contested by a group who arrived at Ely in just 45 minutes. Turning back with the wind behind them they increased speed, averaging a mile in under three minutes they knocked ten minutes off the return leg.

As they started the final leg the competition was between Albert Tebbit from Milton, the Amateur Champion, and H.A. Palmer from Kettering, winner of an International race earlier that month. The two men skated side by side, fighting every inch of the way as they travelled once more past Upware, beyond the junction of the Cam and Old West and on towards the Cathedral, which the winner reached in a time just one minute slower than in the first leg.

In fact there were two winners, for the men could not be separated and crossed the line in a dead heat. Ten others followed them home – just half of the hardy souls who had set off on probably the greatest race ever held by the National Skating Association.

Since then there have been various occasions when outdoor skating has been possible,, perhaps the most famous was that of January 1963 when not only the river froze, but Parker's Piece became an ice-rink.

Do you have memories of skating around Cambridge – write to Mike Petty

Fen speed skating: an illustrated history, by John Slater and Allan Bunch is published by Cambridgeshire Libraries Publications at £6.75

[PICTURES FROM NEWS FILES]

Twenty-five years ago TODAY [IF THIS GOES OUT ON WEDNESDAY, 3RD] the headlines in the News were of 'Killer Gales' as hurricane force winds hit the country leaving a trail of homelessness, damage and blocked roads. Wandlebury woods was, in the words of its warden Bill Clark, "an absolute disaster area" after 50 big trees were ripped up by their roots, and sent crashing down on power lines.

It was a situation repeated throughout the area. The winds struck the giant greenhouses at Parkhall Nurseries, Somersham, smashing three to pieces. "It looks like a battlefield. One of the greenhouses had been literally demolished to the ground and then spread all over the road", confirmed Gordon

Moore. The village's Windmill pub was plunged into darkness as its electricity supply was cut, but landlord Bill Hayes was prepared and quickly produced a supply of candles and tilley lamps and carried on serving. At Newmarket the motor accessory warehouse of Johnson, Burton and Theobald was also open – which proved a problem for its manager Leslie Balls. For its shutter doors were damaged by the wind and he had to spend the night standing guard to prevent thieves getting away with any of the valuable items. Nearby at Caravan International's site some 30 vans were blown over and damaged.

Almost all the stock of top class boats being built by St Neots Rowing Club were lost when the wall of the boathouse collapsed during the recent storm. They included a brand new £1,200 boat that was to have been used by some of their rowers who had been invited to take part in Olympic trials at Henley. Also lost were some old clinker sculls and clinker fours, now virtually irreplaceable.

In Ely chimney pots were sent flying and in St John's Road the flat roofs blown off a line of council garages. These then knocked down a lamppost which blocked the road. At Alconbury the police office roof was damaged but more serious was the loss of a several hundred-year-old barn at Little Chesterford, blown down in the gales.

Newmarket was virtually cut off by fallen trees and at Milton an ancient elm tree was blown down – it had been declared safe by tree experts just a month before. Everywhere council workmen were kept busy during the night clearing fallen trees on most major roads, including the dual carriageway A.1 north-bound road at Southoe. Telephone and electricity engineers worked non-stop to restore services but some villages were without power for more than 48 hours.

Whatever else the year would bring, 1976 had started with a bang! [PICS FROM NEWS FILES]

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Some bookmakers may have lost money because of snow this Christmas, but, according to Harold Griffiths it was part of the game. "A bookmaker's life is not all make, and is no holiday either" he told the News in April 1961 – 40 years ago. When he was not on a racecourse he was either driving to or from one or studying 'form'. In fact the only spare time he had was just before Christmas. On the whole, he added, he enjoyed his business life, but would not want to inflict it on any of his friends.
PICTURE SCANNED

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Christmas is traditionally a time for family get-togethers but many feel that family life is not what it used to be, the fabric of society is changing. It is worth considering what a social worker for the Cambridge Association for the Care of Girls told a meeting of the Cambridge Inner Wheel, 50 years ago. Mrs Everies explained that part of her work involved her talking to girls in senior schools. In addition to questions on sex they were concerned about the correct behaviour to boy friends, whether 16 was too young to start going out with a boy, whether they should use lipstick or make-up and if they would allow a boy to kiss them on bringing them home after a first dance.

She put some of the problem for failed relationships down to the war. Whereas 30 years before broken marriages had not entered into the middle class houses it was very different in 1951. "I believe the break-up of marriages in what we used to regard as good, secure homes, has had repercussions from the top to bottom of society", she said. There was the attitude that 'If so-and-so can do it, so can I'. Some people entered into marriage lightly, thinking that if it didn't work they could break it up, but this could have a profound affect. She spoke of cases where a man and woman had been divorced and had married. Perhaps both had children of their first marriage, and of their own union. There was often a complete lack of respect amongst the children, and a wholly chaotic situation.

Mrs Everies felt that youngsters should be taught that marriage was an art. "It is a dreadful thing to have to deal with young couples who, at 23 or 24 are seeking a way out of their marriage. Many girls went into marriage with the idea of having a good time, or because they felt that as their friends were getting married it was time they did the same. But there is the mundane side too, the washing, baking and cleaning. It is one of those things young people don't seem to realise"

However members of her audience felt that there must have been many unhappy marriages in the middle class of former days, but that it had not come to light, as it would in the 1950s. "There was so much humbug then", one remarked. Another had a different reason for the problem: "There is too much sex education given to children nowadays. Perhaps I am old fashioned, but girls of my day were mostly ignorant of these things, yet they have succeeded in making a success of their marriages".

All this comes from January 1951. If it rings a bell with you do drop me a line with your memories.

**

Hilary Humphries from Newmarket is a collector of material relating to Bacon's the tobacconist who used to have their shop in Market Hill, Cambridge. He writes: "As a 12-year old lad in 1950 I collected cigarette packets and would persuade my father to make the odd purchases in the shop, so adding an exclusive item to my collection. I have a selection of labels of cigarettes issued by the shop. I loved the Alma Mater label, it must have been one of Bacon's most popular lines and sold in several different formats, there was even a Billiard Room size". Pack collecting is now a well-established hobby with its own Cigarette packet collectors club and he has a number of items produced by the company.
[SCAN OF PACKET LABELS]

**

More memories of the Gray's wartime work have come in from Edna Bonenfant (nee Brown) who writes all the way from 1539 Stanzione Drive, North Dighton, Massachusetts, USA, who received a cutting of the article from her sister. Edna confirms: "we did make barrage balloons at first, then we began on the armatures for tanks and planes, that was about 1940-41. I was just a young girl then. I was there until 1945 when I married an American airman and came to the USA in 1946". She is still in touch with a few of the girls from those days. It seems as if Edna was a GI Bride – are there any others in the area who would like to share their memories of those times?

**

Peter Mascall has E-mailed to seek your help with his family history. He writes: "My ancestors seem to mainly have lived in the Castle Camps, Histon, Chesterton area. Does anyone remember William Mascall or his wife Mary Ann Leader who married in 1912. He was a master watchmaker and either owned or worked in a watch and jewellery shop in Histon High Street. His nickname was 'Little Billie'". If you can help please contact Peter at 17 Grasmere Gardens, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 5JN

Memories 10th January 2001, by Mike Petty

A picture of the Whitley Bomber repair section at Marshall's featured in Memories a couple of weeks ago has sparked considerable correspondence. Kevin Peters of Cambridge saw his father-in-law, Frederick Taylor on it – a picture his wife had never seen before, and Mr R.A.C. Powell of Arbury tells me he has a complete list of the names. Margaret Pyner of Bourn recognised her father. He was a master upholsterer, a reserved occupation in the war, and was sent to Cambridge to work on the aircraft which were cloth covered, then painted with dope to tighten the cloth over the wood frames. The girls would do the painting and the rest of the team repair the craft. Her dad picked up a lot of aircraft slang – like 'Bang On' for good, 'Jolly Good Show' and 'Top Hole' – which was fascinating language to a

child. After the war he set up in Cambridge as an upholsterer in Thompson's Lane in the buildings that had formerly housed the Cambridge Tapestry Works – and Margaret still has the trestles that held the rolls that the girls worked on.

Richard North from Longstanton has written to say his late father used to work there, along with Jack Burnett, Cyril Cooper and a host of people. He recalls: "I have listened for hours with great interest to the many stories Cyril Cooper told me of those dark, yet happy days during the war. Of how the benches gradually disappeared in spite of strict security; of an employee who had a certain Mr Hitler's photograph on his identity card - which was never discovered; and how one early morning engine start-up was preceded by the sound of running feet and the hasty evacuation of an embarrassed couple leaving the aircraft.

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All these are memories of more than 50 years ago. But does anybody have personal recollections of another weapon of war, the Thor Nuclear Missiles, the first strategic missile system deployed in the free world, capable of attacking targets up to 1,600 miles away. In 1957 Feltwell airfield was chosen to be the first base for these weapons, with four satellite bases. One of these was at Mepal and in April 1959 the News photographed what it described as "a gigantic cigar", a tarpaulin-covered rocket – minus its warhead – being transported through Ely en route to that base. Their presence was opposed by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and there were protest marches on Mepal, with its newly-constructed high-security fence, launch pads and associated buildings. During the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 the site was on the highest alert, ready to launch at a moment's notice. The Mepal site closed down in 1963 and its nuclear role is largely forgotten.

In February 1960 the News was invited to see for itself just what was happening at the main Feltwell base. The report makes interesting reading. "There are three Thor missiles, housed horizontally in special shelters which can be rolled back to permit their being erected into a vertical position. Once its warhead has been attached – the work of an hour or so – Thor can be erected, fuelled and launched in 15 minutes. The launch crews each consist of a British officer, and American officer, three senior technical N.C.O.s and one N.C.O. experienced in air crew duties. The rocket would take 15 minutes to reach a target in Russia; the destructive properties of its warhead are in the megaton range"

The reporter asked about the possibilities of the missile being stopped or deflected once it had begun its journey – in case somebody changed their minds. "The officers explained that the rocket was not designed to fail to reach its target, but that if by any chance it failed to achieve the correct speed and trajectory at which the warhead is normally detached then the whole system would fall harmlessly to earth. There was no possibility of its falling in a dangerous condition on to intervening friendly territories", they claimed.

The News report was illustrated with photographs, some of which have not been published before today. SCANS OF THE FELTWELL THOR BASE; SCAN OF CUTTING OF THOR MISSILE AT ELY AND OF THE CLOSURE OF THE MEPAL BASE

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Claude Ingrey from Great Wilbraham has written with his memories of RAF Hospital, Ely. "While in the RAF in 1945 I was taken to the RAF Hospital because I had a burst stomach ulcer. I received excellent treatment and was very impressed how modern the hospital was, compared with the Old Addenbrooke's, although ward 16 looked a bit like a large Nissen hut. The Hospital had a full size snooker table, a beautiful lounge and a chapel. Once I was able to get up and about I climbed the fence at the back of the Hospital and visited the city. One day I joined a party being taken all over the Cathedral by 90-year-old Canon Raven. Walking over the East window I felt dead scared!. I used to hitch hike home to Cambridge and after eight weeks in hospital I happened to climb in a RAF truck – who should be sitting there but the Hospital Medical Officer and as I was wearing hospital blue

clothing my stay was soon over, and I returned to RAF Kimbolton” [SCAN OF ELY RAF HOSPITAL]

**

Cottenham local historian Francis Garrett has added further details to the history of Lockspit Hall. He tells me that in about 1830 William Furbank kept the Lockspit Hall beerhouse and was the ferryman there. The house did a good trade since baptisms were frequently held in the river. His son Thomas took over the pub when William moved to the Wheatsheaf in Cottenham in 1855. Tragically Thomas’ wife, Alice, was accidentally drowned in December 1883 and he later moved to London. There’s another little detail too, for in March 1839 Charles Swann, a maltster, was lost in the snow when making his way home to Cottenham from the Hall.

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Memories, 17th January 2001, by Mike Petty

Mr G.W. Meeks of Gamlingay was reading his copy of the St Neots Weekly News recently and spotted a report from the village of Shudy Camps. This reminded him of something that his great-grandfather read in the old Cambridge Independent Press some 60 years ago. It was a poem entitled ‘The Country Rover’ which Mr Meeks has since recited at concerts, schools and rest homes throughout the area. He hopes it might spark a wee bit of interest; I’m sure it will.

The Country Rover

There was a man of Cambridgeshire
Who lived at Shudy Camps,
He roamed the county half the year
In long, unhurried tramps.
From Arrington to Barrington
He wandered, stout old rover,
He walked to Reach and Waterbeach
And many times to Over.

For 60 years or more his feet
Have trodden lane and road,
The smooth green grass of Worsted Heath,
The rutty droves of Lode.
He had a dog, who used to jog
Beside him on his travel,
They roamed the heights of Gog-ma-gog,
The fens of Witcham Gravel.

He’s sat and drank his quart of beer
And munched his bread and mutton
At all the inns in Cambridgeshire, from Hildersham to Sutton.
As for sport, he used to court
A girl from Cherry Hinton
At Burwell he had two or three
And another one at Linton.

High on the hill at Haslingfield

He'd sit & see aloft
The clouds go by, or lie concealed
By Bourn Brook's bank at Toft.
Or sleep away a summer's day
Beside the popped corn,
Then wake and walk to Gamlingay,
Or lie out rough at Bourn.

In winter when they light the lamps
And gather round the fire
They still relate in Shudy Camps
How he would roam the shire
From Baitsbite Locks to Longstowe Fox,
From then to Barton Mills,
By Cheveley Park & Isleham Lark
And back to Bartlow Hills.

And when he said, when old and worn
My tramping days are done
I'll go no more to Bassingbourn
No more to Littlington.
And when at last my end has come
And I have had to die,
'Tis then I shall be deaf and dumb,
Please bury me at Quy

[PICTURES FROM NEWS FILES OF PLACES MENTIONED]

**

Mrs Florence Hall from Eynesbury (ex W.A.A.F. Flight-Sergeant 80930), has kindly jotted down some of her memories of the R.A.F. Hospital at Ely.

"From about late 1941 to June 1945 I was the steward for the Hospital, which also catered for our convalescent home which was situated in Littleport.. One of my duties was to tour the wards to ensure the sisters were happy with the food supplied. I was encouraged to chat to the patients and one of my firm friends there was the late Jimmy Edwards. He was in burns with badly burned hands. Of course he was just an ordinary officer then – indeed it wasn't until years after that I realised who he was – but he was fun to be with even then.

"I met my husband while we were both stationed there, we were married in St Mary's church, Ely and had our reception in the Sergeants' mess at the hospital. He was in the medical profession – a chemist - & we shared the same boss, Squadron Leader Danny Bream. Our time spent at Ely Hospital was very special for both of us & because of all we experienced there – some truly awful things – I'm quite sure it helped us to cope better with life in general"

[SCAN OF ELY RAF HOSPITAL ENTRANCE]

**

"Can anybody help with a picture of the Phantoms Rock'n'Roll group", I asked. Yes replied Mick Barker from Cambridge. He writes: "This group was around in the fifties and early sixties and they were as good as The Shadows, in my estimation. Back in those good old days my wife (who was then my girlfriend) and I travelled all over East Anglia with them. Because I was the doorman come bouncer it didn't cost us anything for admission. They were a very good and very likeable bunch of lads who were very popular over here and in Sweden where they stayed for quite some time and had a number of records released on the Palette label"

The idea for the group started during the EOKA troubles in Cyprus where Ken Leverinton was with the R.E.M.E. and as they weren't allowed out of barracks he practised playing the guitar eight hours a day. On demob Ken joined Pye as an electrician, playing in various local groups until he formed The Phantoms in June 1960. The group played at dances and cinemas throughout East Anglia and had a large following at Cambridge University, in fact two undergraduates wrote "Phantom Guitar", which appeared on their first record.

Mick has sent a copy of one of their publicity photos which gives the line up as Ken Leverinton, Cliff Gentle, Dave Cooke and Freddy Smart. They were all electricians except for Freddy Smart who had his own hairdressing business in Chatteris. [SCAN OF GROUP PIC]

**

Ted Fisher from Cambridge has written to tell me of the sporting prowess of Alice Bilston who ran the London Marathon last year. The achievement is more remarkable given that she was then 88! Alice Clark lived in George IV Street, Cambridge when a girl and attended St Paul's School, Russell Street before going on to the Central School. She was a keen member of the Band of Hope that met in St Paul's Institute in Coronation Street and was often seen playing tennis at Fenners, where the church had facilities. Alice's first job when leaving school was with Laurie and McConnel in Fitzroy Street, which is where she stayed till her marriage to Sid Bilston. After that they moved to Lowestoft and then London. Her husband died ten years ago and it was then that she ran her first London Marathon. Now as she's 'getting on a bit' she only does half-marathons – three times a year! Ted asks: Are there any other 88 year-old athletes produced by this fair city?

**

Can anybody help Colin Matthews of Bassingbourn to track down details of how a member of his family lost his life in the Great War. George Edwin Ingre was a Private (no.13587) in the 11th Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment who died on the Somme on Thursday 1st July 1915, aged 21 years. But Colin has been trying for several years to discover just how and where he died. If you can help let me know and I'll pass the information on

**

EXTRA ODDMENTS IF NEEDED

Can anybody recognise their back garden? I came across this picture when browsing through the News photographic files the other day. It's obviously Cambridge because of the Catholic Church in the distance, and there seems to be a school at the end of the lane on the right. But if it jogs a memory please let me know [SCAN OF VIEW OVER BACK GARDENS]

Memories 24th January 2001, by Mike Petty

With the outbreak of the Great War Cambridge prepared for the inevitable casualties. A hospital for wounded soldiers was established at the Leys school, later expanding to Trinity College where the cloisters under the Wren Library were turned into open-sided wards. As more space became necessary a pre-fabricated hospital was constructed across the Backs on the site now occupied by the University Library. In its operating theatres soldiers were treated, and many patched up to fight again.

Elsewhere convalescent hospitals were established to nurse the wounded back to health. Three large empty houses in Cintra terrace, Hills Road, were placed at the disposal of the Cambridge Women's Voluntary Aid Detachment. The rooms were swept and scrubbed and the girls travelled around Cambridge collecting furniture, going out with a handcart to bring in mattresses, coal-scuttles and all the other essentials. It was the first of several of these VAD Hospitals, others of which were established in villages such as Fulbourn, Cottenham, Whittlesford and Willingham.

It was whilst lecturing in this latter village that one of my class brought in an autograph book containing rhymes and sketches collected from soldiers recovering in one such war-time hospital. In itself this would have been a wonderful find. Little enough is recorded about these institutions, although several, like Cottenham, produced their own magazines. But this one was even more special.

For this did not relate to a VAD Hospital, this was a VD Hospital – and as far as I know there is virtually nothing recorded about them. It is something that seems to have been largely forgotten. I believe there were two such institutions in Cambridge. The Cambridgeshire Collection has a couple of photographs of a tented encampment at Cherry Hinton, but this relates to the other one, just off Newmarket Road. The Cherry Hinton camp treated some 800 men, that at Barnwell 750.

They were established in March 1916 and were not welcomed by local people. Newspapers report protests about the lack of security, of insufficient guards and of fears of patients escaping & causing great danger to nearby residents. But these were not German prisoners of war, they were British casualties of war, men who had perhaps sought comfort from the horrors of the trenches in the company of ladies of the night and found themselves infected as a result.

Some had been wounded before. On the first page of the book a Corporal Johnson from the Middlesex Regiment recalls how he was previously wounded at Neuve Chapelle in March 1915. Others sketched pictures of women, one adding the words, "All one has to live for, Is a pair of ruby lips", while Private Hutt of the Suffolk Regiment drew his cap badge in April 1918

Some of the entries are from the men who ministered at the Hospital whose work even then was kept silent. Quartermaster Sergeant J. Carter Squires penned his tribute to "The Hush Camps".

They've heard of the battles of Flanders
And the fighting at Vimy Ridge
But they've yet to hear of the battles fought
In the "Hush Camps" in Cam-bridge.
And of the men who have fought those battles
Tho' not beribboned or scarred,
They are men who have done their duty,
But to whom all honour is barred.
Some people have called them slackers
But God knows, they don't understand,
For when those battles are recorded,
And despatches come to hand,
Surely they will be accorded
With some credit for making Old England a purer land.

Lance Corporal J. Abrahams, signing himself R.A.M.C. Staff, Barnwell Military Hospital 16th October 1918 penned an acrostic, the first letter of each line spelling out 'Barnwell'

Bravely we enlisted, to fight the murderous Hun,
And bravely heard the mandate, that our fighting days were done.
Rough the life it was, but we didn't care a damn,
Nor groused, nor grumbled, but remained as placid as the Cam.

We finally were shifted, and without shirking for terms,
England beheld her choicest sons, fighting Germans not, but germs.
Loathsome though the task was, we've cured thousands of disease,
Lucky Britons sleep at ease; that breedeth men like these.

Do you have any other mementoes of the forgotten wartime hospitals.

[SCAN OF PAGES FROM THE AUTOGRAPH BOOK ON DISK, SELECTION OF OTHER WAR-TIME HOSPITAL PICTURES IN ENVELOPE]

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Valerie Haynes of Over has lent me another picture of the 54th Maintenance Unit at Marshalls during the Second World War. It is too large to reproduce fully, but Arthur George Parker is fourth to the left of the 54 MU sign on the top row, and Freda Harradine is the seventh female from the left of centre on row three. [SCAN OF PICTURE ON DISK]

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Several people have been in touch to identify last week's mystery picture of the back gardens. Paul Arnold can actually see his plot in Eden Street, where's he's lived for 20 years, and says it has not changed much. Julie Sewell went to the Grammar School for Girls, now Parkside Community College, shown in the background & thinks the view would have been taken from the bandstand at Laurie & McConnell's. Karen Alsop & Suzie McCave agree as does Felicity Collins; she too went to the Girls Grammar and says the background trees along the edge of Parker's Piece remind her of many very cold games of hockey played there, with the girls wearing shorts and Miss Allen, the games mistress, wrapped up in her tracksuit! Mr J. Williamson from Romsey puts the date as possibly the late 1950s.

Eden Street was so named because it was built in the Victorian period on an area of land known as the Garden of Eden, then one big market garden. The nearby streets are named Paradise and Adam and Eve. When Sara Payne talked to residents back in 1981 she heard from Bill Metcalfe how the old fruiterer 'Bowey' Odell used to come up with his horse and cart, shouting 'tomatis, tomatiss'. Peggie Temple recalled how Mr King, at number 30, used to be a fireman. He always left his bicycle outside so that he could go off when the bell sounded outside his house summoning him to a fire. When it rang, out he'd come and off he'd go down to the station in St Andrew's Street. [THERE ARE PICTURES OF EDEN STREET IN THE NEWS LIBRARY FILES]

Do you have memories of other streets in the area, or of the characters who made Cambridge special.

Memories, 31st January 2001, by Mike Petty

"It was an awful parting – the pain – everyone went with her down to the station, nobody cried and as she said that the tears were coming down her face".

At the start of the last war thousands of young children were evacuated from London and other places likely to be attacked and brought to the safety of the countryside. But there was another similar exercise that brought thousands of children to East Anglia even before the Second War started – in fact by then it was already too late. These children too had left their parents behind on the station platforms, only their parents were soon put on trains themselves to places with names such as Auschwitz. For these were Jewish children rushed out of Germany for fear of not British bombers, but of Nazi persecution. Last weekend's holocaust memories highlighted the terrible suffering and of the many thousand who found their ways

to the concentration camps and gas chambers – but many escaped, thanks in part to Cambridge women.

The story of the British evacuees and the organisation that found them new homes, new schools and a new life has been told, albeit not fully. The story of the organisation that cared for the Jewish refugees is largely unknown.

A Cambridge Children's' Refugee Committee had been established in 1936, one of hundreds that had sprung up spontaneously as news of the persecutions started to leak out. By 1938 their work was being co-ordinated and the country divided up into twelve regions, corresponding to the Air Raid Warnings system already in place. Cambridge was part of region four, East Anglia, and the Cambridge committee was asked to take responsibility for it.

In 1984 Gertrude Dubrovsky was working at the Carnegie Foundation in Princeton when she was invited to visit Cambridge. Whilst here she was introduced to Greta Burkill, the wife of Prof Charles Burkill, Master of Peterhouse. "She was an oddity, born in Russia, she spoke with an Russian accent", it was a meeting that was to change Gertrude's life. She was told a remarkable story of how thousands of children had been found homes and cared for – it was a story she had not heard before. Gertrude didn't really believe it – until she was shown hand-drawn charts with names of children, their parents' names, where they had come from and where they had gone. "You must put these in an archive or library", Gertrude urged. "I cannot; each of these children came through my hands. It is as if each one was my child and this is all I have left of that experience", Mrs Burkill replied.

There was nothing Gertrude could do – they were Greta's documents after all. She returned to America and two weeks later received a letter to say that Mrs Burkill had changed her mind & copied them for her. The next day she received another letter, containing Mrs Burkill's obituary. "I began to see in it the hand of God; somebody pointing at me and saying do this".

Now Gertrude has started to piece together the story, of how a committee, mainly of academic ladies, had taken responsibility for finding families who would be prepared to take the refugee children. And as soon as the folks in Germany learned what was happening their offices in Hills Road received hundreds of letters as people begged to have their children signed up for transportation. The committee could not decide which were the most urgent but felt the immediate priority were teenage boys who were subject to arrest and likely to be sent to work camps. This was not necessarily an easy age range to foster.

They tried to find homes with Jewish families in which the children would be placed, but there were not enough. But would it be appropriate to use Christian homes? As they were careful so they were slow, but the need was desperate and people got upset at the delay. It became stressful point of contention for everyone – but was only the first of many.

On arrival the chosen refugees were sent to Cambridge schools until the age of 14, after that they had to work. The Committee ladies helped them find schools and jobs, neither easy given the language and cultural difficulties. But when the youngsters turned 16 they ceased to be refugees and became a potential danger to the country – they had after all been born in Germany. Many were sent off into internment camps on the Isle of Man, others shipped away to Canada and Australia. The Cambridge Committee ladies had accepted parental responsibility for these youngsters – indeed it was becoming more likely that they were the only parents they now had. They arranged a schedule of people who visited them, wrote letters, sent packages. The pressures just seemed to get greater and greater, the frustrations more and more intense.

On top of all that there was a War on, with all the difficulties that represented. Then the war was over, and the horrors of the extermination camps revealed. Many of the refugees were

now orphans, but there must be somebody somewhere. Once more the Committee churned into action, more letters, more assistance, more emotional trauma.

Gertrude had made touch with six of the refugees who were assisted by the Cambridge committee. Some of them were found homes in the Eden Street, Orchard Street area and were cared for by Ann Sofier & Elsie Masefield and her brother. But can you help piece together more of the story; did you or your parents have contact with them, does you family have a bundle of papers like the ones Mrs Burkill preserved that you would be willing to share.

If so please contact Gertrude Dubrovsky at Clare Hall, Herschell Road, Cambridge, CB3 9AL or E-mail her at gd235@cam.ac.uk [SCAN OF BRITISH EVACUEES, PIC OF SOME OF THOSE WHOM GERTRUDE IS RESEARCHING SUPPLIED; PHOTOGRAPHIC HAVE PICS OF GERTRUDE DUBROVSKY WITH HER CAMBRIDGE PAPERS AND OUTSIDE 55 HILLS ROAD – THE CAMBRIDGE COMMITTEE’S H.Q.]

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Jenny Taylor of Impington is also seeking help in finding somebody – but in her case it is Bubs White who used to play lead guitar in The Chequers rock group in the late 1950s, early 1960. Jenny was a fan of the group and used to follow them around. One night the drummer failed to turn up, and she stepped in. They played the US bases along with the Dorothy and the club above Millers music shop. When the group broke up Bubs went on to do session work and she has lost contact. Bubs is in the foreground of this group picture, with Jenny belting out the beat behind. [SCAN OF PICTURE OF THE CHEQUERS]

Her husband, Alan Taylor, is also seeking your help. He played with the once nearly famous Boston Crabs who had some small chart and TV success in the mid 1960s. Previously he ran the resident band Group Four at The Racehorse in Newmarket Road, Cambridge. The standard line-up was Alan on drums, George Watson on guitar, Lynden (Jock) Devlin on bass and vocals and Jack Asplin on piano. However each Sunday they had an additional member, Dave Gilmour, who went on to fame and fortune with Pink Floyd.

Alan has no photographs whatever of those days and would appreciate any help in tracking them down.

You can contact both Jenny and Alan Taylor at 38 Cambridge Road, Impington, CB4 9NU – phone Cambridge 233000.

If you think that the name Boston Crabs rings a bell, you are perhaps recalling how they topped the Cambridge pop charts in June 1965 with their recording of ‘Down in Mexico’, pushing Sandie Shaw and ‘Long Live Love’ down to to second place. That week ‘Wonderful World’ was at a lowly number 18, though its singer, Cliff Richard, has lasted somewhat longer than Alan and his mates.

Just twenty-five years ago, on 1st February 1976, Cliff was packing them in at the Lady Mitchell Hall, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge, where he appeared at an evangelical concert with the Brightwinter Group. Later he moved on to Holy Trinity church where amongst those who turned out to watch was one Christopher South. “He sent himself up in a most winning fashion”, Chris reported, “joking about his age (35) and his handsome head of hair (‘it’s a good fit’). He hammed it up, pretending he was too old and rumaticky to get his foot on to a stool to support his guitar”. Previously a News photographer had visited Cliff in his dressing room as he prepared for the earlier concert, pictures that have not previously been published. Are you in the audience? [PICS SCANNED]

Memories 7th February 2001 by Mike Petty

The telephone rang just before I was due to start my WEA class at Willingham. Could I get to a portacabin at the old goods yard, Ely Station, by 12.30 that afternoon? If so I would find something to my advantage.

In fact I arrived five minutes late and by then Brian Peck had finished his shift and was on his way back home to Cambridge. But there on the step was a large cardboard box and a bundle of maps.

It was a day or so before I had chance even to open it, but once I did I found a number of large lever-arch files. One contained a draft of the marvellous history of Cambridge compiled by Brian and Ralph Phillips from the material collected by Cambridge railwaymen, a copy of which they had presented to the Cambridgeshire Collection about a dozen years ago. The others are full of newspaper cuttings and articles relating to the local railway scene mainly from the 1960s.

There's a copy of the Eastern Region Magazine for June 1963 in which Roma Branton described the line from Cambridge to Newmarket. It gives a fascinating glimpse of the situation nearly 40 years ago. She found: "Leaving Cambridge the first station along the line is Fulbourn, where Mr D.G. White has been station master for ten years. This is a small station but has a fair amount of good traffic. In the first four months of this year they had over 1,000 tons of grain from the silo next to the station. Truck loads of goods are also handled, and sugar beet in season. Another regular traffic to the station is coal, both for domestic use and for the local cement works."

Six Mile Bottom needed police assistance on busy days, for without constabulary help the signalman would never have been able to close the railway gates against the heavy road traffic. The station forwarded sugar beet in season and received mainly agricultural machinery, fertilisers and coal, while Dullingham also handled a considerable quantity of barley.

Newmarket station was often busy with horses; in 1962 they received 748 horses at the station and sent out 1,182 by rail. To help with the work they had two fine strong members of staff – Charlie and Butch, a beautiful pair of shunt horses. They were used to pull wagons and horse boxes in the goods yard and were by then the last horses to be used on the Eastern Region. [THERE ARE PROBABLY PIX IN NEWS LIBRARY]

Railway accidents and incidents feature in the newspaper cuttings, none perhaps as bizarre as in February 1961 when an undergraduate managed to crash his car through the booking hall at Cambridge station, ending up against the indicator board and blocking the exit door. [SCAN OF CUTTING]

There is a reflection too of the continuing problems of providing a fast and efficient system – a problem that seems to have bedevilled the railways since Victorian times according to a cartoon dating from 1856. It is supposed to represent a challenge issued by a Bethnal Green costermonger to race the train with his donkey and barrow. Needless to say, the railway was not victorious and the drawing shows the donkey in front, towing the train while passengers applaud, grateful for such speed. The cartoon was apparently one of several produced by a passenger who used to arm himself with a large bundle of papers, and taking his seat in the front carriage of the train, to fling them out broadcast among the passengers waiting at each platform. But the passengers rushed forward to receive them with such avidity, that he was forced to abandon this practice for fear that some one should be pushed off the platform under the wheels of the train. [SCAN OF CARTOON]

The cuttings also reflect the change as steam gave way to other forms of propulsion and of course the major story that the News broke in March 1963 of how 19 local stations might be closed down as part of the changes proposed by Dr Beeching. [SCAN OF CUTTING]

Cambridge and Ely stations survived the axe and in 1987 won their categories in the Eastern Region 'Best Kept Station' competition, with Elsenham and Newport coming second and third in the class for small stations. [SCAN OF PHOTO]

As this is a history compiled by railwaymen for railwaymen it obviously reflects many of their social activities. The folders include a picture from September 1988 when 20 senior members of BR staff from the Cambridge & March area, some of whom had worked up to 50 years on the railways, celebrated reaching the end of the line at a special presentation at the Maltings, Ely. Brian has most of the names including Dennis Hipkin, Stan Pine and Cyril Stannard but if you see yourself – or have other memories of your time on the railway - I should be delighted to hear from you. [SCAN OF PHOTO]

As for the box and its contents – I will be depositing it in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard library within the next week or so

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I have received a letter from the Chief Executive of the Guinea Pig Club, based in Crawley. The club was established in July 1941 by airmen at the Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead who had been horribly burned during the early years of the war and continues to this day. Through their experiences of having to live with disfigurement and restricted use of fingers they assist new burns patients, showing them that through adversity a full life can be lived.

Jock Allaway was just one of the "Guinea Pigs" who started their life at Ely R.A.F. Hospital. He writes: "I arrived on October 10th 1943 with third degree burns of the hand, face and body after crashing. The plastic surgeon in charge was Wing Commander Morley who eventually became an Air Vice Marshall in charge of all RAF Medical Services. During my stay at Ely I had many operations, new top and bottom eyelids, nose and many ops on both my hands. Every month the distinguished surgeon Sir Archibald McIndoe used to visit and pick patients to be transferred to the new Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead, Sussex. The city of Ely was very good to us, I even had two weeks' convalescence at the Bishop's Palace."

Jock got to know of the article through Mrs Doreen Barnes of Littleport who as a 16-year-old girl used to visit burns unit at the hospital every Sunday afternoon bringing home-made cakes and fresh eggs. They have kept in touch ever since – proving that the horrors of war do have some benefits.

If you would like to contact the club you can write to 32 Goff's Park Road, Crawley, West Sussex, RH11 8AY

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Peter Hall E-mails following a recent Memories article:

My father, the late Walter Hall, was born and bred in Willow Place, Cambridge, in 1892, joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1914 and finished his service as a sergeant at the First Eastern General Hospital in 1919. After the war a venture into tailoring turned into disaster during the 1926 General Strike, when he and my mother joined my grandparents, Rue and Kate Elsdon, in running The Fitzroy Arms in Fitzroy Street until 1954.

Mr H. Benstead of the Victoria Homes, Cambridge also has memories of tailoring, for his father, G.J. Benstead worked for Mr H.G. Jacobs in the 1920s.

“He worked at home, sitting cross-legged on a board in the back bedroom of the house we lived in in Gwydir Street. After school I used to take the completed work, wrapped in black cloth, to the large workshops over the shop in Burleigh Street. and hand it over to a Mr Stephenson. There were five or six tailors and I remember a Mr Carlisle who was the cutter, a man with a pronounced limp, and a young man who was always referred to as ‘Young Mr Bert’ (Jacobs)

“My father’s main work seemed to be making black mourning suits. These were rush jobs as the funeral was only five or six days later. Dad made the coat and waistcoat and mother the trousers. They would work all day and most of the night. Even I had a job – taking the basting out with a bodkin, threading his needles and waxing the thread with beeswax. After the suit was finished it would be a week or more before he got another job. No work, no pay. This was normal, but my father always spoke well of Mr Jacobs and his firm. They gave him work when there was very little for men coming back from the war.

“I am now 90 years old but still have vivid memories of this part of my life. I can almost smell the steam when the seams were pressed under a damp cloth with a large iron called a Goosie, heated on a gas ring and always kept hot. Before you ask, the answer is ‘no!’ I cannot even sew a button on. I started an apprenticeship and became an electrician!

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John Wakefield of Gt Shelford adds to our survey of 1950s and 60s local pop groups with a publicity photo of The Quadrant. The line up at the time was Ray Radford (lead guitar). Phil Atkin (drums), George McKeowen (vocals) & Dave Talbot (bass guitar). At a later group they increased to five members with the addition of a Lowery electronic organ with which they performed a good cover version of Procul Harum’s ‘Whiter Shade of Pale’. [PIC SCANNED]

Memories 14th February 2001, by Mike Petty

Peter Johnson from Morton-in-Marsh has been scanning the News website and has spotted my Memories column. He has been sorting out his late father’s writings and has sent extracts in the hope they may be of interest. They certainly are.

Ben Martin Henry Johnson was born in Cambridge in 1890 and died 92 years later in Stoke on Trent. His father, also Ben, was a boatman at Foster’s Boatyard who died a year later from a heart attack whilst rowing in a race. To make ends meet his mother took on a University lodging house at 37 Market Hill and managed to support her two daughters, Maude and Agnes and young Ben. He recalled:

“Boys as well as girls wore petticoats when I was young. I couldn’t tell my sisters what sex my first friend was and they only found out when I took him home one day and he announced his name was Oscar Barker Benfield. He was the son of a college servant and his mother kept a University lodging house over the Macmillan’s bookshop facing the Senate House. The Market Hill was our playground. Our fiends were, Philip & Will Giles from the Criterion in Market Passage, Bert Wisbey from a pub in Bene’t Street, & Bert Culyer from the Rose and Crown [There were three pubs of that name in Cambridge in those days, at Newmarket Road, Pound Hill & Russell Street]

“We had seasons; there was the top spinning season, the hoop season, marbles and conkers. Then there was the inevitable gun and drilling like soldiers, especially up St Mary’s Court. Our actions often spilled over into the Senate House Passage and would come to a halt whenever the Master of Caius and his two daughters appeared, accompanied by much hat raising. We took care not to disturb a blind man who used to stand near the Gate of Honour, his little dog at his side and his tin can in his hand. I think he made good collections from the undergrads going to and from lectures.” [SCAN OF MARKET HILL C1900 – THE PLAYGROUND]

Mr H. Benstead of the Victoria Homes, Cambridge has also sent me memories of his father, G.J. Benstead who worked as a tailor for Mr H.G. Jacobs in the 1920s.

“Dad worked at home, sitting cross-legged on a board in the back bedroom of the house we lived in in Gwydir Street. After school I used to take the completed work, wrapped in black cloth, to the large workshops over the shop in Burleigh Street and hand it over to a Mr Stephenson. There were five or six tailors and I remember a Mr Carlisle who was the cutter, a man with a pronounced limp, and a young man who was always referred to as ‘Young Mr Bert’ (Jacobs)

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“I am now 90 years old but still have vivid memories of this part of my life. I can almost smell the steam when the seams were pressed under a damp cloth with a large iron called a Goosie, heated on a gas ring and always kept hot. Before you ask, the answer is ‘no!’ I cannot even sew a button on. I started an apprenticeship and became an electrician! [SCAN OF FUNERAL]

Rex Codling from Reading has also been delving into his father’s papers. Herbert Codling and his wife Dora lived in a flat above a grocer’s shop in Mill Road, Cambridge, owned by a Mr Barbrooke before getting a council house in Bateson Road. He joined the Auxiliary Fire Service prior to the war and later transferred to aircraft production.

Rex has sent me the programme of the annual outing of the Cambridge Express Printing Company on 1st July 1939. Fifteen brave men and two brave ladies set off for a Saturday day trip to Margate. Nothing special about that – except that this was truly a day’s trip. They left Cambridge station at 4.30 am and were due to return to Cambridge station twenty-three-and-a-half hours later. Surely such a marathon must have attracted the attention of the CDN at the time, I thought, so I turned to the old files. There is no account of the Cambridge Express outing, but Messrs Cyril Ridgeon and Son also set off to Margate – by train – on the same day at the same time. A splendid breakfast was served en route and they reached their destination by 10.30 – but this is an hour-and-a-half later than the Express party anticipated they would arrive. So was there a hold-up? Even so what do you do in Margate until it’s time for the train home at 11.30 at night? The Ridgeon contingent were free to enjoy their various pursuits, the Printers got together again for dinner. At least the day was fine and sunny. Then eventually it was back on the train, arriving home (half-an-hour late) just as dawn was breaking when a tired but happy throng dispersed for a much-needed rest. [SCAN OF PROGRAMME WITH LIST OF NAMES]

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Following my article on Ely RAF Hospital I have received a letter from the Chief Executive of the Guinea Pig Club, based in Crawley. The club was established in July 1941 by airmen at the Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead who had been horribly burned during the early years of the war and continues to this day. Through their experiences of having to live with disfigurement and restricted use of fingers they assist new burns patients, showing them that through adversity a full life can be lived.

Jock Allaway was just one of the “Guinea Pigs” who started their life at Ely R.A.F. Hospital. He writes: “I arrived on October 10th 1943 with third degree burns of the hand, face and body after crashing. The plastic surgeon in charge was Wing Commander Morley who eventually became an Air Vice Marshall in charge of all RAF Medical Services. During my stay at Ely I had many operations, new top and bottom eyelids, nose and many ops on both my hands. Every month the distinguished surgeon Sir Archibald McIndoe used to visit and pick patients to be transferred to the new Queen Victorian Hospital, East Grinstead, Sussex. The city of Ely was very good to us, I even had two weeks’ convalescence at the Bishop’s Palace.”

Jock got to know of the article through Mrs Doreen Barnes of Littleport who as a 16-year-old girl used to visit burns unit at the hospital every Sunday afternoon bringing home-made cakes and fresh eggs. They have kept in touch ever since – proving that the horrors of war do have some benefits.

If you would like to contact the club you can write to 32 Goff’s Park Road, Crawley, West Sussex, RH11 8AY

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More wartime memories have been flooding in.

Sheila Wick from St Ives has more memories of the 27th Lancers who were stationed in the Cherry Hinton Road area of Cambridge in 1943-44. She particularly remembers Bill Campbell from Scotland who was crushed between two armoured cars but recovered and rejoined his regiment. She has lost touch since then, but is still in contact with Jack Chalmers who was in the same group and now lives in Lincolnshire. Sheila used to live on Cherry Hinton Road and with her mother used to help in the forces canteen at the Morley School in Blinco Grove.

Mr D. Spencer from Waterbeach was stationed with the 54th Maintenance Unit at Marshall’s, right opposite the Cemetery on Newmarket Road. He was there from March to August 1944 and then transferred into the army, first to Huyton transit camp, Liverpool, then on to Ireland and India until he was demobbed in 1947.

Mrs M. Norman of Queen Edith’s Way, Cambridge did war service at Marshalls Flying School and her sister met and married one of the young airmen featured in the photograph. Both are now dead but she is sending a copy of the cutting to their son who lives in Kent.

Ralph Brownlie from Royston thinks he too may be on the photograph. He has sent me a copy of a poem entitled “The salvage man’s song” describing the hardships of the job, tracking down crashed aircraft:

“Sometimes in a swamp, a ‘plane they will find,
And what with the mud, it’s a bit of a bind.
The job’s seldom done without some kind of a hitch,
You can gamble that most of it’s stuck in a ditch.
But with mud to the eyebrows, they’ll get out that ‘plane
And off on a loader to be fixed up again”

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Peter Hall E-mails memories of the First World War Hospitals in Cambridge

My father, the late Walter Hall, was born and bred in Willow Place, Cambridge, in 1892, joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1914 and finished his service as a sergeant at the First Eastern General Hospital in 1919. After the war a venture into tailoring turned into disaster during the 1926 General Strike, when he and my mother joined my grandparents, Rue and Kate Elsdon, in running The Fitzroy Arms in Fitzroy Street until 1954.

Denise Bane (nee Golding) of Royston was born in one of the old the First Eastern General Hospital huts in Burrell's Walk, Cambridge. Her father, Regimental Sergeant Major Hessell George Golding, had been sent there when he came home from France wounded and was by coincidence allocated a home there in 1923. Denise was christened at Great St Mary's as that was her parish church. She later worked at Pye Granta and played her part in the Second World War with the Women's Land Army. [SCAN OF LAND ARMY – NOT THAT OF DENISE BANE]

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Derrick Saunders from Oakington has further information on The Chequers group for which he played in its later days, along with bass player Ricky Wills, Dick Parry & an American serviceman called Andrew Fitzpatric, known in Cambridge as 'Fitz'. The band changed its name to the Soul Committee and turned professional, bringing in new personnel. They filled the old Dorothy and had coach loads of fans that followed them around. After Derrick left in 1998 the group continued for a couple of years, making records that still get played from time to time on the radio. He writes: "Cambridge has always been a great centre for musicians and very often when we try to do a kind of history we can't get into the past very easily. I think there are a lot of photos in old attics and perhaps somebody could take on the task of rounding them up and do a book".

Derrick's friends may know that he was in the Cambridge Footlights with Clive Anderson and Griff Jones. They do not know his secret, but as I mentioned Cliff Richard in my article, he now confesses that Cliff is a first cousin to his wife Monica. They were in kindergarten together in India, and, like him, her family name was Webb.

Memories 21st February 2001, by Mike Petty

Michael Bowyer grew up in Walnut Tree Avenue, Cambridge, a line of Victorian houses that stretched from Newmarket Road down to the river and just across the road from Brunswick School. He might have grown up to be just a normal child, were it not for the R101, the giant airship that passed over Cambridge in November 1929. While its nose was over his house, the stern was over Abbey Road and it kept coming. On its tail was the letter 'G'. The young Bowyer wrote it down, so he should not forget it. It was the start of a lifetime passion for noting things down about aircraft.

Schoolboys are inquisitive and Michael was one of a gang. Whenever anything unusual landed at the nearby Marshall's Airport the word spread like wildfire and more notes were jotted down. He can remember de Havilland Moths flying over the road, and Alan Cobham's air displays. He played truant from school to see a Flying Flea flown by Henri Mignet. He'd asked to go to the toilet, and never returned. He ran down Newmarket Road, crept down a lane and hit behind a petrol pump, where his uncle Jack spotted him – but never told. Sadley the Flea never flew that day – it was too windy.

He went to the 1935 Jubilee Review at Mildenhall and noted down the number so the aircraft he saw. His father made him models, which had to be painted to look like the real thing as recalled by his son. He still has some in the attic. By now Michael was totally addicted to anything to do with aviation. He

started a diary but never kept the pages until October 1941; he has not missed a day since. He logged down planes, numbers, squadron details, bombs.

By the time the air-raid sirens started sounding over Cambridge he was ready. His memories of it are vivid:

“It was terribly hot, June 18th 1940, and the air raid siren had gone – we’d had a lot of air raid warnings, but this was to be different. We’d just got into the middle room of our house which the air-raid warden had said was the safest place, and my father said: ‘if anything happens you’ll never get out’. We hadn’t been there many moments and all of a sudden there was a whistling and my father said ‘they’re bombs boy’ – we were well aware of the fact that they were bombs. The fireplace came out and went back, the light was swinging furiously, we had wooden shutters that my dad and I had made at the beginning of the war & they were shaking furiously, the house was still there. My mother got up and said ‘I’ll go and make the cup of tea’ and just as she said that there was a terrific explosion and it shook the house. I said ‘Dad, Hitler’s come’; he said ‘I don’t want you swearing any more in front of your mother’.

“Within moments an air raid warden was shouting out ‘take cover’; we walked out of house, the moon was merrily shining, there were people coming from all directions, going to air raid shelter opposite. The shelter had walls nine inches thick and the air raid warden dropped the gas curtain. My mum said ‘I’ve forgot to bring my gas mask’. The air raid warden stood up ceremoniously and said: ‘I have to tell you bombs have fallen; I repeat, bombs have fallen’, and I asked where.

“Up the road the children who died were children I went to school with – it was a terrific shock; when I went to look at Vicarage Terrace in the morning the first thing I saw was a dog with its head decapitated. It was so bizarre, last night all those weird things happened, people were dying while we having semi-merriment”. Later Michael investigated the official records of that raid to learn that the adults had got up to look out following the warning, the children had stayed in bed & it was the children who’d died.

As the war continued & more alerts sounded he did what his dad ordered, grabbed his binoculars and notepad first and his gasmask only second. From his garden he watched a German bomber machine-gun the Brunswick School; from a bus near the Catholic Church he saw the entire roof of the Perse School, that had been firebombed the night before, collapse in a massive eruption of fire and flames. Bits of ash rattled down on the bus, burning embers came through the open windows. The conductor checked tickets, the world carried on. Some of this he later recorded in his book ‘Air Raid! in 1986

Michael cycled round various airfields looking for clues as to who might be based there. At Methwold he picked up a piece of paper with a number on it – 487. Later he spotted that a pilot from 487 Squadron had been awarded a medal. So that squadron was at Methwold. Then at Oakington he spotted a mug with a motto ‘Per Andium per Noctem’ – it was proof that the Stirlings of 7 Squadron had taken up residence there. All Highly Secret information.

Then he got caught. Aged about 16 he had cycled to Mildenhall with his friends and his binoculars. There on the runway stood a Lancaster with a peculiar bump under its fuselage, painted black to disguise its contents. He’d seen them before – he’d sneaked inside the planes for a closer look but could never get the bump open. This one was different, the bump had not been painted black; through his binoculars he could see that inside it there was a scanner. He stood there, binoculars in hand, describing everything in great detail to his friends behind him who jotted it down. Then came the tap on his shoulder – just what was he playing at. This was spying! What was worse Michael had in his hand a long list of serial numbers of other aircraft he had carefully noted down. There was nothing for it, but to swallow the list! The teenagers were hauled off to the Guardroom, the extent of their

observations astounding their captors. With security compromised to such an extent there was nothing else for it; he was told to get on his bike, take a short-cut across the runway and get out of there!

Michael joined the Air Training Corps at the County School & when it came for him to join up there could be only one option – the air force. Poor eyesight stopped him flying operationally, but he worked in intelligence, on squadron histories & on the design of appropriate markings for their aircraft.

Afterwards it was time to find a career; his father said ‘Be a teacher’, so he did. He got a job at Bassingbourn school, cycling all the way from Cambridge and cycling over to Girton most evening where he was courting the girl who has been his wife for over 50 years. Mike didn’t want to be a teacher, but the children loved him too, so he gave in. Occasionally at lunchtime he joined other staff in a midday half-pint at the Hoops, where sometimes he chatted to the American airmen from Bassingbourn base, one of whom described in great detail how he’d just been over the Baltic, mapping radar defences. It was top secret information, but Michael knew about it already.

It was a schoolchild who really started him writing. He’d taken a class to Ely Cathedral when one of the girls showed an interest, not in the famous Octagon, but in the stained glass windows of the RAF chapel. He explained the significance of the names recorded there, the planes they flew, and particularly of the wooden Mosquito – the bomber that could fly faster than a fighter. He ought to write a book, she suggested – and her dad had connection with publishers Faber and Faber.

Michael returned home and decided it would be worth a letter. As he set up his typewriter three Mosquitoes began circling his house – they were being filmed for their part in ‘633 Squadron’. It was an omen. Faber expressed an interest and suggested collaboration with Martin Sharpe, the sales director of de Havilland. The resulting book won him a prestigious award from the Chief of the Air Staff. It established his credentials as a writer & led to another book, and then more.

For some time he worked with Air-Fix models, writing articles about the planes they reproduced in miniature. Then discussion in their offices at Bar Hill began to revolve around another idea. There had been books on squadrons, books on planes, but never books on airfields; the sort of book that could go in the glove compartment of a motorcar. The result was the first in a series entitled ‘Action Stations’. He wrote it from memory in three months. It came out on a Monday in 1979 and was sold out by Wednesday. A reprint followed, then another, and another – eventually it had been reissued 27 times with more than 100,000 copies sold around the world.

Such is his prestige that he now has access to sources around the world. He and his camera have photographed Naval Reviews and RAF Flypasts, leaning out of the back of a Hercules aircraft to snap the farewell to the Phantom, or swooping low over spying boats in a de Havilland Dove. In August I joined a group he led to the giant Alconbury airbase where a man in a pick-up truck escorted our minibus past formerly secret U-2 spyplane areas, into strengthened aircraft shelters and to the door of a massive nuclear bunker. Earlier we had gazed at the outside of a building used until very recently as a large underground wartime emergency hospital, kept permanently staffed, day and night, just in case.

Now Michael Bowyer has drawn on over 60 years of personal recording, recollections and official records to revise the Action Stations volume covering Eastern England. It is the definitive history of the major airfields and tiny landing strips, including much information only newly declassified and illustrated by more than 200 rare and unpublished photographs.

Doubtless there is more to find, perhaps buried in official documents, but more likely jotted down or remembered by inquisitive schoolboys or girls. If you have a memory of so long ago then do share it

Action Stations revisited; no.1: Eastern England, by Michael J.F. Bowyer is published by Crecy Publishing Ltd at £24.95

Pictures scanned

Michael Bowyer, aged about 4 with tin-plate toy plane

Michael Bowyer – from Action Stations Revisited

Stirlings of 7 Squadron at Oakington, the plane suffered high losses, 221 crashed at Waterbeach, when tail wings broke off or through other accidents; they were often to be seen stuck in the ditch around the airfield, with their noses sticking over the A10 road,

A Mosquito at Marshalls airfield

An American P-51 lands at Bottisham airfield, possibly on D-Day

On Standby about 1960 – a Javelin at Waterbeach between blast walls which would have protected it from small bombs

Memories 28th February 2001, by Mike Petty

The current horrific headlines of the slaughter of cattle as the dreaded Foot and Mouth Disease spreads across the country will bring back painful memories for many of the similar stories from 1967. Then the first outbreak occurred on a field in Shropshire in October on the day of Oswestry market at which some 7,000 head of stock had been sold, including two from the infected farm. Whole areas of the country were placed under restriction but despite this new outbreaks broke out and by November 14th the controlled area extended as far as Huntingdonshire.

Troops were brought in to help with disinfecting and clearing up, hundreds of slaughtermen permanently engaged. Cambridge cattle market was hit, exports were banned, race meetings called off, ramblers urged to keep away from farmland, the banks of the Cam closed to fishermen, but still new outbreaks occurred. By December people living in areas affected were being asked to stay at home for Christmas, the Irish Government advised visitors to stay away and warned that Christmas parcels containing clothing or used footwear would be automatically returned to the sender.

By January 1968 the situation was becoming easier, though thousands of animals were still being slaughtered each week. The Queen expressed her “Great sympathy for the farmers who have so tragically lost their livestock and my admiration for all who have been fighting with such untiring efforts to control the disease and to ride the country of it once again”. But still odd outbreaks occurred, causing further heartbreak and panic and it was too be April before the last one was reported. But even when the disease had been eradicated, farmers still had to undergo the trauma of restocking and starting again.

The 1967-68 outbreak was not unique, in fact throughout the century there had regularly been foot-and-mouth cases; from 1931 to 1961 there had never been a year in which the number of animals slaughtered was less than 1,000. In 1960 the figure had been 70,000, in 1942 45,251 and in 1923 128,000. Throughout the 1800s local farmers had suffered like everyone else. In April 1884 an outbreak was detected at Wimpole, in February 1882 farms at Offord D’Arcy and Yelling had been hit, in April 1881 Ely cattle market reopened, having been well limed and cleansed after being shut down for three months due the disease. Outbreaks were reported at Chatteris, Manea and Benwick that

January. Earlier in May 1877 the Cambridgeshire authorities had imposed restrictions on the movement of cattle into the county due to another outbreak.

For even then they would have recalled that most frightening outbreak of cattle plague that had struck in May 1865 and raged for two-and-a-half years. Throughout the country and the county parishes reported the decimation of their stock: Stretham reported that 13 herds had been ravaged, at Waterbeach Mr Baxter and Mr Hitch lost cattle. At Littleport James Little had buried 59 head of stock and slaughtered several others, Mr Shrewsbury had lost 19, Mr Gotobed four and a small farmer named Howlett had been entirely deprived of his dairy of seven cows. Each minor tragedy added to the total.

What was worse there was nothing anybody could do about it – except pray. Services of humiliation were held at parish churches, including those of Stapleford and Pampisford, but it is R.G. Edwards, the Baptist minister from Sutton who summarised the feelings of people everywhere in his prayer on the Fast Day, December 20th 1865:

“This dire disease – this Cattle pest,
Which fills with sorrow, all our land,
Proves to us all, that man, at best
Can nothing do to stay thy hand.
Hear gracious God the Village cry,
Preserve our Cattle, for they die.”

The 1865 outbreak was eventually identified as Rindpest, brought in with a consignment of cattle from the Baltic; the one in 1884 blamed on a cargo of imported cattle from Liverpool, Argentinean beef was blamed for the Foot-and-Mouth outbreak of 1967; and as for 2001 – all we can do is wait, watch the headlines - and perhaps pray.

Vic Burling of Cambridge has responded to my request for railway memories. He writes:

“As a BR area relief clerk at the time, I was the person rostered to travel (in my own car!) to all the stations between Cambridge and Bury St. Edmunds the week after they had either been closed to passengers or been reduced to unstaffed halts in November 1966. Being a railway enthusiast as well as a railwayman, it was not a task that I particularly enjoyed doing. Completely closed were Fulbourn(e), Six Mile Bottom, Higham and Saxham & Risby stations, whilst Dullingham, Newmarket and Kennett have managed to cling on to this day because the trains went over to full conductor guard operation which was a fairly new concept then. In its heyday Newmarket had two large booking offices, one on either platform because each had its own separate public entrance. Charlie was the very last of the shunt horses on British Railways, they once numbered nearly 800, and was retired to Somerset on February 21st, 1967.

“The unheated and unlit offices were already cold and damp with condensation running off the walls as I travelled around and I had to do a final balance of the books at each, taking all monies, ticket stocks, parcels stamps and anything else of value through to Bury St. Edmunds.

“A colleague and I also had to undertake passenger travel surveys for several weeks on the Cambridge - St. Ives line. This usually took place in the summer when a lot of the regular travellers were away on holiday and we knew it was simply a ruse for gathering information for closure of the line. We eventually both objected to being used in this way, rather brave for a couple of twentysomethings fearful for their jobs, and were summoned to Great Eastern House on the corner of Station Road and Tenison Road where we had our knuckles duly rapped, although we were then transferred to other work. Unfortunately the St. Ives passenger service succumbed in October 1970.”

Another institution that has succumbed to the process of change is the Cambridge postal sorting office on the corner of Mill Road, where in the mid 1960s the News snapped postal worker, Jim Stuart

welcoming group of schoolchildren and explaining how packets were sorted into London postal area. An experience sorter would quickly route packages to the appropriate bag. Do you recognise yourself or any of the group?

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Workers of a different sort are featured in a photograph lent by Mrs K. Bond of Girton. It shows a group of estate workers at Anglesey Abbey in 1920. Amongst the faces she recognises her late father-in-law, Harry Bond, who was the estate carpenter and later landlord of the Little Rose in Trumpington Street. It also features a couple of ancient vehicles; one appears to be some sort of bus, the other may be a motorcycle combination. If it rings a bell then drop me a line. [SCAN OF PICTURE OF WORKERS]

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Mr L.W. Cadman from Wilburton has been digging through his postcard album to find a card of Prickwillow during the floods of 1937. As he says in his note: "Not quite as bad as this yet! – but of course we're not into March yet – and it seems to be March when the floods come. [SCAN OF PRICKWILLOW]

*

Mona Rumsey from Saffron Walden has sent a card to say that the picture of Land Army girls that I featured in Memories on February 14th was taken at Burgoynes Farm, Impington. Ted Thorogood was Chivers farm manager and his wife Lily was housekeeper at the hostel. She thinks the year was probably 1943

Memories 7th March 2001, by Mike Petty

Cleaners, cooks and caretakers shook hands with royalty in December 1974 when the Duchess of Kent formally opened the new YMCA building in Gonville Place, erected at a cost of over £400,000 to replace the old building swept away for the Lion Yard redevelopment.

That building was not the first meeting place for the Cambridge branch of the Young Men's Christian Association which had come into being in February 1851, just 7 years after the movement's foundation in London. It existed to cultivate the mental talents of the young men of the town and to give it a religious direction. Thus they sought to provide a library of religious books, a Reading Room with religious periodicals, rooms for classes and social religious meetings as well as lectures on all subjects. But to do this it needed space.

The first rooms in Rose Crescent were too dark and hard to get to, the second in Sidney Street were defective in heating and ventilation, little better than the third home at Hobson Place where the landlord wanted to increase the agreed £30 rent. As they were by then £15 in debt things looked bleak indeed. But the Association had a Committee which included some of the most notable of Cambridge businessmen and by 1866 when they moved yet again, this time to St Edward's Passage, such was the numbers attending lectures and using the library that much larger premises were needed.

At this time there came onto the market a site in Alexandra Street which was in the centre of town, near the Post Office, next to the central telegraph station, surrounded by roads yet away from the noise of traffic. Then other businessmen agreed to act as trustees & the future was assured. When the committee, including Mr Foster the banker, Mr Bowes the bookseller, Mr Sayle the shopkeeper & Mr Munsey the Jeweller, planned a building they looked for the best architect of the time, Alfred Waterhouse.

The foundation stone was laid by William Fowler, MP in 1870, and it opened 11 months later, at a cost of £5,000. It included a lecture room that would hold 400 people that became known as the Alexandra Hall, playing an important part in the social life of the town. It was here that in 1908 a Blackpool company first demonstrated "Animated Pictures" and it was soon in regular use, though only for films of a high moral tone. In 1910 it became one of the first three Cambridge buildings licensed under the Cinematograph Act and was the scene of regular shows. But by February 1914 the cinema was six weeks behind with its rent and the Committee gave them one week's notice to quit. Two new applicants asked to continue its use for the same purpose, but it was not to be.

In December 1914 the Welsh Division marched into Cambridge and the YMCA was the one place ready to receive them. For the next five years the Alexandra Hall was devoted to meeting the needs of the troops, with recreation rooms, canteen and concerts. The process was repeated in 1939 but the work also extended to the civilians evacuated to Cambridge to escape the London bombing. Nor were the troops manning the lonely searchlight and anti-aircraft stations overlooked with a Tea Car soon employed. Mobile canteens were at the Railway Station to welcome the troops returning from Dunkirk beaches and soon even the Alexandra street premises were full, men overflowing on to the pavement outside. Later American troops and Italian prisoners of war came to know and appreciate the facilities.

Post-war the YMCA developed its community role once more until the needs of big business became paramount and the site was needed for redevelopment as part of the Lion Yard shopping centre. Hence the new building with its community rooms and study, bedrooms mainly let to non University students and business trainees that received its Royal opening in 1974.

Now Newton Wills is seeking to find people with memories of the old YMCA. Did you attend dances there, were you one of those that used its residential facilities or benefited from its services in other ways. If so he would be pleased to hear from you at the present Cambridge YMCA building at Queen Anne House on Gonville Place, Cambridge – phone 356998 or E-mail to admin@camymca.org.uk. And while we're about it – what do you remember of the old buildings that used to be on the site. [PICTURES OF THE DUCHESS OF WORK OPENING THE NEW YMCA, THE OLD BUILDING IN POST OFFICE TERRACE THAT WAS DEMOLISHED AS PART OF THE LION YARD AND THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE FOR THAT BUILDING

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At least the Great War soldiers billeted at the old YMCA had comfortable rooms. Others were based in tents on the commons and in various parts of the town. A few weeks ago a lady told me of some ghostly happenings in a house on Maids Causeway. It reminded me of a story that appeared in the Cambridge Daily News of 16th January 1915 telling of the experience of the police of a battalion who occupied an empty house in the area.

“The day’s work had been unduly fatiguing and they soon, each one of them, fell soundly asleep. They were aroused from their deep slumber almost simultaneously. For a while there was an oppressive silence and then the disturbed sleepers were startled to hear curious sounds proceeding from all over the premises and from the direction of the front door. Nearly all of them aver that they saw, in shadowy outline, the form of a man which speedily vanished, and that then the noises abruptly ceased. Courageously enough the police decided to search the house and with fixed bayonets they probed into every nook and cranny of the place. The hunt yielded no clue to a human intruder and some time elapsed before the scared and puzzled soldiers successfully wooed sleep again. The following morning the tale of their experience was received with derision and incredulity. Only by neighbours were they taken seriously and from them they learned the house had an eerie history. Their good neighbours declared that the place was known to be haunted. For seven years the houses had been unoccupied, the last tenant being a student lodger whose reason for leaving was that he had seen ghosts there. And so the place had stood empty for many years.”

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Christine Green from Comberton writes: “What a nice surprise to see in the “Memories” an article on the Cambridge Express Printing Company. My father was Leonard G.C. Colpus, and my grandfather George E. Colpus were both mentioned on the annual outing to Margate programme. I went on several of their day trips, by coach and recall the stops of on the way and then the crates of beer would be hauled from the back of the coach which the men – and some of the women would enjoy.

“My mother helped in the office and I spent many happy hours there. The noise when the presses were in action was wonderful. The whole building would creak & shake until I feared the upper floors would collapse with the weight of the heavy machines. The guillotine seemed enormous and lethal but Mr Venning could always cut through the great pile of paper as if he were cutting a slice of bread. The men were always kind to me and would let me set up type and print out headings”.

Christine had lent me a picture of the retirement presentation to Mr Ingrey; with him are her father (far right) and grandfather, both wearing glasses, with the Mayor of Cambridge, Mr A. Spalding. But she asks if anyone has a picture of the outside of the premises in King Street, or if anybody else remembers them. [SCAN ENCLOSED]

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Mrs Laura Simmons of Cambridge has some especial memories of the lead up to decimalization for she was in right at the start of the changes and literally helped shape the future Minting of various coins were underway but one decision needed to be made before production could start – what shape should the new 50p be.

She writes: “On Thursday 18th January 1968 a group of us reported to the Medical research Council’s Applied Psychology Unit in Chaucer Road, Cambridge where we were taken up to an attic room and seated round a hollow square of tables. The new decimal coins were explained and we were given samples to scrutinise and handle. Amongst them was the seven-sided 50p but other groups were tested with pentagons, hexagons or other shapes, to see which was easiest to identify. Then we were all given purses with a mixture of coins and asked to pick out sums like 37p., 65½ p. etc. Our efforts were timed by a stop-watch. There was a slight hold-up at one stage when someone dropped a ½p and we all searched the cork tile floor which made a perfect camouflage. Our second task was to identify particular coins by touch alone. I was a frequent visitor to the Unit for many years, taking part in a great variety of tests. But this is the only one where I can definitely say I helped to plan the future”

Memories 14th March 2001 by Mike Petty

Last week I sought memories of wartime firemen. Colin Summerfield of Landbeach responded immediately with photographs of the Cambridge members of the Auxiliary Fire Service in both formal and somewhat less-formal attire! Can you put names to the faces, or the bodies. His dad, Len Summerfield, is fourth from the right in the dressed group and served throughout the war seeing service in Norwich, London docklands and a large fuel depot fire on the Thames, as well as in Cambridge itself. With his wife, Millie, and two sons, they lived in Vicarage Terrace. They moved out from the house just weeks before the German bombs destroyed it. Colin adds: "My father helped fight the fires and recover the bodies of his friends and old neighbours. This had a profound effect on him and up until his death in 1999 he would not discuss it even with his closest family." There was a brighter side to the job – visiting the wealthier parts of Cambridge and requisitioning large cars that were capable of towing firemen's bowsters. [SCANS OF FIREMEN]

Further details of the work the Cambridge men did in the London blitz were recorded by the late Frank Reeve in an unpublished story 'Going to blazes'. It is illustrated by graphic pictures that capture the horror of that time. [SCAN OF BLITZ]

Mr A.C. Waldock from Fulbourn has forwarded his memories of another war-time job – that of cinema operator. He left school in 1940 and started work in the fitters' shop at Fulbourn Hospital. He writes: "One of the highlights of the job was in the winter evenings when I used to assist the fitter/operator, Mr Harley Overton, to show films to the patients; males on evening, and females another. The programme was a newsreel, cartoon and feature, always the same sort. My job was to hand feed the arc lamp, and put the records on for the reel change, as there was only one projector, an old Kalec No.1. The next day I had to pack up the films to return to the renters.

"I was by now bitten by the cinema bug and in September 1941 I saw an advert in the Cambridge Daily News for a rewind boy at the Regal; I applied and got the job at 25/- (£1.25) a week. I worked there for about a month and got promoted to 4th projectionist at The Central (also ABC, as was the Victoria, Tivoli and Playhouse), where I stayed for 2½ years.

"They had a split week of programmes, Sunday one day, Monday to Wednesday 3 days and Thursday to Saturday – the Minors came along later. The films were delivered Thursday and Sundays and were collected Wednesday and Saturday nights. During the blitz on London the system sometimes went adrift and this caused many frantic phone calls to the renters over non-arrivals. This was alleviated by the use of a standby film held at The Vic for such emergencies, this being put into use until the films arrived by rail. I was usually the one who had to go to the station to collect them and bring it down by taxi. The patrons who came in at one o'clock sometimes saw a triple feature programme.

"The films were normally delivered by the Film Transport Services, a London firm. Our chap lived at Shelford and when he was on holiday or off sick the firm sent a relief driver named Gus, a real Londoner, and a character. He would ask me to come and give him a hand, me being an eager lad was pleased to have a 'night out'. This entailed starting at the Kinema, Playhouse, Tivoli, Arts, Regal, Vic and then Central, then off towards 'the smoke' calling at the U.S. base at Bassingbourn (where the gate MPs went over the van with a fine tooth comb). Then it was on to The Priory at Royston and Ware, Hoddesdon, Enfield and up to Palmers Green where Gus had a watering hole.

"Then it was off to the 'film dump' which was a large garage at West Twinford, near the Brylcreem factory. Sometimes you had to queue up to get in, as vans came from all over the south of England. Once inside you dumped your cans on a bay, then went to a car park and waited until about six o'clock next morning when you reloaded for the return with the next three days programmes. Just think! If Jerry had scored a hit on that garage, with all the nitrate film, not to mention the dozens of vans, each a mobile bomb - you would have seen the blaze in Cambridge!

“During the war the cinemas had firewatchers, who were staff members, usually projectionists or doormen. This entailed sleeping in the circle foyer, and for this we got 6/- (30p) per night. I used to do it three or four nights a week. My eating house was the café over Morley’s pawn shop in Hobson Street owned by a Miss Pearson, an elderly lady. Another regular diner was an old chap named Alf Dellar who delivered the handbills for The Arts and always had hobnailed boots as highly polished as any guardsman’s. Another person I remember at The Central was Bill Pearl – he only had one arm and was doorman, boilerman and cleaner as well as being a good gardener in his spare time. He would bring in big potatoes for our suppers which he would put in the ashpit of the boiler so they would be cooked by the end of the show for the firewatchers’ supper.

“During the blackout my mate Bob Osbourn and I used to take our girlfriends home, and on returning to the cinema, if the doors were locked, we used to slide down the coke chute to get in. Even today as I pass The Central I smile to myself when I see the chute.

“On my next move I was promoted to third projectionist at The Victoria which was my favourite as it had a character all of its own, and there I stayed until I was called up for Military Service in 1944. I was demobbed in 1948 and returned to The Vic where I made it to chief projectionists, being finally made redundant when it ‘went dark’ in 1988” [SCANS OF CINEMAS]

Several villages had cinemas in those days. During the war The Regal at Littleport was hit by incendiary bombs that caused considerable damage. It happened after they had been screening a film entitled “On the night of the fire”. Do you have memories of village cinemas.

Whilst on the subject of entertainment, a Comberton reader asks what happened to the pictures of artists who played at the New Theatre which used to be displayed at the Free Press pub in Cambridge. [SCAN OF NEW THEATRE]

Howard Brumhill of Bartlow writes to say he is researching the change in teaching methods and discipline in schools in Cambridgeshire from the 1950s to the 1990s, especially in the Linton, Sawston, Melbourn and Bottisham village college areas. This seems an ideal subject for ‘Memories’, so if you are willing to share your recollections of the days when discipline was a clip around the ear, or 100 lines then let me know.

Newark Air Museum are hosting a Canberra Reunion on 19th & 20th May to mark 50 years of service by the Canberra with the RAF. They have tracked down many of the aircraft and are now looking for people who flew or maintained them. If you can help please send a large SAE to Bill O’Sullivan at Newark Air Museum, Winthorpe Showground, Newark, Notts NG24 2NY or visit their website at www.newarkairmuseum.co.uk

Memories 21st^h March 2001, by Mike Petty

The news that broke in March 1951, that the King had “been graciously pleased to confer on the Borough of Cambridge the title and dignity of a city” marked the end of half-a-century or more of local government struggle for its councillors.

It obliterated any reminder of the old days of the 1830s when Cambridge council had been condemned as notoriously inefficient – though a portrait of the most corrupt of its Mayors, John Mortlock, continues to hang in the Mayor’s parlour.

In 1888 a Local Government Act enhanced the powers of the Cambridge town council who acquired the responsibilities of the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners, themselves appointed to remedy earlier corporation failings. It also reinforced the developing links with the old enemy – the University – who now won the right to appoint and elect representatives to the council. Soon the University

surrendered many of its old powers over town affairs and the relationship between the town and gown improved.

But the Act also established an important new authority – the County Council with new powers and responsibilities. There was talk of sharing offices, but they came to nothing and the new County opened a County Hall in Hobson Street.

Town and County found themselves at loggerheads over Cambridge's plans to expand its area, to take in Chesterton and parts of Coton, Trumpington, Cherry Hinton and Fen Ditton; the County objected. Both were partially successful and in 1912 only Chesterton and a few fields to the south became part of the Borough of Cambridge.

Now new battles erupted for expanded Cambridge felt itself large enough to be allowed to run all its own affairs and not have to pay rates to the upstart County Council. The County opposed fearing that if Cambridge won independence the rest of the county would be unworkable. Once more the town won the debate though tactical voting in Parliament in 1914 frustrated their plans.

In 1934 the town was successful in its campaign for yet further extensions with Cherry Hinton and Trumpington being brought within its boundaries, its area had now increased three-fold in 24 years.

By now the County Council had expanded into a new Shire Hall on Castle Hill. The Town Council were furious - yet new offices for the County whilst they were stuck in their old Guildhall. Ratepayers had rejected earlier plans for redevelopment, this time they would rebuild. The inevitable opposition that once more erupted was dismissed. Buildings on Peas Hill were pulled down and one wing of the new offices put up, then the old Guildhall was demolished and the present building erected in its place. The join between the two stages can be seen to this day. But Corporation hopes of a grand official opening were frustrated due to start of War and the move into the new building took place without ceremony.

Once the war was over the conflict between town and county recommenced. The County Council now controlled planning and brought out proposals that would limit town expansion. Trying to break the shackles Cambridge once more sought County Borough Status in 1950. But by then the rules had changed; the minimum population required was 100,000 whereas Cambridge, despite all its expansion could only muster 75,000.

But then in March of 1951 the Town Council took the first step to acquire City status. It was an appropriate time. It was 750 years since King John had granted their first charter, Cambridge had been chosen as a centre for the celebration of the Festival of Britain and would attract visitors from across the world – and there was to be the Royal Agricultural Show in July. The King himself had attended Cambridge University which was the only ancient seat of learning not to be accommodated in a city. But the High Steward, Professor G.M. Trevelyan, had the most telling reason – “Why should Oxford be a city if Cambridge is not. I don't believe there is any answer to that question”

Whichever factor was crucial the news broke on 24th March 1951 that the King had accepted the recommendation of the Home Secretary; Cambridge would be granted city status, though it was stressed this would not confer further powers. It was a point reinforced by the Deputy Mayor “I hope the inhabitants of the administrative county will appreciate and enjoy the reflected honour that they now have a city as their county town”.

On April 27th 1951 there was an opportunity to thank those involved in the award of the Honour. The King, George VI, and Queen Elizabeth, together with Princess Margaret were in Cambridge to attend a Thanksgiving Service which would mark a number of events. Primarily there was the restoration of the stained glass in King's College chapel windows – removed during the war years, but also the success of the University Boat Race Crew. They had beaten Oxford not once, but twice. In the first race - described as the strangest boat race on record – the Dark Blues had sunk and the Umpire had declared the event void. At the rematch Cambridge raced home to a 15-length victory. They had then crossed the Atlantic to beat all comers in Anglo-American inter-University races before returning in triumph on the Queen Elizabeth and racing back to Cambridge to meet the King. His Majesty expressed his pleasure at being the first monarch to visit the City of Cambridge, an honour for which Cambridge had been asking since James I had visited in 1615.

Then that evening there was another celebration, this one in the University Arms. Amongst the honoured guests was the Home Secretary, Chuter Ede, who had endorsed the grant of city status. There would be officials and Members of Parliament, and of course the Chairman of the Cambridgeshire County Council, Alderman E.G. Gordon Frost. A correspondent noticed that the County Arms on the entrance gates at Shire Hall were being regilded and wondered if this was because of the reflected glory or was a mild hint that the County was not without its own dignified importance.

Later the battles between town and county would be renewed with proposals for County Borough status promoted and rejected in 1960 and 1962. Then came local government reorganisations which saw Cambridgeshire County merge first with the Isle of Ely in 1964 and then with Huntingdonshire and the Soke of Peterborough in 1974. In that reshuffle Cambridge lost control of various of its previous responsibilities, lost the University-nominated representatives on the council, but retained the 'City' status which this year it is once more celebrating.

SCANS OF ROYAL VISIT TO KINGS COLLEGE 1951
MARKET HILL AND GUILDHALL 1950
THE BUILDING OF THE NEW GUILDHALL 1936
TO BE DELIVERED MONDAY

Memories 28th March 2001, by Mike Petty

Once more it is fires and cinemas that have dominated the postbag. The two were neatly brought together by Don Unwin of Cambridge. He writes:

"I was born and lived until 1947 in Magrath Avenue, Cambridge, and was a frequent visitor to the Rendezvous Cinema on Saturday afternoons; the entrance charge was 1d for seats in the first row, no arms, 2d in the second row and woe betide you if you were caught moving back during the performance. However the highlight was the day the cinema caught fire. The fire brigade turned up eventually, at that time the Police Brigade, the hoses were run out and the engine started. When the water started to flow more came out of the leaks in the canvas hose than came out of the nozzle!" Don later joined the fire brigade during the war and has memories of driving some of the requisitioned motor cars used to pull the fire appliance.

Pam Newman has written from Bedford because she saw her dad, Fred Harley amongst the Auxiliary Firemen I featured in Memories on 14th March. She had never seen that picture before but has sent another showing Fred sitting on the right, with his mate, George Harding behind his right shoulder. But what, she asks, is the significance of the cup that the centre fireman is holding? Pam remembers her dad started his duties in Rathmore Road before moving to the fire station opposite the University Arms. Whilst stationed there he used to make sandals in his spare time when he was waiting for the

‘bells to go down’. One particular memory was the night of the Perse School Fire: “After several hours fighting the fire his coat had got soaked. He then rode home on his bicycle. It was a bitterly cold night and when he came in his arms were outstretched – the coat had frozen solid and he couldn’t bend his arms!” Being a fireman’s daughter was not always unpleasant: “I used to do shopping for my grandmother in Gwydir Street and one day I heard the engine coming. It was on its way to Sturton Street and dad was driving. That day I got to stand on the platform and ring the bell!” [SCAN OF GROUP]

More pictures of the Auxiliary Firemen have been lent me from the wonderful photographic collections at Burwell Museum. Jeff Marsh supplied them with the original picture of the Cheddar’s Lane section. His father Neville and uncle Gordon served during the war but later moved to Burwell where they continued to serve until the AFS was abandoned in the 1960s. Burwell fire station was taken over by the County Council and is still run by a retained local crew [SCAN OF FIREMEN]

Thanks to the efforts of the war-time firemen many blazes that may have run out of control were checked and houses that may have been destroyed continued to provide homes. But when the war was won there was another battle to be fought – the fight for houses.

Many Cambridgeshire villages retain their picture-postcard thatched properties and these have featured in memories books over the years. But many other people live in less picturesque houses that were an immense improvement over the old, damp and crumbling cottages of an older era – council houses. They stand in estates or in rows straggling along the approaches to villages, places where no modern council planner would ever approve. But how did they come to be built, what is their story?

In 1894 the newly-established Rural District Councils were given responsibility for improving the often-appalling housing conditions of the period. One of these new authorities was the Linton RDC who became one of the very first in the country to start to provide council houses. They embarked on a project that dragged on and on, with their clerk being called to give evidence to a Parliamentary Select Committee as they grappled with the principles & the finance involved. Then the council could start to build with their first ten houses in Symonds Lane and Back Road, Linton being occupied in 1911.

Building continued after the Great War with houses in Balsham Road completed in 1927 and more following. By 1937 the Council had built 102 properties that were being rented at between 3/6 (18p) and 5/6 (28p) per week, at a time when the minimum wage for farm labourers was 31/6 (£1.80) per week. The conclusion of the Second World War saw demand for housing of any sort rise to an unprecedented rate. By 1951 Cambridge couples who had applied for council houses in 1946 still had a two or three-year wait ahead of them. In the Linton area in 1950 there were nearly 550 families needing bigger houses and 323 without a separate home of their own. This was in addition to nearly 70 families living in ex-army camps or huts. Yet there were shortages of building materials and labour and the government was keen to promote the building of ‘non-traditional’ houses such as ‘Wates’, ‘Unity’ and ‘No-fines’ concrete types of pre-fabricated houses. Out at Linton the RDC erected a new estate at Chalklands and more and more families were able to start a new life.

Council houses had large gardens – but no running water or inside loos. Certainly Linton had to grapple with such improvement to its older properties – let alone parking spaces or central heating - whilst also finding money for new homes. It is an achievement that can easily be overlooked. The story of Linton Rural District Council’s pioneering work in housing has now been told in a fascinating 125-page study that was started by Frank Jeffery and has now been completed by his widow, Iris. It is published by the Linton Local History Society and sells for £8.

Were you a council tenant? It must have been a time of tremendous excitement when you were first given the keys of the new council house and faced the challenge of finding furniture to equip it. Did it come from your families, or did you visit the various sales in Corn Exchanges or Cattle Markets and bid at auction. Are there odd items that you have continued to use ever since. Do you have memories to share? [SCANS]

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Christine Green asked if anybody had memories of King Street and the Cambridge Express Printing Company, and letters have poured in. David Burbridge of Melbourn even remembered her father, G.E. Colpus who was the air raid warden for an area of Huntingdon Road; he recalls: "I took a form to him to sign to allow my mother, who possessed the stirrup pump, to share with neighbours – we still have the pump". Mr E. Shrimpton of Bar Hill has sent a copy of the cover of the Cambridge Express Street Finder for November 1948 that he acquired when he was transferred from Cambridgeshire County Police to the Borough force. "My first morning on the street I was taken by my Sergeant into the King Street office to obtain a copy of the street finder. It was 9d well spent". He remember there used to be a police phone they referred to as 'Sun Street' on Newmarket Road between Wellington Street and East Road. Sun Street was a row of cottages that were demolished to widen Newmarket Road –but do you remember them.

T. Reynolds of Over was one of those who actually demolished the Express Printing Works when working for Plumb and Nurse, a local firm. He adds: "I recall we had a café nearly opposite where we used to have our breaks. Whilst clearing the rubble from the printers building I recall the digger blacking out the electricity for a while when it struck a live cable hidden in the rubble. Reeds Hairdressers was one of the victims, which was unfortunate as there were customers still under the dryers when the shop lost its power supply". Mrs P. Moorhouse of Chesterton used to live in Trinity Place, off King Street. In fact she and her mother were the last people to move out of the 23 houses that used to be there. Can anybody help her find a picture of her old home?

Another forgotten street is recalled by Beryl Bonner of Whittlesford. Her father, Basil Levett was born in Walnut Tree Avenue which she recalls as "a peaceful tree-line road leading down to the River Cam and the ferry boat". Beryl has lent me a snap of her auntie, Iva, enjoying the peace and tranquillity that was to be found beside the river. It has gone now – replaced by Elizabeth Bridge! [SCAN]. And whilst on the river and river crossings, Derek Stubbings of the Chesterton Local History Society, is anxious to collect as many pictures as possible of the ferries and bridges that used to cross the river between Chesterton and Victoria Bridge. Can you help?

Richard Smith of Cottenham has sent some memories of the early days of films in Cottenham. "I redcall that in the late thirties a Mr Symonds gave film shows in the Lordship Hall, behind the Conservative Club. He parked his van containing the projector close to the building so that when he opened a hatch in the side of the van it was in a position to project through a similar hatch in the wall of the hall. Mr Young sold oranges and chocolate bars during the interval"

Memories 4th April 2001 by Mike Petty

As the foot and mouth disease continues commentators lament the dramatic change to upland landscapes should sheep be removed from the fells. In many parts of rural fenland and Cambridgeshire the sight livestock is now a rarity. Yet only a few years ago most villages were used to seeing the regular procession of cows being driven down the street for milking in the parlour in the farmyard. Browsing through old *News* photograph files for a forthcoming book of Memories I came across one such picture, this one taken at Sutton in November 1964.

Cows feature in Mary Watt's reminiscences of Over. In the early years of the century – last century now –her father had to work for an hour before he could go to school. She recalls: "He drew up many bucketfuls of water from the well just outside the farm's back door to supply the family's needs for the day and cleaned the cow house each morning. Once when he was already dressed in his school clothes he went back down the yard to fetch a tool for his father and as he passed he saw a cow preparing to relieve itself. Not wanting his work spoiled

so soon, he ran to fetch a forkful of straw and stood waiting to catch the 'deposit' as it fell. At the crucial moment the cow hiccuped and overshot the straw. Dad was late for school that morning and his mother was not pleased at having so much extra washing to do.

“After school he drove the cows to drink from Sandpit pond and once had a very narrow escape when the bull accompanying them turned nasty and rushed at him. He managed to get into the garden of one of the nearby cottages and get the gate shut at the moment when the bull made contact with it. Fortunately, the gate was strong enough to resist the impact.

“He was still only a teenager when he drove cattle to Overcote, sent his dog onto the drawbridge to guard the open end, followed the cattle on and guarded the other open end himself and began the crossing. A system of chains pulled the drawbridge slowly across to the Needingworth side. One of the animals broke loose and got into the river and dad had one of his most overwhelming experiences trying to keep the others under control while he got the escaped one ashore. Years later it was still very vivid to him. He arrived at St Ives Market much later than he had expected to!” These ferries were an essential part of the transport infrastructure, carrying not only cattle but also horses and vehicles such as Fred Garner of Willingham’s carrier’s cart, photographed at Overcote. [SCAN ON DISK]

Cattle markets are another side of life that has disappeared. The last auction of cattle and pigs at Ely livestock market was reported on 11th September 1981:

“A 100-year-old tradition came to an end when cattle and pigs were auctioned at the last livestock market held in Ely. During the past few years the market had had less business as more farmers switched from animals to arable farming, so the auctioneers who ran the market Cheffins, Grain & Chalk have decided to call it a day. It was a particularly sad day for the auctioneer, Mr John Grain, who first started work at the market exactly 48 years ago to the day. He said the market was founded by his grandfather, Mr Arthur Trett Grain and continued under his father’s guidance until he took over. At 10.45am Mr Grain rang the bell for the last time to summon farmers, dealers and onlookers to the final cattle sale. This time there was only one animal to be sold – a black Hereford brought along by Mr Sidney King, a Littleport farmer. It tipped the scales at 680kg and was bought by King Brothers of Holbeach, Lincolnshire. Then 78-year-old Mr ‘Nips’ Lee of Ely – a market hand for 63 years until he was forced to retire – was called to ring the bell to herald the start of the final pig sale. The bidding was brisk for the 50 pigs on offer, the last one being sold by Mr William Darby of Haddenham. Entering into the spirit of the occasion the bidders pushed the price up to 290p per kg, when it was bought by Mr Sidney King junior, of Littleport” [SCAN ELY COM ON CD]

The Christmas fatstock markets had been larger affairs in the 1960s when crowds of farmers gathered to watch and participate. [SCAN 028 ON CD]

Working horses are another side of country life that have disappeared. Tommy Parish from Stretham has lent me a snap he took some 50 years ago, this time showing horses being led down the village’s Chapel Street. They pulled the ploughs and harrows, carts and carriages and the horseman who looked after them was a skilled member of the farmer’s team. [SCAN ON DISK]

But it meant work for the children too, as Mary Watts recalls: “children were required to contribute, leading horses to the blacksmith for shoeing, carrying harness to the saddler for repair and driving harvest carts between the fields and the yards where the sheaves were stacked. Cousin Kate remembered taking a loaded cart across a fairly narrow bridge over a ditch between the field and the Potash stack yard and letting one wheel run off the bridge so that the cart tipped sideways, endangering the horse’s safety as well as her own. The uncles and farm men in the yard heard her cries and came

running to help. They were in time to free the horse before it could be badly hurt and then had to unpack the sheaves, get the cart upright and reload. She remembered that they did not reprimand her, but rather comforted and reassured her. Mum found being in charge of a cart horse and its load frightening, especially as the fen droves of those days had deep ruts and a zig-zag course was often needed to keep a balance, but she was lucky to have no such mishap during her tours of duty.”

If you worked with animals, or have snaps of the days when village streets echoed to the cllop of hooves and when barns were home to cattle, not commuters, then drop me a line.

On the subject of housing the book “Housing in Linton in the 19th and 20th centuries” that I featured in last week’s Memories is actually even better value than I reported. In fact it costs only £5, having been sponsored by South Cambridgeshire District and Linton Parish Councils as well as the Linton Local History Society itself.

For £8 you can have your own copy of a fenland history classic, the Sabine Baring-Gould novel ‘Cheap Jack Zita’. Set in the fens around Prickwillow and Littleport during the traumatic times of the 1816 riots, it has long been out of print but has now been reissued by Praxis Books of Crossways Cottage, Walterstone, Herefordshire HR2 0DX. It really is a most interesting read, full of detail of fen folk’s life at the time it was written back in 1894

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Wendy Maskell (nee Bell) from Cambridge has written to say that she saw her dad, the late Reg Bell in the picture of the Cambridge Auxiliary Firemen I featured on 14th March. Also pictured was Reg Smith and Wendy recalls: “During the war we lived at 26 Hobart Road and the Smith family lived at no.12. As soon as the siren sounded both ‘Reggies’ would cycle off to the fire station in Coleridge Road and my mother, brother and I would join Mrs Smith and her two children at her home. I remember my dad having to assist the London Fire Brigade during the blitz. Another memory is of him saying he didn’t enjoy climbing to the top of the training ladder, which of course, was all part of his training!”

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Mrs Gwendoline Tyler from St Ives has sent a picture with faces for older readers to puzzle over. It shows a children’s tea in St Ives Corn Exchange about 1935-36. She is unsure what the event was— or could it have been in connection with the jubilee of King George V in 1935 or perhaps a Coronation party for King George VI. If you know please tell me [SCAN ST IVES ON CD]

EXTRA STORY NOT SENT ON LINE

Mrs Edna Fryer of Fulbourn has sent me some programmes for seaside excursions organised by W. Heffer and sons’ printing department just before the Second World War. They prove that Cambridge folk in those days were prepared to enjoy themselves over a very long day out. In 1936 they went to Blackpool, which meant a 4.20 start in the morning, arriving at their destination six hours later. They were refreshed en route with bacon and eggs, dined at the Savoy Hotel on lamb or beef followed by peach Melba or cheese and finished off the day with a supper on the train back comprising soup, a roast joint and more cheese. If the 11 pm train home took as long as the train there they could expect to be home about 5am.

Perhaps it was all a bit much, for by the time they set off in 1938 for a waygoose to Llandudno they had somewhat less of a day of it. For a start they could lay in much later – the train did not depart till 5.10am and the journey was a mere 5 hours 40 minutes. What’s more they had an early start for home, leaving “the queen of Welsh resorts” at 10 pm.

Being a printing firm they produced a timetable brochure, but not even Heffers could get things right all the time, as part of the verse on their Blackpool trip shows.

Memories 11th April 2001, by Mike Petty

It was April Fools Day the other week, but sometimes I wonder if people could make up some of the happenings I'm told about.

Take the case of Ken Howard of Ely, who I met at a talk last week. He had a tale of how a half-cut boat got into the Cutter Inn, Ely, through the window. I know that area of the city is rather low-lying and there are plenty of snaps of the pub being lapped with water, but who was he trying to kid?

But it was true. Ken used to work in the building and surveyor's department of the old Hall, Cutlack and Harlock Brewery whose workshops were in the building now occupied by the Babylon Gallery on Waterside, Ely. When the Cutter was being refurbished back in 1964 Bob Woods, the surveyor, had the idea of making a bar in the shape of a boat. So he and his team drew up the design & acquired the English oak, which they steam-bent into shape. Then once it was complete all they had to do was install it in the pub, just down the river. They could have loaded the bar onto a lorry and driven it around but this would have been too tame. So they arrange with boatbuilders Appleyard Lincoln to ship it on one of their barges. The workshop team of Stan Angel, Ken, Gerald Murfitt (clerk of the works), Adrian Flude, & Aubrey Davis took one side, while George Cooper, Bill Bean, Ian Scott and Ken Foreman took the other as they carried it down to the river. Then after a short voyage it was unloaded and manhandled into the bar through the window. And yes, they did know it wouldn't go through the door when they built it! [SCANS OF BREWERY WORKSHOP WHERE BOAT-BAR BUILT, THE NAMED GROUP CARRYING IT DOWN TO THE RIVER, THE BOAT EN ROUTE DOWN RIVER AND BEING MANHANDLED THROUGH THE PUB WINDOW]

The brewery became part of East Anglian Breweries but closed suddenly in January 1969 when some 300 employees found their jobs in Ely had gone. Many of the older workers might see themselves in a photograph Ken has of a retirement presentation to Walter Chevell about 1954-55. They include more Days than there were in a week, including Rocky, Banger and Billy. The site has now been redeveloped as Brewery Close. [SCAN OF THE RETIREMENT PRESENTATION]

For many working in a brewery might seem an ideal job, but the conditions down at Waterside Ely was far from ideal. On a damp November morning the smell from the brewery would mingle with the smell from the Sugar Beet Factory, the smell from the Jam Factory, the smell from the Gas Works, and the reek from the sewage works to produce a cocktail that was far from pleasant. No wonder the maggots from the nearby rag-and-bone works would walk out under the gate!

But Ken has proof that this brewery at least did know how to organise a booze-up. Their annual dinners were grand affairs, quite the highlight of the social calendar, as here in about 1960 when the venue was the old Women's Institute Hall in Newnham Street, Ely. [SCAN OF THE PARTY]

And, talking of ladies of mature age, his wife Pamela (nee Hills) is happy to embarrass herself by allowing me to feature this view of her (third from right, front row) in this photograph of pupils at Silver Street school, Ely. She would not wish to embarrass her classmates – most of whom she can name – by pointing out that they are all this year approaching their 65th birthday. Just three names elude her from amongst those in the second row from the top. The person fourth from the right (whose face is obscured by a mistake on the picture) and the two at the end of that row, just the other side of Doreen Turner. [SCAN OF SILVER STREET SCHOOL GROUP]

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At an earlier meeting, of the Cambridge Instrument Company pensioners, Derek Wilderspin told me of an incident when a double-decker bus overturned in Sidney Street, Cambridge one Friday 13th. So I promised to keep an eye open for details. Then I got a letter from Mrs Muriel Taylor of Weston Colville. Inside was a picture of an overturned bus in Sidney Street, Cambridge dated 13th October 1945. Talk about co-incidence. Except that 13th October 1945 was not a Friday. I turned up the back files of the CDN to find an account of the accident, but there is no mention of it at all. Muriel knows the details: "The driver of the bus was my father, Percy Wolfe, and the conductress was Daphne Wilson (who lodged in Kingston Street). It was a Saturday morning and the cause was that the front axle broke, turning the bus on its side and causing traffic chaos. My father, who was with the Eastern Counties Bus Company for nearly 50 years, was only badly shaken but the conductress suffered a broken collar bone". Derek is adamant this is not the crash he saw, which was further along outside the Gas Company's shop, for he was away in 1945. So when was the other crash? [SCAN OF BUS CRASH]

The Instrument Company fellowship have been busily collecting memories of the 'good old days' for a Millennium booklet. In it John Green recalls his recollections of the firms Christmas Parties in the 1950s. They were held in the staff canteen at the back of the works on Chesterton Road and for John the highlight was the film show. He reports: It started by the wheeling out on it's trolley of the projector with it's wooden cover, by I think Mr Sutton and Mr Hammond. Whilst we children waited, the spools were fitted, the film threaded through, the lights dimmed, and the "show" began. Up on the screen appeared Charlie Chaplain, or Mickey Mouse, or other Disney characters. Then the real "show" began! There would be a small bang and the image on the screen would disappear to be replaced by a yellow light. Messrs S&H would ask for the lights to be put up, off would come the wooden cover and the gluing together of the film would begin. The film then mended, back on would go the wooden projector cover, and to cheers from the children the film would start again, to be followed - as it always seemed - quite quickly, by another break in the film.

"After several episodes of the same it would be decided that the film already had too many bad joints, and it would be re-wound and replaced by another film. Whilst this film changing was taking place the opportunity would be taken for the Rev Walter Partridge, (vicar of St Luke's in whose parish CICO was situated) to walk around and talk to the children. Unfortunately my only recollection of him is that he always wore on his lapel a painted plaster toy head, which he thrust at you, and wiggled!

"Once the film had been replaced off would go the lights again and a new film would commence, then if we were lucky another and even better "show" would take place! As the film progressed a small brown spot would appear on the screen which would rapidly spread, and then the film, joy oh joy, would burst into flames! This would often finish the film show!"

Can anybody help Peggy Brutnell who remembers when she was eight years old seeing the R101 Airship flying over Cambridge. She writes: "I lived in New Street and was playing "houses" with fallen leaves with a few friends on the New Street Rec and we all started running home when the airship appeared, but a photographer called us back and sat us amongst the leaves. The photograph was on the front page of the evening newspaper that night. I'd love to see it again. I am 79 now but often think of that day". Once more we have a mystery for I know the R101 was featured in the C.D.N. on 9th November 1929 – but not with the picture she remembers. Did it come back over Cambridge before its fatal crash in October 1930?

Helen Harwood of Great Shelford would like more details of another form of transport – railway shunting horses. She writes: “I was every interested to read in Memories of 28th February about Mr Burling’s memories of Charlie the last BR shunt horse. My dad was a shunter in the 50’s and 60’s and had steam and diesel shunting engines, but never a horse! Please could we have more about Charlie and what his duties were! Can you help?

And keeping on railways Mr P.A.L. Brunney would like details of a railway engine that crashed through the buffer and went on to Station Road in Cambridge. Once more its over to you.

Memories 18TH April 2001, by Mike Petty

Ten years ago Royston was still in a state of shock following a series of explosions and fires that had devastated the area in the early evening of Friday 8th March 1991.

Police sealed off the town, traffic was halted on the outskirts and abandoned cars littered the area as motorists trudged the final miles to their homes on foot. Trains were stopped on the main line for fears that sparks from the overhead power lines could cause further devastation.

Firemen were inundated by a flood of calls for assistance as a heavy cloud of gas hung in the air and gas appliances sprung leaks or burst into flames.

Frightening stories began to emerge; one lady in Sun Hill had been taking a mid-afternoon nap when she was awoken by the sound of an explosion. As her bedroom filled with smoke she rushed downstairs to find her kitchen boiler ablaze, flames and smoke spewing out. As firemen tackled that blaze they were alerted by screams from a bungalow two doors down as a lady fled her home after her gas fire exploded in flames. Plans were made to evacuate 25 homes in Green Drift after an explosion in a terraced house shattered windows.

Another huge explosion rocked Greneway School where caretaker David Hanchett saw flames billowing from ventilation slots in the boiler house. The kitchen, hall and changing rooms were damaged in the blast and music teacher Adrian Jacobs led 40 children to safety.

But where was safe? An emergency centre was established at Tannery Drift School and at Royston Hospital patients were issued with extra blankets as the heating had to be turned off, though food continued to be cooked – carefully – in electric ovens.

As police with loudhailers toured the streets warning people to turn off their gas appliances some 250 engineers were called in to make checks on some 5,000 homes, shops and businesses. Those that were not occupied were broken into. It was an operation that would take all night, and the fitting of new gas meters to every premise would taken even longer

Once the immediate situation was stabilised the clearing up could begin. It was to be a long job. Five weeks after the explosions some people were still without heating, cooking or washing facilities, everywhere redecorating and repairs were being undertaken.

But how could it have happened. An enquiry revealed that during work on a new medium-pressure gas main a pipe had been connected wrongly, sending a surge of gas with 15 times more pressure than usual into the domestic supply. [THERE ARE THREE PHOTOS OF THE ROYSTON GAS INCIDENT IN THE NEWS LIBRARY PHOTO FILES UNDER ‘GAS’]

In October 1965 it had been Cambridge's turn to experience the fear of a gas explosion – though this time the danger was of a different kind. As daylight broke on 27th October 1965 students from Magdalene college were awoken by a strange noise. They peered out to see a steel cable stretching into the night sky and far above a wartime barrage balloon was hovering. It had broken away from R.A.F. Cardington carrying its weather instruments with it and dragged its wire rope thirty miles across country before becoming hooked on scaffolding at St Johns College. The College was evacuated whilst it was winched to the ground, firemen carefully avoided protrusions that might pierce the hydrogen-filled canopy and cause an explosion. [SCAN OF BARRAGE BALLOON]

Another balloon flight was recalled last week by Peter Hamence of Sutton who showed me two picture of an blimp that came down near Sutton Gault in October 1913. It sailed along Bury Lane, turned left and landed in Eddy Read's field. One photo quite clearly shows the advertising slogan 'Give her Bovril' on its envelope, the other is a wonderful detail of the flying controls. [SCANS OF BALLOON]. He also has a picture of a windmill at Mill Farm in Sutton which had to be demolished when Mepal airfield was built during the second world war and last week I heard from a lady in Chatteris of the awful night in September 1943 when a heavily loaded bomber failed to take off from that airfield and ploughed into nearby council houses, killing three on the ground as well as the crew.

Mrs Caroline Neech of Milton has a piece of another crashed bomber, the German Dornier that came down at the back of her house in Warren Road, Cambridge in February 1944. The crew had bailed out and the plane flew itself until it ran out of fuel and made a landing on the allotments, one wing caught a shed and swung the plane round, away from the houses. Her husband, a fitter in the RAF, was home on leave that night and heard what sounded like a glider landing. He went outside to investigate and could hardly believe what he saw. The plane was there for a two or three days before the wings were taken off & it was carted away, People living in the area opened their back gardens to sightseers and collected money for the Red Cross. [SCAN OF CRASHED BOMBER]

Then to complete the aviation theme I met Derek Miller from Longstanton who was searching for a picture of a glider that crashed on to the central reservation of the M11 in November 1984. Both the instructor and the student pilot from the Cambridge University Gliding Club escaped serious injury, but the machine was badly damaged. Fortunately it was early morning when traffic was light or the situation could have been even worse. I have located a picture of a glider flying over the M11, but not one of the actual crash. Can you help. [SCAN OF GLIDER OVER M11]

Arthur Caldecoat of Cambridge believes he may be able to shed some light on the overturned bus I featured in last week's Memories. He seems to recall that the bus actually fell on its side outside the Gas Board showrooms in Sidney Street but that it had to be dragged down to the corner of Market Street where it was wide enough to get it upright again. He remembers that it was placed on sheets of metal to drag it along and that police had to divert traffic for some time. Rodney Dale from Haddenham, who was in his youth an avid bus aficionado, remembers the bus was on route 101 (Green End Road - Cambridge Railway Station). The accident happened before 8 o'clock one morning, and the only passenger was a Mr McKenna who was 'on top' and slightly injured. Rodney can't remember the registration number of the bus (it might have been VE2802), but is pretty sure that its Eastern Counties number was AH223, because it was the only AH bus with a flat, as opposed to curvaceous, front.

Paul Carter of Wadhurst, East Sussex has written: "During my researchers into bus and coach operations in the Cambridge area I have come across several references to the Gogs Fete and

the competition amongst the local bus and coach operators to cater for the large number of locals wishing to reach this event. Do you have any information about it?"

It was certainly flourishing in July 1933 as the Cambridge Chronicle reported one of the largest gatherings at the Wandlebury House of Sir Terence Gray when 18,000 people assembled to enjoy ten hours of fun at a fantastic fete. The crowd was in good humour, the sun blazed continually, and with twelve hundred helpers to ensure that everything went according to plan it was a resounding success. Five bands kept the action going while other attractions included Clay Pigeon Shooting, Tennis Tournament, Fixed Jack Bowling, Quoits, Darts, Whippet Racing, Greyhound Racing, Bowling, Skee-ball, Skittles, County Treasure Hunt, Borough Treasure Hunt, Ringing the Horse and Cutting the Chicken. And the long list of prizes for the draw should surely have persuaded even the most reluctant to have a small flutter. The holder of ticket no 17763, a Mr R. P. Williams, won the first prize . . . a Morris Minor Motor Car. Entertainment abounded, and 'The Great Risko' - a famous aerial gymnast and Royal Command performer - thrilled the crowd by launching himself into space from a height of 70ft held by only one ankle.

But can you add more details

Tony Brotchie of Cambridge has managed to solve the riddle of the picture of members of the Cambridge National Fire Service personnel and their cup. He tells me it commemorated the success of the station in a pump drill competition in 1942 in which they were runners up. The firemen pictured were Charlie Perrin, Jack Ives, George Harding, Arthur Smoothy in the back row with firemen Coe, 'Tosh' Burton and Fred Harley in front. The pump in the background had been bought for the Cambridge Police Fire Brigade in 1939. Tony was a junior fireman / despatch rider in those days and tells me they still hold a reunion every year.

Mrs Jose Parr of Ely can add more details about the Cutter Inn boat-bar I featured last week. Her late father, Eric Howard was foreman of the building department of the brewery for many years and was in charge of the building of the bar. He is shown holding a plane in the picture of the workshop. Jose and her mother have other pictures and also an official invitation to the launch of the new bar at the Cutter in 1964.

My mention of the reprint of the Victorian story 'Cheap Jack Zita' has brought a response from Janice Clarke (nee Parr) of Royston. She has a copy of a 'New Edition', dated 1894. Inside is a note that the book originally belonged to Miss A.E. Gill, later Mrs A.E. Spenceley. It was bought at her sale, on 8th February 1952, by Mr C.J. Fendick of Little Downham Lodge; he gave it to Janice's mother, Mrs Kathleen Parr who in turn passed it on. But Janice adds: "I grew up in Little Downham but have no recollection of a Mrs Spenceley. I wonder if she came from Littleport, where I know Mr Fendick had a business. What was the reason for her sale?" Can anybody help?

Memories 25th April 2001, by Mike Petty

More readers have come forward with details of the bus crash in Sidney Street that I featured in Memories on 11th April. My picture, lent by Mrs Muriel Taylor of Weston Colville was dated 13th October 1945 in ink on the top corner of the photograph, and that was a Saturday. But reader Derek Wilderspin had been certain the bus had overturned on Friday the 13th and he has been backed up by Mrs M. Walker of Cambridge & by Roynon Howes who E-mailed with more details:

"I am certain that it was, indeed, Friday 13th because my father was at work and he did not work on a Saturday. He was in fact in charge of the workshop at the then Eastern Counties and it was he who oversaw the recovery of the bus. You show the bus, still on its side outside

the old Sainsbury's and quite rightly so because, although it fell further up in front of the Gas Showrooms, actually touching but not breaking the windows of the showroom, it was impossible to raise it to an upright position as it required three cranes to do this. Two of the cranes came from RAF Waterbeach and a third one joined them later from, I think, the American base at Mildenhall. The two cranes, one at the front and the other at the back, carried the bus, still on its side to where the photograph was taken and the third approached from the Market Square. It was this one that then was able to pull the bus upright. It was a very tricky job as they had to prevent the bus from overshooting and crashing down on its other side.

"The three cranes, two at the front and one at the rear, then transported the bus through Cambridge to the repair shop at about one and a half miles per hour. Each time they met an obstacle like the bollards in front of Lloyds Bank, the bus would have to be lowered and one crane disconnected. It would then go round the obstruction and drag the bus round it before carrying on down St Andrew's Street. It was a painfully slow business. The first idea was to take it up to the repair shop in Hills Road but then they decided to change the route to take it up to the Newmarket Road depot. It held up the traffic all day in Cambridge and it was a talking point for several years."

Roynon feels that the year was not 1945, but earlier. "I am sure that only one bus fell on its side in that area, ever", he adds

John Dench has also E-mailed with what may be the conclusive proof, for he recalls that date as Friday 13th October 1944. "It happened early morning around 8 am near to the Green Street junction. My memory is very clear on this as it was the year I started work at Galloway and Porter's bookshop and I remember viewing the scene from the shop steps in the company of the later Mr George Porter."

Armed with his information I turned back to the files of the News and there, indeed is an account of the accident. It includes the name of the driver, Percy Wolfe and the conductress, Daphne Wilson, as recalled by Muriel Taylor. One of the passengers was William Howes – confirmed by his daughter, Ivy Jordan who has also written in. She tells me he was taken to the Leys School which was then used as an annexe for Addenbrooke's Hospital where he had a plate inserted in his arm. [COPY OF CUTTING IN ENVELOPE DELIVERED SATURDAY]

So it looks as if the date actually written on the other picture might have been wrong - but the bus in the News picture is surely facing the other way from the bus in the photo lent by Mrs Taylor – is there still a mystery here?

And on the continuing issue of bus crashes Malcolm Boston seems to recall there was another double-decker that fell over in Petty Cury in the late 1940s or early 1950s. It ended up leaning against the Boots building and the Eros upstairs restaurant. Does this jog any memories? [PHOTO OF BUS SQUEEZING DOWN PETTY CURY IN NEWS LIBRARY FILES]

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There has also been some progress on my search for information on a train that crashed onto Station Road. Mr H. Mansfield from Radegund Road believes the train overran the turntable that used to be on the railway property on the left as you approach the station. His late father, Arthur Mansfield, was a sergeant in the railway Home Guard and was on duty that night. He had to go around all the sentry posts to make sure the men were at their posts and awake. His route was the air raid shelter, Rustat Road, Mill Road, Devonshire Road, across Station Road to the then upper yard, behind the flour mills, along Hills Road and back. As he walked down Station Road in the blackout he thought he could see a train in the road and told himself it was

impossible. He always wondered what anyone would have thought to see a sergeant patting an engine to see if it was real! But does anyone have a picture to prove it?

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When Helen Harwood asked for memories of Charlie the shunting horse at Newmarket station she stimulated a host of recollections.

Vic Burling from Cambridge is a rail enthusiast and has sent me a copy of an illustrated article that appeared in 'The Railway Observer' of June 1967. It confirms that when Charlie retired on 21st February that year he was the last in a long line of shunt horses on the railways of Britain; there had been 772 such animals in 1928, by 1955 the total had dropped to 76 and now they were gone completely. His work had involved shunting horseboxes, often containing valuable racehorses. [PICTURE OF CHARLIE AT NEWMARKET AMONGST THE ENVELOPE OF PICTURED DELIVERED ON SATURDAY]

Molly Pringle from Newmarket writes: "I knew Charlie well as my husband had a forage business on the Newmarket railway crossing and supplied Charlie with his feed. We lived on the premises & saw Charlie at work every day. He was a 'gentle giant' and a dear old friend. Charlie appeared one year at the Horse of the Year Show in London and I was very proud to be able to see him walk majestically across the area"

Other readers recall shunting horses elsewhere. Mr E.A. George from Cambridge recalls: "My memory goes back to the 1920s & early '30s in Shelford. As far as I remember there was one horse at the station which both pulled the trolley used for local deliveries and the odd little shunting job, though the main shunting was done by the engine of the pick-up which called most days. If a wagon was difficult to start a lever was applied behind a wheel; once moving it was not difficult for the horse to keep it going. The main generally in charge of the horse was known as 'Trolley' Robinson and the goods foreman was Bob Page"

Syd Butter from Gt Shelford used to work at Cadbury's depot in Hills Road, Cambridge during the 1950s, next door to Pordages the vegetable wholesalers. Both firms had goods delivered by rail. The wagons were shunted in each morning by horse. Syd continues: "The fellow who was with the horse hardly had to give an order, it knew exactly where to stop. The wagons weighed a few tons, so he would lean forward with all his strength and once they moved he eased off and let them roll".

Helen has written again to say she has been contacted by an ex-work colleague, John Capes, who remembers shunting-horses being used at North Walsham up to about 1947. There they were used to move open wagons containing sugar beet and closed vans for parcels and livestock. They also used to deliver parcels on a cart. John also remembers 'mechanical horses' – a three-wheeler cab to which trailers could be attached. Walter Martin Lane photographed one such machine at Ely station goods yard at about this time. [SCAN]

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Brian Attmore seeks your assistance urgently with a picture of an event at the Abbey Stadium Football Ground sometime between 1945 and 1953. He is working to produce a picture book on Cambridge United, the profits of which will go to the club and needs to know what is going on; perhaps the bunting, flags and fashions may help. He is also on the lookout for any other details of events such as gymkanas and garden shows that used to be held there. If you can help then E-mail him at Brian.Attmore@btinternet.com or ring on Cambridge 245168 [HE E-MAILED THE PICTURE TO THE NEWSDESK ON 20TH APRIL 11.26AM AND THIS SHOULD BE ON THE SYSTEM]

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With May Day approaching Mrs Molly Sekulla of Campkin Road, Cambridge has lent me a picture taken outside Merton House, Grantchester on 1st May 1937. She writes: "In those days the girls of the village chose a May Queen and processed through the streets singing Spring songs & collecting money which was divided between us at the end of the day". She believes the ceremony might have been discontinued at the outbreak of the war or when the 11-year-old pupils went to Sawston Village College for their further education, having previously been educated until the age of 14 years at the village school. [SCAN OF GIRLS] Do you have May-Day memories of processions – or trades union demonstrations?

Memories 2nd May 2001 by Mike Petty

In May 1976 tourists flocked to view a sight that if repeated today may well have caused them to flee in panic - such is the hysteria generated by foot-and-mouth disease in certain countries.

But then tourists deserted King's College Chapel and cars came to a halt on the Backs while a Stapleford sheep farmer gave what many people took to be a demonstration of sheep shearing.

But for Mr. Gerald Beavis it was as a routine job of work. With a flock of 41 Suffolk ewes grazing on Scholars' Piece, the area of rough grass across the river from the manicured lawns, he had decided to do the shearing at the college rather than lose time by taking the sheep back to his farm. Never can he have performed a routine farming task to such an audience as some 100 camera-toting tourists jostled to take his photograph.

When King's college head gardener, Mr Dennis Gifford, made a brief appearance he was immediately assailed by questioners demanding to know whether it was an ancient Cambridge tradition being enacted and whether the college really approved of such rural goings on in such surroundings. He told them: "We often have sheep here and we prefer them to cattle because they keep the grass nice and short".

Old engravings show that animals have grazed there for centuries. What made this special was that as far as anybody knew it was the first time sheep had actually been shorn there.

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One man who knows all about such matters is Dr Peter Jackson from Over, who works at the University Veterinary School. But he has not always been an academic, as he explains in a fascinating letter:

"I am sure that I am just one of many who enjoyed your recent article on the changes that have taken place on Cambridgeshire Farms in recent and not so recent years. It brought back to me many memories both of growing up in the villages of Cambridgeshire but also of my life as a local veterinary surgeon which started in 1960.

My decision to become a vet was taken in the village of Babraham where my mother was headmistress. My greatest joy was to help out at the Home Farm where the Adeane family had a dairy farm. During school holidays and at weekends I was up at 6.00 am to help with the milking and other jobs with the 35 or so cows that lived there. One morning a Jersey cow named Annabelle was having a problem calving. Mr J.P.G. Runciman, who with his father ran the long established veterinary practice at Downing Street, Cambridge, was called and arrived to deal with the problem. I was alone on the farm and was asked to help. We delivered twin calves with some difficulty but the experience made me feel I had seen the

Holy Grail. I knew this was the job I wanted to do and after struggling a bit at the Perse School to gain sufficient A levels I managed to gain a place at Edinburgh University.

The farming scene was totally different in the 1950s and 60s than it is today. The majority of farms were mixed, growing crops on rotation and usually having cattle, pigs and sometimes sheep and poultry too. When I was working in Cambridge as a student we attended a herd of Guernsey cows and a Friesian herd in Trumpington, two in Grantchester, one in Thriplow, one in Lolworth as well as a number on the Cambs- Suffolk Border. There was at least one dairy herd in each Cambridgeshire village. A large farm had perhaps 60 milking cows but many farmers managed to make a living with far fewer.

My first job after qualifying was at March and then in 1966 I moved to Chatteris where we opened a branch practice and lived happily for the next 10 years. When I went to work in March in 1960 there were five dairy herds in the town and its immediate vicinity. At Chatteris we attended four dairy farms in the town and others in Mepal, Sutton, Haddenham & Somersham. The most numerous farm livestock were pigs and we looked after the veterinary needs of approximately 40 pig farms or smallholdings in Chatteris or its immediate neighbourhood. There were many more in the surrounding villages.

In those days many of our pig keepers were tenants of Cambridgeshire County Council renting smallholdings at Tick Fen near Chatteris, Coates, in fields near March and also at Manea and Benwick. We also had smallholder clients in Huntingdonshire and Norfolk. Some smallholders managed to make a reasonable living on as little as 10 acres of good fen land and there were very few of more than 50 acres. The tenants grew corn, potatoes, sugar beet and other vegetable crops in rotation. Almost all had six to ten sows and fattened or sold on their offspring making a reasonable profit whilst doing so. Many smallholders also had one or two cattle, or beasts as they were called, to fatten over winter and some older men had a heavy horse working around the farm too. Quite a few people in March, Chatteris and the surrounding villages kept one or two fattening pigs or a sow at the bottom of their gardens. Not everyone kept a boar and it was not uncommon to see the late Mr Claude Bayes walking his boar along Bridge Street in Chatteris to mate with a neighbour's sow.

The financial situation in livestock farming was totally different in those days. Pig keepers could make a profit of up to £5 a pig which made the job very well worth while. Our farm visit fee in those days was 10s 6d (55p) and a visit plus an injection to a sick pig would cost no more than £1.25. It was not uncommon to visit a sick pig once, twice or even three times and still leave a profit for the owner. Costs were very different too - petrol was 30p per gallon and you could buy a new Ford Anglia for about £500. All four vets in our practice averaged 30,000 miles a year and we could change our cars yearly for about £150. My wages in 1960 were £1,100 a year and my take home pay about £16 a week. Full board and lodging at the Station Hotel in March was £6.00 a week.

Swine fever (recently seen again in East Anglia) was endemic in those days and we spent a lot of time vaccinating pigs against this disease and another common disease Swine Erysipelas. This latter disease is now easily cured with penicillin but was a dreadful scourge in the pre-antibiotic days. Older clients in Chatteris would recall taking out barrow loads of dead pigs which had died from this disease.

Farmers were mostly reluctant to try and treat their own animals believing it to be a job for the vet. As a result any obstetrical and other veterinary problems would result in a call for veterinary assistance at any time of day or night. Sadly it is now often not economic to seek veterinary assistance for a sick pig. Although most farmers would still do anything for their livestock most have less time to spend with each animal. I remember being called to see a sow in March suffering from severe mastitis. Her udder was hard and she was showing signs of toxæmia. Mastitis is a potentially dangerous and life threatening disease. Antibiotic and

anti-inflammatory therapy will do much to help but nursing care is of great benefit too. I advised my March owner to massage his sow's hard udder with udder cream as often as he could and to get her up on her feet every few hours. The next morning I visited the sow expecting to find that she had died. Instead she was lying happily feeding her piglets. Her udder was soft and full of milk. There was no sign of the owner but he emerged slowly from his house looking tired and unshaven. 'What do you think of her mate?' he asked. I replied that she was unbelievably better. 'You gave me a job and a half mate' he said. 'I've been up all night rubbing her udder with goose grease and getting her up as you said. It looks as if it's done the job.' It had and the life of the sow and indirectly her 10 piglets had been saved partly by my drug therapy but with enormous input from the owner. That was just one example of amazing devotion to duty that we saw. Farmers and stockmen and women had time then to take that extra little bit of trouble with an individual animal.

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There was always plenty of help available on our farms. At one of the first calving cases I attended at Sutton five men came to help but luckily were not needed. Mr Rickwood employed large numbers of men and women on his farms - 35 men reported every day for work at Horsey Farm, Chatteris. Much of their work was gang work on the land picking potatoes, singling sugar beet etc. Most of this work is now done by machine and better sugar beet seed that does not require singling and chopping out is available.

How farm life has changed and not necessarily for the better. Back in the 60s we never thought that things would or could change so much or that local farms would be denuded of both people and animals. The coming of the Common Market initially aided arable farmers but animal production became less and less profitable. Animals were kept in larger and larger groups with more being looked after by fewer people. Less and less time was available for individual animal care. The vet is an infrequent visitor to many farms but able to provide overall guidance about animal health. There is less chance for many reasons to examine and treat individual sick animals in the way that we did regularly so many years ago.

I left general practice in 1976 but I feel very lucky to have lived through those distant days and work with so many nice Cambridgeshire people and their animals.

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The importance of animals in many people's lives was commemorated at a service held in Ely Cathedral in April 1988:as the News reported:

“Some of the congregation howled and barked when the organist started to play the first hymn during a service at Ely Cathedral. Others let out yelps and growls that echoed around the mighty Norman building. A few even managed to doze despite the racket while others munched contentedly wondering what all the fuss was about. The vice-dean, Canon Dennis Green, used a microphone to make himself heard to the rest of the congregation. No one minded about the chaos because all were taking part in a blessing service for animals and owners, thought to be the only one of its kind in the country. It was organised by the Dean and Chapter in conjunction with Wood Green Animal Shelters following the success of a similar event last year. Hundreds of people took animals of all shapes and sizes to the service – cats, dogs, sheep, goats, ponies, donkeys, pigs and cows” [SCAN]

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Brain Warner of Hartington Grove, Cambridge has been scanning his old photo albums and has unearthed a picture of the Park House Football Team, winners of the inter-house football cup at the old Central Boys' School, Cambridge in 1948. He is the goal-keeper and in the outside-right position is David Hunt who now lives in Long Melford. But can anybody recognise any of the others? [NOTE THE ORIGINAL OF THIS PICTURE IS NOT VERY SHARP]

I WILL BRING THE SCANS IN ON A DISK ON MONDAY MORNING - MIKE

Memories, May 2nd, by Mike Petty

Do you have May Day memories, I asked last week.

Yes replies Mr A.Tall from Colne, for he has photographs of May Day celebrations in that village from 1913 onwards. He writes: “My grandfather, J.A. Fitch, always drove the May Queen round the surrounding villages of Bluntisham, Earith and Somersham collecting money for the school outing to the seaside. The last day of April was used to collect wild flowers such as cowslips and bluebells from local meadows to decorate the carts. When the May Queen had been crowned we used to dance round the Maypole in the school playground in front of all the parents”.

Photographs in the News archives shows the custom was still being continued at Oakington in 1986 with a charming group of young ladies touring the village on a decorated float. That was 15 years ago so some of those girls may have daughters of their own by now – if so let me know [PICTURE OF THE OAKINGTON FLOAT 1986]

Pictures of groups dancing round the May Pole also feature with children from Mayfield School being joined by a Hobby Horse on Jesus Green in 1978 [PICTURE OF MAYFIELD] and a newly-formed Morris dancing group making its first public performance on Parker's Piece, Cambridge in 1976. "The Staploe Hundred", based in the Soham and Burwell area had been training hard at Wicken for their great day [DANCERS ON PARKER'S PIECE]. It was part of the biggest May Day celebration Cambridge had seen for many years with children from several county primary schools dancing at several city-centre locations in an event organised by the Cambridge branch of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. There were other traditions too for visitors to wonder at, with brightly dressed dolls suspended in hoops being carried by girls and a Morris fertility cake which, it was claimed, had been baked by seven maidens. But normal – for Cambridge – life continued with a procession of graduates in full academic dress making their way towards the Senate House for degree day, needing a police escort through the maypole dancers in Petty Cury.

While the folklore enthusiasts of 1976 were rejoicing at their success another group were bemoaning a lack of support. For the May Day March organised that year by the Cambridge Trades Council attracted less than 100 people, including children and babies in prams and pushchairs, who followed just one union banner to their rally on Parker's Piece. It was only a pale shadow of the event in May 1973 when 600 people had paraded behind a mixture of banners as part of the Trades Union Congress protest against Ted Heath's government. Yet the numbers were still considered too low on a day when hundreds of thousands of workers stayed at home, transport workers struck and car workers at Dagenham and Luton failed to report for duty. Locally Caravans International at Newmarket was forced to close, though at Huntingdon's Vauxhall factory work continued normally, despite striking engineering workers. [PHOTO OF PARADE FOLLOWING CAMBRIDGE TRADES COUNCIL BANNER]

May Day, strikes and Parker's Piece were also in the news in 1990 when hundreds of marchers paraded through the city to protest against the Poll Tax before throwing their poll tax demands into a burning dustbin [PHOTO OF MARCH IN MARKET HILL – DEFENDING PUBLIC SERVICES BANNER]

But it was just 75 years, in Spring 1926 that the country experienced its largest protest, the General Strike. Cambridge was divided. In the "Red Romsey" area across Mill Road bridge railwaymen stopped work, and in the True Blue central Cambridge undergraduates did likewise. The University gave time off studying for any that wished to respond to the call and keep the country going at this time of need. And as the time of need coincided with the time of examinations many were only too happy to oblige.

Over 2,000 students took the opportunity for work experience in professions normally denied to men of their breeding. Upper-class gentlemen could be found working as labourers at the docks in Grimsby, maintaining the peace as Special Constables in London, or keeping the wheels of transport rolling. On the Tubes, on the buses, lorries or trams the Cambridge accent could be heard.

Some could fulfil every schoolboy's dream and play on the trains. It was imperative that the trains be kept running so that food supplies could be maintained – and also so that undergraduates could be despatched to the places where their services as strike-breakers were in demand. Many however travelled by car with daily convoys leaving the Backs and heading off to all points of the compass. Others found work nearer home.

Whilst the Baptist and Methodist churches on Mill Road, Cambridge, opened their doors to local striking railwaymen, a Chesterton town councillor made his way to the station and on the first day of the strike found himself driving a locomotive to Sudbury. His companions on the footplate included a number of undergraduates. One was the son of a former chief of the

Conservative Association, there was a member of the Macintosh toffee family, Lord Hinchingbrooke from Huntingdon, two rowing Blues, a White Russian émigré and the son of a Newcastle manufacturer.

A newspaper correspondent joined two undergraduates from St John's College for a trip on the footplate, one stoking the furnace whilst the other kept watch with the driver for obstructions on the line. They found the work dirty and hard, and the twelve-hour shift was somewhat different from their usual labour at college. It was all good fun.

The strikers found their fun in cricket matches on Parker's Piece, in sports on the Rec and a concert in Romsey School. They also found great amusement when an engine went off the rails in their own heartland near Mill Road Bridge. Hundreds of strikers turned out to mock and chaff at the students' misfortune.

Then came the tragic news of a fatal accident at Bishop's Stortford where a good train had rammed a passenger train waiting at the platform. The impact lifted two carriages off the track and smashed the station awning, two men waiting on the platform were killed.

The strike was soon over, the Unions beaten. Some local railway strikers were victimised, as was the one engine driver who had reported for duty. For the students it was the end of a great adventure; they had been to places and done things that had given them a new outlook on life – but the dreaded examinations were still waiting for them. [GENERAL STRIKE COMPOSITE – SCAN]

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Jean Gimbert from Cambridge has responded to my mention of a bomber that crashed on a Sutton council house in 1943. She has her own reason for remembering it. "I was one of the children evacuated from the nearby houses, and spent an uncomfortable night on a thin mattress on a classroom floor at the village school. It was a very scary night too, and no-one slept very much because the bombs on the plane went off one by one, each shaking the building violently.

"I think we were allowed back home mid-morning the next day, when all the bombs had exploded and the danger was passed. The house had not been damaged, although there was a film of dust over everything and flakes of plaster had drifted down from the ceiling. I remember being very relieved that my pet budgerigar, left behind in the hasty evacuation, had apparently escaped unscathed!"

Jean adds that she enjoys the articles and sends them to her ex-neighbour who now lives in Canada – but of course her Canadian friend could read them for herself on the News web-site at Cambridge-News.co.uk

Memories 9th May 2001 by Mike Petty

In May 1976 tourists flocked to view a sight that if repeated today may well have caused them to flee in panic - such is the hysteria generated by foot-and-mouth disease in certain countries.

But then tourists deserted King's College Chapel and cars came to a halt on the Backs while a Stapleford sheep farmer gave what many people took to be a demonstration of sheep shearing.

But for Mr. Gerald Beavis it was as a routine job of work. With a flock of 41 Suffolk ewes grazing on Scholars' Piece, the area of rough grass across the river from the manicured lawns, he had decided to do the shearing at the college rather than lose time by taking the sheep

back to his farm. Never can he have performed a routine farming task to such an audience as some 100 camera-toting tourists jostled to take his photograph.

When King's college head gardener, Mr Dennis Gifford, made a brief appearance he was immediately assailed by questioners demanding to know whether it was an ancient Cambridge tradition being enacted and whether the college really approved of such rural goings on in such surroundings. He told them: "We often have sheep here and we prefer them to cattle because they keep the grass nice and short".

Old engravings show that animals have grazed there for centuries. What made this special was that as far as anybody knew it was the first time sheep had actually been shorn there.

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One man who knows all about such matters is Dr Peter Jackson from Over, who works at the University Veterinary School. But he has not always been an academic, as he explains in a fascinating letter:

"I am sure that I am just one of many who enjoyed your recent article on the changes that have taken place on Cambridgeshire Farms in recent and not so recent years. It brought back to me many memories both of growing up in the villages of Cambridgeshire but also of my life as a local veterinary surgeon which started in 1960.

My decision to become a vet was taken in the village of Babraham where my mother was headmistress. My greatest joy was to help out at the Home Farm where the Adeane family had a dairy farm. During school holidays and at weekends I was up at 6.00 am to help with the milking and other jobs with the 35 or so cows that lived there. One morning a Jersey cow named Annabelle was having a problem calving. Mr J.P.G. Runciman, who with his father ran the long established veterinary practice at Downing Street, Cambridge, was called and arrived to deal with the problem. I was alone on the farm and was asked to help. We delivered twin calves with some difficulty but the experience made me feel I had seen the Holy Grail. I knew this was the job I wanted to do and after struggling a bit at the Perse School to gain sufficient A levels I managed to gain a place at Edinburgh University.

The farming scene was totally different in the 1950s and 60s than it is today. The majority of farms were mixed, growing crops on rotation and usually having cattle, pigs and sometimes sheep and poultry too. When I was working in Cambridge as a student we attended a herd of Guernsey cows and a Friesian herd in Trumpington, two in Grantchester, one in Thriplow, one in Lolworth as well as a number on the Cambs- Suffolk Border. There was at least one dairy herd in each Cambridgeshire village. A large farm had perhaps 60 milking cows but many farmers managed to make a living with far fewer.

My first job after qualifying was at March and then in 1966 I moved to Chatteris where we opened a branch practice and lived happily for the next 10 years. When I went to work in March in 1960 there were five dairy herds in the town and its immediate vicinity. At Chatteris we attended four dairy farms in the town and others in Mepal, Sutton, Haddenham & Somersham. The most numerous farm livestock were pigs and we looked after the veterinary needs of approximately 40 pig farms or smallholdings in Chatteris or its immediate neighbourhood. There were many more in the surrounding villages.

In those days many of our pig keepers were tenants of Cambridgeshire County Council renting smallholdings at Tick Fen near Chatteris, Coates, in fields near March and also at Manea and Benwick. We also had smallholder clients in Huntingdonshire and Norfolk. Some smallholders managed to make a reasonable living on as little as 10 acres of good fen

land and there were very few of more than 50 acres. The tenants grew corn, potatoes, sugar beet and other vegetable crops in rotation. Almost all had six to ten sows and fattened or sold on their offspring making a reasonable profit whilst doing so. Many smallholders also had one or two cattle, or beasts as they were called, to fatten over winter and some older men had a heavy horse working around the farm too. Quite a few people in March, Chatteris and the surrounding villages kept one or two fattening pigs or a sow at the bottom of their gardens. Not everyone kept a boar and it was not uncommon to see the late Mr Claude Bayes walking his boar along Bridge Street in Chatteris to mate with a neighbour's sow.

The financial situation in livestock farming was totally different in those days. Pig keepers could make a profit of up to £5 a pig which made the job very well worth while. Our farm visit fee in those days was 10s 6d (55p) and a visit plus an injection to a sick pig would cost no more than £1.25. It was not uncommon to visit a sick pig once, twice or even three times and still leave a profit for the owner. Costs were very different too - petrol was 30p per gallon and you could buy a new Ford Anglia for about £500. All four vets in our practice averaged 30,000 miles a year and we could change our cars yearly for about £150. My wages in 1960 were £1,100 a year and my take home pay about £16 a week. Full board and lodging at the Station Hotel in March was £6.00 a week.

Swine fever (recently seen again in East Anglia) was endemic in those days and we spent a lot of time vaccinating pigs against this disease and another common disease Swine Erysipelas. This latter disease is now easily cured with penicillin but was a dreadful scourge in the pre-antibiotic days. Older clients in Chatteris would recall taking out barrow loads of dead pigs which had died from this disease.

Farmers were mostly reluctant to try and treat their own animals believing it to be a job for the vet. As a result any obstetrical and other veterinary problems would result in a call for veterinary assistance at any time of day or night. Sadly it is now often not economic to seek veterinary assistance for a sick pig. Although most farmers would still do anything for their livestock most have less time to spend with each animal. I remember being called to see a sow in March suffering from severe mastitis. Her udder was hard and she was showing signs of toxæmia. Mastitis is a potentially dangerous and life threatening disease. Antibiotic and anti-inflammatory therapy will do much to help but nursing care is of great benefit too. I advised my March owner to massage his sow's hard udder with udder cream as often as he could and to get her up on her feet every few hours. The next morning I visited the sow expecting to find that she had died. Instead she was lying happily feeding her piglets. Her udder was soft and full of milk. There was no sign of the owner but he emerged slowly from his house looking tired and unshaven. 'What do you think of her mate?' he asked. I replied that she was unbelievably better. 'You gave me a job and a half mate' he said. 'I've been up all night rubbing her udder with goose grease and getting her up as you said. It looks as if it's done the job.' It had and the life of the sow and indirectly her 10 piglets had been saved partly by my drug therapy but with enormous input from the owner. That was just one example of amazing devotion to duty that we saw. Farmers and stockmen and women had time then to take that extra little bit of trouble with an individual animal.

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SCANS OF SHEEP SHEARING ON BACKS 1976

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Memories 16 May 2001, by Mike Petty

How often when spring cleaning do we find tucked away a yellowing scrap of an old newspaper. Immediately work stops as we peruse the faded pages and are transported back to an earlier time, when prices were different, the world was younger and when people faced problems very similar to those we face today. Almost inevitably the most interesting story is the one that ends in mid-sentence and we are left wondering just what happened next.

The earliest Cambridge newspaper was issued in 1744. It was entitled the Cambridge Journal and Flying Post and for a while it was the only record of local life; but then in 1762 the Cambridge Chronicle arrived which within five years had absorbed the older paper. It enjoyed an unchallenged presence on the streets until The Cambridge Intelligencer came in 1793, flourished and failed in 1803.

Then in 1819 came the forerunner of the Cambridge Independent Press. Whilst the Chronicle supported the Tory Cause and the Established church, the Independent was more Radical and promoted nonconformity. Throughout the century each reported the news as they saw it, and chose not to report topics they disagreed with. Other titles – the Cambridge Advertiser, Cambridge Gazette, Cambridge Guardian & Cambridge Express amongst them - came and went but the big two continued to dominate.

The in 1888 yet another title appeared on the scene. The Cambridge Daily News was different – unlike them it came out six days a week. It took time to persuade Cambridge people of the need for a local daily newspaper and villages were quite indifferent, but it was to become a formidable force and within the year had started its own sister title, the Cambridge Weekly News. As the new century advanced so the new Weekly title flourished, absorbing the Cambridge Express in 1909; but when in 1916 the Cambridge Independent Press became part of the group its title was so well-established that this name continued. The Weekly News banner was dropped, only to be revived decades later as the title for a series of free newspapers.

The Great War presented immense problems for newspapers. In 1914 the CDN issued war bulletins on Sunday and used Central News Telegraphs to ensure their war news was up to date. But always alongside the reports from the front were the heart-breaking stories of local losses. And there were new developments with the regular use of photographs. The Cambridge Graphic had been the first local paper embrace this new medium, using high-quality paper to reproduce the pictures, but this had failed in 1902 after only two years. Now they were back, and not just ‘new’ pictures for a regular series of ‘Peeps from the Past’ ran for many years, with readers sending-in their photographs and commenting upon them.

Major local stories would be guaranteed to increase circulation. In 1921 long queues formed for copies of the Cambridge Daily News which reported developments in a King Street murder saga. Then in June 1930 came more drama with a triple tragedy in a Cambridge college after an undergraduate shot his tutor and a Cambridge detective before turning the pistol on himself. It was perhaps ironic that this should happen at the time that the paper was reporting the sale of the old gallows at the County Gaol before its demolition to make way for a new Shire Hall. This was the age of massive change for Cambridge, with hundreds of new homes being built and new families looking to the News for information about the radical changes in the town centre. There old properties in Sidney Street were ripped down for massive new shopping developments for Boots, Woolworth and Sainsbury, and the Dorothy Café Restaurant enhanced the town's social life. But as the depression bit the rivalry between the Cambridge Chronicle and the Cambridge Independent Press finally came to an end as the two papers merged.

In 1938 a triumphant Cambridge Daily News celebrated its 50th anniversary with a souvenir supplement so large that it caused problems for the newsboys who had to deliver it. But by then the local news was being overshadowed by the activities in Europe as the world moved one more to war. Censorship was introduced, preventing the News from mentioning that the first town to suffer direct German air attack was Cambridge itself. Headlines tried to be upbeat as the Dunkirk evacuation saw the launch of a new Local Defence Volunteer to counter the anticipated invasion. And when that invasion came – of American, not German troops, that news had to kept off the front pages, for it was thought that everything reported in the News would be known in Germany. Certainly the news that Generals Eisenhower and Montgomery were in Cambridge planning the D-Day invasions was something that had to be kept silent – at least until the war was won.

The 1950s saw the elevation of Cambridge to city status as it struggled to cope with the increasing demand for homes and plan its way into the second half of the century. The News reported the interminable wrangles that saw first the Lion Yard and then Fitzroy Street transformed into major shopping areas. Its music correspondents covered the arrival of large-scale pop concerts, including a new sensation, The Beatles; the University correspondent saw the arrival of moon rock brought to Cambridge for analysis in University laboratories. There were tornadoes, royal weddings and the weddings of more ordinary folk to fill the pages of what was by now the Cambridge Evening News.

But papers are more than news. A major series of feature articles saw both Erica Dimock and Sara Payne travel 'Down Your Street' telling the story of the people who lived and worked in the Cambridge of the 1960s and 1980s; their words illustrated by photographs that capture the changing face of the city. Advertisements for the latest motor cars look outdated after only a few years, whilst house prices from 1988 – when the News celebrated its centenary - now seem incredibly cheap.

For the local historian the files of local newspapers comprise a unique record, putting the local events into their national and international context and – importantly - reflecting the opinions of Cambridgeshire correspondents. Cambridge's central library in Lion Yard is home to the country's largest collection of Cambridgeshire newspapers & over the last 30 years they have pioneered extensive indexes and cuttings files to allow people to exploit at least some of the information reported. In April 1983 the cuttings files themselves made headlines with news that a Russian spy had found them so interesting that he had taken copious copies of their reports on local reaction to cruise missile bases.

Now, as newspaper technology changes, more recent stories can be found much less publicly through the ability to search back issues via the News' own website.

Today's news is tomorrow's history and no history is as accessible as that presented in newspapers. They carry the day-by-day hopes and fears, the ideas that succeed and those that fail, although as a glimpse of my daily 'Looking Back' columns will show – the same ideas and stories do seem to come up time and again!

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Mike Petty lectures on Cambridgeshire newspapers and the local researcher to Courses and groups throughout the region.

SCAN OF RUSSIAN SPY HEADLINES – CEN 6th April 1983; OTHER HEADLINE PHOTOS WILL BE DELIVERED ON MONDAY

Memories 23rd May 2001, by Mike Petty

With all the debate about the American Star Wars missile defence project let us not forget that this year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of another defence force – the Royal Observer Corps. Set up during the Second World War to keep watch over aircraft movements, both friend and foe, they established look-out posts across the area. At Stretham they moved into the disused windmill so that they could have a high vantage point from which to observe over a wide area. To give a better view they removed the sails – and, some say Lord Haw Haw, “Germany calling”, came on the wireless to ask why!

Later the windmill site was adapted again, this time with the construction of an underground bunker from which the effects of nuclear war could be monitored. But what actually went on down there? In June 1976 Rodney Tibbs, a News reporter, was invited to another underground post to find out. This is his report from the time.

A number of times a year a group of shadowy figures converge on a low grass mound on Oakington airfield, raise a steel hatch and vanish into the bowels of the earth. The steel hatch clangs behind them. The Royal Observer Corps is going observing. The observing posts, about one every 15 miles, are really concrete bunkers buried deep in the ground. When hostilities were imminent the part-time civilian observers would get a telephone call, they would then pass the message on to another of the team. It was then a question of cycling along the country lanes, using their local knowledge to skirt blocked roads and fallen buildings should hostilities have started before they actually got to their post.

Once safely below ground they would contact their headquarters at Bedford and keep a wary eye on their various recording instruments. The bomb power indicator would reveal the size of any explosion though measurement of increased air pressure. If the radiation levels were intense the observers must be prepared to stay at their post for long periods, in total isolation. They had beds for those off duty and iron rations (which if they still survive must be pretty hard by now!) Should the very worst occur and the post find itself totally cut off in war-torn Cambridgeshire with radiation reaching dangerous levels they could warn those residents above ground by operating their portable siren.

The News photographer in June 1976 snapped Observer Lieutenant Stan Barnes emerging from his underground post. But he also went down below to picture Observers David Lane & Alex Blackmore busy at their all-important tasks.

In 1976 however there were problems. The shelters were proof against radiation and against a moderate amount of blast, but not against rabbits, according to Observer Lieutenant Stan Barnes: ‘Recently we found that the rabbits had been pretty busy in the grass mound which is

part of our protection against radiation. We had to fill up the rabbit holes'. That is something at least that should not affect the Star Wars shield!

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T. Gooding of Godmanchester spotted something of particular interest in my 'Looking Back' stories for 8th May 1951 which reported the crash of a Wellington aircraft at Brampton. He tells me the aircraft was a model T.10 used for navigational training & operated by 201 Advanced Flying School. Its serial number was RP341 and it was on a cross-country training flight. It is thought the pilot may have misread his instruments as at the time of the crash it was 55 miles off course. Mr Gooding even has the names of the crew.

John Dench of Cambridge has gone back even further for, following my note on the R101 visit to Cambridge, he has been sifting through his late father's scrapbooks and unearthed a picture of the German airship, Graf Zeppelin above Wembley Stadium on cup final day – probably the Bolton Wanderers v Manchester City final of 1926, John calculates. As he points out both airship and stadium are now history.

**

Mrs M. Owen from Cambridge has dropped a line to say that she has been reunited with a best friend after nearly 50 years – thanks to a piece in "Memories". Muriel Taylor from Weston Colville had sent me a snap of a bus driven by her father that overturned in Sidney Street. When she read it Mrs Owen knew it was her friend, tracked her down and they have now met to share memories. Roger Holroyd of Arbury still cannot understand how the bus actually came to turn over and how it came to be travelling down Sidney Street. Muriel says it was caused when the front axle broke and as for going the wrong-way, well I believe that it was 1948 when the major one-way- traffic scheme was introduced in Sidney Street, Trinity Street and Market Street three years after the crash. But if you know different please get in touch.

**

Valerie Doty from East Road, Cambridge was having lunch with her aunt recently and trying to remember where in Petty Cury the Waffle Café used to be. Her grandmother used to work there as a waitress in the 1940s. The owner was a Mr Alvey and she seems to remember it was over the top of the Fifty Shilling Taylors, next door to Lyons Tea Shop. I have a picture of the corner of Petty Cury taken in 1950 that shows The Corner House Café over Burton's tailors. Am I right in thinking this would have been the place?

And whilst mentioning Waffles, does anybody recall another café of that name that used to be on the corner of Gold Street and Fitzroy Street, Cambridge. About 25 years ago it was a very trendy eating place with undergraduates flocking there for their May Ball breakfasts – memories please [SCAN OF MARKET HILL AND OF WAFFLES]

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Syd Fullman of Stonehouse in Gloucestershire also seeks your help, this time on behalf of a lady from Holland; she has a picture of her father and would like to know when and where it was taken. He is shown forming part of the guard for King Peter II of Yugoslavia and his mother who, having escaped from their country during the Second World War, lived in exile at Great Gransden for some months in 1942. Syd thinks the picture may have been taken there just before the King moved to Witchford, where his mother, Queen Marie, had bought a farmhouse. Does anybody recognise the lych-gate in the background, or can you add further information. If so please write to me and I will pass it on. [SCAN]

Shirley Brown from Trumpington needs help in her research.

Entering Trumpington from Long Road you pass a large block of spacious, well-appointed flats. But do you remember what was there before the flats were built?

At the end of the nineteenth century there were plantations on the South Side of Long Road (known then as Mill Road). By 1888 a large house had been built at the junction of Long Road and Trumpington High Street. It was called 'Gilmerton' and was occupied by Stephen Mansfield. By 1904 he had a neighbour in an equally large house called "the Beeches". The two houses changed hands several times and the orchard of 'Gilmerton' was sold as building land. In 1941 both houses were sold to Block & Anderson, a London company producing printing machines similar to 'Gestetners'. Many local people were employed there. Were you one and if so what do you remember of those days

After the war 'Block & Anderson' returned to London, 'Gilmerton' and 'The Beeches' were converted into flats and let to members and fellows of King's College. In 1964 the houses were demolished and the land sold for £27,000. Tenants spoke sadly of the demolition and some tried to save pieces of the lovely glass. Has anyone a memento of either of these houses? [SCANS]

Memories 30th May 2001, by Mike Petty

Two long-established traditions of village life have changed this year; one may not be noticed, the other may not be forgotten.

The old-style 'Best-Kept-Village' competition, organised by Cambridgeshire Acre – Action for Communities in Rural England – has a new format. Now villages will be assessed to see how they are functioning as communities, looking at the way they care for the young and old, the environment, the businesses – and even their use of the internet. The winning villages will go through to a national final with written submissions, a presentation and finally a village visit by judges.

Previously teams of volunteer judges would quietly arrive early in the judging process and walk every village street, peering into bus shelters, checking notice boards for out of date events or details of recycling facilities. The state of decoration of the village shop, seat or sign and the overall pride that individual villagers had taken in their own gardens, be they on main street or back lane, would be noted. Once three or four villages of similar size had been assessed comment forms would be posted off, points calculated and one of the villages would pass on to a second stage of the competition. At the end of the process would come the unveiling of 'Best-Kept-Village' signs – something else for the hard-pressed parish councils to keep maintained until the next year.

Some villages took the whole competition to heart – or were just more proud of their community. In June 1968 Witcham parish councillors set up a working party to trim the playing field hedge and tidy up the bus shelter – but although the village roadman had also been particularly diligent they still dropped marks on the previous year. They finally achieved the award in 1973. Newly-elected MP, Clement Freud who unveiled the sign confessed: "I don't know how you go about judging the best kept village, but I noticed that Witcham was the only village which had taken down all the John Stevens, Barry Young and Clement Freud election posters. That has got to be one of the largest contributory reasons!"

[SCAN OF WITCHAM BEST KEPT VILLAGE TROPHY UNVEILING 1973 – WILL TRY AND FIND OTHERS FROM NEWS FILES TUESDAY AM]

Another excuse for a general tidy up would be Feast Sunday – in our village always the third Sunday in May as it has been for many, many years. Indeed the newspaper reported how in 1877 the main topic of the conversation between ladies meeting in the street would be 'have yer done yer cleaning yet' and any housewife who did not have her home spick and span by

the great day would be frowned upon by her neighbours. It is part of the tradition of village life, a time when relatives return home from all parts of the country.

The feast traditionally had three separate sections - a procession, a funfair and a church service; the service is the oldest segment. At Haddenham in 1873 it was emphasised this was an important religious occasion, a celebration connected with the original dedication of their church.

The second stage was a funfair and really was an event to be looked forward to. People walked or cycled from their own village to visit the neighbouring feast. In Melbourn in 1859 there were five or six sideshows depicting the wonders of the world, a pig with two heads, a sheep with six legs, there were shooting galleries & travelling photographers. At Histon in 1900 there were roundabouts brought by Messrs Barker and Thurston, shellfish and confectionery stalls and dancing in the public houses. In Rampton 1912 was the year that one of the traction engines pulling the amusements hit a tree on the Green - which could be seen to be leaning, years later. Jack Nightingale had his rock stall, toy stall, coconut shy, swinging boats and shooting range - a penny a shot at the clay pipes which were the targets or for the same money you could get a strip of liquorice, about 15 inches long $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wide. The celebrations went on for a number of days but Thursday morning was the saddest of the week, for on the way to school you would see the wagons all packed up and ready to go, and on returning, at dinner time the Green would be empty with just the memory to last until next year. These travelling fairs have often become memories themselves. Some villages continue to celebrate all week, at Sutton in 1976 the programme promised entertainment for seven days with prize bingo, pram races, the police male voice choir, discos and displays culminating on Sunday with the fancy dress and decorated floats.

The third section was the parade. This owed its origin to the Friendly Societies, the groups who supported their members through illness and unemployment in the days before social security or free medical care. In Waterbeach there were three: the Shepherds, Foresters and Victoria Benefit who combined for an annual parade from the Green through the High Street to the Baptist Chapel, where a united service was held. When in 1893 Addenbrooke's Hospital issued an appeal for financial help to maintain and improve their services the Societies responded to the call by linking their parade with a collection for the Hospital. So 'Hospital Sunday' or 'Feast Sunday' came part of rural life, with the Red Cross Friendly Societies Banner in pride of place in the procession.

It is this parade which became the essence of feast week. Children dressed as Cowboys & Indians, people from other lands, cavemen and who knows what else clambered on to decorated trailers or lorries & tried to collect money in their nets at the end of sticks, no longer for Addenbrooke's but other worthwhile causes such as cancer research or the blind. The parade was led by the village bobby and a local band and paused half-way for a united church service, the pews packed with a most colourful and seemingly multi-ethnic congregation. It was the day when families were reunited, when those now living away brought their children back to visit, when evacuees would return & woe betide any grandmother who failed to spot her grandchild amongst all the other youngsters on the back of the float. Many adults also wish they could be up there on the lorries, both to have a tour of the old village and relive the days of their childhood when they too were stretching out for sixpences, threepenny bits, even farthings - as long as it would not drop through the hole in that net.

It happened year on year, But this year our streets were empty.

The last time the parade was stopped it was because of Hitler's bombers, this time it was halted because the Police Service would not make officers available to control the traffic -

unless they were paid for – and the organisers preferred any income went to charity, as in the past.

Instead organisers rallied around to arrange a fete on the recreation ground, with bouncy castles, exhibitions, stalls; and the band sat down to play at the united, open-air service – on which the sun for once shone. It was a great financial success, the charities benefited more than before. But it was not the same. Older folk wandered around with their bags of coins they had saved up for the children's nets, wondering quite what to do with them

So has a tradition now become consigned to the history books – or will another year village youngsters be able once more to enjoy their annual celebration of community life as their parents did before them.

Do you remember the Feasts of days gone by – write to Mike Petty at the News
SCAN OF STRETHAM PARADE

Another type of feast is recalled by Peggy Day of Quy who has just published a selection of letters written to her by her mother, Kitty Watts between January and August 1945. Peggy was in the Wrens and so missed the invitation to tea at the RAF camp in Quy Park. For that day rationing was to be a thing of the past – there was going to be real butter, boiled eggs and all kinds of fancy cakes and buns. But the event was slightly different, as her mum told her. "Billy quite enjoyed the Camp treat. I don't think he had much tea as there was no bread and butter, just trifles etc and creamy cakes and buns and tea and lemonade. He had two pieces of cake and got someone else to eat the cream. There was just a cup of tea for the mothers, but after the kiddies had finished they were allowed to finish the rest up. Percy came home unexpectedly last night so Aunt Beat was very pleased. She had let his bed to an airman and his wife, but I expect she would sleep with the kiddies and he with his Dad" "More letters from home" is available from Peggy Day, 8 Orchard Street, Quy for £3.60 (including postage) or from the village stores.

Laura Staves is researching the history of Girton Baptist Church. One fascinating source of information has been a magazine called the "Cambridge and County Baptist Quarterly", which was published for a number of years at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Each magazine contained a postcard-sized photograph of a local church or personality. A bound set of the magazines is in the Cambridgeshire Collection, but unfortunately the pictures have not been included. (She only knows about them because a few unbound magazines are also in the collection). The edition for January 1914 has a focus on Girton and starts "Our illustration for this quarter is of the interior and exterior of Girton Chapel". As you can imagine she would particularly like to see an early photograph of the building; they have tried all the Baptist College libraries, theological libraries in Cambridge, the University Library and the British Library, but without success. Now she wonders if somebody somewhere might just happen to have a copy of the photograph.

Memories 6th June 2001, by Mike Petty

It was about 50 years ago today that William Thurbon, known to many people as "Billy" retired from what many people would think of as a most depressing trade – undertaking. He recalled his own life and times to a reporter in the Cambridge Daily News in June 1951.

Billy had spent the previous 49 years working for just one firm, Ellis Merry, at Abbey Walk, Cambridge. In all that time he'd made 13,000 coffins from their rough wood stage. He had fitted them, polished them and taken them to the homes where they were needed, where his workmanship would be appreciated as the body would often stay in a room in the house before Mr Thurbon conveyed it in the hearse to the funeral.

It had been hard work; once following the tragic sinking of a ferry boat at Fen Ditton he'd worked 24 hour straight off, without a break, then went back after an hour's sleep to make two or three more coffins. On one occasion he had to fetch a body from Heacham in Norfolk back to Balsham when the back axle of the hearse broke. He and his colleagues were such a long way from any town or village that they'd had to spend the night in the open air. There was another time when he dealt with a number of people who'd died during an outbreak of smallpox – "How we didn't get it was a miracle", he mused.

Ernest Gill, a former mayor of Cambridge, recalled some years ago how he would visit Billy at his work. "I was very inquisitive indeed, asking 'who is this one for?' Said Billy 'Oh, this one is for an elderly lady, and this for a young man', and so often he replied, 'This one is for a dear little child'"

Best of all Billy remembered the old days when he could drive a hearse led by three or four Belgian horses with black coverings worn under their harness and black rosettes attached to their bridles; not only the undertaker but all of the bearers wore top hats and morning coats. But when Merry's horse-hearses were not needed to convey the dead then would be used to carry the living, transporting invalid patients to hospital. There is a snap that shows a living patient being loaded into the hearse for what was – hopefully – not his last ride.

SCAN OF FUNERAL PROCESSION IN ST JOHN'S STREET & MERRY'S HORSE
DRAWN AMBULANCE, BOTH ABOUT 1903

When Valerie Doty raised the question of Waffles café in Petty Cury, Cambridge, she unleashed a flood of memories from readers

Was it over Burton's I wondered. No replies Peggy Green of Cambridge, that was The Corner House Café & was something different. It was a lovely, very big café, owned by G.P. Hawkins which ran partly over the International Stores on Market Hill, right across Burton and then above Dolcis shoe-shop in Petty Cury. Peggy ought to know as her sister Flora was the manageress for many years until she married and moved to the U.S.A. to live – and Peggy herself worked there as a cashier for a short time.

The Waffles was about half-way down, on the left hand side at number 32-33 Petty Cury as Joan Futter of Histon points out, with Lyons tea shop on one side and Empire Meat on the other. Nearby was an umbrella maker and another butcher – Rose. (Whatever happened to butchers in Cambridge?) Mrs P. Anderson of Cherry Hinton Road remembers it & Doug Jones of Histon visited regularly before 1939; he recalls that you went up stairs to the first floor and a wooden-beamed room – and they served good coffee. Valerie Doty recalls how you could sit at the window and look down on all the people going in and out of the Lion Hotel opposite.

Reg Wood from Saffron Walden gives, as usual the definitive answer to anything about shops. He writes: "The Waffles café was patronised mainly by undergrads who took their girl friends there, rather than going to college rooms. The next café in Petty Cury was the Mecca, later to become known as The Eros. This was where the middle class went to tea, on the maids' half day. The maids went to Lyons tea shop, which was much cheaper. Another popular tea shop was The Friar House on the corner of Free School Lane in Bene't Street, while another popular eating place was under Burton's shop and known as the Venetian Restaurant."

Joan Futter also recalls the Venetian “I remember going there as a small child with my mother and grandmother. It was always a great treat after an afternoon shopping in town. We usually had toasted teacakes & very strong tea – too strong for me”. By 1963 it had become The Francis Restaurant, as a snap of nightlife shows. Peter Andrews from Histon used to patronise the Scotch Hoose on the corner of Market Street, next to the Victoria Cinema restaurant. First set up at the end of the Great War in Petty Cury by a Cambridge graduate concerned about the limited means of students, supplying plain well-cooked food at nominal prices, it moved to Market Hill in the early 1930s. In its early days it catered for teas and coffee as well as lunches and dinners but by the mid-1960s concentrated on main meals, and had built up a considerable reputation. It was probably the only place in East Anglia where Scottish haggis could be obtained – unless you know different.

And as for different food, Peter Adams from Saffron Walden is one of several readers who recalls the other Waffles, the one in Fitzroy Street. “It had been a baker’s shop and was an odd, somewhat triangular shape. Customers sat at small tables on bentwood chairs. There was not much space, particularly in the evenings and at weekends when it was crowded. There really were queues out into the street. It served nothing but waffles to eat, with a wide range of sweet and savoury toppings, and, as I remember it, fruit juice drinks. After decimalization the chap who ran it made a point of having the prices in shillings up on a board on the wall – he felt it made the prices look lower, but I wasn’t convinced. He once told us that if anyone ate one of each of the different kinds of waffle (sweet and savoury) they got the meal free, and only one person had every done it. It made a good, unusual, cheap meal, hence its popularity. After the Kite area was largely bulldozed away for the Grafton Centre redevelopment the establishment moved to a place on Castle Hill, but it closed many years ago”

SCANS

OF SOUTH SIDE PETTY CURY 1949 SHOWING LION HOTEL WITH ITS
PROJECTING WINDOW ON LEFT;
BEN’T STREET 1964 – THE FRIAR HOUSE RESTAURANT WAS THE HALF-
TIMBERED BUILDING ON THE RIGHT
MARKET HILL AT NIGHT 1963 SHOWING THE FRANCIS RESTAURANT -
FORMERLY THE VENETIAN & SIMILAR SCENE IN 1937
PERHAPS FILE PHOTO OF WAFFLES, CASTLE HILL

Readers have also been quick to solve two other mysteries. Both David Daniels and Alan Marr of Great Gransden have been able to confirm that the picture I showed of King Peter of Yugoslavia was indeed taken in their village, in fact the lychgate in the background is exactly the same today. Alan says that although the Gransdens Society copied some hundreds of local photographs when compiling their book of pictures of the village, he had never seen this particular snap before.

Shirley Brown from Trumpington has also received more information in her search for the story of the two large houses near the corner of Long Road, Gilmerton and The Beeches. They had been used for a while by a company called Block and Anderson who made Bandas duplicating machines. Victor Stirling from Cambridge was one of their employees who moved up to Cambridge when their London premises were bombed out and stayed until he was called up in 1944. Almost as soon as he left Cliff Parker, now at Thriplow, was taken on as an apprentice tool maker and stayed with them for 16 years. It was only a short time however before the firm moved to Aycliffe Trading Estate in County Durham, just a new miles north of Darlington. There they expanded, although the offices moved back to London from where they had been bombed out. They were a grand company to work for and many of the staff stayed with them for much longer than myself. Cliff however left to join the training division of the Department of Employment and is grateful for the grounding he received at B

& A. He has another memento too: “my wife joined the firm and we have now been married for nearly 51 years”

Pat Beavis has written from Great Walsingham, Norfolk, following another ‘Memories’ piece, the one about her husband, Gerald, shearing sheep on the Backs in 1975. Gerald has now retired but lectures to various groups on ‘Old Time Sheperding’ and is off to Wroxham and Leicester shortly. I have found a snap taken by the News at the time, showing him hard at work on King’s meadow where he attracted a considerable audience of visitors and locals alike.

SCAN OF GERALD BEAVIS SHEARING SHEEP ON BACKS, MAY 1975

Joan Smith from St Albans Road, Cambridge has been scanning through the family album following recent articles about airships. She has a photograph showing the R101 moored at Cardington; “I well remember being driven by my father (Mr Gerald Maddox of Huntingdon) in a car in a long, slow queue round the field to see it at its mooring”.

Brian Saunders from Coochiemudlo Island, Queensland, Australia has aerogrammed me to seek help tracing his ancestors. He’s got back to John Saunders who married Grace Mayes at Fen Ditton in June 1748, but now he’s stuck. If you can dislodge him drop me a line.

Memories 13th June 2001, by Mike Petty

The other weekend I had a meeting in London and decided to let the bus take the strain. The coach would depart from Cambridge’s Cowley Road park and ride at 8am. A few minutes before the hour there was no sign of the bus, so I asked the Information Manager in the newly-built waiting room – “No mate, I only deal with park and ride. I don’t know nothing about any coaches”. A helpful bus driver suggested it would leave from Milton Road, so I hurried there – only to find the coach drew up on time outside the new departure building on Cowley Road as it does every day. I hurried back, feeling less than happy to be the cause of amusement to the dis-information official. On arrival at Drummer Street there were more passengers, mainly foreign visitors taking advantage of the £8 return – providing they had the right fare. Sadly many did not, the driver rummaged in his pockets but had run out of change – come back the bus conductor with his satchel!

Drummer Street bus station opened in November 1925, despite major protests about the loss of a strip of grass from Christ’s Pieces to create sufficient parking space for cars. Now country buses would stop there, instead of clogging up Senate House Hill, as they had previously. Soon there were disputes between the bus companies as to who could stop where, with wrongly parked buses being manhandled out of the way. By 1947 there were complaints that it was too small for the number of buses using it, and proposals for changes have continued ever since.

Then in June 1951 came a major improvement to the facilities with the opening of a mobile canteen based in a brand-new, beautifully equipped Berkeley caravan. The Mayor declared it would be a great asset to the city. Inside everything was spotlessly clean with plenty of cupboard space for glasses (no plastic cups in those days). At one end there was a gas stove used in winter for making “hot-dogs”, and a sink to wash up. It was open from 8.30 am to 10 pm on weekdays, and from 2pm to 9 pm Sundays. Prices were reasonable; cups of tea 2d, coffee 3d, squash and minerals 4d; sandwiches cost from 3d to 6d and cheese rolls 4d. Even at these prices the facility was expected to cover its costs, there would be no subsidy from the rates. To complete the improvements there were new bus shelters, where you could sit and munch your snack while you waited for the bus to arrive.

Then in 1991 came a major revamp to bring it up to date, with new glass waiting areas, improved toilets and - hopefully - helpful staff who do actually know where buses leave from!
PICTURES OF DRUMMER STREET

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One of the current issues in the news is the future of the reinforced concrete bunker at Brooklands Avenue. Now nobody is in any doubt as to its existence. But in April 1963 it was a top-secret structure – until a group known as “Spies for Peace” publicised its existence in a duplicated leaflet. R.S.G.4 was, they revealed, the regional seat of government for East Anglia; a post-nuclear military government stand-by headquarters which in event of war would take over the running of the region. They went on to list the names of some of those who would staff it – “if you are not amongst them there will be no room in R.S.G.4 for you” they warned. They even gave its telephone number (Cambridge 58900), together with the locations and phone numbers for the others scattered around the country.

Their leaflet concluded with “The Secret Anthem”

God save our R.S.G.

No room for you and me

Where shall we be?

We shall die alone in the wilderness

Our queen could not care less!

The whole country’s in a bloody mess

God save the R.S.G.s.

It caused quite a stir at the time, now its future is in doubt. Were you on the list, did you work inside it – or are you still sworn to secrecy? Or can you shed light on the background to this Ban-the-Bomb protest from the early 1960s?

FIND PICTURE TAKEN RECENTLY OF THE BUNKER

Ken Holliday has written from Norwich to say that he was one of the Observers at the Stretham windmill Royal Observer Corps posts, having added two years to his age! He has also drawn my attention to a contemporary newspaper account giving more details of the ‘Give Her Bovril’ airship at Sutton in October 1913 (Memories 18th April).

“Much excitement prevailed in the village when it became known that an airship had come down in the fens, not very far distant, and cyclists were soon speeding to the spot from all directions. Many were under the impression that it was one of our army airships, but it proved to be the Bovril advertising airship which left Hendon last Friday and has since been touring the country. First Pilot R.F. Dagnell was in charge assisted by Second Pilot S. Heath. Mr Sole’s Tubbs’ Farm is not exactly a nice place for an airship to be housed, so that when Mr A. Drake suggested it should be brought nearer Sutton those in charge readily fell in with the idea of moving it. A gang of Messrs Drake & Son’s men, who had been employed near by, therefore shouldered the car and proceeded towards the village. This was rendered easier as the envelope still contained sufficient gas to give it buoyancy and thus helped them over ditches and other obstacles. When they reached the high road a crowd soon gathered and it looked a curious procession that proceeded to Bury Lane where our aerial visitor was to spend the night, Mr E. Lowe staying “on guard”. Many people visited the scene when Mr Alf C. Drake was present and made a collection in aid of the Welsh colliery disaster relief fund, the pilots having consented to keep the airship on view as long as possible for this purpose. The airship will then be packed up and sent by rail to Hendon”. [SCAN OF THE AIRSHIP PILOT]

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Mrs P. Anderson from Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge, writes: "I was surprised and delighted to see my late father (Prof Saddington) mentioned in your "Looking Back" column on June 6th". I had delved back into the files of the News for 1926 to report how a demonstration of ju jitsu had been given in Cambridge by Mr A.J. Morgan and C.W. Boxsell who deputised for Professor Saddington and the son of Professor Sitton, the old University boxing instructor. A carpet about five feet square was requisitioned for a mat and Professor Saddington supplied ju jitsu costumes. The proceedings opened with a demonstration of "Kime-no-Kata, or ju jitsu self-defence methods. This was followed by methods of defence against an armed assailant which was loudly applauded while a display of ju jitsu wrestling brought the house down.

Mrs Anderson continues: "My father died in 1964 but ju jitsu had always been his great interest and he only stopped taking an active interest when the wound he received in World War I broke out again. How he would have enjoyed these reminiscences. I remember being taken to the gym and watching the students practising their throws and their falls. I seem to think the gym was a room behind the Guildhall". She also remembers the Prof Sitton lived in Madingley and his son Robert was a partner in the Cambridge motor firm Sitton and Mothersole

Delving into the News photo files to find a picture to accompany her letter I came across a very dramatic shot taken in December 1982 of a young Richard Patient from Bar Hill who had then just passed his examination for a junior black belt, not in ju jitsu, but in the Shotokan form of karate. Club secretary Mike Harris commented: "When you see him in normal dress he looks so unassuming that you wonder almost if he could burst a grape". It made quite a change from his other hobby – that of ornithology. Today Richard has turned his back on martial arts to become an accountant, but travels the world bird watching. Do you recognise any of the other youngsters at the Bar Hill club.
PICTURE ENCLOSED

Keith Hamilton from Cambridge is an avid collector of anything to do with fairs and fairground folk, and is the area correspondent for "The World's Fair", the show people's newspaper. Referring to Memories of 30th May he writes: "I am sure the habit of having everything spick and span for feast still holds with some of the older folk in villages where the feast is still kept up. I am aware the habit still holds with show people to some extent. Although the Cambridge Midsummer fair does not possibly have the same impact it once did there is still a tradition among many fairground families that everything must be just so in time for Cambridge. Trailer (living wagons) are washed down outside and they have a general tidy up. When stalls, transport etc are due a tidy up and possibly a repaint it is still a tradition to get it done in time for Cambridge. Indeed when I visited Thurston's fair at Luton last week there was quite a bit of painting of lorries going on 'in time for Cambridge'. Having most of my friends from the business I even find myself having a bit of a spring clean in my modest flat 'in case someone calls!'" PICTURE OF FAIR

One of the girls shown on the picture of Histon feast that week has come forward: "I've just seen a copy of the Evening News and much to my surprise the picture of Histon feast in 1985 is the Girl Guide float with me and my sister on the front row. I am second from the left and she is next to me with dark hair. I remember that day as it rained and we all froze in our shorts and grass skirts. I was 10 years old at the time. For your information I'm Helen Smith and best known for losing my limbs to meningitis"

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Jeanne Cherry from Thompson's Lane, Cambridge has set us a puzzle. She has acquired a large photograph from 1910 showing a tennis match with a very fashionable and large crowd watching. It was in an album compiled by A.L. Prinsep who played lawn tennis for Trinity

College at that time. But where was it played? “I have walked to every possible spot in Cambridge, hoping to recognise the chimney pots of the two houses in the background,” Jeanne says, but without result. Can you identify them? Write to Mike Petty at the News [SCAN OF PICTURE OF TENNIS MATCH]

Memories 20th June 2001, by Mike Petty

Helen Windibank (nee Batt) from Ashford in Kent is on the ancestor hunt. Her great aunt, Kate Batt married a member of the Morley family who was a photographer in Cambridge. They had daughters Grace, Kate and Dorothy of whom Grace graduated from the University in the early 1900s and may have been the reason the family moved to Cambridge.

Helen may have a search on her hands for the 1904 Spaldings' Directory reveals numerous Morleys in Cambridge at that time; Arthur was landlord of The John Gilpin in Gold Street, Edward was an electrical engineer, Ernest the manager of the International Tea Company, Frederick a pawnbroker and jeweller – and at that time also a Town Councillor. Then there was George, a guard on the railways, Harry a coachman, Herbert the secretary of the Stockwell Street Baptist Chapel Sunday School – not to mention John a shoemaker, another John a labourer – and yet another who was an architect. There's no space to mention more than Richard, a cleaner at the pumping station, Walter the lead glazier of Mawson Road or William a bricklayer in Eden Street.

Such is the wealth of information tucked away inside the covers of just one of the series of Cambridge Street directories issued by William Potter Spalding from 1874. Originally they came out every 3-4 years but they became an annual publication after the Great War; they stopped at the start of World War II after which Kellys took over publication

Spalding's 1904 directory is typical. The first pages start with advertisements – for Bolton's removals, Joshua Taylor, Cole the jeweller, Matthews the grocer in Trinity Street – some of which are forgotten, others of which linger on in the memory of older residents.

Then comes lists of officials and organisations- the school attendance officer, collector of market tolls, names of each of the borough police, the surgeons at Addenbrooke's Hospital – a record of those who served in so many capacities. Postal times, hackney carriage fares, lists of societies, names of churchwardens – on and on they go

But the main feature is street directory; from Abbey Road to York Street the compilers surveyed house by house, listing the name of the occupant. Often the same names come up year after year, directory after directory, enabling you to identify those who have lived in your house; sometimes occupants change regularly – making you wonder why?

Spalding however went further than just listing names, he also included jobs, giving a wonderful feel for the area and how it has changed– just how many laundresses, pawnbrokers' assistants, soap boilers or cab proprietors live down Abbey Road today?

Corner shops, pubs, breweries and factories all feature street by street; but they also come together in a classified list of trades. Cambridge in 1904 had autocar companies, bath proprietors, blackboard renovators, braziers, ironfounders and perambulator makers alongside the manufacturers of artificial teeth and vacuum cleaner companies.

In fact within its 300 pages Spalding's directory for 1904 crammed a mass of information. But some things defeated even him. The names are there – but there is no overall index to them, so Helen would have to plod page by page.

This was something that confronted another family researcher, Hugo Brown who has been working on his genealogy for many years. He'd discovered that his wife, Melanie (nee Johnson) was born in the Mill Road Maternity Hospital in the 1960s and lived for a while in a simple two up, two down terraced house at 39 Gwydir Street. Then when checking the 1881 Census for her ancestors he came across the entry for her former home. In that small house there had been no fewer than 15 occupants, and more amazingly they were actually Melanie's great-great-great grandparents James and William Smee! No-one in the family knew of this co-incidence. They only lived at 39 Gwydir St for a very short while and Hugo found it difficult to locate them on the 1891 Census. So he resorted to the files of Spalding's directories in the Cambridgeshire Collection.

He scanned through year after year of directories. He located James Smee, who was a college servant, in all the Spalding Directories except for 1904. So he decided to create a short index to that year, just surnames only, to locate James Smee. But by now he was hooked & soon realised that it would be far more interesting to create a full alphabetical index of all 14,555 entries contained in the 1904 Directory with copies deposited with the Cambridgeshire Collection and the Cambridge Records Office. But when the index was finally complete he was no further forward; he still hadn't found him, he just wasn't listed.

But at least other researchers could save themselves hours of work by using Hugo's index.

However Hugo Brown has gone much further than merely index the names; he has indexed the names of houses, indexed pubs, occupations, advertisements; and he's not confined it to paper; he's cut it on a CD-Rom. This is a monumental project, involving many hours of work, but it does not take up much disc space. So Hugo has scanned the complete directory, page by page and constructed links so that you can click on a name and be taken immediately to the page of the directory where it is shown.

But some of the streets have now vanished. Spalding included a map with his directory, so Hugo has scanned that as well; and while about it he added other maps for 1924 and 1949 enabling one to compare how areas have changed over the years.

In fact he has put some much time and effort into all these sections that it is a shame few people will consult them fully.

For in addition to all this he has scanned in some 1,000 pictures, half of which he has taken himself over the last 20 years, the other half of which have come from the Cambridgeshire Collection. They are arranged in fifteen sequences – streets, colleges, churches, pubs, events, people, parks amongst them. There are links upon links and soon one just keeps clicking, meandering through hundreds of images, old and new. There are even town trails of the city before 1930 and after 1980 – with fascinating comparisons, of colleges, pubs and churches. Click on a picture, it comes up on the computer screen, click on the print button and it prints out.

The Cambridge Explorer CD-Rom is due to be launched shortly. It will cost £20 and be available from Heffers, from the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library or from Hugo Brown at The Cambridge Explorer, Ash House, Prickwillow Road, Queen Adelaide, Ely, Cambs CB7 4TZ. Of course there is a web-site at www.cambridge-explorer.co.uk

To view it you need a Pentium PC with a CD-drive and Microsoft Internet Explorer v5 (or newer). If you have an interest in Cambridge history, but have not yet ventured into the new technology then this is the time to approach your grandchildren for their assistance. Mind you they will probably want to keep it themselves for all those school and college projects – or just because it shows whose was living in their house nearly 1900 years ago.

Memories 27th June 2001 by Mike Petty

In the early 1960s the prospect of seeing-in the 21st-century seemed remote. The Great Powers were caught in an arms race that could only end in atomic war; East Anglia was the centre for both British and American H-bombers, perhaps nowhere else in the world had as much destructive power concentrated in one area. It was therefore an obvious target for Russian bombs.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament tried to raise awareness of the effect of an atomic attack and thousands of people protested peacefully. But for some this was not enough. A national Committee of 100 initiated a campaign of massive civil disobedience, organising mass marches and sit-down demonstrations, and an East Anglia committee was formed, with a Cambridge schoolmaster as its secretary. One of those shadowy figures was a youngster, Raith Overhill – now a magistrate and Cambridge city councillor. Like many others he agonised about the aftermath of an attack: “There may or may not be any survivors. You might be one of them. Think of that for a moment ... Imagine everything burnt to the ground. No food, or water contaminated by radiation. Would you wish to live in such a world”.

But, like it or not, some would survive, at least for a while; and once the fires had died away and the radiation levels dropped somebody would have to try and pick up the pieces. So the Government established a series of regional centres, bomb-proof bunkers where officials would shelter safely. One of those was in Cambridge. It was top secret.

The teen-aged Raith was employed by Wally Undrill’s upholsterers and French polishers, based in Catharine Street. The firm had a contract with the Government offices in Brooklands Avenue, refurbishing, moving filing cabinets, putting in carpets. They also got the job of fitting out the new bomb-proof bunker - and Raith was one of those assigned to the work, fitting and assembling furnishings.

There he was, a committed anti-nuclear protestor, author of ‘Food for Thought’ and ‘Save Humanity’ leaflets, and he was being granted access to a absolutely top-secret installation.

“My first impression of the building was daunting, it was stone grey, stark and windowless. The large steel door was swung open, to me it was like a portal which lead to a labyrinth of corridors and dormitories. The ministry official who would direct the work, showed me the water purifying system operation and mess rooms, where groups of men were laying flooring”. (The flooring did not survive – the lino, specially made for the job, was the wrong colour. It was ripped out and burnt.)

“At this point I was handed a floor layout plan, with TOP SECRET stamped over it; those plans gave the instructions where furnishing and, most important, the beds were to be erected. Over the next few weeks myself and two other young men worked hard to complete our task. As we were unable to have a radio – no signal could penetrate the massive walls - we would sing pop hits of the time, and some times out of bravado I would sing the Red Flag. To this very day I could never understand how I was allowed into the building wearing my CND badge.

“On what was to be my last day in the building and my reason for leaving, was an inspection by senior ministry officials. One high ranking military officer said that the beds would have to be taken apart and re-erected in another part of the building, I protested, as I had the official layout plan. But I was no match for his seniority, and decided that I would not wish to spend my time with the likes of him in such a claustrophobic building, in the event of a nuclear holocaust.”

Raith left, went to his Committee of 100 meetings in Fen Ditton and helped produce the “Spies for Peace” leaflet that told the world about the shelter in which he had been working.

All that was a long while ago. But last week Raith went back, wearing his old CND badge. Nowadays the gaunt building is swathed in greenery. Inside it remains as he remembered, stark concrete corridors, small windowless offices some still equipped with their regulation mirror and filing cabinets with the original labels tied to the, now empty, drawers. In one larger room there is a map of East Anglia, lying nearby the pins which would have plotted explosions. While some of the air purification equipment still stands ready for use, the male and female dormitories, where the 300 beds had been erected – as per plan – are now empty. It is a warm, quiet and sterile environment – our guide had never seen a single spider or creepy crawlly inside it.

From out of a folder of papers Raith produced a leaflet advertising a march from Cambridge Guildhall to this other centre of government. “Perhaps in the four minutes before annihilation you can run the mile from the city centre – press the doorbell for admission!”

But however terrible it would have been for those outside the prospect for the men and women locked inside their shelter would surely have been far worse. For they knew far better than any idealistic youngster just what would be happening to their own wives and children outside, alone. And who would want to emerge afterwards if the world was like the campaigners were predicting.

So far it has not happened, the bunker still stands and councillors – like Raith – will be involved in deciding its future. It is not the most attractive piece of architecture in Cambridge but had somebody pushed the button it might have been the only building left!

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It’s the time of year when papers are full of stories of escaped vultures, fen tigers or anything animal. But Michael Snelling of Haslingfield is concerned about a missing lion. The beast is described as being about 100 years old and bright red in colour. It was last seen in central Cambridge some months ago, high up near the library, where it had been for some 25 years, but has now disappeared. Has it been culled because of woodworm, has it gone to breed with the other lions near the Fitzwilliam Museum – or is it lurking in some yard somewhere. Wherever it is Michael would like to see it brought back, for without it all the people who used to say “meet you under the Red Lion” are quite lost.

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The other evening I spoke to a group at Kirtling, one of a cluster of small parishes to the south-east of Newmarket. During the tea interval the talk inevitably got around to the changing way of life, to the arrival of new residents who do not have time to attend village gatherings, to the soaring price of housing that force village children into Newmarket for accommodation. But last year a group of some fifty of the older residents took the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about old times, present times and future times with village children, and the children responded with their own hopes & memories. It has all been brought together by a team of writers and photographers, using illustrations produced by the children and published in a book dedicated to the young generation. But this is not just another book of memories for it includes a CD-Rom including the voices and artwork of children adding their insight into aspects such as childhood, technology, health and food. One major change has been travel; it may be much easier now to get away, but Victor Dickerson captures much of the romance of a Sunday School Outing in his poem from Dullingham station.

The day has arrived for our Sunday school treat.
Washed behind ears and clean socks on our feet.
We travel by train, the same as last year -
We're all getting on without a care.
Third class carriage, sixteen squeezed in –
Good thing that some are thin.
No lavatory on this train –
You had to go before you came.

On arrival it's off to the beach

Sandwiches in newspaper - dripping or marg.
(Sometimes a cake - nothing too large.)
Should you, by bad luck, let them fall
You'll have to eat them sand and all.
A bee's stung Mr. Goody on the chin.
Tea at the Church Hall - all fall in.
Long tables have the goodies on,
Meat paste sandwiches nearly all gone.
As usual Betty wants to pee –
No wonder - she's drunk a pint of tea!
Games are played with a lot of passion
And afterwards it's off to the station.

Finally the train reaches home

Mums and dads are at the station,
Mum looking good in a nice white apron.
We have sticks of rock as our day-out token -
Sad to say many are broken.
Some are sticky from the heat,
Wilkie's got his on his teeth.

I snuggle into bed and it starts to rain -
I hear it on the window pane.
Oh happy days - roll on next year -
With another day out without a care.

Do you remember Sunday School outings – write to Mike Petty at the News

“Millennium Child” is published by Cross Board Arts at the Wysing Arts Centre, Fox Road,
Bourn, CB3 7TX

Memories 4th July 2001, by Mike Petty

One of Cambridge's foremost fashion shops, closed this week, 50 years ago. George Stace was a name that had come to stand for a good, solid, middle class trade. It was not necessarily a smart one, but it met the needs of a definite section of the community. It catered for the matron, and for the essentially well-to-do family of both town and county.

In its day it had striven to meet the needs of its customers, providing work for a small army of girls in making and adapting clothes. In 1898 the firm had been summonsed for employing

17-year-old Kate Ladds after 8pm contrary to the Workshops and Factories Act. On June 4th she had begun work at nine o'clock in the morning and finished at 9.20 at night, with just an hour and a half for meals - & was not paid anything extra for the overtime. She said some of the employees in the showroom began at 8.30 a.m. On this particular night she was making a hat that a lady wanted home that night. Despite her assurances that Mr Stace was not a hard taskmaster and was not sweating the girls he employed he was fined one shilling.

On George Stace's death in 1918 Mr R.E. Moore took over as manager, but the shop had remained largely unchanged, as had its reputation for good class trading. They had survived the hardships of the Second World War, and enjoyed a good sale in January 1949 when the possibility of the ending of clothes rationing had a psychological effect with people inclined to be a bit rash with their coupons and the half-price, half-price coupon goods went well. They cleared some of their Old Look stock and a number of suits have been sold at a quarter of their price - £20 coats at £4.19s.6d. It was pointed out that the "shorter lady" scored, as some of the old length garments look new length on her.

News of the closure was a serious blow to many of the customers who had shopped there for many years. One lady summed up its appeal: "My mother brought her wedding dress there, and I bought mine. My daughter's wedding dress came from here and I was hoping my granddaughter's would be bought here too in due course". Sadly it was not to be; Joshua Taylor acquired the goodwill of the business and hoped the ladies would transfer their business to them. [SCAN OF STACE'S]

But you do not have to go back so far to reflect on change. In June 1976 the News took a stroll through the 'Kite' area of Cambridge, down Fitzroy and Burleigh Streets, an area then threatened with redevelopment but which provided "the sort of service that makes shopping a pleasure, where shoppers can ask favours - and know they'll get them". There was Laurie & McConnal's, "the delightfully unrushed family department store (with free parking and a pleasant restaurant on the first floor)"; the Talk of the Town - "not so much a department store as lots of chic mini stores under the same roof", and fashionably simple clothes - lovingly chosen hand-knits, hand-weaves - at the shop called just Fitzroy.

Like other areas it had its multiples but here "the chainstores that settle in the Kite lose their usual anonymity. Here the Boots, Tesco (furniture), Fine Fare, Woolworths and others all become part of the community, presided over by the Co-op, all lumbering Victorian without and comfortable modern department store within".

Warming to the assignment the reporter of 25 years ago took us on a jaunt: "Go early one Saturday while the sun's still streaming up Gold Street & have a wander round. You'll see the do-it-yourselfers drawn up in their cars at the DIY shop (Fitzroy and James street corner), and just before nine you'll see a small crowd of devotees begin to gather outside the model shop (Ren-Models). Pick up your morning paper at Woods in Burleigh Street and have an early coffee in the Rumble Tum. Now go on and spoil yourself and pop into The Jays and buy that LP or tape you've been holding out on before foraging in the fashion shops - Fades for all you want in denim, Trend Tailoring and Dysons for men, and Mandrake and Josephine Parsons for women. Then when your spending's got to stop, treat yourself to lunch. The Peking does midday lunches with good portions of sweet and sour pork at 65p. Chopsticks make a delicious meal last longer and there's gentle advice on choosing dishes"

There was plenty of choice and plenty of parking space, but just one problem: "Don't go shopping in the Kite on Thursday - it's early closing". [PICTURES FROM NEWS FILES]

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Does anybody remember working for Messrs I & R Morley? They had a world-wide reputation for woollen products and a factory in Abbey Road where in 1951 they were

producing as many as 135 dozen woollen garments in a month. In April that year plans were announced for extensions and improvements designed to turn the premises into a modern up-to-date knitwear factory, with machine room, yarn store, press room, boiler house and mechanic shop. The expansion meant that more workers would be needed in a job that carried interest and personal pride in craftsmanship. There were none of those dull machining tasks associated with large-scale factories and girls would complete the whole garment – one could produce the body work of a garment in about 45 minutes and a really nimble-fingered girl could make as many as three dozen garments in a week. Amongst their products were cable stitch sweaters for cricket clubs – including the M.C.C. Pullovers, slipovers, jumpers and sweaters were packed for distribution to every part of the world.

The firm offered excellent canteen facilities and social activities including a trip to the coast during the summer and a visit to London in winter. But do you remember it?

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Joy Hall from St Ives has sent me a poem of her memories of a Sunday School outing by train to Hunstanton – the excitement of the first glimpse of the sea, the spades and buckets, sandwiches and pop, and the paddling. Last week we too went back again; the station has long gone, but the ghost train's still there; the boating lake's been filled in but there are still donkeys on the beach. I forgot to see if the picture postcards still show the pier as they did long years after it had disappeared! Mr M. Beeton of Histon has more tangible evidence of change for he still treasures a number of cine films of Histon Baptist Sunday School outings that were taken by his late step father, R.T. Barnes in the 1930's, 50's and 60's. He recalls: "It seems that nearly all the village turned out for this annual treat. When you arrived at the resort a mad dash was made for the beach, followed by the funfair, skating rink etc. Games such as beach cricket and rounders were organised for anyone to join in. The day was always finished off by a tea that catered for everyone". Then in winter the film would be shown back at the Church to remind everyone of their excursion. Do you remember them?

Mr D. Coote from Luton has been digging amongst his family archives to find a photograph taken in Guernsey in 1947. It shows a group of youngsters from the Central School, Cambridge He is there on the back row, one from the right; Ivor Fuller is on the left of the row in front while "Cambridge's Diana Dors" with the blonde hair was, he thinks, named Betty Fiske. Ted Mudd has a picture of the real Diana taken when she visited the Tivoli cinema, Cambridge in the 1950s. If you recognise yourself or would like to share memories with Mr Coote let me know. [SCAN OF GROUP & OF DIANA DORS WHEN SHE VISITED CAMBRIDGE]

Christine Branch from Haslingfield has a much older query. She has a photograph of the Girl Guide Company attached to the Catholic Church in Hills Road, Cambridge, taken between 1921 and 1926. The captain was Miss M. Goss (centre) and the person on her right was probably her assistant, a Miss Watts. Christine's aunt, Cecily Hughes (nee Wilkins) is seated front left. Do you know the number of the unit (somewhere between the 13th and 17th Cambridge), have any memories or know why it was disbanded. If so please contact her at 10 The Meadows, Haslingfield, phone Cambridge 870136, or write to me at the News. [SCAN OF GIRL GUIDE TROOP]

Memories 11 Jul 2001, by Mike Petty

The recent high temperatures have recalled memories of the summer of 1976; in early May and June that year temperatures had sometimes reached into the 80s but from 22nd June to 26th August the weather was consistently dry, sunny & hot. The summer of 1975 had been the hottest for nearly 30 years, but this was worse. Every day between 23rd June and 7th July the thermometers soared into the 90s – a record.

As temperatures hit 94 degrees in the centre of Cambridge even King's College chapel organ went out of tune, The main King's Cross to Cambridge railway line became distorted at Shepreth, roads at Swaffham Prior started to break up in the heat and *News* reporters tried cooking an egg on the bonnet of a car.

Working conditions became almost impossible; Cambridge policemen removed their ties, Huntingdon barristers their wigs and gowns, At Haverhill Taylor's Foundry removed skylights to encourage a breeze and furniture makers dished out free drinks. Mildenhall factory workers began clocking in at 6am so they could leave by mid-afternoon when the heat was at its most intense. Marshalls and Pye Unicam workers followed suit. Building workers were in demand when houses cracked through subsidence as the soil dried out beneath them.

Cambridge pubs ran out of lager because of a 100 per cent increase in demand and brewers were unable to replace stocks. Newmarket pubs ran out of lemonade and a Haverhill Hotel ran out of ice – which so annoyed one customer that he threw his drink at landlord Colin Addy.

Children too were suffering. About 100 Cub Scouts and Brownie Guides collapsed from heat exhaustion at an open air service conducted by the Bishop of Ely at the Cub Scout jubilee camp at Braham Farm, Lt Thetford.

Ely swimming pool was overwhelmed with visitors but the annual swim through Cambridge, organised by the Granta swimming club, had to be cancelled for the first time in about 40 years because of the low level of water in the river Cam. Due to possible pollution problems they dare not risk the health hazards involved. The situation got worse when a sudden storm caused failure in the city's stormwater system and oil that had collected in the drains during the hot weather was washed into the Cam, causing giant oil slicks. This added to the problems being experienced by fish as water temperatures soared and water levels fell. Farmers were stopped from extracting water to irrigate their parched fields where the harvest was coming on about three weeks before schedule; nor would they be allowed to burn stubble for fear of wholesale conflagrations.

Extreme heat took its toll of animals. At Cambridge abattoir in Coldham's Lane one animal died on the premises and three others were dead on arrival because of the intense heat-induced heart attacks. There were fears too for chickens; about 1,500 died at Baldock and Wilburton poultryman Edward Everitt, who had some 50,000 hens, expressed concern at the difficulties being faced in keeping them cool

But as well as heat there was another crisis that year – drought. Summer rainfall had been less than half the average, but this was just part of the problem. The drought had begun in April 1975, it had been serious by April 1976 and still there seemed no end in sight.

Trees were parched, Wandlebury nature reserve shut its gates as branches fell off because of the drought and other nature reserves considered closure.

Cambridgeshire fire fighters faced their biggest crisis in years as the heatwave continued. In the Cam Causeway area of Cambridge Stephen Stokes and Robert Earl were amongst children and adults who turned out in force to help firemen fight a fire which threatened their homes. It raced across waste ground and broke through the fence line at the bottom of their gardens before it was controlled. It was the third fire on the land in a week. Cambridge Fire & rescue Service, already stretched with other alarms could initially only send one engine, so its first action was to put a call out for everyone to pitch in and help. Everywhere firemen were finding difficulty getting water as ponds, fen drains and rivers dried up; Hobson's Brook gurgled to a stop and reservoirs emptied. At Graham Water remains of submerged farms became visible. Water rationing was introduced and standpipes erected - though Newmarket racecourse continued to irrigate its July course.

Then on 15th July more than an inch of rain fell overnight; it was a relief, but nowhere near enough – water engineers noted that we needed at least three months of heavy rain to get anything like back to normal. The Cambridge Water Company was warning that by 1981 it would be short of more than 1.25 million gallons of water a day and were planning a Great Ouse Groundwater Scheme to remedy the situation.

In desperation the Government appointed a Minister for Drought, Dennis Howell, to co-ordinate water conservation. Within three days it started raining. Over August Bank Holiday roads flooded and at Soham and Isleham pubs and private houses had to be pumped out. Normal weather was resumed. [PICTURES FROM NEWS FILES]

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Hot weather was welcome on Sunday School outings; Mr A. Challis of Bar Hill recalls: “The invitation in the Cambridge Evening News to relate Sunday School outings of years ago tempted me as, at 90 years of age I remember them well. As secretary of the Hills Road Methodist Sunday School (corner of Norwich street) in the twenties I organised them for children of the church. The main organisers of the special trains were Mr & Mrs David Moore who lived at "Lumen" Histon Road. Mr Moore was a chemist at Chivers and he and his wife Florence were keen workers for the Temperance Movement. Each summer in the twenties they organised special trains to selected places for families from Cambridge and surrounding villages. This was a popular outing, probably in July and I remember collecting the pennies from January onwards and also arranging the teas at the venue selected. The fare would have been modest by today’s standard. Places visited were Skegness, Gt. Yarmouth, Hunstanton etc and a film would taken of the day which was shown in the following winter to the various churches which participated. At these events they were known as Uncle David and Auntie Flossie and for several years they did a good job in giving many people a day out when travel was not so easily available. These trips would have been in the early 20's as by 1925 I was working, I still have a photograph or two of the trips including one of Miss Emilie Lewis who had an excellent contralto voice and later formed the Mackenzie School of Music”. (Uncle David’s films still survive and have been copied for the East Anglian Film Archive; from time to time filmshows are given to packed chapels)

Pubs also had outings; this picture is headed “The Blackbird’s outing to Southend, July 17th 1933” – can anyone shed light on it? [SCAN]

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With the fortunes of the Marconi electronics company in the news at the moment, Mr P. Johnson of Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire, has sent me a snap of the founder and radio pioneer, Guglielmo Marconi, being presented with an honorary degree in the Cambridge University Senate House, probably in 1931. It is not the best photograph in the world but was taken by Agnes Johnson who managed to find herself a seat in the gallery with a very small camera in her possession. Notes on the back of the snap record: “The uniforms made a very colourful scene; that of Marconi himself being a marvellous affair of purple faced with gold, which fitted him without a crease. Amongst those present on the dais was Sir J.J. Thompson and Sir Will Spens in his Vice Chancellor’s robes”. [SCAN]

Memories 19th July 2001, by Mike Petty

The dedication of the new Processional Way at Ely Cathedral marked the first major addition to that building for many centuries, launching the Ship of the Fens into the 21st century, after much of the preceding century had been involved with the skilful restoration and repair of the

original fabric. 100 years earlier another major religious building had been completed; this time the Roman Catholic church of Our Lady in Hills Road, Cambridge. One company links the two – Rattee and Kett.

George Kett was a Norfolk man who had worked on the restoration of Norwich cathedral in the 1830s, and then moved on to the new Houses of Parliament in London. Meanwhile in Cambridge another craftsman, James Rattee, had enhanced his reputation with his carving on the choir stalls at Ely Cathedral. He had also acquired a building site on the corner of ‘a little land leading to nowhere’. He chose a good spot for a few years later the railway reached Cambridge, and the lane became Station Road.

The two men struck up a partnership and a ‘Wood and Stone Carving Works’ was established. They constructed their stone and joinery works, builders yard and office beside Rattee’s house, Poplar Cottage at the end of the road. Their partnership was to be short lived, Rattee fell violently ill and died within forty-eight hours. Kett continued the business. The rest, as they say is history. Wherever there was restoration or stonework the company was there; in colleges, cathedrals, churches its craftsmen were employed. Huge blocks of stone were transported to Cambridge to be shaped and carved in the traditional way. But as the century moved on the old workshops became too small. A piece of land was bought at Purbeck Road and the stone works moved there; in the 1950s the joinery department also moved, leaving only the offices on the original site. Then they too moved.

The old house was pulled down and a modern office block, Kett House erected, with its distinctive emblem of the oak tree – a reminder of a much earlier part of the family story, the revolt of 1549 when peasant farmers had rebelled against inclosure. Kett House itself has now recently been renovated.

Meanwhile at Purbeck Road work continued. In 1963 the company was working on renovation of the Prime Minister’s residence in Downing Street and at the same time building the new Churchill College in addition to a miscellany of jobs such as tombstones, boundary stones, fountains and all manner of intricate stone and wood work. In wooden outbuildings the fine craftsmanship continued, and outside working hours the craftsmen took part in social and sporting activities, such as cricket matches. Their yard was filled with rough blocks of Purbeck and Clipsham stone offloaded by giant cranes from lorries that had negotiated the Cambridge.

A couple of years ago Rattee and Kett were on the move again, this time to Longstanton. Their present premises do not have the quaintness of the original Station Road site but have been designed for efficiency, the heavy blocks of stone transported by overhead gantries through the various processes of rough and intricate shaping. But the traditional craftsmanship is still there with the ancient skill of stone carving now supplement by men like Trevor Wilson producing intricate pieces of sculpture or mouldings, but utilising a modern material, Codestone, to produce exact replicas of historic artefacts.

Rattee and Kett have taken their traditional skills into the Digital age, but do you remember the old days, did you work on the turrets or pinnacles of King’s college; can you add some more personal memories to a history that is literally carved in stone?

SOHAM GRAMMAR SCHOOL STORY – PLEASE INCLUDE FROM ITEM E-MAILED PREVIOUSLY

Memories 25^h July 2001, by Mike Petty

THE LEAD STORY WAS SENT LAST WEEK; IT IS UNCHANGED

It was probably the greatest of the Cambridge University student stunts & it was one answer to the Cambridge traffic problems.

On Saturday evening all seemed quiet and normal; on Sunday morning strollers in King's Parade on June 8th 1958 could not believe their eyes. For parked serenely in the heart of the city was an Austin 7 van that had obviously been there for some time and had not been moved on by the police. In fact despite the best efforts, not of the police, but of the Civil Defence volunteers, it would remain parked for several days.

Cambridge planners had already decided that the answer to their parking problems was to erect a multi-storey car park, in Park Street – but not a stone had been turned. So what was this vehicle doing high up in the air – perched precariously on the roof of the University Senate House.

It had not been there the night before. It was certainly there now. But how did it get up there?

Only slowly did details start to emerge, and still the full story has not come out. But this weekend I met one man who had been involved – though, he claimed only in a supporting role. Even after all these years he does still not want his identity revealed, so I will call him Bob from Burradoo.

He confirmed that Engineering students from the University had been planning the operation for some time. They had run through their plan on the Wednesday evening, but Saturday evening, as dusk fell, the operation was commenced.

First they needed a van – from where he does not know; then they removed the engine. Without an engine how do you get a van into Senate House Passage, and yet once there they were only part way. There was building work going on on the old University Library and some of the scaffolding poles were taken down. Two undergraduates then used their night-climbing skills to shin to the roof of the Senate House from which they dropped down ropes. Bob and other students helped to tie the scaffold poles to them and up they were hauled. Once there they were constructed into a derrick.

Meanwhile a cradle was being positioned around the old van; this was secured to the rope from the roof and, using a winch it was hoisted up into the air. So far so good. But then it got stuck half-way. Bob was one of those on look-out duty, at the end of Senate House Passage watching the entrance to Clare College; it seemed an age to him before one of the undergraduates could clamber to the van and release it. Then those on the roof grabbed its bumper and swung it up to the centre of the roof. It was not the end; the make-shift derrick had to be dismantled and the scaffolding poles carefully replaced where they had been found. The whole operation took over 3 ½ [THREE AND A HALF] hours.

It was the evening of the Bump Supper, a time of revelry marking the end of the May races, but Bob did not hang around any longer. Like other students he was in lodgings and his late arrival home would have to be marked in by his landlady. But in Bob's case this was not a problem, for his landlady was his wife. It was very unusual for undergraduates to be married in those days. In fact he was fined by a Proctor for walking arm in arm with her in the street – it was an offence for a student to canoodle with a lady; but this was no lady, this was his wife. It made no difference, University rules did not recognise that students could have wives.

But Bob from Burradoo was an unusual student all round. For one thing he was a Cambridge lad, having grown up a few doors from Milton Road School, and attended the County School. He had worked for a while in the Central Library at the back of the Guildhall, spending some

time in the cupboard that then housed the largely unsorted Cambridgeshire Collection, before gaining admission to Fitzwilliam Hall to study law.

His legal training came in handy when he was apprehended for another prank, this time in Oxford where he had celebrated a Varsity Rugby match somewhat too well and had decided to bring home a souvenir of the occasion, a notice board from an Oxford church. There he was amongst his mates, singing rugby songs in the street, when it dawned on him that the other voices had disappeared. Behind him stood two Bobbies, arms crossed. He handed over the board and bolted. Regaining his friends he recalled how he had escaped; "Indeed sir?" intoned a gruff official voice! Bob convinced the powers that he had not stolen the sign, just borrowed it.

Back at the Senate House Cambridge's Mayor Christopher Wordingham, together with Town Clerk Alan Swift, Councillor C.A. Mole, chairman of the City's Civil Defence Committee and reporters were watching as after a day or so's deliberation the van was prepared to be lowered back to ground level. Once more a derrick was erected on the roof of the Senate House, a pulley was attached and ropes secured again. But this time the van would not pass between the legs of the derrick. A Civil Defence volunteer picked up a hammer and tried to flatten out the protrusions to make the obstinate shape more streamlined. But to no avail, it would not budge. They took down the derrick and re-erected it – still without success. In all this they were 'assisted' by 'advice' from students looking on from the roof of Gonville and Caius college urging them to send for a team of undergraduates to help them. Others watched from turrets and battlements, balconies and upper windows; crowds lined the pavements, police controlled traffic and the nation's press were there in abundance.

The grads had got in up in one piece, civic pride dictated it should come down in one piece; only they couldn't. There was no denial that in spite of the ingenuity, and at times real courage, of the Civil Defence men, this time they were beaten.

So they inspected the van more closely and found that, not only had the engine been removed, but that the body was in two parts, loosely bolted together. It had not been such a triumph as originally thought, city officials claimed. But Bob is adamant it went up intact (though there was an admission at the time that the rear axle did go up separately).

As daylight began to fail it was time for extreme measures. In came an oxy-acetylene torch to reduce the van to segments. Down came the bonnet, the radiator, the steering column, the roof and sides. By 8.35 pm all that was left was a pile of scrap metal, and a number of red faces; the authorities flushed with embarrassment at having been soundly beaten, the undergraduates with something more to celebrate at the end of term.

Bob himself says he stayed away from the scene, fearful of the retribution that might be doled out to the perpetrators; he gained his degree and took himself off to carve out a career in Singapore, from where he has retired to New South Wales. But despite his best endeavours to remain anonymous he was actually captured on camera. If you recognise him disguised as a lady road-cleaner tormenting a long-suffering Bobby on Rag Day then do let me know. And now one of the perpetrators of this most audacious stunt has come forward perhaps others will follow suit. And, whilst in confession mode, if you know anything about any of the other student stunts involving motor cars now is the time to confess. Write to Mike Petty at the News.

**"BOB FROM BURRADOO" IS ROBERT T. CONSTABLE, MANHASSET, 50A
BURRADOO RD, BURRADOO, NSW 2576, e-mail bobcon@ozimail.com.au**

Memories 25^h July 2001, by Mike Petty

EXTRA STORIES .

In 1943 as war raged around the world a secret plan was being hatched in Cambridge. Stephen Dykes Bower, a church architect was instructed to begin planning, not for the invasion of Europe but the occupation of Girton, Histon, Milton, Fulbourn and the Shelfords. The invasion would come once the war was over; part of the reconstruction of Cambridge – though Cambridge had not been badly bombed. It was the first act of a regional office of the newly-formed Ministry of Town and Country Planning, set up in Trinity College, Cambridge. Dykes Bower had no planning experience and his terms of reference have not survived, but it was clear that any proposals for future development would be controversial, with disputes inevitable. So he made it easier for himself by seeking out those known to be sympathetic to his ideals & not talking to those most likely to oppose – the college bursars, and the residents of those villages that would be need to be urbanised as satellite centres for a super-Cambridge. Only three copies of the masterplan are known to have survived, and only one of those is complete. It is held in the archives of the Cambridge Preservation Society and has now been revealed for the first time in a new study on ‘Planners and Preservationists’ by Anthony Cooper which examines the development of the Cambridge Green Belt from 1928 to 1985. Now once again villagers once more prepare to fight ‘urbanisation’, but this time at least they have some ideas of the plans being hatched.

‘Planners and preservationists; the Cambridge Preservation Society and the city’s Green Belt 1928-1985’ is published by the Cambridge Preservation Society at £15

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My mention of Morley’s knitwear firm has brought back memories to Peggy Brutnell, nee Beamiss of Cambridge, who was employed there 60 years ago. She recalls: “It was a Mr Denney of Victoria Park who we worked for, & in charge of us girls was a lady called Rene Crossman (a lovely lady)”. The company was taken over by the Army about January 1942 & they all went their different ways, several of the girls got married to Americans. Graham Clark of Woodlark Road, Cambridge joined the company after they restarted: “I began my career with the firm in Abbey Walk in 1950 as a knitting and sewing machine mechanic. The firm employed approx 80 women who operating the machinery, winding yarn onto bobbins and knitting and making-up the actual garments. The manager then was Mr R. Warren as his daughter, Sheila, was the making-up manageress.” Graham left the firm to do his National Service in 1953 but later returned for another four years before the firm had to cut its overheads by moving the factory back to the Midlands.

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Various readers have seen faces they know on the recent photo of a trip to Guernsey. Jane Reeson saw her mum and dad, Bertha Jacklin and Alec Reeson – did you remember them? Brian Halls of Cambridge saw himself in the picture but says it was the Central Youth Club (not School) and was taken in 1946. Muriel Brotchie (nee Edwards) from Chesterton agrees; the camp was arranged for the Cambridgeshire County Youth Clubs and as a large number wanted to attend it was divided into two groups. While they were housed in a local school some of the boys found a stack of German rifles under the floorboards! She has a picture of the whole group – which I featured amongst the Rattee & Kett pictures last week! (Oops)

Memories 1st August 2001, by Mike Petty

Last week I popped into Age Concern's drop-in centre in Parson's Court, Cambridge, right beside the Corn Exchange. It provides a welcoming and inexpensive cup of tea, snack or lunch for any over-50s who find themselves in the city centre and would like to pause for a while either under cover or in their courtyard garden. Here you are likely to bump into people you've not met for years and catch up on old, or new gossip.

Memories flowed, from the old Chesterton Workhouse, where the tramps would wait outside on a seat near the Co-op until it was opening time, to "Kinky" in his frock coat, deerstalker hat and shepherd's crook. Then there was the 'East Road College' – St George's school whose reputation was such that shops advertising for errand-boys would state: "Boys from East Road College need not apply". The Territorial Army was not so particular and many lads volunteered for service, less for the annual camp or pair of boots, than for the £20 enlistment payment, a fortune.

Cambridge in those days was "Pride and Poverty", people had lace curtains at their windows so others could not see how poor they were. A 'moonlight flit' was a regular occurrence, and Coulson's had a cart that could be rented for 6d to take your meagre possessions from one home to another where the rent was cheaper. The first thing was to strip the wallpaper – it was full of bugs, and you never bought a second-hand mattress for the same reason. There was great interest in a Billhead, lent me by Eileen Gander of Cottenham. It records purchases made by her mother from the London Furnishing Company, Fitzroy Street, in 1922, though the beds and chairs would have been beyond the reach of many Cambridge folk, despite being the cheapest in the trade. [SCAN OF BILL]

One of those whose cup of coffee I interrupted was Fred Unwin, whose first "Pimbo" book, with its graphic evocation of Cambridge life, was published just 25 years ago, having been previously serialised in the News. It was not however his first published work for while browsing through the old files of the CDN I came across an article dated 16th August 1951 in which he described the joys of being a milkman. WERE YOU A MILKMAN – write to Mike Petty

Fred Unwin has recorded this tribute to his old school in one of his verses, "East Road Ballad"

East Road 'College', past Loker's school-house lane,
Had Kingdom, Baldry, Coleman and Mallett,
To teach emphatically on, how to 'spell it'
May be a future errand boys' domain;
But, worthy lads emerged from such a place,
Going there, was certainly no disgrace!
[SCAN OF 'EAST ROAD COLLEGE 1929]

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My photograph of the final parade of Soham Grammar School has brought in several responses. Frank Burton, now living in Fen Ditton, attended the school in the 1930s and in his first year travelled by train from Haddenham station, changing at Ely for Soham. Next year the station closed and he went by Ortona open-topped double-decker bus. He has lent a photograph of staff c1934, including Messrs Neil (Head and divinity), Ford (chemistry and geometry), Crouch (history, music & art), Johnson (English and Latin), Hunt (science & biology), Riley (French & scoutmaster) and Britten (maths) [SCAN] [GOODS TRAINS CONTINUED TO RUN FROM HADDENHAM STATION UNTIL 1964 – SCAN]

Trevor Smith from Cambridge was there between 1957 and 1962 and for most of that time boarded with Mr & Mrs Armitage at the Moat House. "There was a timetable for everything from meals to homework and lights out, this timetable was not flexible. There was also time for some recreation and games such as table tennis, darts, cricket and football on the lawn. I also recall the PE period when five-a-side-football would be played early on very cold and frosty mornings and plunging into the frozen puddles on the cross country run heading out towards the Wicken Road". Amongst the teachers he remembers were "Sid" Saunders, "Rat" Taylor, "Taffy" Thomas, Pete

Askem, “Jingo” Waller, “Punch” Lawrence, Lionel Hart & “Tabby” Tabraham, whilst “Charlie” Ford & “Slug” Riley had been there since Frank’s day.

Alan Dench, now at St Ives, was one of the pupils in the Soham School photograph and identifies Mr Tabraham, the deputy head, and Mr Taylor, head of the Lower School, flanking Mr Armitage at the head of the procession. Mrs Joan Pickup from Cherry Hinton saw her son in the parade; he’s now running his own business in Berlin – thanks to Mrs Armitage who persuaded him to study German.

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Geoffrey Hawes from Waterbeach was a member of the Coleridge Youth Club in June 1946 and went on one of the holidays to Guernsey. He writes : “On arrival at St.Peter’s Port, the first thing that struck me, was that the large main building, probably the port offices had painted on it’s wall in large Gothic script, a word declaring it’s function in German! On leaving St. Peters Port, going on to St. Sampsons where were housed in their local school, we passed many reminders of the "Occupation", a couple of Swastika marked Armoured Cars, doors and gateways, carrying the notice, "Betreten Verboten," and so on. We arrived at the school, where we allocated to various classrooms for dormitories, and slept on the floor. He has a photo taken at the back entrance of St. Sampson's School. The young lady, having her hair washed, was he believes, Peggy, the lad holding her left arm was one of the Norden brothers from Linton, (County School Boys,) and the one on the right, looking on, was known as, "Aitch." The youth looking over his shoulder, was a “Central Schoolboy” [SCAN 63.61] Jean Clinch (nee Oldham), now in Fen Stanton, was also on a trip that stayed at St Sampson’s school – were you? [SCAN OF GUERNSEY GROUP]

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Many such journeys started from local stations. Many of these have now vanished and others that still survive are remarkably different from what they were only a few years ago. A picture of one such is amongst those featured in a new book of aerial photographs of British railways, then and now. Over 120 stations are featured, from Aberdeen to Portsmouth, but can you recognise this one, shown here in May 1954. Whilst the passenger facilities remain much the same, the goods area to the left of the station has been replaced by industrial and retail facilities, giving a graphic illustration of the decline of the commercial use of the railway over the last 50 years or so. [SCAN] [THE PICTURE IS OF ELY STATION 1954] Aerofilms’ “From the air: Britain’s railways then and now” is published by Ian Allan at £35

Mrs Pearl Reed from Cambridge was interested in the story of Rattee and Kett; her grandfather Robert Woods and his dad, Daniel Woods, were carpenters who worked on the wood carving on the ceiling of Norwich Cathedral in the 1830s.

Mr R.A. Minks of Stapleford recognised himself at the wheel of his Hillman Minx car in a photograph I featured of Burleigh Street taken over 30 years ago. He remembers the number, ULB 144. Presumably the car is now long gone – or is it?

Peter Rolph of 92 Lancaster Rd, St Albans is researching his family history and is particularly interested in a Richard William Rolph born in Fulbourn in September 1865. He went into service as a page, progressed to a footman and finally became a butler. But who did he work for, did he have connections with St Albans or Harpenden, and where is he buried. If you can help contact Peter on 01727 869942

Ros Buffery has solved the mystery of the location of the tennis match in Jeanne Cherry’s photograph that I featured on June 13th. She remembers that the University tennis courts were in Clarkson Road, on the site of the new Mathematics Faculty and the houses in the background stood on Madingley Road. And an even earlier “Memories” – that on 24th September 1999 - has also born fruit. Keith Marfleet from Swindon has been in touch to say that he was one of the people on a photograph of Laurie & McConnal’s staff. So if you have a mystery write to me and one day we may get an answer!

Memories 8th August 2001, by Mike Petty

Cambridge is a city of students of all ages; when one batch go down, another come up. But for two such students the last fortnight have been a case of revisiting the past, both had been here before. They were members of an Elderhostel group, based at Lucy Cavendish College and come with others from across the United States to take part in a series of lectures and excursions comprising a course on 'Cambridge, a sense of belonging'

Margery Tuttle, who'd travelled from Concord, New Hampshire, had once belonged to Newnham College where she arrived as an undergraduate to study science in the mid 1930s. She went back to her old haunts to revive memories of the days she'd had to make up her own coal fire in her room to keep warm in the winter months. She had little time in those days for undergraduate excesses but did regularly borrow a dog for walks to Grantchester and take tea at the Whim in Trinity Street. Margery went down in 1939 when the air raid shelters were being constructed and worked in the American Embassy in London throughout the war. Despite her studies Margery – then Miss M.A. Lowe left without an M.A. degree – for the University of Cambridge did not award them to women students until 1947.

Graham Marsh was a student at Cambridge for just one term, but he studied under Bertrand Russell and other senior academics. He was not at King's or St Catharine's, but the one in between – Bull College. This had been founded in October 1945 for 149 American officers and enlisted men who'd arrived at Cambridge to pursue studies under the U.S. Army's Information and Education Programme, and were billeted at the Bull Hotel, the American Red Cross Headquarters.

But by the time Graham arrived in 1946 with the second batch of Americans – one minute he'd been in Berlin rounding up members of the Hitler Youth, the next he'd been told he was off to Cambridge – the college had moved to Brookland's Avenue & the men based in huts. But when the College moved to its new home, a large part of the British Red Cross Staff went with it & played an outstanding role in making his term a pleasant success. Besides providing them with every facility for study and recreation, their efforts were an important reason for the overwhelming success of social teas, dances, and other entertainment.

Lillian Bourne, who was a Red Cross Hospitality Hostess throughout the war years, acted as liaison between the Americans & the people of Cambridge, organising teas in the homes of University dignitaries such as the noted historian Dr. Trevelyan, and Dr. Sheppard, Provost of King's College. The Bull College mess, the only army mess serving five meals a day, was managed by Edyth Dove, dietician extraordinary from the Bull Hotel. Miss Mary Corke acted as secretary, her advice a never-ending source of help for the students while Audrey Swain, besides having charge of the pay roll, handled nearly every job in the office.

Graham and his companions also organised entertainment for themselves, challenging the locals to a darts competition – and being soundly thrashed, and competing in the rowing races, determined to bump their way to the head of the river. Despite all their practice they were having difficulties making the grade, until they brought in a secret weapon – WAC Sergeant Connie Grayson. The first lady cox on the Cam was an exceptional news story and the principal news agencies and film companies, "Time Magazine", Paramount and Pathe, interviewed and depicted the American crew. Graham was not amongst the rowers but was there to see them make a 'bump' – when they rammed into a college boat that had got itself wedged across the river. No lives were lost and Anglo-American relations were not strained too much.

When the course finished each student was issued with an alumni magazine containing their names and faces. Graham brought his back to Cambridge with him and retraced his footsteps back to the Bull. He was greeted by the Head Porter of St Catharine's, Dom Mulcrone, who opened the door of the old hotel – now part of the college – for the first time in years and

invited him inside. It was somewhat different from the wartime days, but it brought back many memories that Graham will take back with him to Tucson, Arizona – the second time he had been made to feel that he ‘belonged’ to Cambridge. [PICTURES TAKEN OF GRAHAM MARSH AT THE BULL BY PHOTOGRAPHIC, SCANS OF PICTURES FROM HIS MAGAZINE, OTHER PIX]

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It is just 50 years this week that Ely hit the headlines after a Harvard two-seater aeroplane from RAF Feltwell crashed in St Mary’s Street. It first struck the top of a forge owned by Messrs Brand Brothers, then careered across the street, ending up with the engine and forepart of the aircraft in a showroom belonging to Messrs T.W. Nice’s garage & the tail and part of the body in St Mary’s street. One wing of the plane came off and overturned a car, the other ploughed into the middle of the road. The aircraft’s crew were extricated from the wreckage, but one died later at the R.A.F. Hospital. As it crashed the plane hit a lorry owned by Darby’s Sand and Gravel, hurling its cab into the garage showroom and the crushing the driver under the engine. [SCAN OF ELY AIRPLANE CRASH]

Today giant American jets fly over the City as they make their approaches into Mildenhall. If the crew glance downwards they see beneath them the Ely station complex, much smaller today than when it was photographed in May 1954, for this was the station I featured last week from the Aerofilm’s book, ‘British Railways, then and now’.

Many memories have come in of the celebrated Van on the Senate House Roof incident, and I will feature these next week; but Gill Wordingham has contacted me to point out that her father - the then Mayor of Cambridge – was Leonard (not Christopher) Wordingham. Len was a railwayman who was granted special leave to enable him to carry out his mayoral duties, following in the footsteps of other highly respected railwaymen, Tom Amey and W.L. Briggs & like them he was elected an Alderman. He became a Director of Cambridge City Football Club – for whom he’d played in his younger days, and a Justice of the Peace; Mr Joshua Taylor, chairman of the Bench paid tribute to his memory when he died in August 1969.

More memories of Morley’s Knitwear have come in from Margaret Adams of Caldecote who worked there between 1954 and 1958. She has lent me a photograph of the firm’s Christmas lunch of 1957 and can identify the manager, Mr Holmes, (back right), Mr Shirley his assistant (back left) while Beryl and Molly worked in the office and the man in the front was Harold, the caretaker. [SCAN OF GROUP]

Pamela Noakes writes from Tioga Trail, Parker, Colorado, USA: “My brother recently sent me the article on the Waffles Café. I remember if being above one of the shops along Petty Cury and frequented it often between 1955 and 1963. I also remember the Eros café a little further along. Opposite these shops was a passage where the Lion Yard shops are now; just along on the left had side was a Chinese restaurant called the Hang Chow. There was a fish market called McFisheries, they had a fish tank in the middle of the shop which was built into the floor, as far as I can remember. I am sure you have received many other pieces of information but apart from a yearly visit home I now reside in the USA and it has given me a warm feeling of fond memories to tell you my ‘remembrances’”

Stephen Hullyer is researching Cambridge during the 1970s and would like pictures showing the Lion Yard area at that time. Do you have snaps that can help him –if so send them to me and I’ll copy them and pass them on.

Alan Gall, a member of the History of Physics group of the Institute of Physics, seeks your help. He is trying to find information about Felix Niedergasass, a glass-blower who moved down from Manchester in the 1920s and was employed by Ernest Rutherford, the nuclear scientist, at the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge. If you can help contact Alan at 16 Hawthorn Road, Bamford, Rochdale, OL11 5JD.

Memories 15th August 2001, by Mike Petty

A few weeks ago – in Memories for July 25th – I featured the story of the Austin 7 van that was hoisted to the roof of the Cambridge University Senate House in June 1958. Could anybody add further details, I wondered. The response came from Nigel Balchin who E-mailed to say he'd been one of the main perpetrators and that the full story, first published in the Caius College Magazine some eighteen months after the event, is now featured on the College's website (cai.cam.ac.uk). The article names the men – and women involved - and solves many of the mysteries.

So where did they get the vehicle? Old Austin Sevens were then so popular in Cambridge that even a wreck was unobtainable from the local scrap yards, but eventually they found an engineless black van, axle deep in a nettled at Harston. They brought it for £4.10s. on condition that the back axle, good tyres, and other vitals were returned. It was towed into an overgrown farmyard at Coton where preparations were made.

Every internal component was stripped out, consistent with it remaining steerable, a square hole was cut in the roof to pass the lifting tackle, and a lifting eye firmly fixed to the chassis. The back axle was loosened so that it could be dropped off on the road and returned to the owner as soon as the van had been towed into Cambridge. Special fittings were attached so it could be trundled on front wheels only, like a wheelbarrow, from its parking place to the launch point.

But how could the lightened van, whose axles were only held on with fence wire and finger-tight pins, and which looked more like a stage prop than a road worthy vehicle, be towed in without attracting police attention? Nigel had the idea of disguising the tow-in as publicity for a May Ball; enormous coloured posters were prepared and festooned around the skeleton van. Then after lunch on the Saturday the bizarre procession set off from Coton for the centre of Cambridge. It attracted much attention, but its innocence went unquestioned. Another member of the team had earlier parked his car on Queen's Road to reserve a parking space & on arrival the van was surrounded by mechanics who propped up the back end and removed the rear axle, driving seat and four good wheels for return to the owner. They fitted two ancient and useless tyres in front, and the doors and two rear wheels were removed, wrapped in brown paper and taken into College disguised as pictures and cushions. The remaining bits of the van were covered with a billowing polythene cloak, equipped with the statutory parking light, and abandoned.

Meanwhile plans laid so that whenever an alarm was given there would be somewhere to hide. The warning was to be given by a lookout starting a Vespa scooter by Great St. Mary's Church - the racket would be audible to everyone concerned. Various distractions were arranged, a large Bentley jammed by revellers on Garret Hostel Bridge and an elaborate system of decoys employed to divert both police and proctors, including students without gowns and a couple apparently fighting over a girl.

Then it was time to start. A plank was laid from Caius college to the Senate House roof and a small party scrambled across taking various detached bits of the van across, before raising the drawbridge after them. They built and erected the necessary derrick and rigging using scaffolding poles and prepared to hoist the chassis. The operation to raise the van was trickier than they had expected, and then when it was in mid air it was spotted by a party of inebriated undergraduate oarsmen. Nigel informed them that he was tethering a captive balloon, but that rides could not be given without Ministry approval. Satisfied, the drunks moved on. Finally the van was across but at the last moment it fell backwards the last five feet on to the roof. Working like madmen the party manhandled the van by brute force up the thirty-degree slope to the apex, refitted the doors and wheels, dismantled the derrick and threw the rigging down to the lawns below.

By now it was light and as they walked back across the plank to Caius an early morning policeman patrolled his beat past Bowes and Bowes. But he failed to spot them and his gaze did not wander to a black tattered pre-war Austin Seven van placed neatly on the apex of the lead roof of the Senate House.

The event made headlines around the world as pressmen gathered to witness the operation to remove the vehicle. Patrick Mills from Cambridge was there, but for a different reason. "My future wife and I were having our banns called for the first time at Parish Communion at Great St Mary's, so my wife's father, Tom Green, then University Marshall, came to church that morning. This was his first 'free' Sunday as during Full Term he had to have an early lunch before going to the Senate House to organise the procession to Gt St Mary's for the University sermon. But immediately after Communion he had to go home and change, then return to organise the removal of the car. The Rev Mervyn Stockwood wasted no time in arranging an unprecedented Sunday opening of the tower for special viewing of the operation – and further income for the church!"

Business was brisk as visitor paid their 6d. to ascend the Tower to see the spectacle. Patrick Schicker of Milton Road, Cambridge, was one of those who saw the activity: "Early in the evening we were filmed watching the efforts to bring the car down and a haughty Civil Defence lady told us to be sure to get home by 10pm to see ourselves on the news. But at 10.30 pm the film crew were still there waiting the descent of the van, and soon after the Civil Defence called it a day!" The next morning oxyacetylene cutting equipment was raised to the roof, and a few spectators saw the fiery end of the story, as the van was dissected into six pieces, lowered, and driven away as an inglorious pile of scrap. [SCAN OF ARTICLE SHOWING VAN ON ROOF, REUSE PICS FROM JULY 25TH ARTICLE]

Then, a few years later something similar happened again, as Ray Walker related in the Cambridge Austin 7 and Vintage Car Club newsletter in November 1983 which has been sent in by his widow, Mary.

"One day in June 1963 five or six students came to my garage and were looking at the Austin 7's in the yard. At that time there could have been between 12 and 15 - some customers' cars, some my own. Although they could have bought a runner for about £15 or £20 their focus was on an extremely rough box saloon without an engine or gearbox, the radiator and bonnet having been put back on for preservation. I had given £2 for it and sold the engine for £5 for a speedboat. Thinking they really wanted something to run I pointed out the deficiencies and explained that a lot of work would be involved in getting it running.

'Oh, that's alright' said one, 'we don't need an engine or anything like that, it doesn't need to run. How much do you want for it?' With the Senate House incident in mind I said quite sharply: 'Look, this isn't for some stupid prank is it? Because if it is I am having no part in it'. Looking extremely crestfallen they turned towards the gate to go, their hopes obviously dashed to the ground by an irate garage owner. As they reached the gate I called 'Hey! just a moment. I do not want anything for the Austin Seven and if I come in tomorrow morning and find it gone you will hear no more'

Sure enough, in the morning it had vanished. I did not see the students again and did not know the fate of the car until there was published in the Cambridge Daily News a picture showing it suspended beneath the Bridge of Sighs. The feat was accomplished by poling the car down the river on a platform supported on a number of punts lashed together. Wire ropes were passed through the window of the bridge and the windows of the car and tightened up, then the raft was floated out from underneath. The College authorities had no great problems in removing it. They borrowed one of the floating platforms from a nearby punt hire firm and

used that to bring the car back to dry land. [SCANS OF THE CAR UNDER BRIDGE OF SIGHS]

A similar stunt was repeated in November 1968 but this time a Bond Minicar was used. In this case a couple of scaffold pole "trapezes" were slung under the bridge and the car lifted up bodily from its raft onto these, relatively easy with such a small and light vehicle. The job was carried out between 2.30 and 4.45 in the morning. The College were once again on the ball and the car was spirited away in the same manner almost before anyone had a chance to see it."

Ron Frost from Cherry Hinton has seen more student pranks than most including a Ford Escort suspended under the bridge of Clare College, where he worked from 1960 till he retired twelve years ago. He writes: "I've seen banners flying from King's college pinnacles, trees covered with toilet rolls and shop dummies beside the clock of the Lloyd's bank in Sidney Street. In Clare the weather vane was taken down at least four times and the Old Court was decorated with Christmas trees before the end of term".

In 1951 the Leys School's Clapham Society published a survey they'd undertaken of the small village of Horningsea. First they researched its history, then they looked at the community as it then was. Their findings make interesting reading. The village comprised some 85 houses, only 36 of which had mains water, the rest depended on wells and pumps. Only three had main drainage, the rest relied on cesspools. 58 homes had connections to the electricity system, but two generated their own and 25 homes were without, relying on oil and paraffin for both lighting and cooking. Even those who had electric light did not generally cook with electric, preferring an open hearth or oil stove. There were very few unemployed or retired people and most of the work was done in and around the village. So what did the people do? Of the 93 men surveyed 46 worked in agriculture, the majority as farm workers. Two were employed as butchers with one each of grocer, furniture man and fishmonger in the village services whilst others were categorised as craftsmen – boot repairer, carpenter, potter, blacksmith's mate or builders. Of those 17 men who found employment outside the village two worked at Bottisham Village College, five on the railways, three were in the Forces and the rest a mixture of pest control, brewery worker, telegraph installer and one mathematician. Nor did Horningsea add greatly to the Cambridge rush-hour traffic, for only nine used their car for work, three went by motorbike, one each by bus, lorry and horse – but 24 cycled to their job. By now, presumably, things have changed but the survey is not out-of-date, instead it remains a valuable picture of a community as it was at the start of the 1950s. [SCAN OF COTTAGES FROM THE LEYS SCHOOL SURVEY / PICTURE OF HORNINGSEA FROM NEWS FILE]

Another old survey has just been reissued with a glossy colour photograph on the cover. Arthur Mee's "Cambridgeshire" was originally trumpeted as "the most complete picture of a county ever present to the public" when it came out in 1939. It records that Chivers jam factory employs 2,000 people making a hundred tons of jam a day, that at Prickwillow rhubarb and cabbages grow around the church, and at Papworth Everard the traveller is struck by the number of chalets in a tree-shaded row – the open-air bedrooms for patients arriving at the tuberculosis hospital. We learn that Lt Thetford is a tiny hamlet near Grunty Fen and has little to see "except a few thatched cottages and a little lowly church with a roof like a mantle of moss". But a fuller survey would have revealed an impoverished agricultural community, with cows driven through the streets; indeed it was said that that if you lived there you lived down Cow-Sh*t Lane. Now the village has become gentrified and the small community doubled in size with a new housing estate approached via a new access road named – ironically – Cow-Slip Lane! The guide was illustrated with photographs which generally show unchanging aspects of unchanged buildings, though there is the odd gem, such as Stretham windmill which then had sails. But the quality of the modern reproduction does not match the original 1939 edition, copies of which can readily be found in antiquarian

bookshops.[SCAN OF STRETHAM WINDMILL FROM THE 1939 EDITION OF THE GUIDE] - “Cambridgeshire, the country of the fens”, by Arthur Mee; republished by The King’s England Press £17.95

Betty Anderson, (nee Fiske) was the ‘Diana Dors’ lookalike featured in the Central Youth Club outing to Guernsey and has a picture of all the youngsters who went. She now lives out at Linton but finds that when she visits Cambridge she never sees any of her old friends or acquaintances – perhaps she would at the Age Concern drop-in café, Parson’s Court. Betty now wears glasses and has her hair much shorter but if you do spot her, say hello.

Mrs J. Clements of Campkin Road, Cambridge was a former pupil of; she started her school life at East Road school when just three years old, before the Infants department moved to Norfolk Street. At the age of 11 she went back to the old site, then known as St George’s Senior School where she was given an good education thanks to the excellent teachers– even though in her final year there were 53 pupils in her class due to the evacuees.

Memories 22nd August 2001, by Mike Petty

When Jack Diver from Histon phoned me the first thing I did was to check the date – it must surely be April 1st!

For he had memories of two people wrapped in sacking – mother and son, he thought - who appeared with a pile of parcels, and moved them one by one, along the road from Cambridge to Histon. They slept in the parcels at night and were supplied by food by a car. Then one night a lorry turned up and they vanished. He thought it was in the 1970s.

So it was with little hope that I asked the staff at the *News* office library. “Oh yes”, said Linda, “I think we’ve got a file on them”. And she had.

The mystery couple first hit the local headlines in February 1966 when they were spotted resting by a hedge at Little Paxton, near St Neots. But by then they had been on the road for three years, having been dogged every step of the way by reporters and television interviewers. “It all began with the simple wish of a pair of Southerners to see the North. It has become a complicated one, but also a very ordinary one” they told the *News*. They had plodded along the Great North Road with a pile of parcels, carrying part of their one-ton load about 100 yards down the road, then returning for another batch. It was a laborious way to see the world and they made less than a quarter of a mile progress in one day.

Neither of the travellers would give their names. The woman was aged about 50 and spoke in a cultured voice: “We are not really unconventional people. There is nothing we like better than the comforts of home, an easy armchair with a book, or visits to libraries and art galleries”, she explained, as she crouched amongst the disorderly pile of parcels and poured over a road map. Her companion said little but nodded assent as his companion described the hardships of the journey. “The weather is frightening sometimes”, she went on. “I remember one day walking along a frosty road which had been sprayed with salt. The salt caked to our feet and the pain was terrible”

It took them some four months to get from St Neots to Cambridge, only to find the police waiting for them. They were welcome to enter the city – but they would have to leave their bulky baggage behind. Halted in their tracks the couple abandoned their parcels and accepted a lift back to Caxton in a van – which then returned for the mysterious load. They were later spotted at Fenstanton in August 1966.

Their massive trek came to an end at Histon in Spring next year. Police swooped to impound the parcels following complaints from residents. A police truck made several trips to collect the mysterious packages – found to contain a miscellaneous assortment of old rags and cardboard – which were stored under plastic sheets in the police station yard. Their owners were seen wandering around near the Rose and Crown pub, the woman on the point of tears: “What is there to do. We have lost everything. They have just gone. But really it is not important. We can start again”, she sobbed. They then disappeared into the night but were spotted by a News reader walking towards Holbeach, some 60 miles away; they carried a woollen blanket – but no parcels.

As the police produced their case for submission to court a local councillor rallied to the travellers’ support. “I love these people. They have guts and character. It seems extraordinary that they could find themselves being arrested as a result of being what they are, parcel people who have opted out of our so-called civilised rat-race” he said. The police said the charge was depositing litter and causing obstruction with their parcels at Histon.

They parcel pair failed to appear at the Magistrates’ court in May 1967, but police dropped the charges. They were left with a problem – what to do with their possessions. The magistrate remarked: “To me it is worthless, but it might be of some worth to the owners”.

And there the trail goes cold. There was some speculation it was all a stunt, that there would be a book at the end of it. But if you know more, let me know. [PHOTOS OF THE PARCEL PEOPLE FROM NEWS FILES]

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In those days the railways provided a more effective way of transporting parcels. Derek Harris from Histon sent his memories of Ely station goods yard:

“This was an important assembly point for traffic generated from the outlying fens and staff manned the yard continuously, working on three shifts. The goods yard for loading and discharge of produce by local traders was between the Goods Sheds and the Station building with an entrance on Station Road. Traffic generated here was picked up by freight trains booked to call at Ely. Local trains departed to Newmarket, Shippea Hill, Littleport, & Downham Market for agricultural traffic and to Brandon for wagons of pit props for the coal mines. We also had our own trains to Cambridge and Whitemoor yards.

“The Goods Department had their own quarters in Station Road, beyond which were two long Goods Sheds. The work handled here was the distribution of the town goods by horse and cart, a large hand cart and later on by a Scammel motor truck. Every day, at the appointed time, the Ely Yard pilot engine and shunters went, 'down the hole' - to the Goods Sheds - to place empties and bring the loaded up into the yard. During the war period, two trains of loaded vans were sent up to Ely on Saturday to be 'transhipped' on the Sunday morning; vans were loaded at Depots with goods for any number of destinations - in railway terms 'rough-loaded'. Work commenced then to shift commodities around with hand barrows and trucks, working from the long wooden platform of the shed. Each shed could hold two trains each placed on either end of a central platform.

“The busiest period was autumn when the Sugar Beet Factory at Adelaide opened for the Campaign. This embraced the transport of sugar beet and its product of sugar, molasses and pulp, well known to farmers as animal feed. Dried pulp, known as pulp nuts, was bagged and sent away in covered vans, the wet pulp dispatched in open trucks. To 'feed' the factory, coal from the mines came on a regular basis on local trains from Whitemoor yard to Ely and 'tripped' to the North Junction. During the campaign, a BR pilot engine and a foreman shunter, transferred the loaded and empty vehicles to & from the factory private sidings. The

BR locomotive was not permitted into these sidings beyond a certain 'limit of shunt' notice. The beet factory employed two industrial steam loco's with a foreman and shunter to finally place the coal and return the empties to BR."

All has now gone, and the Sugar Beet Factory no longer sends its distinctive smell across the fens, nor provides the well-paid seasonal employment it used to. Did you work there? [SCAN OF ELY GOODS YARD]

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Railways are part of the agenda for the Cambridge Conference of the Association for Industrial Archaeology which has attracted enthusiasts from all around the country. But does Cambridgeshire have anything industrial for them to see? Yes indeed as a new guide points out. Nigel Balchin and Peter Filby have identified wind and watermills, pumping stations and coprolite pits, chemical manure works and steelyard amongst a wealth of sites. Nor are they merely relics of the past, for the giant straw-burning power station at Sutton is very new technology while some of the oldest forms of production, hand made bricks and tiles are produced at Burwell. "A guide to the industrial archaeology of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough" ISBN 0 9528930 4 5 [IF NECESSARY USE WINDMILL PICTURES FROM NEWS PHOTO FILES – I WILL POP IN ON TUESDAY MORNING]

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Recent Memories features have encouraged readers to write. G.A Cooper from Cambridge says he actually took the picture I showed of the Youth Club outing to Guernsey in 1946 (Memories 1st August) on an old Agfa plate camera his father lent him – and has still got the negative. He can identify most of the people, including Peggy Bailey whose hair was being washed. John Norden of the County school was holding her left arm, while Peter Bond watches from the steps behind the girl in the foreground. "Aitch" on the right is yet another County classmate, Cyril Harding, while the face peering between Geoff Hawes and John Norden might belong to Mo Summerfield. He adds: "The return voyage was made in daylight and the sea was very rough. As I think about it now I can still see Peggy's face go a horrible yellow/green as sea sickness overcame her". As tangible reminders of the visit he has two copies of the 'Guernsey Star' printed during the occupation period and a German army gasmask, complete in its steel case, that he liberated from a concrete pillbox on the island. [REPEAT THE PICTURE USED ON 1ST AUGUST]

Mrs P. Lucas from Gt Shelford spotted her father on another "boat" – the one being used to recover the Austin 7 car from the Bridge of Sighs (Memories 15th August). He was Bill Gentle, a motor trimmer who had a workshop on Quayside, and was well known in the area. His workshop was also called "Gentle's Mission" because of all the people who called on him to have a smoke or cup of tea, or just a warm by his tortoise stove that stood in the middle of his workshop.

Somebody providing refreshment to Americans in wartime was Mrs W. Abbs of Cambridge who writes of her experiences. "I worked at the Bull Hotel donut dugout which was above Marks and Spencers in Hobson Street. Then I went to the Brooklands Avenue. I am in the small snap of workers, six from left, back row (Memories 8th August). I would be interested to know if any of the group are still around. I worked with Miss Dove, Audrey and Mary. It brought back many happy memories"

Valerie Doty, from Cambridge, was born at Staffordshire Street and wonders whether anybody has any old snaps of the area. One from the Cambridgeshire Collection appears on the Cambridge Explorer CD-Rom; it was taken in the 1920s. Do you have any others? [SCAN OF MAN OUTSIDE TERRACE HOUSE]

Memories 29th August 2001, by Mike Petty

Mrs Vera Pope now lives way down in south Devon but it only took five days before she had received a “Memories” article about East Road. Straightaway she sat down to pen her own recollections of that part of Cambridge where she was born over 90 years ago.

As her memories gush out Vera writes them down: “I was born at number 61 East Road in 1909. Just opposite across the road was Nelson Street where my grandfather preached in the ‘Mission’ & my grandmother gave mugs of tea and a sticky bun to all the drunks who came in.

“We went to Brunswick School, near Chesterton ferry [now Elizabeth Bridge]. Every morning Jimmy Fletcher brought the milk in a gallon can, then walked my sister and I across the road, down Nelson Street into Gwydir Street where his parents had a shop. There were thirteen children and each took a can of milk for delivery before going to the Council School on East Road, near Donkeys Common.

“Easter Monday everyone flocked to Parker’s Piece, if you had a large skipping rope you were more than welcome. [Do you remember the tradition of skipping on Parker’s Piece?] I remember Brunswick School we took two pence every Monday to pay for our books. Across the road there was a theatre next to a slaughterhouse. It was terrifying Monday mornings; pigs were being slaughtered, little dwarfs ran out of the theatre & we couldn’t get inside the high school gates quick enough. [The theatre was the Hippodrome, later known as the Gaiety, in Auckland Road. It had started life as a permanent indoor Circus about 1895]

“Strangely enough my sister married the milk boy in later life, his sister married a young man named Brown whose parents kept a tiny cycle shop in Burleigh Street opposite the Methodist Church

“I remember boat race night, when the winning boats were set alight on the Market Square [does anybody have more memories or snaps of this] and Saturday morning markets when my grandmother bought a bag of ‘tacky’ oranges from ‘Buller’ Whitehead and made them into wine. In your photograph of East Road on the left hand side is a cottage where every Friday evening we would take a basin and buy two penn’orth of mushy peas with vinegar.” [PHOTO OF EAST ROAD IN 1963 AND OF DOGETT’S HORSE-DRAWN MILK CART]

Another News article, this one by Natasha McDowell on Cambridge during the Great War, has brought a response from Ray Lawton of Cottenham. His father, John Lawton, went to Magdalene college as an Officer Cadet in January 1917 for three months’ training. Whilst there he penned letters home which give vivid details of his experiences; these have now been printed along with other correspondence between 1915 and 1919 under the title “A soldier writes home – John Lawton’s wartime letters”

Back in 1917 he wrote:

“There are four companies in our battalion which is the Garrison Officer Cadet Battalion. Our College is a magnificent old pile with many fine traditions. The Cadets here are collected from all parts of the United Kingdom & from nearly every regiment in the British Army. The majority of them are N.C.O.’s, but some of them belong to the R.A.M.C., & do not know much drill. They are all very nice & ‘pukah’ gentlemen. . We are treated as officers all the way through & are to behave ourselves generally as ‘cadets & gentlemen’. We have to provide ourselves with cadet uniform. However the usual procedure is to buy better cloth &

to have it made into officers uniform so that it will be ready for us when we get gazetted otherwise we shall have to discard the ordinary cadet uniform in a few months time & that would be a waste of money. We are allowed £8 [EIGHT POUNDS] for this outfit & what we have extra we pay for ourselves. We are recompensed for this extra cost afterwards by the other £42 [42 POUNDS] we receive when our commission is granted. We are all practically certain of getting our commission: in the last two classes only one chap failed to pass the final exam, and even he got his commission". [Given the slaughter in the trenches officers were badly needed at the front]

Their daily routine started with roll call at 7.30 am and progressed through physical training, drill, map reading, engineering and trench digging lectures till bed at 10.15 pm. In all this they were mixing with the few students in the college & every evening they dined in the big Hall

with the Dons. "The table is covered thick with plate emblazoned with the college arms & is lighted by innumerable red-shaded candles. The chief says Grace in Latin & then all that one can hear is the tinkle of silver & the subdued murmur of conversation". It was a memory that was to last, for John Lawton survived the war, trained as a teacher and obtained his first headship at Dry Drayton school in 1927. ['PUNCH' CARTOON OF OFFICER CADETS IN CAMBRIDGE COLLEGE]

Long-distance correspondent, Peter Johnson from Moreton in Marsh, has discovered some unprinted glass negatives taken by Agnes Johnson in Cambridge about 1914. One of these shows horses being watered in the Cam at Jesus Green, when Cambridge became the gathering place for hundreds of troops before being despatched to the front. [SCAN OF PICTURE OF HORSES IN CAM FROM HER ORIGINAL NEGATIVE; SCAN OF PHOTOGRAPH OF TROOPS ON JESUS GREEN – NOT TAKEN BY HER].

Peter's father's memories, that I have featured from time to time, have now been published in expanded form in the latest issue of the Cambridgeshire Local History Society Review. Other articles include a survey of clay tobacco pipes and their makers (about the only 'interesting' things I ever find in the garden), the famous Manea community of the 1830s which abolished money and installed centrally-heated houses and some most interesting notes on the early days of the Cambridgeshire police force. The Review is free to members of the society (annual subscription £8) or obtainable from the Secretary, Gill Rushworth, at 1a Archer's Close, Swaffham Bulbeck, CB5 0NG at £2.50 including postage.

Mrs Patricia Peterson from Histon Road, Cambridge has written seeking your help. "Do you happen to have – or know how I can get – a photograph of the American Service Organisation and the Donut shop next door in Hobson Street, Cambridge in the 1940s. I was a guest at this club several times. Also we used to go to the Eros Restaurant in Petty Cury, do you have photos of this". If you can help let me know. [PICTURE OF HOBSON STREET IN THE 1960S FROM NEWS FILES]

All of this is a long time ago; meanwhile Stephen Hullyer, who is continuing his researches on the Lion Yard area in the 1970s has two questions about car parks: When were the Queen Anne Terrace & Lion Yard and multi-storey car parks started and finished?

According to notes I have plans for the Queen Anne Terrace project were approved in 1968 and the car park opened in 1971; meanwhile work started on the Lion Yard car park on 28th December 1970 and Mayor Peter Wright opened the first section in July 1972. But since then there have been further additions and extensions, and now there are plans to knock it all down and start again – so no wonder it is taking some researching. If you can help contact him at stephen.hullyer@ntlworld.com

While the new car parks were being constructed an old car park was closed. Pictures in the News files show Market Hill packed with cars, vans and lorries in July 1964, with the stalls just around the outside. All that changed five years later, in 1969, when traffic was banned. But shoppers could still take a bus into the city centre, though as another picture dated September 1965 shows, these could be held up by traffic obstructions in Market Street.
[SCANS OF MARKET HILL CARS AND BUSES]

To Christine Corby of Newmarket Road, Cambridge, Market Street meant Eaden Lilleys and she has committed her memories of that famous shop to verse

Down memory lane I do recall
The department store that had it all
Eaden Lilleys was one of these
They sold everything you would need
Their aim was always the customer to please
From ribbons, cottons, needles and pins
Beautiful brooches and diamond rings.
Perfumes to greet you as you walk through the door,
A wonderful feeling as you walk through the store.
The lingerie department, with floaty frills and lace,
Would put a happy smile on any lady's face.
Never will we see the likes again
As a bookstore now resides in this domain
Now it's just a memory
Of one of the grand stores that use to be....

Eaden Lilleys

[PICTURES OF EADEN LILLEY IN NEWS LIBRARY]

Memories 5th September 2001, by Mike Petty

Last weekend it was Wilburton church's turn to hold its festival of flowers and painting, like so many other communities, in their bid to raise money to maintain their church.

Many hours of organising, planning, picture-hanging, flower arranging, baking and effort came to fruition when the doors opened to visitors on Saturday morning, being preceded by a successful musical launch the evening before.

Having been given the opportunity to contribute a stand I watched as villagers and visitors came in, in their ones and twos; first scanning the paintings, anxious to have the first chance of acquiring their own mini masterpiece; then slowing down to appreciate the floral displays, and finally glancing through photographs to see faces from the not-so-distant past that they recognised.

But there were times when the church was almost empty, save for the stewards and those whose particular talents lay not in artwork or floristry, but in music. And the most magical moment of the weekend came whilst the church was silent, save for the sound of a harp and the crystal voice of two ladies in the chancel, singing an old English folk song. Shafts of sunlight streamed through the windows, illuminating them – and the blond toddler, sitting on the chancel step, captivate by the sound.

Later I peered into the church vestry where, in dusty frames, hung photographs of past ministers, some now fading into obscurity. What would they have made of the previous night's jazz in the nave, or the angelic voices? [PIX OF WILBURTON FROM LIBRARY FILES]

The life of one Victorian village vicar has been explored in a new book from Sawston. Edwin Daniel was appointed in 1836 to a parish many of whose residents were very poor, working-class and new to the village, having been attracted by its industrial developments, but whose Lord of the Manor was a staunch Roman Catholic – views Daniel opposed. The new vicar had a growing family but inherited a small vicarage. He resolved to build himself a house which would also serve as the base for a private Classical Academy to supplement his income.

Whilst his school flourished, his family did not; two of his sons died, one whilst an apprentice to the House Surgeon at Addenbrooke's Hospital. Then one of his daughters eloped with Thomas Sutton Evans, the son of the tannery owner.

When Edwin died in 1855 he was succeeded as vicar by his son, Edwin Swann Daniel. But he soon found himself at odds with his brother-in-law, T.S. Evans, an arrogant, argumentative and vindictive man who quarrelled with many of the village tradesmen, and became known as the tyrant of Sawston. They battled for some 22 years before Edwin was forced from his house, resign his living and eventually died a pauper and lunatic at Fulbourn Asylum.

All this and more is examined by Jane Lane in her book, 'A Cambridgeshire Vicar' which is available at Sawston Book Shop and the SPCK, King's Parade, Cambridge, at £14.99 [PHOTOS OF SAWSTON]

Another book new to the shops comprises reflections from a Cambridge drawing-room, by Louis T. Stanley, a remarkable man whose career included the role of industrialist and economist with that of chairman of BRM motor racing team. Over dozens of dinner-parities at his Trumpington home Stanley has entertained a host of eminent personalities, from legends of stage and screen to statesmen, saints and heretics. He was a friend of Donald Campbell, whose body was recently recovered from the waters of Coniston Water years after his speedboat, Bluebird, had flipped over during his quest for the water-speed record. "He telephoned me very early to say he was about to make the official run. Sleepily I asked had the course been swept. 'As much as possible. It was imperative that a new record could be announced at the opening of the Boat Show later that morning. The odds against hitting floating debris would be 1000-to-1'. Sadly that bet was lost".

Louis Stanley's main sporting interests lay in motor racing with the BRM team, and he numbered amongst his drivers Juan Manuel Fangio, Mike Hawthorn, Graham Hill, Niki Lauda and Jackie Stewart who said of him; "Louis Stanley undertakes many tasks, some of which seem impossible. The duties he undertakes would fill the lifetime of lesser men". His recollections of people he has known reads fill some 240 pages of his latest book, "Vignettes and Memories" (Robson Books, £16.95) [SCAN OF DONALD CAMPBELL, PHOTO OF LOUIS STANLEY WITH JACKIE STEWART]

Top footballer, in Stanley's opinion, is Stanley Matthews. Cambridge United's fans may disagree. Some might nominate names such as Roy Ruffett who was captain when United won their first victory over Cambridge City in a competitive match in 1952, goalie Rodney Slack, voted player of the season three times at the Abbey in the 1960s, or Phil Chapple who led the team to victory at Wembley in 1990. That was in the playoffs for promotion from the Third Division and saw the team accorded a heroes' welcome at the Guildhall. These and many more are featured in a new pictorial history of Cambridge United which draws heavily on the News' photographic files, as Brian Attmore and Graham Nurse combine to cover the club's story from 1912 to the present day, together with a glimpse into the future with a new all-seater stadium in the offing. Images of Sport: Cambridge United Football Club is published by Tempus at £10.99 [SCAN OF AN EVENT AT THE GROUND IN THE EARLY 1950S; PHOTO OF THE TEAM'S ARRIVAL AT THE GUILDHALL AFTER THEIR WEMBLEY APPEARANCE]

Julie Wilson from Chesterton seeks your help in identifying an old photograph of a group of gentlemen preparing to enjoy a river trip. It was taken by Ralph Starr who opened his first photographic studio in Mill Road in 1888, moving one year later to Fitzroy Street. It was followed with another branch at Ely in 1900 and a third in Regent Street as he developed into one of Cambridge's most eminent photographers and went into partnership with a Mr Rignall. Some of the excursionists are wearing medals and one carries an accordion. Perhaps the most important are those guarding the crates of beer. They may have had something to do with the sewage pumping station at Cheddars Lane. Any ideas? [SCAN OF MYSTERY PIC]

The pictures of the Parcel People have prompted memories for Margaret Twigden who has e-mailed:

I was in my late teens and lived in Swavesey and well remember being taken to "see" them when they were somewhere in the vicinity of the American Cemetery. I assume that from Fenstanton, they made their way via Fen Drayton and then to Swavesey. It was so exciting, they spent almost a week outside our house in School Lane. Everybody was fascinated by these two mysterious people. It was assumed that they were mother and son (I think she was older than 50), she was very well spoken and said a lot more than he did. I spent a lot of time talking to them, they were very nice people, even though they were a bit smelly and dirty!! I asked them if they were mother and son, she replied "We are of the clan" !!! People used to say that they were wealthy and there was a rumour that every so often a limousine would appear and whisk them off into the night (leaving behind the parcels) and then they would re-appear the next morning.

They were always coming round asking for drink and food. I remember my Dad being quite annoyed about them, but I used to sneak stuff out whenever I could. From Swavesey they made their way through the villages until they ended up in Histon, which as you say is where it all came to an end.

Rodney Dale from Haddenham has more thoughts: I compiled the first-ever collection of what are now called Urban Myths (but were then called Whale-Tumour Stories) which was published in 1978. Therein I recorded:

"The Parcels People approached from the north via Willingham, Rampton, Cottenham and towards Histon. They had piles and piles of parcels, which seemed ever to grow, kept dry under sheets of plastic. There were tales of a large car (Bentley or Rolls) visiting in the dead of night with nourishment. According to a letter to the Observer 13 February 1977 'the story was told that they went into a fish and chip café near Stamford and proffered a cheque in payment, which the owner refused to accept. The Parcels People then told the café owner to ring a certain number in London, which he did, and the voice at the other end told the owner that the cheque would be honoured as the people concerned were very wealthy' [REPRISE PARCEL PEOPLE PIC]

Memories 12th September 2001, by Mike Petty

Haddenham steam engine rally was held last weekend. Amongst those flocking to the scene was Gerald Bailey from Wicken, as he has for many years. But in conversation on Friday Gerald turned his mind back to the days when the machines he drove were modern, powerful – and essential for the country's survival.

When the Second World War broke out Gerald was called up, but pronounced unfit for military service. He returned to the Wicken farm where he worked as a tractor driver, knowing that he would be unpopular – for if he did not go then one of the other four

farmhands would be sent instead. So Gerald resigned his job. He applied to the War Agricultural Executive Committee for work and was offered employment in Leicester – a skilled tractor-man like him was badly needed to train others. But why work away, when there was work nearby?

With the country in desperate need of all the food it could grow the Government had introduced measures to requisition land that was not being farmed to its full potential – such as water-logged fenland that was impossible to cultivate without machinery beyond the reach of farmers who had been struggling just to survive throughout the depression of the 'thirties. Some of that land was in Burwell Fen, just over the Cock-up Bridge from Wicken and adjacent to Priory Farm, whose story has been told by Alan Bloom in his book, 'The Farm in the Fen', published in 1944.

Gerald worked with his caterpillar tractor clearing bushes and scrub, dragging out the giant bog oaks that were a constant problem as deep ploughs carved through land never cultivated before. He has memories of the Land Army girls, based at Swaffham Prior, who would be brought to work in the fen, and while away the cold, wet days when work was impossible by singing in the barn. He also recalls the day when a taxi was seen bumping its way down the rutted road; it drew to a halt and out stepped two smartly-dressed men in plus-fours and polished shoes who asked the driver to return for them at four in the afternoon. They walked across to the farmworker who seemed to be in charge and asked what he would like them to do – they had been sent to play their part in the war effort. They were not dressed for hard, dirty work, but they were given dirty work to do, spreading black fen soil. Come dokey-time and they had no sandwiches, but produced instead a small box from which each took two pills – vitamins, they said. When the taxi came again at the end of the day they departed in a cloud of dust, to return next day. It took little detective work to realise that these men were conscientious objectors, fighting the war on the farm front, rather than in the front line.

There were other less-willing workers, the Prisoners-of-War. Whilst the German PoWs worked with a will, their former Italian allies were less prepared for labour. Gerald recalls how he used a spinner to unearth potatoes, the Italians picked a row, then sat down to discuss the state of the world and seemed reluctant to start work again. Nor could the 60-year-old foreman impose his will on such a batch of strapping young men. But the British soldier sent to guard them found a way. He fixed a bayonet to his rifle, inserted a bullet into the chamber and fired over their heads. This galvanised them into activity, they found the incentive to work.

The German prisoners not only worked well, they ate well. Whilst the Land Army girls had Spam and raw carrot in their sandwiches, the Germans enjoyed piles of bacon – which they were happy to share when asked. Less happy was one of the farmers who discovered the prisoners had borrowed his boat, purloined his binder-twine to make nets and were catching all the fish in the Cam.

Gerald spent several years at the War-Ag machinery depot in a commandeered barn at Stretham, working to repair equipment that had been damaged by unskilled drivers. When the Stretham depot closed he moved across to Bourn, but the bureaucracy of having to drive from a fenland farm at the end of the day, just to clock-out – and then drive all the way home to Wicken – was ridiculous, especially at a time of petrol rationing. He was given a van and authority to stock it with whatever he needed and to service the tractors throughout the area. It was something he continued as an agricultural contractor after the War-Ag was wound up in the 1950s, keeping-up-to-date with the latest machinery, but at the same time applying his skill to the older steam-machines such as those he was happily recalling at the Haddenham rally this weekend. [NEG OF GERALD BAILEY ON TRACTION ENGINE 4817.88.32A – I WILL LOCATE; SCANS OF CATERPILLAR TRACTORS DRAGGING OAKS IN BURWELL FEN (not Bailey); DIGGING OUT BOG OAK (not in Burwell fen)]

Whilst Gerald was driving tractors, Derek Harris, from Histon, was involved with even heavier transport – steam locomotives. He recognises some of the men I featured at Ely station goods yard – Memories 22nd August – as Ronnie Lark, a goods guard and later relief signalman, Peter Cooper then Ely yard foreman who eventually became Yard Inspector at Cambridge and ‘Moses’ Hutchins, one-time Beet Foreman at Ely North Junction. [REPRISE PICTURE OF ELY GOODS YARD]

Derek himself started his railway career in 1940 as a signal-box lad at Ely North, aged 14. He has vivid recollections of the Ely Sugar Beet Factory, now itself but a memory. He writes: “Ely North Junction was at the hub of rail activity during the Sugar Beet Campaign, usually from September until early January. The Ely factory was one of a group and could remain active well into February if they were chosen as the ‘clearing up’ factory. At the end of the campaign, rail loaded sugar beet would be diverted from the surrounding counties and as far away as Colwick (Notts) to Ely.

“Beet was loaded in loose-coupled, open coal wagons which were worked into the various marshalling yards and made up into block train loads for the various factories by the Beet Foreman who possessed the qualifications of a shunter, main line guard and the ability to work with a locomotive as well as a good knowledge of geography! His only assistant was a goods porter who worked with the factory staff, labelling and recording the destination, numbers etc., of all empties and loaded wagons.

“On one occasion, bagged raw sugar (dark brown which contained molasses) loaded in locked, sealed vans, was awaiting disposal in the North Junction sidings. A considerable quantity of it was ‘run-off’ in the night through holes bored up through the floorboards. All the sugar made at the factories was stored in bonded warehouses and monitored by Customs & Excise but they missed out on the cunning of the thief on this occasion.

“Of course the input of sugarbeet was regulated, much of it came by road in open topped lorries and in the early days without any protective covering so that much of it lay in the gutters of Nutholt Lane, the Prickwillow Road and Adelaide. These fallen pieces were a useful supplement for the diet of tame rabbits (which many folk reared for food or the cattle-market sale on Thursdays) Some beet was brought in by the river barges, a suitable quay had been constructed for this purpose.

“One of the most remarkable sights but not seen by many, was the display of wild flowers in the Beet Factory holding sidings throughout the spring and summer. These siding were where some hundreds of trucks of beet we held over, especially during the Christmas period. They were constructed beside the lineside path from leading from Springhead Lane (popularly known as Love Lane) level crossing to the North Junction box and cottages. A path tolerated by BR otherwise the signalmen would need to go via Adelaide to reach the ‘box. Seeds from earlier plants and new seed deposited from the Autumn collection of beet there, provided a wealth of variety and colour to the beholder.” [PICTURES OF BEET FACTORY AND RAILWAY LINE APPROACHING IT WERE SORTED OUT LAST WEEK]

Whilst on the subject of signalmen, I owe an apology to the family of the late Bert Garwood of Littleport, whose picture in his signalbox in 1969 is featured in my forthcoming ‘Memory Lane, Ely and the Fens’ book. A gremlin transposed the ‘G’ to a ‘Y’, making him appear a relation to the famous impersonator. Let me know of other slips when you spot them so they can be put right in later reprints. (‘Memory Lane, Ely and the Fens’ is due in the shops shortly) [SCAN OF SIGNAL BOX AND MR GARWOOD]

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Julie Wilson from Chesterton seeks your help in identifying an old photograph of a group of gentlemen preparing to enjoy a river trip. It was taken by Ralph Starr who opened his first photographic studio in Mill Road in 1888, moving one year later to Fitzroy Street and later Regent Street, Cambridge with a branch in Ely in 1900. He developed into one of Cambridge's most eminent photographers and went into partnership with a Mr Rignall. Some of the excursionists in the picture are wearing medals and one carries an accordion. Perhaps the most important people are those guarding the crates of beer. They may have had something to do with the sewage pumping station at Cheddar's Lane. Any ideas? [SCAN OF MYSTERY PIC]

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Recent articles about East Road, Cambridge, have prompted Bob Doughty to send me memories of his grandfather, Herbert (Wally) Beamiss. Wally was born at The Three Compasses pub in East Road in 1902. His family ran and owned several homes and businesses in the area but unfortunately by the time he came of age he was on his own and for a time was forced to live rough. He got several jobs in the building trade, working on the Guildhall in the 1930s – and at one time falling off the roof. He also worked as a delivery driver for Charles Hall and Bob remembers how when a lad of four or five years old he went out with Wally and his mate Buster in the lorry. Herbert Beamiss passed away two years ago, aged 98, but will surely be remembered by several people.

Memories 19th September 2001, by Mike Petty

The world has been stunned by the events of the last week. But incredibly similar things have been reported on the same day in the past!

News of the tragedy in America was met with disbelief around the world and fully reported in the columns of the News. In Cambridge “inhabitants hastened to show their regret and sympathy with the great sister nation across the sea. Everywhere was heard expressions of sorrow. Flags at half-mast mournfully floated from the summits of public buildings, churches, houses of business and a few private residences, for the sorrow and sympathy were as universal as they were keen”

From churches everywhere came sympathy with American nation “as it passed along the path of darkness and perplexity”. At St Andrew's Street Chapel the pastor trusted the eyes of rulers “would be turned to the causes of dissatisfaction, commotion and distress among the nations, so that out of this great sorrow some good might come to the American people and the world.”

These snippets may be have been written yesterday; in fact they come from copies of the Cambridge Daily News for September 14th and 16th 1901, when the shock was the death of American President William McKinley after being shot by an assassin. His words in the immediate aftermath of the attack were quoted from the pulpit of Emmanuel Congregational Church: “The President murmured a message to his wife, and then bade no one hurt the miserable wretch who had assailed him”. [COPIES OF NEWS PAGES FROM, SEPT 1901]

The sight of the devastation wreaked by two planes horrified thousands of people who witnessed it. The News reported how “a dead silence fell on the horrified crowd, a silence which remained united – save for the shuffling of feet as the spectators surged back until the desperate tragedy ended in a burst of flame and black smoke and the dull roar of the

subsequent explosion". Once more this was not September 2001, it was 17th September 1951 – just 50 years ago – reporting the collision of two Meteor jet fighters during a Battle of Britain display at RAF Waterbeach. One plane crashed within 200 yards of the crowd, another on the edge of the airfield, near the Cambridge-Ely road [CUTTING FROM CDN 17.9.1951]

And also this week I heard an eye-witness account of a search for survivors, as Bill Hutchings of Teversham described his horror at reaching the end of Sturton Street and looking at the heap of smoking rubble that had been his home in Vicarage Terrace. Of the panic of trying to find somebody who could tell him if his mother had survived, and his relief when she was finally found wandering shell-shocked and covered in dust in a nearby street. Others were not so fortunate, several lives were lost, others shattered. That date was June 1940 when Cambridge became the first target for the direct aerial attack by Germany during the Second World War. That tragedy is still remembered, the few contemporary photographs reprinted again and again. But the news was censored at the time, the suffering unreported until the War had been won. Still details come to light; last week a lady told me how her father had the job of clearing the household effects, and that she still has his pencil-written records. [VICARAGE TERRACE WRECKAGE]

But, largely forgotten, Ely too suffered in that first war-time raid and one man died during the bombs that fell near the newly-constructed army camp in West Fen Road. And as I reported in Memories (Aug 8th) Ely also suffered tragedy when a plane crashed in St Mary's Street in August 1951. Janet Smith this week E-mailed me an eye-witness account of that event as remembered by 81-year-old Olive Silcock who now lives in Clacton where she is writing her memories in their local newspaper. Olive recalls: "I remember it was sometime before 9am. I had asked my oldest son, Edward Silcock, to go to Mr. Fletcher's grocery shop for milk etc. He said he wouldn't - it was as well he didn't! – because a large bang, which made No. 3 St. Mary's Street (my house) tremble. I thought it was a bomb - the darkness and the hail of dust, earth rattling at the doors and windows, it was very frightening. It's sound was like a million hailstones hitting our roof. I remember I was afraid to move!!

"Some of the wreckage fell outside our front door so, as my son, by refusing to go on an errand, saved his life. A pram outside Joe Brand's shop was crushed and the King's Arms (opposite) had their pub windows and door damaged. People came from nowhere, but I was told not to leave the house because of the fuel that was everywhere, running down the street. A passer-by, who I knew, said the driver of that lorry had stopped to buy cigs at Mr. Cook's shop opposite the Church. Had he not, then the 'plane would have missed him - it was a grim sight. (Her sons ran out despite being told to keep in and told her the driver's head had been decapitated)

"I also remember the vicar of St. Mary's Church was also on the scene as the young airman was dying. I remember the second airman was taken to the RAF Hospital, Lynn Road, but later was taken to Fulbourn Hospital in Cambridge. The road was blocked off and RAF servicemen were on guard. It was a day to remember. This is a scribbled account but worth a mention. I guess if the plane's wing had come off I would not be writing this story"

[REPRISE PIC OF CRASH]

Even wartime hardships can bring happiness to some. Mrs Jean Potter of Golding Road, Cambridge was struck by a Memories (Aug 29th) photo of troops on Cambridge commons at the start of the Great War. She writes: "My mother, Violet, lived with her parents (Mr & Mrs Joe Day) who had The Britannia public house on East Road. He was also a blacksmith, so they had, attached to this a forge and wheelwright business. The soldiers from the tent camps had to bring their horses to use the forge for shoeing and that's how by father, George Sullivan from Newport Wales, who was in the Welsh Regiment, met by mother. They married before he eventually went overseas. After the war ended they lived for a while in Wales but

returned to Cambridge after my Grandmother died, leaving by grandfather with 4our younger children to bring up. They then spent the rest of their lives in Cambridge, having three girls, Vi, Zena, and me” [REPRISE PIC OF TROOPS ON COMMON]

One element of the attack on New York has been the dramatic transformation of the skyline. In this respect the changes in Cambridge itself have been largely self-inflicted, such as the clearance of the south side of Petty Cury for the Lion Yard redevelopment and the clearance for the Grafton Centre which left the areas looking like a bomb site. [POSSIBLE PICS OF GRAFTTON STREET OR LION YARD REDEVELOPMENT FROM NEWS LIBRARY FILES]

This week however Ernest Best has passed to me a wonderful series of drawings made by an artist named Lewis, dated 1954 and 1956 that capture many areas of the city that have now vanished. Many I recognise; some I don't. If they jog memories for you or if you call tell me something about the artist please let me know. [SCANS]

Memories 26th September 2001, by Mike Petty

Over morning coffee at the Age Concern's 'Pop-in' centre in Parson's Court, Cambridge the conversation revolved about grass. Not the immaculate grass of the college lawns, nor the illegal substance, but the old fashioned, everyday stuff that is cut with a lawnmower. The question was – where can you get grass seed in Cambridge.

The obvious answer was Sanders the seed people. It was the obvious place that many generations of Cambridge folk had turned to for their garden needs. But incredibly it is no longer there, a part of Cambridge's history has gone, unnoticed.

A couple of evenings later and the name came up again when Eileen Ward recalled her distress after she learned that the name had gone from the shop in Hobson Street. For Eileen and her family had been associated with the business since the First World War. And in her attic at Histon she had a pile of material relating to the company and its history. When I visited her home she produced masses of seed catalogues, the firm's neat, hand-written ledgers kept by her father, Leslie Scarr.

Trying to piece it all together it would seem that the business was started by one James Sanders in 1866; he had a nursery at Newnham and a shop at 23a Petty Cury, on the north side, Petty Cury end. Eileen even has a catalogue from those distant days full of details of wrinkled peas – American Wonder being one of the earliest types, though two new varieties, Alderman and Boston Unrivalled were new on the scene. Bibby's Defiance celery, Lee's Immense Hardy Green lettuce, Champion Moss Curled parsley and Hackford Park Prolific tomato could all be had from stock. Those more interested in flowers could select from page after page – Betteridge's Quilled asters, Empress of India nasturtium or Double German wallflowers amongst them.

Leslie Scarr had joined the firm in July 1917, aged 16 shortly after the death of its founder. His wage of 13s a week was a great advance on the 7s.6d he's previously earned as an office boy at a bill-posting company after leaving the Higher Grade School aged 14. James Sanders' business was continued by his nephew, Montague Shirley Alliston until he died suddenly just after Christmas 1926. Leslie stayed with the firm, first helping the widow and then being taken into partnership, after the shop relocated down to Regent Street in 1927. It was a period of intense activity for him for he was also overseeing the building of his own new home in Coleridge Road at a cost of £500!

The shop was quite convenient for the railway where potatoes arrived by the truck load to be transported to the shop door and carted into the shop. Eileen recalls how, later, sand that arrived by lorry was tipped onto the pavement and had to be barrowed into the shop as quickly as possible to allow traffic and pedestrians free passage.

With the outbreak of the Second World War it became imperative to grow your own vegetables; there is a pause in Eileen's file of catalogues but a bundle of 'Dig For Victory' leaflets, one of which was devoted to 'Saving your own seeds' – something a seedsman might have been forgiven for keeping at the back of the counter! Another war-time guide gave instructions as to 'How to Dig', aimed at the gardener, not the constructor of Air Raid Shelters. Leslie Scarr had been too young for the First war, he was too specialist to be spared for the Second and granted exemption as a seed expert.

The business continued in Regent Street until the premises were redeveloped by Downing College in 1979, when it moved first to King Street, then round the corner into Hobson Street. By then Leslie had gone into partnership with his daughter Eileen and her husband Dennis Ward. By 1991 he was retired – as a 90-year-old is entitled to be – but still went in to run the accounts and give advice to the sons and grandsons of customers he had served years earlier. Things were different then, the rise of garden centres had had an impact; potatoes no longer arrived loose by the ton, but came hand-packed. But you could still get grass seed – a choice of varieties, at the quantity you required, from two ounces to two hundredweight.

On his days off Leslie devoted himself to his own garden, and sadly died when going out to get potatoes. On that same day Eileen learned of her husband's terminal Cancer. The business was sold on, the name continued above the shop in Hobson Street until about a month ago when gardeners found the door shut, the fascia board removed – and asked well where do you get grass seed in central Cambridge now?

Now the names of James Sanders seeds has passed into history, and the records of the Company have been passed to the County Record Office at Shire Hall, Cambridge, where historians, both local and botanical can have access to them both now and in the future. [PHOTOGRAPHIC HAVE PICTURES OF EILEEN WARD AND HER MATERIAL; SCAN OF SEED CATALOGUE, HOW TO DIG LEAFLET AND – PERHAPS NEGS OF LESLIE SCARR – 1251.87.9 (in greenhouse), 6571.91.3 (outside shop). PERHAPS PIX OF REGENT STREET/ KING STREET – I WILL TRY AND FIND THESE]

Sid Martin has written from Langdon House, Chesterton, to say that he remembers Gerald Bailey and his mechanical skill with tractors (Memories September 12th) "I was one of the tractor drivers who when in trouble called on Mr Bailey and he came and put things right". Sid worked for many years on farmland that ran up to the Huntingdon Road, now disappeared under Bar Hill. It is now one of the busiest of the country's roads but was different in his day: "I used to see mostly old men walking along both ways and wondered where they did so. They were called "Tramps" or "Roadsters". Occasionally a few elderly women also did this same walk, but mostly men. They lived in hundreds of well-built brick or stone buildings like huge barns, dotted all over the country, about five to twelve miles distant from each other. These buildings had various names, "Spikes", "Unions", but mostly "Workhouses". The men were only allowed to stop overnight and then had to move on to the next 'Home', but each morning they had to do a small job of work, mostly chopping firewood or household duties. One of these 'Unions' was in Union Road, Chesterton – later it became Chesterton Hospital."

I have been told that the men would wait for the Union to open sitting on a bench around a tree on the corner of High Street and Chapel Street Chesterton – and this was another of the topics sketched by Lewis Todd in the 1950s. Two of the other scenes I featured in last week's Memories have been identified; one is St Matthew's Church that stood right alongside Vicarage Terrace, the other is a thatched cottage in Clement Place that was demolished to

make way for Park Street car park. Can you help with any of those in this week's batch?
[SCAN OF SEAT AROUND TREE AND OTHERS]

Mrs P.C. Mason of Cambridge has been having a clear out of papers relating to the family and has send me various items including a group photograph of the Central Boys' School 1948. Can anybody put names to faces? [SCAN OF PHOTO]

Alastair Hopkins spotted a face he recognised recently – his own! He was idly scanning pictures in the new 'Memory Lane Ely and the Fens' book and came across one of himself and his mother when they were harvesting potatoes on their Sidings Farm at Prickwillow in 1974. He remembers the visit of the News photographer but never saw the resulting pictures. Now they are in a book! Although it's not officially launched until later this week already numerous people have seen themselves or their relations. If you're one of them please let me know – I'll be signing copies at the News office at Ely on Friday, do come along for a chat.
[SCAN OF POTATO HARVEST]

Memories 3rd October 2001, by Mike Petty

It is that time of year when members of Cambridge Antiquarian Society are awoken in the morning by the clump of the arrival of the latest volume of 'Proceedings'. This years' hefty 150-page volume concentrates on religion in Cambridgeshire over the last 2000 years. It contains a varied number of scholarly papers including a detailed assessment of a Romano-Celtic shrine at Little Paxton quarry, over 30 pages on Cambridgeshire church bell-frames and a remarkable analysis of the dust removed from the choir stalls in King's college chapel which gives a fascinating insight into the uses and misuses the building has been subjected to over the centuries.

There is also a history of another building, not itself of any great antiquarian significance, but one that plays a most important part in the religious life of the Muslim community in Cambridge. Little has been researched about the diverse multi-ethnic community whose members trace their roots to a variety of nations, including Mauritius, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Turkey. They first used a room at the Cambridge Guildhall as a place of prayer before moving in 1975 to a house on Chesterton Road where two small downstairs rooms were used as a mosque. But these premises were not suitable for the required alignment facing Mecca, and nor could they be demolished and rebuilt. There was also a small matter of planning permission for change of use from a domestic house. Their search for permanent accommodation led them to consider the disused All Saints Church in Jesus Lane or the then empty St Andrew the Great church where application for conversion into a mosque was turned down. Eventually they found an old Gospel Hall, later a meeting place for the Plymouth Brethren off Mill Road, Cambridge. The former church meeting hall now includes a minbar [SIC] (the short flight of steps used by the Imam to deliver his sermon at Friday prayers) and where copies of the Qur'an and other religious texts can be stored, while a second prayer hall has been added. An upper room provides a place that women can use for prayer, being excluded by custom from the main body of the mosque. Even so the space is often full and during the major festivals, most notably the Eid [SIC] or id al-fitr [SIC] prayers at the end of Ramadan the congregation have sometimes erected a marquee on Midsummer Common or in the grounds of Jesus College. During his researches Timothy Insoll, then a Research Fellow at St John's college was aided by a fellow student, Talib Ali, and by photographs from the News archives to ensure that something of the important story of the Cambridge Muslim community can be recorded in a journal that circulates around the world. If you have memories to share, then write to me at the News

[PHOTOS OF MUSLIMS AT PRAYER IN THE CAMBRIDGE MOSQUE, 29.11.1985 AND THE CELEBRATION OF THE END OF RAMADAN ON THE LAWNS OF JESUS COLLEGE, 27.4.1990 – I HAVE SCANNED THOSE FROM THE PROCEEDINGS AND WILL TRY AND TRACK DOWN THE ORIGINALS]

The story of the discovery of the remains of an old Cambridge Street Tramways car that was broken in the News last week has stimulated memories for Charlie Goodge of Ely. He will be well remembered in the city as a shoemender and tells me that when he left Needham's school at 13 years of age he started work for Batas in the High Street then moved to Charlie Prior who had his shoe shop in Minster Place, Ely. In those days there were various cobblers in the city as people tended to have their shoes repaired more frequently than today. But the arrival of the army camp in West Fen Road at the start of the Second World War boosted the demand even more and as soon as Charlie finished work at 6pm he would walk to Downham Road where Mr Herbert Johnson has the contract to repair army boots. On arrival he blew a whistle and waved a green flag – thinking he was about to enter a railway carriage. But it was in fact the old tramcar. It had a tortoise stove in the corner and they kept it warm by burning worn-put soles. Next morning it was back to the day-job where he stayed until he was called up into the army. On demob he started his own business next to the old Majestic Cinema in Newnham Street.

Somebody who did know the full significance of Mr Johnson's workshop was Michael Gates, the well-known local historian. He was however asked not to divulge the secret, even after Mr Johnson died some years ago, but every time he drove past he slowed down to check the valuable relic was still in place. You can imagine his excitement when Mike Salmons, the builder who acquired the land, recognised its importance and allowed its removal for restoration. The story of the carriage – originally a double-decker pulled by a single horse on the route from Cambridge station to Market Hill – is well recorded. But now the restorers are seeking any additional photographs of the tram, that carried the number one, to aid their renovation. If you can help then give him a ring on Cambridge 293803 – and drop me a line. It's probably too far back for any personal recollections, but you might have fathers or granddads that worked on the Cambridge Street Tramways Company between 1880 and 1914. [SCAN OF TRAM & WEST FEN ARMY CAMP]

Mrs Silvia Miller of Sutton has lent me a picture of another ancient form of transport with a photograph of Sutton station that must have been taken in the early years of the 1900s. In January 1964 the News took another view when it recorded the trip of the goods train that ran along the old Grunty Fen railway from Ely before it closed that July. En route the train needed to stop at Little Thetford and close the crossing gates across the A10. People bemoan the loss of the old railway lines, but given the amount of traffic along that road they would have a very long wait before they could do it today! And am I the only person who remembers the queues that used to build up at the Milton Road railway crossing in Cambridge – especially when the underpass filled up with water? Do you have pictures of the railway gates there – or others that have now disappeared? [SCAN OF SUTTON STATION OLD PHOTO, NEWS PHOTO OF SUTTON STATION JANUARY 1964 AND LT THETFORD RAILWAY CROSSING GATES WITH FIREMAN ROBERT GILBEY AND JACK WATSON, JAN 1964]

Whilst signing copies of 'Memory Lane, Ely and the Fens' last week I learned the names of two of the domino players featured in the bar of the Railway Tavern, Shippea Hill. One is 'Dorcy' Butcher from Kenny Hill, the other a Mr Sparrow who was a builder from Littleport. Dominoes used to be a prominent feature of pub life, with the air of hushed concentration giving way to detailed analysis after a game was concluded. But who do you recall from all those who would while away hours in play – with only the odd break for a refill of the pint

mug? And do you have snaps of games in progress? [SCAN OF DOMINOES AT SHIPPEA HILL JULY 1977]

Last week's picture of the Central School in 1948 has brought immediate response from various old boys. John Goddard of Cherry Hinton recognised Alan Dant, Alan Sharpling, John Davies and David Burling amongst the students. He recalls his old teachers, as does Peter Hammond from Bar Hill who adds his own memories of them. From the left: Mr Bill Newett (Metal Work), "Taffy" Evans (PE and Science), Harry Bell (PE and Maths – "a former Notts County footballer and a real gentlemen" according to Peter), Ted Edsour (English – "a great supporter of the RSPCA, if you gave him a halfpenny you could forget your detention"), Ralph 'Buster' Brown (Deputy Head and Maths), 'Jock' Livingston (Head – "a very wise and very fair man, who commanded our respect"), Dick Annely (Geography), Mr Mansfield (Maths – "very sticked"), Percy Frankham (Commerce – "he had only one arm and his handwriting was perfect"), Mr Beckerley (History), 'Percy' Giles (Woodwork – "he taught me a great deal about wood and woodwork, which is still my trade after 48 years – 41 with Marshalls Aerospace") and Roland Parker (French) who also wrote books on Cambridge and Cambridgeshire history. David Brown from Cambridge knows that he was on the picture, but was just chopped off from the section I showed. [REPRISE CENTRAL SCHOOL PHOTO]

Nick Wise has e-mailed to identify two of the sketches by Lewis Todd that I featured on 26th September; one shows the old entrance to Jordan's Yard, between 13 and 14 Bridge Street; the mid 1970s redevelopment moved the passageway a little further north. The left-hand sketch was the now demolished Wray's Court off Sidney Street, where Sainsbury's now stands.

Memories 10th October 2001 by Mike Petty

Mary Rae from Cambridge was delighted when she opened the News on 26th September and saw a picture of Wrays Court. "I remember this clearly. The little girl with the dolls' pram is my daughter Christine who would have been about 2½ years old and the black cat was our Tim. I can also remember the man sitting on his stool at the entrance to Wrays Court sketching this about 1953/4. We used to live at no.6. The Passage was between Spalding's Map Shop and an electrical shop in Sidney Street, but was demolished and is now part of Sainsburys. The sketch appeared in the CDN at the time which I kept, but over the years it seems to have got lost and I felt one day it would come up in one of your 'Memories' articles, and he it is. I feel so pleased its come out of the archives after all these years, as I have spoken of this sketch many times with my daughter"

Another letter came from Diane Todd; she not only knew the sketch, she knew the artist – her husband, Lewis Todd. Lewis worked for the Cambridge Daily News as a cartoonist, successor to Ronald Searle and Sid Moon who went to the Sunday Despatch. He recalls the old News offices in St Andrew's Street, Cambridge, where in an upstairs room the photo engravers cut their sheets with zinc, the acid dropping through the ceiling into the room below.

Lewis' job was to research and produce four cartoons a week, mainly devoted to sportsmen. From boxes at his home in Over he produces piles of cuttings depicting such heroes as Brian Stonebridge the 'scrambling' wizard, sketched at Littleport in September 1951 and unsung heroes like Jack Haylock who by September 1952 had been a groundsman at Fenner's for 45 years. Lewis chatted to Jack and recorded his memories – such as Charlie the horse. "Wearing hoof leathers, he used to pull a five-ton roller that took eight men to handle, and a 42 inch cutter, the cut line of which he followed with uncanny precision. But he would like a mouthful of grass at the end of each 'cut' – and woe betide the man who tried to prevent him. Charlie eventually took exception to a mechanical horse while lauding a load out of the Pit lawn one May Week and had to be destroyed. You can still see where the stables stood".

Another character to emerge from the cuttings was Mr L.D.V. Wordingham, who is depicted hiding under a table during a torrential downpour as he gave his commentaries during the August Bank Holiday sports meeting at the Milton Road ground in 1952. Lewis himself presumably got soaked!

It was during the August 'silly season', when news was short, that Lewis suggested to the editor of the News, H.H. Higgins, that he should produce a series of sketches on the theme 'Know your Cambridge' to tease readers – though the answer was always given at the bottom of the page. So it was that he arrived in Wrays Court, as Mary Rae remembers. Later, when his week's work was done Lewis returned to the scenes he had sketched, this time with his canvas, easel and paintbox. He still has many of his original paintings, hoping one day for a retrospective exhibition of his work. But the views do not lay unseen for he has reproduced many of the older paintings which he sells on Saturdays on All Saints Green and on Sundays on Cambridge Market.

But whilst the characters are captioned, and the streets recalled, there is another side to his cartooning which is more tantalising. For he also depicted contemporary issues. One sketch from Swaffham Prior in 1957 laments the loss of a fountain and horse trough, another depicts an irate character in the 'Forgotten village' of Grantchester – who can shed light on the background to these. But another from 1953 needs no explanation; it shows the traditional annual arrival of students and their luggage, though these days the scene is somewhat different.

PHOTO OF LEWIS TODD WITH HIS 1950S PAINTINGS OF PRZIBORSKY'S
HAIRDRESSERS SHOP, RAM YARD; PHOTO OF HIS PAINTING OF THE JACKSONS
WHO SOLD THE CDN ON MARKET HILL IN 1950S; THEY ARE SHOWN IN THE
BUN SHOP PUB, ST ANDREW'S HILL
SCAN OF WRAY'S COURT, SIDNEY STREET SHOWING MARY RAE'S DAUGHTER,
SCAN OF BRIAN STONEBRIDGE, SCRAMBLER; L.D.V. WORDINGHAM
COMMENTATING FROM UNDER TABLE, AUG 1952 & JACK HAYLOCK AT
FENNERS
SCAN OF SWAFFHAM PRIOR FOUNTAIN, GRANTCHESTER & UNDERGRADS
ARRIVING AT COLLEGE
SCAN OF PAINTING OF NORTHAMPTON STREET/ MAGDALENE STREET
CORNER

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The work of an earlier Cambridge artist, Robert Farren, is on show at the galleries of Cambridge Fine Art, Church Street, Little Shelford, from 15th October. Three of his original watercolours of the Wrestler's Inn and Falcon Yard, Cambridge that he painted about 120 years ago will be on display alongside landscapes, seascapes and still life by a variety of Victorian artists [SCAN OF FALCON YARD – NOW LION YARD, CAMBRIDGE]

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Robert Gilbey of Cambridge saw himself in "Memories" on 3rd October; he was fireman on the 'Grunty Fen Express' train in January 1964 and is shown opening the crossing gates at Lt Thetford.

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The picture of the Central Boys school 1948 has continued to bring in responses; P.D. Stearn from Cambridge, Nigel Neville from Dry Drayton, & Steve Foreman from Girton, all have contacted me. Philip Shaw recalls how "Taffy" Evans the music and maths master, was well known for eating blackboard dust at the start of the first chemistry class of the afternoon – he

suffered from indigestion and was eager to explain the chemistry of indigestion remedies. Peter Froste from Laxfield near Woodbridge thinks it would be nice to have a reunion – but Malcolm Smith says that some of the old chums still do get together. Margaret Rowe writes from Leatherhead in Surrey to say she saw her father, Frank Mansfield. He taught at the Central from 1930 to 1953 when he became headmaster of St Andrew's Church of England School in Chesterton until he retired in 1964. He then became a qualified Cambridge Tourist Guide; a long-time member of Castle Street Methodist Church and sometime circuit steward, he died suddenly in 1969.

Since so many Central old boys have seen themselves I wonder if we can repeat the exercise with Central School Girls, but this time going back much further, to 1933. The picture has been supplied by Edna Arnold of Cambridge and is one of a batch that she will shortly be donating to the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard library. [SCAN OF CENTRAL GIRLS' SCHOOL SEPT 1933]

GIVEN THE NUMBER OF PICTURES YOU MIGHT LIKE TO HOLD OVER THESE FAIRGROUND NOTES

Edna also saved a copy of 'The Forget-me-not', the school magazine, for Spring 1930. In it Pearl Hardy gave her impressions of Midsummer Fair

"As one enters the fairground one hears the shouting of the rock merchants and the high-pitched voices of the fortune-tellers mingled with the noise (I will not call it " music ") of the merry-go-rounds. Now the harassed and perplexed vendors of sweet-meats hurry to serve impatient customers. Now a small child, confused by the dust and din around it, begins to wail loudly. Now the oily mechanic perspires freely and longs to get out of the stuffy interior of the round-about. Now the switch-backs let off their steam and deafen the bystanders. Now the old lady holds her hands up in disgusted amazement as the people are whirled round in the chara-planes".

Albert Sheldrick describes a similar scene in Ashwell at about the same time: "After morning Sunday school it was important to be at the recreation ground in time to see the first caravans arrive from Melbourn where the fair had ended the previous night. Then came the big steam engine, Lord Kitchener, towing a huge wagon loaded with all the bits and pieces which made up James Harris and Sons flying horses, soon followed by Viscount Lascelles, a slightly smaller engine towing more of the fair equipment. By midday most of the fair had arrived, the water tap near the Cricketers pub had been connected to supply water for the horses, the engines and the caravan people.

"It was only a small fair. The Harris's came from Biggleswade and Jim's brother drove the Lord Kitchener which provided power for most of the fair's lighting, powered the flying horses, and the organ with its figures automatically banging drums and playing flutes and other instruments, blasting out such popular tunes as "Valencia" and "I'm one of the nuts from Barcelona". Every now and then, just to hurry patrons along, there was an almighty shriek on the whistle, which could be, heard all over the village.

"The Harris girls, blonde and smartly dressed, attracted the customers to the dart stalls and a shooting gallery where you fired corks at packets of Woodbine cigarettes, boxes of Swan Vesta matches and other two penny items. Young Jim Harris was usually the caller at a set of large faces with open mouths and clay pipes instead of teeth. You threw three wooden balls for two pence in an attempt to smash the 'teeth'"

Ken Page of Biggleswade has researched the story of Harris' fun fairs and traced the relationships with the Thurston family of showmen. He has published a lavishly illustrated history but he is anxious to trace any other connections. If you can help, or have other memories to share, contact Ken at 10 Victoria Court, Back Street, Biggleswade, SG18 8LG.

His book "The story of Harris's fun fairs" sells for £20 – plus £4 postage. [SCAN OF ALBERT HARRIS, A CLASSIC SHOWMAN FROM THE BOOK]

Memories 17th October 2001, by Mike Petty

Last week I listened once more to the voice of Percy North, who had a memory as sharp as the photographs he took.

Many older folk will remember that Percy was a mainstay of the St John Ambulance brigade, having joined in 1902, & transferring to the Red Cross at the beginning of the Great War - the first man in Cambridge to don the uniform. During the next War he was commandant in charge of stretcher parties at Addenbrooke's Hospital and saw every casualty caused by the raids over the city. Although blinded by an attack of shingles when he was 90 years old he remained independent, preparing his own food and baking his own bread until his death in 1983, five months short of his 100th birthday.

He enjoyed many hobbies: music - at one time having his own orchestra – needlework, oil painting & antiques – and was able to tell the story of each of the items in his mini-museum which ranged from old lemonade bottles to clocks and fine furniture. But his main love was photography. Percy made a photographic survey of the back streets off Newmarket Road, recording the dereliction and demolition of an area that he could people with memory and recollection. [SCAN OF AREA]

He would sit and recall the names of tradesmen in the shops around Burleigh street as they were in the days of his youth, nearly a century before. His memory was not only of names but sounds - the calls of the traders who hawked their wares around the small streets off East Road. "Jam jars or bottels" encouraged children to bring such containers to be exchanged for a paper windmill, the lavender girl attracted their older brothers, the trotter man none at all. Some thirty years ago Percy committed these to tape which he deposited in the Cambridgeshire Collection and so the other week I was able to share them with other old Cambridge residents.

He could also recall the sounds of the great Midsummer Fair, held on the common almost opposite his Newmarket Road chiropodist's premises. Percy saw it change from the days when horse-drawn caravans were strewn across the grass and the drinking booths by the river thumped to the sound of heavy dancing. Nearby would be the cockle and whelk stalls where Mrs Hames used to have a great boiler of hot peas - an old halfpenny a basin. Nearby too was the Red Cross tent where North and his colleagues administered to the innumerable accidents and illnesses, sprains, monkey bites and air gun slugs which afflicted the visitors and fairground people alike. If you have tapes of people recalling olden days, please do let me know

In Spring 1930 Pearl Hardy recorded her impressions of that Fair in the 'The Forget-me-not', the Central School for Girls magazine, which Edna Arnold has lent me. Pearl recalled:

"As one enters the fairground one hears the shouting of the rock merchants and the high-pitched voices of the fortune-tellers mingled with the noise (I will not call it " music ") of the merry-go-rounds. Now the harassed and perplexed vendors of sweet-meats hurry to serve impatient customers. Now a small child, confused by the dust and din around it, begins to wail loudly. Now the oily mechanic perspires freely and longs to get out of the stuffy interior of the round-about. Now the switch-backs let off their steam and deafen the bystanders. Now the old lady holds her hands up in disgusted amazement as the people are whirled round in the chara-planes".

Albert Sheldrick describes a similar scene in Ashwell at about the same time: “After morning Sunday school it was important to be at the recreation ground in time to see the first caravans arrive from Melbourn where the fair had ended the previous night. Then came the big steam engine, Lord Kitchener, towing a huge wagon loaded with all the bits and pieces which made up James Harris and Sons flying horses, soon followed by Viscount Lascelles, a slightly smaller engine towing more of the fair equipment. By midday most of the fair had arrived, the water tap near the Cricketers pub had been connected to supply water for the horses, the engines and the caravan people.

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Ken Page of Biggleswade includes Albert's memories in a book on the story of Harris' fun fairs and has traced their relationships with the Thurston family of showmen. He has published a lavishly illustrated history but he is anxious to trace any other connections. If you can help, or have other memories to share, contact Ken at 10 Victoria Court, Back Street, Biggleswade, SG18 8LG. His book “The story of Harris's fun fairs” sells for £20 – plus £4 postage. [SCAN OF ALBERT HARRIS, A CLASSIC SHOWMAN FROM THE BOOK] [OTHER PIX FROM NEWS FILES]

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Cambridge's Market Hill is another place where the vendor's cries can still be heard. A fine photograph features in the re-issued ‘Memories of Cambridge’ book produced some years ago by True North Books. In the foreground is one of Jack Baldry's delivery lorries. The soft drinks firm started in Gold Street, Cambridge in 1923 and by 1969 had taken over another old-established firm, Barker and Wadsworth and were producing some 800 dozen bottles of mineral water an hour. They later relocated to Newmarket Road and then to Sawston in 1979. [SCAN OF MARKET HILL & BALDRYS]

Another company that features in the book is that of Spicers Stationery work in Sawston, with a picture taken in the mid 1950s. Whilst several firms have their own sections in the book Spicers does not. The author wonders just what the young women featured would have to say about working conditions were like in that vast room filled with machinery. If you remember, please drop me a line. [SCAN OF SICERS]

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Mrs Mella Ball of Milton has been browsing through the family photo album and come across one of her father at the Cambridge Cattle Market in December 1958 – the gentleman with his hand up. His name was Bruhl and he was head chef at the Lion Hotel. But do you recognise any of the others? [SCAN OF CATTLE MARKET]

Geoffrey Sandell from Cambridge has e-mailed to respond to my teaser in ‘Memories’ of 19th September. He is quite right in saying it shows farmers in the corn market at Cambridge Corn

Exchange. They are leaning on one of the stalls where they displayed their grain. He also says the bell was rung when the auction was about to begin. [SCAN OF STALL]

Further memories of another Corn Exchange, this one at Ely, were recorded by the News in December 1962 when it was used for the last time as a corn market, the purpose for which it was built in 1847. It had just been purchased by a London development company and was shortly to be demolished to make way for the Market Place shopping centre.

Only a handful of farmers, corn merchants and representatives of seed, feeding stuffs, fertilisers, oil and seed companies turned up for the building's last two-hour use as an indoor market. Before the war as many as 300 people from all parts of the eastern counties and from London congregated at the Corn Exchange every Thursday. Mr Frank King, the custodian, recalled: "65 years ago, Broad Street used to be packed with people coming off the trains to the markets. Admission to the market cost farmers 3d (1p) a week, or 7s.6d. (37p) a year". Mr Harry Sale a Cambridge corn merchant whose association with the market started 41 years before, said stand holders paid £3.5s. (£3.25) a year, walking merchants – those who did not have stands - £1.6s. (£1.30) a year, and merchants who visited occasionally 1s (5p) a week. While in the past sellers and buyers turned up in their hundreds, the average attendance in the last five or six years had dwindled to between 30 and 40. The corn market activities were transferred across the street, to the club room at the rear of the Club Hotel while the Corn Exchange continued in use for a while for a variety of events. It had provided a setting for dinners, political meetings, wrestling, boxing and darts tournaments. [SCAN OF ELY CORN EXCHANGE 1962]

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Leslie Hayward from Wimborne in Dorset seeks your assistance in his researches into Gertrude Ellen Sharp. She was brought to Cambridge in 1890 as a young girl when her father, David Sharp, a distinguished entomologist, took up his position as curator of Zoology at the University. It seems likely Gertrude attended the Cambridge School of Art before going to the Royal College of Art sometime between 1909 and 1911. She married John Adams in 1914 and became prominent as a designer after the partnership of Carter, Stabler and Adams took over the Poole Pottery in 1921 & established a reputation for elegance and decorative modernism during the 1920s and 1930s. Later she remarried and is better known as Truda Carter until her death in 1958. Leslie knows most of the story, having written a major book on the Poole pottery, but is now seeking any Cambridge connections and particularly any photographs of her. So far he has drawn a blank – but can you help?

Mr S.R. Howchin of Cambridge has lent me a photograph of an attractive young lady at Byron's Pool, taken in May 1939. He was the projectionist at the Central Cinema in Hobson Street but on 9th April it had burnt down, and now he was out of work. He took his young lady for a stroll to the well-known beauty spot – and they have been together ever since. [SCAN OF BYRONS POOL]

Memories 24th October 2001, by Mike Petty

Twenty-five years ago the people of Cambridge's new Arbury Estate prepared to welcome back a Royal visitor.

In September 1955 the first house had been completed on the new Arbury Estate extension, an area that would take a large bite out of Cambridge's 4,337 housing waiting list. Monkman,

the builders, took out an advertisement to emphasise the speed of their construction: started 1st June, occupied 17th September.

Others took much longer to complete their dream house. Several families responded to an advertisement in the *News* announcing a meeting for ordinary people who were prepared to co-operate to build their own homes. Cambridge Self-Build Society was set up and eventually they learned of some building plots in the barren fields and allotments off Milton Road.

The men bought a second-hand cement mixer, some scaffolding, some spades and the various bits and pieces needed to build a house. This included floodlights so work could continue long into the night as “Essex Close” started to rise. It was one way of beating the housing shortage. Post-war housing had started with pre-fabs as a temporary measure; 450 were built in Church End and Walpole Way, 100 in the Lichfield & Golding road area, another 40 at Gilbert Close. Mowlems erected concrete ‘Easiform’ houses at a cost of £1,400 providing dwellings within the capacity of people to pay, after all not everybody could afford 35/- (£1.75) per week!

By 1952 the Council had built 2,000 non-traditional houses since the war but when that year Ernest Marples opened the 5,000th Unity steel and concrete house he urged caution on those who advocated cutting costs by reducing standards. “One had got to stop somewhere, otherwise we could be building little pigeon houses with one room upstairs and one down”, he said.

By 1954 there was a 15-year waiting list for council houses and nearly half of new buildings were set aside to re-house people living in some 1,250 “slum” dwellings. The Mayor urged the erection of large blocks of flats in the newly cleared areas rather than taking acres of agricultural land but instead eyes turned to the County Council smallholdings and poultry farms on the north of the town, already separated from Milton Road by a line of houses. Gilbert Road had been established shortly after the Great War and sold off to speculative developers who had erected villas but other development had paused for the Second. Now it was all systems go again. Soon the landscape was changing as roads were laid and plots pegged out.

Not all residents relished departure to pastures new; their small houses might be over a century old, with a blank wall at the back, inadequate ventilation, lavatories or drainage but they were in the New Town or Fitzroy Street areas with their local amenities and community spirit. To some, particularly young mothers with children, the new Arbury could appear bleak and unwelcoming. As the vast estate mushroomed and new phases expanded towards Kings Hedges Road some thought it less of an estate than a New Town – but without the facilities of a new town. An Editorial of December 1968 described it as “an urban wilderness, a dormitory suburb with no life of its own”, others, termed it “slumburbia”, “like a prairie” and “completely soulless”.

The plan unveiled in February 1955 had included provision for shops, schools, a pub, cinema and two churches. The cinema did not materialise but the church did. For a while the congregation met in individual houses but then an army hut was bought for their first church. Then in July 1957 Princess Margaret came to lay the foundation stone of the new Church of the Good Shepherd a building designed to play an essential role in providing a community spirit to the rapidly-expanding population. In October 1976 she was back for a service of dedication of the cross on the top of the church to mark its completion – although it was not actually completed as was originally planned. A tower that formed part of the architect’s design had not been built, and a large window had been put in the west wall instead. The Princess was welcomed by the vicar, the Rev Martin Suter and outside by a crowd of mothers and children who huddled in the rain for an hour, awaiting the Royal party, who were a little late due to the bad weather

The soaked crowds did not have to wait so long for the Princess' departure, for she left earlier than scheduled for her next appointment, a visit to Langdon House in Chesterton, the home she had opened during her 1957 visit. Here she met some of the original residents, including the oldest, 99-year-old Mrs Alice Standiforth, and the matron Mrs Elieen Mackinder. And, perhaps intent on not being late twice in a day, the Princess was whisked off 15 minutes ahead of schedule for the inauguration of the University Clinical Medical School at Addenbrooke's Hospital. As news of her early departure was telephoned ahead it threw the department into panic stations, but they rallied around and ensured the entrance hall was packed with patients, visitors and medical staff in time for her arrival. Then it was time for lunch and a tour of facilities accompanied by the University Vice Chancellor, Miss Rosemary Murray, when she was introduced to the Chairman of the Area Health Authority, Mrs Pauline Burnet and the Regius Professor of Physic, Prof. John Butterfield. Princess Margaret met various people on her tour, including 10-month-old Nicola Woolnough from St Neots, cradled in the arms of Staff Nurse Jillie Walker. If you recognise other faces amongst those snapped by the News photographers please let me know.

Then at the end of a hectic day the Royal visitor sped off, leaving scores of people with their personal memories of the day they met the Princess. [PICTURES OF THE VISIT FROM NEWS LIBRARY FILES]

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The weekend's downpours, turning roads into rivers and lawns into lakes will doubtless bring forth a mass of memories of the great floods of days gone by – and I look forward to a bumper postbag. But older generations also experienced flooding, as a picture of Jesus Green footbridge shows. It was taken in August 1879 when more than three inches of water fell in six hours. The Cambridge Chronicle reported that “the lightning and thunder were awful in grandeur and the downpour of rain and hail terrible”. The Cam flooded at Midsummer Common and the Jesus Lock footbridge stood only inches higher than the river. The scene was captured by the Simpson Brothers – Charles and John. If you have other old photos of ancient floods I should be pleased to see them [SCAN OF FLOOD]

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It may have been a bit like taking coals to Newcastle, introducing a group from Duxford and Whittlesford to an aircraft museum. But like everybody else they were captivated by the collection of mementoes crammed into the Witchford Airfield Museum, off the Lancaster Way business park near Ely, and listened entranced to Barry Aldridge's account of the losses suffered there during the war. Duxford local historians have been busy collecting reminiscences of their village and have just issued a booklet crammed full of fascinating stories of their own Second World War incidents.

If there was an air raid the Home Guards on duty with the Wardens were expected to patrol the village. A more regular duty was to keep a look out from the tower of St John's Church for enemy parachutists and the like. Joe Bright remembered what it was like. “I used to have to go up there all hours. All we had was ladders tied together to get up through that little door. No lights. We stood on top of the tower to watch” They were not always taken seriously. Alf Cutter recalled “Poor old Timmy Gray was on duty out there one night and us boys locked the door at the bottom. We could hear him shouting, 'let me out'. He was a great man. He threw a sandbag at a Bren gun carrier and blew it up one night in one of their mock battles”

In spite of the watchers, on one occasion a German airman walked unmolested through Duxford; Grace and Irene Chandler recounted the incident. “The Wardens were supposed to be on guard that night and who should walk by but a German airman who had come out of a plane. And they didn't see him. ... He was shot down or something. Anyway, Stella saw him

go by and my aunt saw him go by our two houses. ... He went up to the aerodrome ... He gave himself up. But those fellows were supposed to be on guard. They never see him; they let him go by". Joe Bright, a Home Guard at the time, maintained that he did see the airman, but decided to leave him be: "I lived over the other side of the road when he came up this side. I let him go. I got to go to work! I was at the paper mill then. I thought, well, I don't think I'm going to bother about you, so I let him go". "Duxford Remembered", by John Patrick is on sale at Duxford Post Office or from Jim Longstaff, 88 St John's Street, Duxford, CB2 4RA for £4.50, plus 84p postage. [DUXFORD PHOTO FROM NEWS FILES]

Do you have memories of another local company, Spicers Stationery works at Sawston. A fine photograph features in the re-issued 'Memories of Cambridge' book produced some years ago by True North Books. It shows a photograph taken in the mid 1950s. Whilst several firms have their own sections in the book Spicers does not. The author wonders just what the young women featured would have to say about working conditions were like in that vast room filled with machinery. If you remember, please drop me a line.

And do you remember Baldry's, the soft-drinks firm. One of their lorries features in the foreground of a photograph of Cambridge Market Place. They started in Gold Street, Cambridge in 1923 and by 1969 had taken over another old-established firm, Barker and Wadsworth, and were producing some 800 dozen bottles of mineral water an hour. They later relocated to Newmarket Road and then to Sawston in 1979. Memories of Cambridge, published by True North Books, £9.99 [SCAN OF MARKET HILL & BALDRYS]

Joan Watts writes (nee Williams) to say she always looks forward to "Memories" each week and was delighted to see the picture of the Girls' Central School. She was in it, with her friends Eileen Howard, Patsy Blows, Joan Pilsworth & Joyce Pledger. Some of the teachers were Miss Morley, Miss Pauley, Miss Shrive & Miss Shedd. Another old-girl has pointed out that all the teachers were unmarried – and if they did marry they had to leave their job. This seems incredible today – do you remember other instances?

Memories 31st October 2001, by Mike Petty

Saturday afternoon saw scores of Cambridgeshire local historians making their way to Madingley Hall, the home of the Cambridge University Board of Continuing Education. There in the splendour of the Saloon, overlooking the croquet lawn, antiquarians from Thriplow, Littleport and Duxford mixed and mingled; Huntingdonshire Local Historians discussed CD-ROMs with Cambridgeshire Family Historians and everywhere people compared experiences – and of course shared memories.

The occasion that had brought them together was the 50th birthday of the Cambridgeshire Local History Society, which had been established in the distant post-war days to encourage individuals and groups to investigate the fascinating history on their doorsteps. Today societies have mushroomed and in villages and towns throughout the county halls are regularly packed to hear talks on a myriad of local historical topics.

But many do more than listen. There has been a tremendous outpouring of publications recording the history of virtually everything, from football clubs to bus companies, chapels to war memorials, families to communities. Each is the result of hours of research and writing but much of it appears and disappears without wide acclaim; indeed so great is the output that few bookshops have space to stock even a fraction, not even newspaper columns can mention them all.

So as part of their celebrations the Cambridgeshire Local History Society decided to express their appreciation of the work being undertaken locally. There is one place where all

publications come together, and Chris Jakes, Librarian of the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library, Cambridge, sifted through the hundreds of books and pamphlets to produce an initial listing of contenders. These titles were then assessed by Society members each of whom had the unenviable task of producing a short-list which in turn was discussed and debated until finally just seven titles were left on the table.

They included a history of Girton Baptist Church from 1859-1934 with its description of members of the early church, such as William Hoppett, a stone-breaker on the roads who would attend chapel arrayed in the old time quaintness of knee breeches, and careless of all rules of pronunciation would announce the hymns thus: "Let us now sing, to the praise and glory of God, the 465th hume" [SUBS – IT SHOULD READ 'HUME']. Like many such congregations they suffered the loss of one of their former Sunday School boys during the Great War that so devastated communities. John Symond researched both that and the Second World War so that when the names are read out in his village on Armistice Sunday the sacrifice of the "Heroes of Over" can be remembered.

Peggy Day has been writing the story of Quy and its neighbourhood for many years and even when the pile of publications had been weeded down, there were still two of her works left on the table. But not even such a prodigious writer could have two awards, so it went for her title 'Life in Quy', an account of the village – in which she claims there have been no major historical events – from the beginning of time to the year 2000. By contrast Dr Chis Lewis had only a modest task – he was concerned with only 1,000 years of life in the parishes of Kirtling and Upend, producing a detailed piece of research that has been published by the parish council in advance of the long-anticipated final volume of the Victoria County History of Cambridgeshire. The final page was handed over to a thirteen-year-old, Timothy Oates of Kirtling to give his views of what the village might be like in another hundred year's time. He predicts that cities and towns will have become so polluted that villages like Kirtling with clean, fresh air will be for the privileged. It will, however, escape the worst of the expansion of new housing and the only real changes to the older houses will be subtle, with things like the use of alternative power and a greater and wider use of technologies such as the Internet.

One of the most riveting parts of the presentation came when older residents of the villages around Kirtling described how they had embraced this new technology during the production of "Millennium Child". This combines memories of long-time villagers with those of the younger generation and incorporates a CD-ROM to add a new dimension to Cambridgeshire history publications. Peter Hewitt includes no such advances in his concise account of "Fenland: a landscape made by man" but combines ancient maps and old prints to produce a most attractive booklet on an area of Cambridgeshire that can often feel overlooked, that part between Chatteris and Wisbech. Some of my own favourite memories are of travelling on behalf of Cambridge University Board of Continuing Education to take a class way up in Outwell. And when members of that class visited Cambridge and saw for themselves the resources available for fenland history in the City & University Libraries it proved a rewarding experience for everyone.

For most who had made the journey on Saturday it was a trip into unknown territory, and they went away loaded with brochures of courses they could attend at Madingley. But for some it was almost literally on their doorstep. There had to be one publication that was first amongst equals and it was judged to be "Gallows Piece to Bee Garden", a history of a very ordinary village – or so its compilers claim – Dry Drayton. But few villages have had the advantage of a clergyman with the knowledge to produce an authoritative account of his parish – which is what Francis Walker did in 1876. Nearly a century and a quarter later parishioners tuned back to his work as the basis for a new study covering all aspects of their settlement, including its natural history. The result was a 180-page, well-produced volume that had involved many members of the community including the parish council, school and village association. It aimed at keeping alive pride in their village and a determination to conserve all that is of

value and is a model for others to emulate –at least in the opinion of the Cambridgeshire Local History Society.

For further details of the Cambridgeshire Local History Society contact Gillian Rushworth, 1a Archers Close, Swaffham Bulbeck CB5 0NG [VILLAGE PICTURES FROM NEWS FILES; SCAN OF A FENLAND DRAINAGE MILL FROM PETER HEWITT'S BOOK; PICTURE TAKEN AT MADINGLEY HALL SATURDAY]

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Frank Wayman of Over has recently been shown a 'Memories' cutting from 22nd August about the famous 'Parcel People' of 1966. He has special cause to remember them as they lived on his property for about six weeks. He writes: "I had little contact with them. We were especially busy with the fruit harvest during that period and I was working most of the daylight hours. They had many sacks containing old clothes, papers and heaven knows what, which I assume they slept on. I often heard cars pull up during the evening and occasionally saw people handing over food and transferring drink from thermos flasks and on the first occasion the young man came knocking on the back door asking for a large flask to be filled with tea. The wife was a bit apprehensive about this and I gave them strict instructions that a repeat of this behaviour would result in their prompt dismissal. I was told they used to badger people some distance along the street for food and drink, which caused a certain amount of resentment. When the nights grew colder I gave the man my army tank suit which I brought home after the war and thereafter he wore it night and day.

"The time came towards the end of October when I had to tell them to leave because builders were coming in to demolish the shed and re-roof the barn. They were clean in their habits and left no rubbish behind, but where they washed was always a mystery to me as were their sanitary arrangements because I found no evidence anywhere. I came to the conclusion they probably used my loo, which was in an open fronted hovel across the yard, when we were away working. This was in pre-sewerage days and many properties had fresh air loos in buildings away from the house.

"I never knew where they came from or went to. I remember hearing that the lady spent many hours sitting in a pew at the back of the church and passed some of the time writing."
[PARCEL PEOPLE PICTURES IN NEWS BIOG FILES]

Mrs H. Bainbridge (nee Cornwell) from Cambridge says her memory was jogged by my picture of the Central Girls School in 1933; she's there on the second row from the back. She recalls some of the teachers as Miss Churchill (headmistress), Barker, Morley, Pawley, Shedd, Stubblefield, Sykes, Shrive, Howlett, Latimer and Clark. She also has, somewhere, a picture of the May Queen at the school. Shirley Brown from Trumpington confirms that women teachers had to remain unmarried, although in her school in Yorkshire one married lady teacher was allowed back during the Second World War, her husband was fighting overseas. Post-war there was a scramble to train teachers and several emergency colleges were opened to give a one year's intensive training course for primary and secondary-modern teachers. Shirley was one such and on her final school practice taught a class of 48 seven-year-olds! When she actually started teaching in 1956 equal pay for men and women was being phased in - in seven annual increments.

While back on the theme of schooldays, I have had a plea from an Ely lady to ask if anybody can identify the children photographed at Sutton school with headteacher Mr A.W. Williams back in November 1964. They are taking part in what the News described as a 'tape-assisted reading lesson'. Do you remember this form of learning. [SCAN OF SUTTON SCHOOL IS NO. 366 ON THE MEMORY LANE, ELY AND THE FENS CDS WITH SANDRA]

Memories 7th November 2001, by Mike Petty

Beryl Frost from Cambridge has written me a most interesting letter prompted by several memories that have been generated in recent weeks. Prziborsky the hairdresser was her uncle Fred. "His wife had ladies hairdressing on the first floor; they had two sons Norman and Tony, neither of them followed the trade. Ram Yard was the yard to the left of the hairdressers. Several Jewish families from London were evacuated there during the war and I was friendly with the Bogomonos. Sid Maltby the cobbler had his workshop next door; he was an extremely kind man and made sandals for most of the evacuees because they had no shoes. I can still remember one of the many epigrams he had on his wall: 'The devil wants your souls to ruin – Sid Maltby wants your soles to mend'

Other Jewish children aged about four came from Austria or Germany. Zickma & Zilla were the youngest. Paula, who worked at Ramsey & Muspratt, the photographers in Post Office Terrace, took care of them. She later went to America and took Zilla with her and I believe Zickma was adopted by a Cambridge family. Ernst Bergman was a mechanic at King and Harper salvage in Jesus Lane. Dagmar Mizanski was a special friend of mine, we worked at Robert Sayle. When I first befriended them they were billeted at the house next door to the old Central Boys School on Parkside. They came to England with the clothes they stood up in and precious little else. The house at Parkside was bare, bunk beds against the walls. Gradually they found other accommodation. What wonderful people they were in times of despair. At the end of the war the Red Cross searched for their families back home in Austria. Dagmar was told her brothers and father had gone to the gas chambers and her mother killed; that was when she decided to go to relatives in America. I often wonder where they are now."

Beryl has a question: "When at Chesterton Girls School there was a scheme where we went to help at Addenbrooke's Hospital and the Leys School (also a hospital then). We wore white headbands with a red cross and white apron. I remember I went to the children's ward almost every night. I used to read to the children, especially a lovely little girl named June. She had a tumour on the brain and unfortunately after an operation she lost her sight. When she was discharged I used to cycle to Waterbeach every Sunday to see her – even through the winter in blackout. The Leys School was for wounded soldiers, friend or foe. One evening I was asked to take supper to a patient in a side ward. He was bound from head to foot in bandages. I was shocked and went back to the kitchen but a nurse insisted I feed him supper. From then on he was my first call. Miss Tweed was the 'first aid' teacher and organised the rota. Does anyone have photographs of us marching through Cambridge on Remembrance Day 1943-4?"
[SCAN OF PRZIBORSKY'S SHOP, RAM YARD/ROUND CHURCH STREET]

More memories that time are contained in a wonderful booklet of memories produced by Addenbrooke's Hospital League of Nurses. They record how during the war the Ministry commandeered the Leys School and sent the boys to Scotland for the duration. Addenbrooke's was asked to run it as a hospital, so baths, basins, sinks etc had to be installed together with three hundred and fifty beds. It was decided it should be established as a hospital capable of dealing with all types of cases, but that it should primarily be used for treatment of service cases and Emergency Medical Service patients.

Margaret Williams was one of those who transferred over. Her memories were recorded in the book: "I can remember being informed between 7p.m. & 8 p.m. in the evening that a hundred and fifty wounded soldiers would be arriving during the night about 3a.m. I went to the Dining Room where the nurses were having supper and asked for volunteers. They all volunteered although they knew there was no extra salary or time off. We did not need them

all so we selected the number required and sent them off to bed to sleep for a few hours. They had already worked a full day. We called them when the convoy arrived”.

She was full of praise for the medics nearer the front line: “The standard of treatment carried out by our Medical Staff in France was of a very high order. The wounded patients' limbs were placed in plasters for protection. The date the wound occurred, the type of wound, the treatment given, any dangerous drugs administered on the way over, the name, dose, time and date were all clearly written on the plaster. We had no difficulty in picking up where they had left off. There is no doubt that many, many, of our men's lives and limbs were saved by this prompt and efficient treatment”.

They gave the best of treatment to soldiers from both sides: “A convoy of German prisoners of war (some of them Colonels) arrived one night at The Leys. They were kept separate from our boys. Their wounds were treated as were our own men and they were given the same food for which they were grateful. It was more than they expected. They were with us until their wounds healed, and then the military took them over.”

Mary Ayers Brown was another of those on duty. “I was the nursing Sister of School House, which was used for German Prisoners. I recall one specific night waiting up until the early hours of the morning for a convoy of German prisoners, approximately fifty of them. We were given strict instructions as to our responsibility for them, as well as significant phrases to use to enquire as to their condition. We had a guard present all the time. It is a good thing that most of us were not fluent in the German language so we didn't understand that many times they were swearing at us when we treated their wounds and of course after we left the bedside they shouted Heil Hitler, which we naturally ignored. It was quite an experience.”

Her sister Joan – now Joan Garrett - was Night Sister at Addenbrooke's where Griffith and Hatton wards were emptied to await the wounded. She recalled: “Griffith received a convoy of Italian prisoners of war, but later the ward was converted as an emergency ward to be used for gas contaminated patients. Oxygen had been piped to every bed, and all trolleys laid for emergency work. The Consultants attached to the 14th Eastern General were housed at Kimbolton Castle and they attended all convoy patients. The first convoys we had were Germans. They had been flown to Salisbury Plain after being treated with field dressings & arrived at Cambridge station at 2 a.m! Those who had been given morphine were clearly marked with a label M tied to their clothing. Very few could speak any English at all. The medical staff were there promptly and examined each patient carefully. Those requiring surgery were dealt with in order and very promptly. The theatres were ready to receive them. Most of the men were quiet and easy to care for, though I do still remember one or two very difficult individuals.

“After about a week and as soon as they were fit, the men left hospital and were I think transferred by the army to Prisoner of War camps. One thing I remember is that the Germans had lovely voice. When the lights went down at 8 p.m. they started to sing German songs. I enjoyed this as I sat writing the night report!

“A sentry was stationed on the first floor of the hospital between Griffith and Hatton, just outside Matrons office! He remained there while the Prisoners of War were in the hospital. Later we had convoys of our own men. Many or most of them had been in concentration camps for quite a long time and were found as the army overtook the camps towards the end of the war. Some had had a long journey home after wartime or years in captivity. Almost all were very sick and in a poor condition. I still have a very vivid memory of one or two - some were so shocked and shaken they were unable to converse. Eventually, as they were well enough they were transferred to hospitals nearer to their homes, leaving Addenbrooke's free to receive the next convoy.

“Hard work but Happy” is a remarkable record of the dedication of generations of Addenbrooke’s nurses. Their memories and anecdotes will ring bells with anybody who has ever nursed or who remembers the old Addenbrooke’s Hospital. It is available from Gill Winsor, The Moors, Nags Head Lane, Hargrave, Northants, NN9 6BJ for £5.75, including postage. Any profits go to the Addenbrooke’s League of Nurses Benevolent Fund. [PICTURES FROM NEWS FILES]

Down the road at Duxford they had other memories of visiting Germans!

If there was an air raid the Home Guards on duty with the Wardens were expected to patrol the village. A more regular duty was to keep a look out from the tower of St John’s Church for enemy parachutists and the like. Joe Bright remembered what it was like. “I used to have to go up there all hours. All we had was ladders tied together to get up through that little door. No lights. We stood on top of the tower to watch” They were not always taken seriously. Alf Cutter recalled “Poor old Timmy Gray was on duty out there one night and us boys locked the door at the bottom. We could hear him shouting, ‘let me out’. He was a great man. He threw a sandbag at a Bren gun carrier and blew it up one night in one of their mock battles”

In spite of the watchers, on one occasion a German airman strolled unmolested through Duxford; Grace and Irene Chandler recounted the incident. “The Wardens were supposed to be on guard that night and who should walk by but a German airman who had come out of a plane. And they didn’t see him. ... He was shot down or something. Anyway, Stella saw him go by and my aunt saw him go by our two houses. ... He went up to the aerodrome ... He gave himself up. But those fellows were supposed to be on guard. They never see him; they let him go by”. Joe Bright, a Home Guard at the time, maintained that he did see the airman, but decided to leave him be: “I lived over the other side of the road when he came up this side. I let him go. I got to go to work! I was at the paper mill then. I thought, well, I don’t think I’m going to bother about you, so I let him go”. “Duxford Remembered”, by John Patrick is on sale at Duxford Post Office or from Jim Longstaff, 88 St John’s Street, Duxford, CB2 4RA for £4.50, plus 84p postage. [DUXFORD PHOTO FROM NEWS FILES]

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Suzaune Langford from West Wrattling is compiling a scrapbook of material relating to the village and has come across a mystery photograph that she hopes somebody can identify. It shows a dramatic scene, with a group of villagers gathered near the ruins of a cottage destroyed by fire. One man seems to have lost his head – but doubtless this is a slight malfunction of Edgar Morley’s equipment. He was the Linton newsagent who became a prolific photographer and published several postcard views, of which this is one. But this picture was not taken in Linton – so where is it. If you can help, let me know. [SCAN]

Memories 14 November 2001, by Mike Petty

The news that mortgage rates are the lowest than they have been since 1955 [PLEASE CHECK THIS IS RIGHT!] prompts some thoughts as what life was like all those years ago

A perusal of major and minor news for 1955 makes interesting reading

More and more people were moving into Cambridgeshire with the population increasing much faster than the rest of the country. The number of houses had increased by a third since

1931 but still there were difficulties finding homes. The new Arbury estate was being constructed in Cambridge and planners were advocated extra development in 'necklace' villages to boost the region's population from 18,800 to 25,000 within 20 years. Histon, Impington, Milton, Gt Shelford, Stapleford, Harston, Girton and Fulbourn were earmarked for the biggest expansion. But they should not be built at Fulbourn - it had been developed as far as it could be developed & they were already packed like sardines one resident complained at an inquiry into a plan for another 500 houses.

There were three cottages to be had in Town Close Fulbourn where in June the charity trustees were seeking £200 each. There might well be another house going beside the railway line, as the 'Sunday Pictorial' reported on 18th December. Five times in the last two years the gates on the level crossing at Teversham Road, Fulbourn had been open when they should have been closed and so were wrecked by passing trains. It happened twice in nine days in 1955 – and the gatekeeper resigned - and then in December it happened again. On each occasion the excuse was "I was called away for personal reasons". Next week the paper returned to the subject – for it had happened again! Only this time there was a difference: only one gate had been wrecked – the engine driver had read the 'Pictorial' story and was braking as he neared the crossing, thinking that the gates might be closed!

Railways were also in the news at Foxton in September where parishioners were fighting to maintain their railway station. Its closure would speed the drift away from the countryside to the town, and there was a lot of development planned for the area which would bring more passengers. The Railway claimed that during September only 69 people had got on trains there, a figure disputed by residents. The situation would be better for commuters at Burwell for diesel trains were to be run on the Mildenhall line by December and, coupled with reduced fares, would it was hoped boost passengers and prevent the line being closed.

But safety concerns were in people's minds. In January 1955 there was an explosion at Lords Bridge station when fire broke out in a hanger containing mustard gas which used for experimental purposes. A radius of 1,000 yards was cordoned off and local people were told that if they developed any rashes they could go to RAF Lords Bridge for treatment. In May a Corporal was awarded the George Medal for his bravery in preventing what might have been a major disaster with spread of toxic vapour over a wide area. He'd gone into the midst of an inferno of toxic smoke searching for casualties and checking appliances to prevent the spread of poison gas.

There were also air disasters with incidents at Bassingbourn in January & at Comberton and Landbeach in February where a Vampire jet crashed in flames narrowly missing the school, rectory and church. Meanwhile other communities were seeking to repair damage caused from the air. Heydon church on the hills near Royston was still wreathed in scaffolding as work continued on the building following a German bomb in 1940; rebuilding would cost over £21,000, mainly funded by the War Damage Commission. Meanwhile Longstanton church was rethatched and Oakington parishioners were seeking help from the Air Ministry for repairs to their church which had been shaken by being under the flight path from the local airfield.

Armistice Sunday 1955 was a time to commemorate the sacrifice of airmen for a memorial window to over 19,000 men of Bomber command lost during the war was unveiled at Ely cathedral. The cathedral had been a landmark for the battered bombers returning home after their raids and in the new window the badge of the Royal Air Force was displayed side by side with that of the Royal New Zealand Air Force - whose men had travelled half-way round the earth to play their part to aid the Mother Country. Other war dead were remembered with the unveiling of the roll of honour at Cambridge Guildhall.

Despite the heroism of the American airmen the owner of Wimpole Hall wanted them out. Her land had been requisitioned in 1940 and two years later the Americans had set up a hutted hospital and a sewage farm just outside the main gate of her stately home. They had returned in 1951 and were still there. Three times they'd smashed the ironwork of the historic gates, and they were always trying to get her trees cut down, she complained.

Elsewhere international relations were being strengthened with the opening of the Bell School of languages in October bringing 50 people from some 22 different countries. New schools were in the pipeline with plans for ultra-modern Queen Edith's school unveiled in October. It would be a secondary grammar constructed on "inter-grid" system costing over £170,000 & be ready by September 1957. Another much-needed facility was also in the offing when in July the Government announced permission for a new Addenbrooke's hospital on Hills road.

Cambridge City Library was celebrating its centenary year & opened a new Reading Room in December, but reading was under pressure because of new developments in the cinema. The Regal got stereo sound in March, the Central in Hobson Street gained cinemascope in June, but the Rex Cinema in Magrath Avenue made the biggest headlines in April when the shocking new Marlon Brando picture "The Wild One" was given a local X-certificate so it could be shown there. Some saw more threat from television and the Independent Television Authority reported a strong signal in a test transmission in September.

Some things never change. Cambridge was a transport blackspot - parking was so bad it was deterring people from coming to shop there, said the News in November 1955. And when shoppers arrived in Cambridge there was danger crossing the road. The new Highway Code had been launched at Cambridge Guildhall in March and was soon selling well - but what were the Belisha beacons it referred to? They were playthings for undergraduates - 34 had been damaged or stolen between January and April. A Caius College man was fined £2 after a policeman saw him jump up and pull the beacon off the one in St John's street before dropping it on the ground. They were also favourite souvenirs: police found two suspended from the ceiling of a Downing college room. The student claimed he had not known where the first one came from - it just appeared - but it looked out of place there on its own - so he took another to go with it!

But traffic problems did not prevent the crowds descending on the city centre in October to get a glimpse of the young Queen Elizabeth and her dashing Prince, Philip. "He's smashing - but she's super" was the verdict as she inspected guard of honour of the Cambridgeshire Regiment - newly constituted as an Airborne Light Regiment - which was drawn up outside the Guildhall in the pouring rain, whilst the Duke sought refuge inside! They both appeared on the balcony to wave to the crowds below. Their main event was the opening of the new University School of Veterinary Medicine in Madingley Road before moving on to Girton college where they met members of the recently founded New Hall. The Royal couple left by car en route for the train to London, which they caught at Histon railway station.

But the main issue on everybody's mind was housing.

I WILL E-MAIL ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE CAMBRIDGE HOUSING SCENE ON MONDAY AFTERNOON

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A recent picture of the Spicers Stationery works at Sawston in the mid 1950s (Memories 24th October) has brought a letter from Helen O'Donovan (nee Wood) of Comberton. Her father, a chartered accountant, took a post in the company's offices in 1930 and stayed until 1947.

Helen writes: “As a child I remember being taken along when parties of visitors were shown round the mill and still have memories of the paper-making process. Being high-quality paper it was made from rags which were purchased in bulk from rag merchants. Rag fibres give the paper much greater strength than wood pulp or recycled paper. The first stage in the process was the sorting. In a vast room sat the ‘rag-women’, a cheerful, chatty band, who had to eliminate all unsuitable materials such as old corsets from the rest. Each lady sat at a wooden sorting table to which was fixed a sharp upright blade for slicing off buttons”. The rags were boiled down into a greyish mush and then bleached before beginning the process that would result in enormous rolls of dry paper. Helen never worked at the factory end, where the paper was made up into pads and envelopes – but did help out in the mill canteen.

Gillian Collins (nee Dockerill) from Woodhurst thinks she was the second girl from the front in the picture, just behind her friend Helen. She would have been 15 or 16 years old at the time. The machines were very old and very often broke down and did not fold the envelopes correctly

Memories 21st November 2001, by Mike Petty

A couple of weeks ago Beryl Frost recalled how when at Chesterton Girls School she went to help at Addenbrooke’s Hospital & visited the children’s’ ward almost every night. She remembered: “I used to read to the children, especially a lovely little girl named June. She had a tumour on the brain and unfortunately after an operation she lost her sight. When she was discharged I used to cycle to Waterbeach every Sunday to see her – even through the winter in blackout”

This immediately rang a bell for Martin Howlett of Waterbeach for this girl was his cousin, June Carter. The brave little girl would not tell her parents that she was going blind until she started to bump into things. June died from her tumour but in the family album Martin has a photograph of her taken outside her house with members of the Waterbeach Salvation Army whose hall was next door. Her grieving parents penned a poignant tribute to her in the back of the album, a sentiment shared by Beryl.

If we had all the world to give
We’d give it yes and more
To see her smiling face again
To speak to her once more.
Some may think that we forget her
When they often see us smile
But they little know the heartache
That’s hidden all the while

SCAN OF PHOTO AND VERSE

Such personal tributes mean everything to those who are seeking to trace their family trees; many hundreds of them journey to the Family History Centre at the Church of Latter Day Saints in Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge where there is a room devoted to genealogical sources. The church has been undergoing renovation and on Saturday evening there was a celebration concert and buffet to mark its reopening – though it will be next year before the Family History Centre is operational again. Scores of people, young and old, mixed and mingled; amongst them was Leonard Reed who has for many years been researching and publishing material on the church’s history. His latest volume is an account of Elijah Larkin, a Cambridge policeman whose detailed journal of the period from 1854 to 1867 forms the basis of the book. It records his early life in Chesterton, his conversion to the Mormon faith and subsequent emigration.

It provides a unique insight into the policeman's lot in Victorian Cambridge. On 1st August 1861 Elijah joined some 2,3000 other people at Cambridge Botanic Gardens, though he had no time to admire the flowers, as he noted: "Blondin, the great Niagara Falls tight-rope walker walked across a rope 45 feet high. Carried a man, wheeled a barrow and done other extraordinary feats across it. Also walked with his head in a sack across it. There were several London thieves present and as the people crowded out at the close of the performances they commenced work, and Mr. Coward of Cambridge and Mons Perritt of Newmarket lost their watches. We immediately arrested four of the thieves and took them to the station and searched them but did not find the watches. No doubt they were either put into the persons' pockets or thrown away. We then marched them to the railway station where we found seven more of the gang and searched them on the platforms, and one woman I took to the Railway Hotel and had her searched by Miss Newman, the landlord's daughter. We then kept all of them in custody until the train was ready to start then put them all in one carriage and gave all the passengers notice to take care of their pockets, and away they went back to London."

Life in those days could be violent as Elijah reported on 10th November 1862: "This evening as it was the Prince of Wales birthday, the town was partially illuminated and a great number of people assembled on the Market Hill. At about 8 o'clock a mob of about 50 or 70 university men came four deep onto the hill but the town people showed no desire for a row, and gave way for them to pass round the hill, and went opposite Rose Crescent. They ran out in skirmishing order with the corner of the Gowns evidently loaded among the people and commenced to strike some, but it was not returned by the Town, and a body of our men came up. They were dispersed but exclaimed they would be revenged for Friday the 5th work. They then patrolled the principal streets of the town shouting, "Gown, Gown, Gown", and got together about 100 and came on the Hill again, but the proctors being sent for by the superintendent they soon dispersed". For a couple of hours the police kept town and gown apart "until at last a body of about 20 or 30 University men came down Rose Crescent, and we took a stick from one of them and then some of the University men struck our men, and at it we went and ultimately succeeded in capturing two University men and took them to the station. Shortly after a cry was raised that University man has a pistol pointing at the people. Myself and Inspector Thompson followed and I caught hold of his arm and took the pistol which was broke from him"

When Elijah decided to hand in his truncheon in 1862 and make the pilgrimage to Salt Lake City, Utah, he found his wife Sarah very uncertain about the move. But together they made the long journey by sea, railway, steamboat and wagon train to their new world. Their relationship remained stormy, especially after Elijah took his second wife - polygamy was then an acceptable form of marriage in the church. He was later ordained a high priest and died in 1905.

Twenty-five years ago today another group of family enthusiasts gathered just a bit further along Cherry Hinton Road when eighty couples, some of them travelling hundreds of miles, came to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Cherry Hinton Road United Reformed Church. They all had one thing in common – they were married there. The "earliest" married couple there were Arthur "Snowy" Chapman, then aged 64, and his wife Irene who were married in March 1933. He had once been a salesman at Laurie and McConnals. Mr Chapman recalled that as a child his playmate was the future wife of one of the two retired ministers at the service, the Rev Clifford Taylor, who was at the church from 1948-1961. Inspiration for the service had come from a television programme about a vicar who organised a service for couples he had married a decade before and the Rev Stuart Smith decided to borrow and expand the idea. The 80 couples who attended represented about a tenth of the marriages solemnised at the church up to 1976. The News photographer was there to record the event – do you recognise yourself or a friend in the picture taken on 21st November 1976? [NEG 4087.76.24]

While these two buildings continue to serve their congregations another is coming to the end of its community life. The York Street Mission, off Newmarket Road, Cambridge was established in 1885 by three ladies, one of whom quarrelled with the others and went off and founded another, Peoples Mission, around the corner. In 1905 it was bought for St Columba's Church to bring Christianity and companionship to residents in what was then the poorest area of Cambridge. One of the greatest strengths was the joint Bible Class and Club which combined religious studies with a strong social side, with games of badminton, billiards, lexicon and draughts, an annual social & a sick club. From 1923 to 1944 it flourished under the guidance of Labour Party activist Alex Wood, who worked at the Cavendish Laboratory and encouraged visiting scientists and academics to visit and talk to its members. In those days the bible classes were well attended, the hall being packed out, especially when Uncle David and Auntie Flossie brought their Band of Hope film shows, but after the Second World War things changed. The Mission closed, it became home to a youth club and the Cambridgeshire College of Further Education & now the building is scheduled for demolition and rebuilding.

York Street Mission is etched in memory of Snowy Easton of Long Road, Cambridge, who grew up in the streets around "Dobblers' Hole" – a rubbish strewn rag-and-bone yard. His grandmother was its caretaker and Snowy remembers polishing the wooden floor until it gleamed; he treasures a snap of a wedding reception of Percy Easton and Ida Ryder following their wedding at Cherry Hinton church about 1927, with himself as a very young lad in the front row. Later in his capacity as funeral director he buried many of the guests. His aunt Miss Gertrude Easton ran Guides and Brownies there for more than 50 years, many of them in a wheelchair, & received a medal and commendation for her work from the Chief Guide, Lady Baden Powell in 1974. SCAN OF WEDDING RECEPTION, OTHER PIX FROM NEWS LIBRARY

Another long-serving Brownie leader was in the news in November 1976. Miss Betty Macleod had run the 1st Cambridge Brownies, believed to be the oldest pack in the world, since 1919. She had a Brownie hut at the bottom of her garden in Newton Road with meetings in her own home when wet. The number of meetings she had missed could be counted on the fingers of one hand, but now she learned that under a national edict all guiders had to give up their warrants on reaching the age of 65 – and she was 79! But before she handed over the pack she was planning a diamond jubilee party for past and present members at the Scout and Guide Hut at Newnham Croft School. According to her records the first meeting of the pack took place on January 3rd 1917 in Downing College. It was started by Miss M.A. Gaskell who in 1911 pioneered the Guide movement in Cambridge by founding the 1st Cambridge Guide Company. The first groups were called 'Rosebuds', but the name never found favour and Baden Powell had suggested the name 'Brownies' instead. NEWS NEG 4070.76.26; PIX FROM NEWS FILES; SCAN OF GUIDE CAMP PROBABLY AT CHIPPENHAM 1930S, FROM EDNA ARNOLD OF CAMBRIDGE – 64.50

Mrs Grace Hughes from Royston writes that during the Second World War she visited a soldier in a convalescent home in a big house on the Gog Magog Hills. She asks if anybody remembers it. This would have been the mansion once owned by the Godolphin Osborne family, the Dukes of Leeds, that Sir Harold Gray purchased in 1904. It seems to have been a large rambling structure of no great distinction, though over the centuries it had produced an interesting accumulation of chimneys, which was about the only part of the house that was easily visible as the rest was virtually covered in creepers. After Sir Harold died in 1951 the house, then in a seriously neglected state with outbreaks of dry rot, passed to his son, Terence Gray. He wished to dispose of the Wandlebury estate and approached the County Council to see whether they would purchase the area and turn it into public open space; they were interested in the land, but they had no use for the house itself. After various discussions the council dropped out and the Cambridge Preservation Society, who had offered the county

75% of the purchase price, stepped in to make an offer on their own behalf, which was accepted.

The magnificent Wandlebury ring and surrounding land was to be preserved and made available to the public, but the house itself was another matter. They sought advice on the practicality of converting the mansion into a number of residences but found it was not practicable to preserve it. So in 1955 the house was demolished, though the Cupola Stable Block was preserved and still stands in the centre of the Wandlebury ring, visited by thousands of people each year.

Grace Hughes also says that during the period 1934-1936 she belonged to The Robins, a young people's group organised through the Robin Goodfellow column of the CDN, that maintained a cot at Addenbrooke's Hospital. Every year a concert was given for the Robins which was held in the Guildhall and every child on leaving was given a bar of Cadbury's milk chocolate. Are there any other Robins who remember this, she asks.

In 1964 Tesco opened their first Cambridge store in Regent Street. Here Donald Pears signs records for his fans at the store; a photo lent by Snowy Easton [SCAN]

Memories 28th November 2001, by Mike Petty

It was in December 1976 that the news broke; though it was news that had been expected for several months. The curator of the Cambridge Folk Museum, Miss Enid Porter, was retiring because of ill-health, after running it single-handed since 1947. Under Enid had the museum's popularity and size had grown considerably.

The Museum had been started following an exhibition of folk items by the Women's Institute in 1936. Cambridge Rotarians had launched an appeal for a folk museum and eventually the present premises in Castle Street were acquired.

Enid had taken over from Reginald Lambeth who one day had been passing a demolition site when he saw a complete Georgian shopfront. Thinking it would be a useful addition to the Folk Museum he asked permission to take it away - but was refused. Nothing daunted Mr Lambeth made numerous nocturnal visits on his bicycle bringing a portion away at a time, until eventually the whole shopfront was rebuilt in the museum. It still stands in the yard.

Enid Porter experienced similar difficulties in acquiring items for the Museum - one might almost say "her" museum - for in many minds the two were completely synonymous. Enid was the Museum the Museum was Enid; she provided a human face to what might otherwise be an obscure institution and people need a face they can relate to - for it is often the family's treasured possession they are giving away, they need to feel it appreciated and cared for.

In 1958 a large collection of records relating to fenland history were acquired from an old fenman - and to the fenman Cambridge can be a remote and unwelcoming place. But Enid had a feeling for the area and their people and assisted W.H. Barrett and Arthur Randell to set down their memories and tales of the fens in books which are to be found, in many a local home. Books that people read who never read anything but newspapers or magazines.

Enid Porter had an honours degree in Modern Languages, had post graduate teacher training, was awarded honorary degrees from the Open University and the University of Cambridge. She was an expert - yet she was also prepared to clean the museum windows, to run the museum single-handed on a pittance of a salary. She would sit in her small office with its electric fire and chat to visitors, learning things which would otherwise have been lost - the

most valuable members of society she said in 1968 - are people in their 70s and 80s, we have so much to learn from them.

But she also had much to give; an authority who would always be there to answer the multitude of questions that visitors asked - and 1200 schoolchildren toured her museum in 1968 alone. For Enid know each item and its story.

She shared that information, writing over 70 articles in newspapers, magazines and journals on topics such as fenland barges, witchcraft, woad, public baths or skating. Then there were her books such as the Josiah Chater diaries of Cambridge Victorian life, and of course her major work on Cambridgeshire customs and folklore - over 400 pages about the Madingley plough boys, fenland beliefs, cures for lumbago, rhymes and rags.

Enid shared to her knowledge too in her public lectures, in villages or in Cambridge guildhall following the annual meeting of the Folk Museum Association showing slides and telling stories about them which were taken from no book, but learned from her visitors during hours of patient discussion.

In 1971 there was great excitement about the possible arrival of local radio; draft programmes were mooted - news from the Fitzwilliam Museum, a live report from rehearsals at the Arts Theatre, Cambridge teenagers would present their own choice of music and the city councillors explain their views on proposed rent rises. At peak evening listening there would be a major treat: Enid Porter would talk for an hour about fenland life 50 years ago. Local radio did not arrive just then but and many hundreds listened enthralled to her tales of Christmas pant which were broadcast on Radio Cambridgeshire on Christmas day 1982. By then television had discovered the knowledge and interest housed in the museum and its curator.

By 1975 over 15,000 people were visiting but many more found the doors closed, Miss Porter was ill and there was of course no deputy to call on, she retired the following year and died in January 1984.

Now the Folk Museum stands poised on the brink of an ambitious expansion programme that will see the old curator's cottage replaced with additional galleries and the lecture facilities it so badly needs. Once more the future is bright. [SCAN OF FEN EXHIBITS AT FOLK MUSEUM, PIX FROM NEWS FILES]

After Enid's departure various curators have played their own part in the museum's development. One of those was Nick Mansfield who has gone on to become Director of the People's History Museum and Research Fellow in the Department of History at the University of Manchester. Nick's own latest publication was launched at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, Coalbrookdale, last week. It is a study of English farmworkers and local patriotism between 1900 and 1930. Much of the research is based on the area around Shropshire and Herefordshire but there is a section on the Cambridgeshire volunteers who came forward in 1914 - though initially few did. In part this was caused by there being nowhere local to join up, Sam Fairweather being one who walked 27 miles to Bury St Edmunds to enlist - only being he was too old.

George Ellis was successful in his application and had a drink to celebrate. He was found drunk and disorderly and his company commander refused to have him back in his unit - 'they could not be justified in allowing the nation to pay for the training of such a man'. Newmarket stablemen - fine, fit, young men - were also rejected - until the Suffolk regiment decided to reduce height and chest measurements for recruits

Some men gave up their jobs to join up, but were turned down because the administration could not cope. They refused to go home since they now had no job to go back to. Cambridge University and the colleges guaranteed to provide work once the war was over, Sir Charles Walderston at Newton Hall also made up the pay of any of his men who enlisted. Cambridge Corn Exchange became a base for the 11th Suffolks until May 1915 – Nick’s dad remembers visiting his uncles there, to collect their washing. Such personal memories do much to bring the great national and international events alive.

Nick Mansfield’s study is published by Ashgate of Aldershot and will hardly become a best seller, priced as it is at £40. But he had deposited a copy in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Lion Yard Library where he himself spent much of his time in earlier years. ‘English farmworkers and local patriotism, 1900-1930’. ISBN 0754602974

Enid Porter recorded various Christmas traditions in her monumental 400-page book ‘Cambridgeshire customs and folklore’. She mentions Mummers’ Plays at Barton and Grantchester, with children with blackened faces parading the village and collecting money; there were Town Waits who paraded the centre of town entertaining people with their music and singing. She mentions Bellmen’s Verses – but not Father Christmas. So can you help fill a gap in the Christmas story? What are your memories of Santa Claus – write to Mike Petty at the News [SANTA PIX FROM NEWS FILE]

**

Mrs Grace Hughes from Royston writes that during the Second World War she visited a soldier in a convalescent home in a big house on the Gog Magog Hills. She asks if anybody remembers it. This would have been the mansion once owned by the Godolphin Osborne family, the Dukes of Leeds, that Sir Harold Gray purchased in 1904. It seems to have been a large rambling structure of no great distinction, though over the centuries it had produced an interesting accumulation of chimneys, which was about the only part of the house that was easily visible as the rest was virtually covered in creepers. After Sir Harold died in 1951 the house, then in a seriously neglected state with outbreaks of dry rot, passed to his son, Terence Gray. He wished to dispose of the Wandlebury estate and approached the County Council to see whether they would purchase the area and turn it into public open space; they were interested in the land, but they had no use for the house itself. After various discussions the council dropped out and the Cambridge Preservation Society, who had offered the county 75% of the purchase price, stepped in to make an offer on their own behalf, which was accepted.

The magnificent Wandlebury ring and surrounding land was to be preserved and made available to the public, but the house itself was another matter. They sought advice on the practicality of converting the mansion into a number of residences but found it was not practicable to preserve it. So in 1955 the house was demolished, though the Cupola Stable Block was preserved and still stands in the centre of the Wandlebury ring, visited by thousands of people each year.

Grace Hughes also says that during the period 1934-1936 she belonged to The Robins, a young people’s group organised through the Robin Goodfellow column of the CDN, that maintained a cot at Addenbrooke’s Hospital. Every year a concert was given for the Robins which was held in the Guildhall and every child on leaving was given a bar of Cadbury’s milk chocolate. Are there any other Robins who remember this, she asks.

Pat Houghton from Foxton has personal memories of the Royal visit of October 1955, for she was one of the New Hall undergraduates who met the Queen at Girton College – but it was in the morning, not afternoon as I reported, and before she opened the Veterinary School.

In 1964 Tesco opened their first Cambridge store in Regent Street. Here Donald Pears signs records for his fans at the store; a photo lent by Snowy Easton [SCAN]

Memories 5th December 2001 by Mike Petty

It was at the Regal cinema on 19th March 1963 that Cambridge fans got their first glimpse of "a four man 'rock' group with weird hairstyles as a gimmick" who sang and played their current hits "Love Me Do" & "Please Please Me". The four lads from Liverpool, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr were part of a bill that included bigger name stars such as Chris Montez, Tommy Roe, Debbie Lee & the Viscounts. Despite the wealth of talent the News reporter was not impressed: "The fast moving show was not the best Cambridge audiences have seen"

But then Cambridge audiences were used to these touring shows; Cliff Richard, Adam Faith, Billy Fury & Phil Everley had played the venue in previous months, as had Eden Kane, Dave Clarke and various others. One of the biggest names of all, The Rolling Stones were to appear that September. In fact often so many stars appeared in the same bill that some had to change at the University Arms and run across road to the stage. Sometimes they dined at the Hotel, Rosemary Preston from Cherry Hinton collected Billy J. Kramer's autograph on the back of a dinner menu for the University Arms Hotel on Sunday 11th August 1963 - dinner was 15/-

Rosemary was one of those who used to queue for the pop concerts at the Regal as she recalled in a "Memories" article in September 1998: "One memory I have is of skipping technical college one afternoon with my friends and going to see a show. We got a lad to climb up a drainpipe in the passageway at the side and he came down and opened a fire exit to let us in. We ran up the circle and saw a band on stage rehearsing. We then went through to the restaurant where some of the performers were eating before getting thrown out."

In November 1963 the Beatles returned, but by then their debut album "Please Please Me" had soared to the top of the album charts and a subsequent single, "She Loves You", sold 1.6 million copies in the UK alone. Beatlemania was in full flow. Wherever they went, they were mobbed by screaming fans. For their Cambridge performance they arrived under police escort, and took the stage at the Regal Cinema in front of 4,000 youngsters, mainly girls. The queue for tickets had stretched round the building and been controlled by members of Cambridge Police's 12-strong Vespa motorscooter squad including Roy Coxon, one-time goalkeeper for Cambridge Town Football Club & Jock Urquart. The normal-looking police helmets were reinforced to give extra safety in event of scooter accidents but the crowd were peaceful

The Red Cross had dozens of men ready for fainting or hysteria amongst the 4000 in the audience. Rosemary Preston was there. She recalled in "Memories" how: "We heard nothing because of the screaming, but had a really good time just seeing them. They had the Shelford rugby club at the front of the stage to stop people trying to get onto it. The next morning my mother came to my room with a copy of the Daily Express in her hand with a photograph of me and a couple of my friends at the concert screaming. The caption was "City of learning and culture bends to the sound". The date November 27th, 1963"

After the show, the Fab Four were smuggled out, using a decoy police van. The News reported: "It took the four young Beatles less than a minute to run down a flight of stairs back-stage and scramble into their van. As soon as police sergeant Arthur Quinney, who was driving the van, pulled away from the kerbside, the decoy Black Maria, with headlamps blazing, headed towards the crowds of teenagers."

The following year, the scenes of adulation were repeated worldwide when The Beatles went to America. More than 73 million viewers tuned in to watch them on the Ed Sullivan Show. In 1966 they notched up three number one hits with “Day Tripper”, “Paperback Writer” and “Eleanor Rigby”, and in 1967 they released the album many regard as their masterpiece, “Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band”. The group went their separate ways in the Seventies, each member having highly successful solo careers. As far as I know neither John, Paul, Ringo nor George returned to Cambridge – or did they – over to you.

If you saw the Beatles in Cambridge or elsewhere share your memories with Mike Petty at the News [SCANS, PIX FROM NEWS FILES]

Memories 12th December 2001, by Mike Petty

It now appears that some of those who flocked to the pop concerts at the Regal in 1963 were not quite sure of the identity of the handsome young heroes in front of them. I refer not to the performers on the stage, but to the performers in front of the stage. They were not members of Shelford Rugby Club, but of Shelford Football Club. Jim Dean, who still lives in Lt Shelford, was the organiser responsible for recruiting the lads who protected the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and the rest from those who sought to mob them. It was a particularly noisy operation, but one that had its compensation, fighting back hundreds of lovely young ladies. When peace returned there would be a crate of beer for the battered defenders. Jim himself worked for the ABC chain and had to be there early to welcome the performers as they arrived. On the first visit of the Beatles his memory of John Lennon is of guiding him through to the toilets so he could scrub the cuffs and collar of his shirt. Jim met them all and was the person delegated to visit the dressing room to collect autographs for the rest of the guys.

Lots of people treasured the programmes for these concerts, but lots of people have also seemed to have put them away for safety, and then cannot remember where. Do you still have one?

One of those in the crowd for that first Beatles performance in March 1963 was Christopher (now Professor) Calladine, who writes from Peterhouse. He writes: “I went by accident. A friend and I decided to go and see the film at the Regal that week. But when we got there we discovered that instead of the film there was a live performance. We decided to stay, joined a short queue and got seats near the back, downstairs. There were many young girls in the audience and there was a great deal of screaming from them

“The lead singer that night was Bobby Vee, and whenever he came on stage the screaming became very intense. He was a short, young American singer dressed in a very shiny suit. He had a particular gimmick which elicited wild creaming: at the end of a song he would come forward from the back of the stage at speed, and then throw himself down on his knees so that he slid for several yards on the floor of the stage, coming to a stop at the very edge of the platform.

“Another feature of the evening that was new to me was the way in which young girls would go down the aisles to the very front and attempt to throw themselves onto the stage. This was particularly difficult because there was a gorilla-like man at the end of each aisle to turn them back. The only way of getting a note on to the stage was to throw it over or round these custodians.

“The Beatles were, as I recall, the number two act. I was particularly struck by the way in which Paul McCartney’s head moved from side to side as he played, as if his neck were

double-jointed. There was a good deal of screaming during their acts too – but not at the level accorded to Bobby Vee.

“A few years ago at the Henley Regatta I met a man who had been present at the same concert. He had been part of a group of undergraduates who had been taken by Monsignor Alfred Gilbey, the then Roman Catholic Chaplain to students at Fisher House. I knew Gilbey slightly and I found this vignette of him rather surprising, but I have no reason to doubt the veracity of my informer.”

In the 1950s music for many meant music for dancing. Les Isaacson of King's Hedges has dug out a number of photographs including one of a BLESMA – British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association ball at the Embassy dancehall, Mill Road, at Christmas 1953, when the music was supplied by Freddie Webb and his band. The host and hostess for the evening were Vic and Maude Brown and amongst those enjoying the evening he recognises Mr & Mrs H.I. Isaacson, Day, Flack and Cornell – who kept a fruit and veg shop on Cherryhinton Road. Grace Toats, a dancer and Mrs Fordham a piano teacher are also there. Do you recognise others? [SCAN]

As Christmas approaches towns and cities around the county are encouraging shoppers through festive displays of decorative lighting. In 1965 it was Ely's display that caught the attention of News reporters and photographers:

“Colourful and well-designed window displays, a repeat of the popular and much-admired decorative street lighting, with a star in the centre of each span, and as an innovation the introduction of a dozen eight-foot high ‘Mod’ angels erected at strategic points. These are amongst the attractions, which allied to top class salesmanship, excellent service and ingenuity, are certain to make yet another Ely and district chamber of trade ‘shopping week’ a success. It will spotlight the ability of trading establishments to supply, in wide variety and quality, all the shopping public's needs. The street illuminations have in past years bought praise from a wide area and set a pattern followed by other towns. The ‘Mod’ angels complete with golden crowns and candlesticks are illuminated at the head and feet and placed in positions where it would be difficult to extend the decorative lights. The chamber's president W.A.T. Rayment said “I believe there are definite advantages to shopping in Ely, and for the customers coming in from the villages by car.”

But as the picture shows the Ely pavements in 1965 seemed unable to cope with the Christmas crowds

[SCAN 251 ON ELY MEMORY LANE CDS WITH SANDRA]

Chatteris' Christmas lights are famed throughout the fens and this year many of the townfolk will be including an additional present in their families' stockings. For members of the Chatteris Good Companions have been setting down their memories and reminiscences; these have been edited by local historian Rita Goodger and produced just in time for Xmas.

Club members come from all over the country and their memories span the world. Some of my favourite local recollections come from Sylvia Casey who recalls when Chatteris cemetery was bombed during the war & from Gwen Vortmann who remembers the mock airfield that was laid out in the fens around Benwick in an attempt to distract German bombers away from the real targets – only too well as far as Benwick folk were concerned.

But I particularly love Reg Wenn's reminiscences of some of the local characters he met when working for Crawley's motor and agricultural engineers. They included “Putt” Dunkling, a local farmer. “Mr. Dunkling had a vehicle the likes of which were seldom seen in

the fens, it was in fact identical to the old London taxis. One particular morning he phoned the garage because his vehicle would not start. We all knew Mr. Dunkling as 'Putt', and mostly he addressed people as 'Matey Boy'. On answering the phone 'Putt' said "Hello matey boy, the old taxi won't start, can you come and see to it?" "We are rather busy at the moment, but when we have a mechanic free we will come to you, where are you?" "I'm down at Seward's Farm matey boy, I'll leave it with you."

"Seward's Farm was a good three miles from Chatteris, but before we were able to get out to the broken down vehicle it was delivered to the garage by 'Putt' and his little daughter Mavis. We could not believe our eyes, there was 'Putt' with a horse collar round his neck and ropes attached from that collar to his old taxi, and little Mavis was steering it. "How's that matey boy, I thought I'd save you a bit of time." This little man with enormous strength had pulled that vehicle from his farm, and there is quite an incline coming into Chatteris up Huntingdon Road. We were all quite amazed at what 'Putt' had done, but he just laughed. Then took his thick leather belt off, walked over to the workshop anvil and tethered his belt to that anvil. When he was satisfied the belt was secure he placed the big buckle in his mouth and gradually lifted the anvil from the ground and swung it round and round only holding it with his teeth. Mr. Dunkling was truly an amazing man."

Do you know of other such feats of strength – write to Mike Petty at the News

READERS' REPLY

Mrs Mansfield saw her father Edward (Ted) Phillips and his brother Stanley amongst the group of people outside the York Street Mission, (Memories 21st November) another brother Frank is in the picture somewhere. The Mission appeals to whole families; on Sundays after the evening service was over the children used to collect the hymn books whilst the parents chatted, on weekdays it the main building was used as a club room with ping pong as the most popular attraction. Members used to take it in turns to serve hot drinks; the favourite was hot lemon and it was her job to squeeze the lemons.

The picture also jogged memories for Ann Prior of Haverhill. She writes: "I was a Brownie and a Guide, we held out meetings there and I have many happy memories. We were the 19th Cambridge Guides, with Miss Easton as Captain. I remember she lived her life in a wheelchair. I used to shop for her and was paid 6d." Ann includes a photo taken on an outing to Hunstanton about 54 years ago; she's standing on the far left second row. Does anybody else remember the trip? [SCAN]

Mrs Doreen Price from Cambridge has written to express her surprise at seeing her parents amongst the group of people who gathered to celebrate their weddings at Cherry Hinton Road United Reformed Church in November 1976, that I featured in Memories a couple of weeks ago. Doreen's mum and dad are the couple right in front, next to the Rev Taylor. Their names were Phyllis and Sidney Hill who lived in Coldham's Lane. They had married at the church on 5th August 1933. Doreen followed in their footsteps when she too was married there, but she did not attend the reunion.

Barbara Sealy of Chesterton has sent her memories of the Priziborsky family of hairdressers. For some years in the 1920s and 1930s she used to stay with their son, Murray his wife May on their farm at Little Maplestead. He had changed his surname to Pearce after the First World War when he was a pupil at the Cambridge & County High School as any foreign-sounding name was looked on with suspicion. She would be picked up from Halstead in his scarlet MG and be returned to Cambridge by the Priziborsky family at the end of the holiday.

Pamela Ladd from Impington writes to say she was a member of "The Robins" that maintained a cot in the childrens' ward of old Addenbrooke's Hospital. She still has her

“Robin” badge with its ‘Cambs Press and News’ inscription & wonders if there is a museum in the area that would like it.

Joan Moore from Ely found her attention caught by the mention in *Memories*, 28th November, about the big house at Wandlebury. She writes: “I remember playing in an informal concert there during the early part of the Second War to entertain patients who had been evacuated there from London Hospitals. They were all very severely disabled, most having to be carried or wheeled into the large ‘lobby type’ area where we performed. Mr Leslie North organised the event. Several of us sang well-known popular songs. Few of the audience were well enough to sing, but most managed to clap time to the music & some cheered. It made a rousing end to the evening. I have never forgotten the impact of seeing such dreadfully ill people. I was quite young at the time and may be the only player at the event still alive”. Does anybody else remember these concerts, or the patients

READERS’ REQUESTS

Robert Maltby from Longstanton seeks your assistance. He remembers a black dome-like structure that appeared in Warkworth Terrace, Cambridge, during the War. It was removed in the late 1950s – but what was its story?

Alan Carpenter from Cherry Hinton recalls when a Crimean war cannon appeared in front of the Senate House, but cannot quite remember the year. He thinks it was either 1935 or 1936. The gun was located in the grounds of Jesus College and could be seen from Victoria Avenue. Its wheels were secured to a concrete base to discourage its removal but one night a band of students who had previously greased the gun's axle and loosened the wheels' chains moved it as silently as possible through the streets to the town centre. It was difficult to tow a gun weighing more than a ton through the streets of night-time Cambridge without alerting the police, and there were elaborate diversions to draw the police away from the cannon's route. The gun was eventually returned to Jesus only to become a victim of the Government scrap iron collection in 1940.

Memories

The news that the main Cambridge to Huntingdon road, the A14, is scheduled for improvement will delight many motorists who endure the seemingly continuous delays it occasions. However we must not get too excited for any road improvement schemes seem to take forever to come to fruition. Indeed the public inquiry that preceded the building of the Cambridge Northern and Western bypasses were the lenthiest then known..

But perhaps the most delayed Cambridge road project was Elizabeth Bridge; which started in the 1880s because of another Cambridge problem – lack of houses. Cambridge councillors were anxious to expand the boundaries of their town and eyes turned to Chesterton, just across the river but still obstinately independent - though its residents easily crossed into Cambridge and made use of the facilities provided without contributing to the rates.

Suggestions for amalgamation received a cool response; as a dowry Cambridge suggested a new bridge making access far easier than the inconvenient ferries and far closer than the long trudge to Magdalene bridge. There was much local opposition but on a poll of ratepayers the idea was approved. An application for an Act of Parliament to build it (and another as well, while they were about it) was successful, though the amount of land they could take for the controversial main road across Midsummer Common was restricted to two acres.

In September 1889 operations began; the Engineers appointed were Messrs Webster of Liverpool and Waters of Cambridge, the contractor John Mackay of Hereford. The superstructure was to be of iron and steel with 6 main ribs spanning the river at an angle of 105 degrees given a clear rise above the water of 14 feet six inches. Its main ribs would be wrought iron plate capable easily of taking the weight of two traction engines. Further details were specified - a length of 40 feet, footways of 7 feet width giving a roadway of 26 feet - ample room for the two widest vehicles to pass with ease. It was to use local materials where possible, to employ a number of local men, be completed within 10 months and the cost, including the road across the common would be £10,000.

It was November 1889 when the Mayor of Cambridge left the Guildhall, escorted by ten policemen, to join the Chairman of the Chesterton Local Board, J. Bester, on the site. Together they performed the ceremonial lying of the of the foundation stone, each tapping it with the mallets and silver trowels that had been presented by the engineer and contractors. Beneath the stone was placed a vase containing copies of the local newspapers, an account of the background to the new bridge, a copy of the act of parliament and a list of the people involved. The speeches over councillors and crowds dispersed leaving workmen to remove the bunting and decoration that had formed the backdrop to the occasion and continue the work of construction.

The planned 10-month construction period became extended to 15 and it was 11th December 1890 before the great opening ceremony could be performed. The proceedings were scheduled to start at noon but council business delayed the departure of the official procession of 13 carriages from the Guildhall by half an hour. They proceeded to the start of the new road at the junction of Maids Causeway and Jesus Lane where a silk cord blocked their route. Mayor and Chairman formally untied the bow, named "The Victoria Avenue" and - to only feeble cheers from a few onlookers - proceeded slowly towards the bridge.

Here they found hundreds of onlookers, chilled by the weather and impatient at the delay, and another silken cord. Chairman declared the bridge open, Mayor named it and together they pulled at the rope from which dangled a bottle of champagne, intended to smash against the parapet in the traditional way. Sadly it was not to be - the bottle merely swung tamely and eventually had to be hurled by hand. The cheers that rang out were feeble in the extreme, the contingent of police had no disorder to contain - except for a restive horse who contrived to break the shaft of his carriage. The official party walked across, then rode across and returned to the Guildhall, having duly declared the Victoria Bridge well and truly open.

They left behind a remarkable monument to forward thinking - a bridge designed before the age of the motor car that was to carry the weight of heavy lorries. But by 1986 it was found to be rusting away and in need of urgent repairs which took as long to complete as the Victorians took to build it.

But what has this to do with Elizabeth Bridge. Well the Act of 1889 had anticipated the need for another river crossing. But although the permission was there and residents of De Freville Avenue were agitating for it, others became concerned that if it were built it would cause additional traffic chaos. "The class of traffic that makes East Road one of the most unpleasant thoroughfares in the town would pass through the Abbey estate" claimed residents in 1914.

Though this bridge was put on the back burner another was implemented with the construction of a new road and bridge across Coe Fen, Once more this had caused considerable opposition. When Fen Causeway, the new and important link between Newnham and the rest of Cambridge, was opened by the Mayor in December 1926 the bridge and its approaches were gaily decorated with bunting and presented a colourful scene. The Mayor recalled that the project of relieving Silver Street traffic had started as long ago as 1904 and discussion had gone on for nearly 20 years before the Town Council approved the plan in

1923. Nine proposals had been put forward and had it not been for the urgency of the unemployment question the same position would have existed today, only instead of nine there might have been nineteen different schemes.

Further plans were announced in the 1930s for a new bypass road around the east of the city, from Trumpington Road through Long Road and Brooks Road to Coldham's Lane. There would be a dual carriageway over Newmarket Road to Ditton Walk, a viaduct over the railway and river to Cam Causeway before the road would continue along Green End Road and Kings Hedges to Huntingdon Road. Nor would it stop there; more roads were planned to continue over Madingley Road, Barton Road and back to Trumpington. Some of the road was actually constructed before planners changed their minds and the scheme lapsed. An Inner Relief Road, a Railway Route, a Western Relief Road were all debated before the present Northern bypass and M11 opened in 1980.

But by then Cambridge's traffic problems had been solved. For Elizabeth Bridge had finally been opened in July 1971, roughly on the site of the second bridge envisaged in the 1888 act. Rush-hour queues along Victoria Avenue disappeared, every day was like 'motoring on Sunday morning'.

Les Isaacson has contacted me to correct my caption to the picture of a dance at the Embassy Ballroom, featured in last week's memories. That particular dance was not one organised on behalf of the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association. However this week's picture was. It was held at the Guildhall in May 1952 when the host and hostess were Vic and Maude Brown and amongst the dancers are Les himself with his mother and father, Audrey Greenfield, Mrs Winter and Mr & Mrs Gifford, C. Bevis and Ron Smith. Meanwhile bandleader Freddie Webb's sister, Edith Jackson, who now lives on the Arbury, has contacted me to say she was delighted to see her brother on the earlier picture.

Another picture to tease the memories of people in the Huntingdon or Brampton area has been sent in by Mr R.S. Foreman of Girton. It is obviously a lad's football team from 1935. Are you or your dad on it. If so contact me since Mr Foreman would like to pass it on to somebody who would treasure it

Rosemary Preston has e-mailed to say that she does still have her copy of the programme for the Beatles concerts at the Regal when the main stars were Chris Montez Tommy Roe. She also has the programme for a visit by the Rolling Stones in 1963. The News photographers took some photographs of Mick and the rest being shepherded into a Black Maria – presumably to ensure their safe arrival – and snatched one shot of the fans who were waiting to greet them. It's not the best picture in the world, but are you on it?

Mrs Joan Hancock from Fulbourn has a picture that she is puzzling over. Her grandparents were Charles and Ada Phillips who lived in Abbey Walk. She has a photograph of them taken on board a boat of some sort – grandfather is the man with his elbow resting on the rail, his wife is sitting beside him, But does anybody know what the occasion was, or can you see anybody you know there?

Memories Dec 19 & 26th, by Mike Petty

I HAVE TRIED TO OFFER ENOUGH TEXT TO COVER BOTH WEEKS – THOUGH I MAY ADD MORE FOR 26TH
PART IS REPRISE OF THE 'KNOW YOUR CAMBRIDGE' SERIES OF 1956
WILL BRING IN PICS MONDAY PM

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But perhaps the most delayed Cambridge road project was Elizabeth Bridge; which started in the 1880s because of another Cambridge problem – lack of houses. Cambridge councillors were anxious to expand the boundaries of their town and eyes turned to Chesterton, just across the river but still obstinately independent .

Suggestions for amalgamation received a cool response; as a dowry Cambridge suggested a new bridge making access far easier than the inconvenient ferries and far closer than the long trudge to Magdalene bridge. There was much local opposition but on a poll of ratepayers the idea was approved. An application for an Act of Parliament to build it (and another as well, while they were about it) was successful, though the amount of land they could take for the controversial main road across Midsummer Common was restricted to two acres.

In September 1889 operations began; the Engineers appointed were Messrs Webster of Liverpool and Waters of Cambridge, the contractor John Mackay of Hereford. The superstructure was to be of iron and steel; its main ribs would be wrought iron plate capable easily of taking the weight of two traction engines. Further details were specified - a length of 40 feet, footways of seven feet width giving a roadway of 26 feet - ample room for the two widest vehicles to pass with ease. It was to use local materials where possible, to employ a number of local men, be completed within 10 months and the cost, including the road across the common would be £10,000.

It was November 1889 when the Mayor of Cambridge left the Guildhall, escorted by ten policemen, to join the Chairman of the Chesterton Local Board, J. Bester, on the site. Together they performed the ceremonial lying of the of the foundation stone, each tapping it with the mallets and silver trowels that had been presented by the engineer and contractors. Beneath the stone was placed a vase containing copies of the local newspapers, an account of the background to the new bridge, a copy of the act of parliament and a list of the people involved. The speeches over councillors and crowds dispersed leaving workmen to remove the bunting and decoration that had formed the backdrop to the occasion and continue the work of construction.

The planned 10-month construction period became extended to 15 and it was 11th December 1890 before the great opening ceremony could be performed. The proceedings were scheduled to start at noon but council business delayed the departure of the official procession of 13 carriages from the Guildhall by half an hour. They proceeded to the start of the new road at the junction of Maids Causeway and Jesus Lane where a silk cord blocked their route. Mayor and Chairman formally untied the bow, named "The Victoria Avenue" and - to only feeble cheers from a few onlookers - proceeded slowly towards the bridge.

Here they found hundreds of onlookers, chilled by the weather and impatient at the delay, and another silken cord. Chairman declared the bridge open, Mayor named it and together they pulled at the rope from which dangled a bottle of champagne, intended to smash against the parapet in the traditional way. Sadly it was not to be - the bottle merely swung tamely and eventually had to be hurled by hand. The cheers that rang out were feeble in the extreme, the contingent of police had no disorder to contain - except for a restive horse who contrived to break the shaft of his carriage. The official party walked across, then rode across and returned to the Guildhall, having duly declared the Victoria Bridge well and truly open.

They left behind a remarkable monument to forward thinking - a bridge designed before the age of the motor car that was to carry the weight of heavy lorries. But by 1986 it was found to be rusting away and in need of urgent repairs which took as long to complete as the Victorians took to build it.

But what has this to do with Elizabeth Bridge. Well the Act of 1888 had anticipated the need for another river crossing. But although the permission was there and residents of De Freville Avenue were agitating for it, others became concerned that if it were built it would cause additional traffic chaos. "The class of traffic that makes East Road one of the most unpleasant thoroughfares in the town would pass through the Abbey estate" claimed residents in 1914.

Though this bridge was put on the back burner another was implemented with the construction of a new road and bridge across Coe Fen. Once more this had caused considerable opposition. When Fen Causeway, the new and important link between Newnham and the rest of Cambridge, was opened by the Mayor in December 1926 he recalled that the project of relieving Silver Street traffic had started as long ago as 1904 and discussion had gone on for nearly 20 years before the Town Council approved the plan in 1923. Nine proposals had been put forward and had it not been for the urgency of the unemployment question the same position would have existed today, only instead of nine there might have been nineteen different schemes.

Further plans were announced in the 1930s for a new bypass road around the east of the city, from Trumpington Road through Long Road and Brooks Road to Coldham's Lane. There would be a dual carriageway over Newmarket Road to Ditton Walk, a viaduct over the railway and river to Cam Causeway before the road would continue along Green End Road and Kings Hedges to Huntingdon Road. Nor would it stop there; more roads were planned to continue over Madingley Road, Barton Road and back to Trumpington. Some of the road was actually constructed before planners changed their minds and the scheme lapsed. Part of the dual carriageways were ripped up before minds changed again and some of the original route reinstated. An Inner Relief Road, a Railway Route, a Western Relief Road were all debated and rejected.

But by then Cambridge's traffic problems had been solved. For Elizabeth Bridge had finally been opened in July 1971, roughly on the site of the second bridge envisaged in the 1888 act. Rush-hour queues along Victoria Avenue disappeared, every day was like 'motoring on Sunday morning'. Sadly it was not to last; traffic increased again; but then came the Northern bypass and M11 opening in 1980 having carved a great gash through the Cambridgeshire countryside. This would end Cambridge's traffic problems ... wouldn't it?

So now the old A604 has been widened and improved to become the A14; it will be improved again; perhaps not this decade, but surely this century. Writing in the 1850s John Brown remembered how as a lad he had trudged along the road driving some 300 to 400 sheep that had been bought by Cambridge butchers at the St Ives livestock markets. It was a long, straight, boring road and the animals were constantly breaking away and running into adjoining fields. By the time he reached Cambridge he was tired out. About 25 years ago that great Cambridge character, Snowy Farr, recalled how as a lad he saw more people walking along the road from Huntingdon than there were then cars driving along it. Does the road hold any memories for you?

**

Les Isaacson has contacted me to correct my caption to the picture of a dance at the Embassy Ballroom, featured in last week's memories. That particular dance was not one organised on behalf of the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association. However this week's picture

was. It was held at the Guildhall in May 1952 when the host and hostess were Vic and Maude Brown and amongst the dancers are Les himself with his mother and father, Audrey Greenfield, Mrs Winter and Mr & Mrs Gifford, C. Bevis and Ron Smith. Meanwhile bandleader Freddie Webb's sister, Edith Jackson, who now lives on the Arbury, has contacted me to say she was delighted to see her brother on the earlier picture. [SCAN]

Another picture to tease the memories of people in the Huntingdon or Brampton area has been sent in by Mr R.S. Foreman of Girton. It is obviously a lad's football team from 1935. Are you or your dad on it. If so contact me since Mr Foreman would like to pass it on to somebody who would treasure it [SCAN]

Rosemary Preston has e-mailed to say that she does still have her copy of the programme for the Beatles concerts at the Regal when the main stars were Chris Montez & Tommy Roe. She also has the programme for a visit by the Rolling Stones in September 1963. The News photographers took some photographs of Mick and the rest being shepherded into a Black Maria – presumably to ensure their safe arrival – and another of them waiting their turn to perform [SCANS]

Mrs Joan Hancock from Fulbourn has a picture that she is puzzling over. Her grandparents were Charles and Ada Phillips who lived in Abbey Walk. She has a photograph of them taken on board a boat of some sort – grandfather is the man with his elbow resting on the rail, his wife is sitting beside him, But does anybody know what the occasion was, or can you see anybody you know there? [SCAN]

Know your Cambridge

One of the items sent in to "Memories" this year were sketches made by Lewis Todd, cartoonist for the News in the 1950s. He teased readers in 1956 with a series of views of bits of Cambridge that often pass unnoticed. How many can you identify?

Suggest you crop pictures to remove the numbers and then renumber them 1-10.

answers : numbers refer to those under pictures

page 1

- 5 : statue of Jonas Webb that used to stand in the Corn Exchange, now moved to Babraham
- 6 : central section of Fitzwilliam Museum façade on which are figures representing the Nine Muses
- 23 : chimneys of old Vicarage House of St Clement's church in Bridge Street
- 14 : base of lamp standard in centre of Parker's Piece
- 13 : west door of St Clement's church, Bridge Street
- 1 : Rose Crescent

page 2

- 8 : Northampton Street corner
- 9 : carving of dog over kitchen entrance of Old Court of Corpus Christi college, seen from Free School Lane
- 10: Shelley Row
- 18: St Matthews church, off East Road

Memories 2002

Memories 2002 in one sequence

Memories 2nd January 2002, by Mike Petty

Raymond Parcell has written from Newmarket to recount his memories of the Via Devana, the A604, the A14 – the major route carrying traffic from the Midlands to the East Coast.

Raymond knew it in earlier days, for he grew up in Crochfield Villa not far from the former gallows at Five Bells Hill, almost in no-man's land on the boundary of Dry Drayton, Madingley and , - more easily described these days as next to Hacker's Fruit Farm and the Cambridge Crematorium.

Raymond's first encounter with the road was almost his last for, aged 18 months, he decided to explore it at close hand, crawling into the path of a passing bus and bringing it to a sudden stop. He also added to the traffic on the road, with his own 'Roadburner' – a steerable 4-wheel soapbox cart or practising roller-skating on quieter days – not something to be encouraged today.

Even then there would be some traffic that attracted attention; though steam ploughs & threshing engines were a common sight Raymond recalls how he stood in awe at the sight of a monster 'Gyro-tiller' moving sedately from farm to farm. Chivers regularly drove their herds of cattle or flocks of sheep along the road as the moved from field to field.

Then came the Second World War bringing convoys of Army and RAF vehicles; later came the Americans. Raymond recalls: "My father had a few goats which were tethered to feed on the grass verges; the Americans thought it great fun to startle the goats by making their vehicles backfire". On one occasion a convoy of army tanks were travelling East when one almost went West – the driver lost control and it slewed across the road, coming to a halt in the road-side ditch. It took several days before the army was able to retrieve it. The tank driver claimed that a fly in his eye caused the drama. But it was not just the big vehicles that suffered accidents; Raymond recalls even despatch riders on their motorcycles crashing head-on.

Speed is a major factor in accidents but some people know how to control it. Racing driver Archie Scott-Brown would sometimes startle everyone in the area with a fast run up in one of the Lister-Bristols or Jaguars en route from his home in Cambridge to a garage he managed further up the road. To make the road safer the Council dug four feet off the hill at Five Bells Corner, at the Oakington – Dry Drayton crossroads. The hump was claimed to be dangerous as it obscured vision. Some years later it was rebuilt to its original height because traffic was travelling too fast!

One group who make their way at a much more sedate pace were the Roadsters – or tramps, who were always knocking at their door for some hot water to make tea in their old tin can; often they then wanted a little tea to go with the water – oh and then a slide of bread!

Raymond has now moved into quieter pastures. "The six lane monstrosity they stupidly restyled the 'A.14' isn't my road any more. Bring back the Via Devana!", he pleads.

Two readers have written to identify the mystery photograph that Mr R. Foreman from Girton thought had been taken in the Huntingdon area. Not so. It shows Histon school first eleven football team. Valerie Phillips from Cambridge recognised her late brother, Arthur Docwra on the right in the front row and can name several of the others. But Cyril Moore of Impington has the complete team sheet: Ralph Charles in goal (top); standing left-right Victor Miller, Bill Lack, David Stops (of Stops' Shops newsagents), Ken Mansfield, Ron Parker. Sitting, left-right: Derek Driver, Morris Thurston, Harry (Johnny) Burton, Percy Brett and Arthur Docwra. Three of them still live in the Histon area. Cyril was playing in the school second eleven at the time but made the main team the following year. He recalls that the headmaster was Mr A.J. Parr who went on to become the first Warden of Impington Village College when it opened in 1939. [REPRISE FOOTBALL TEAM PHOTO FROM DEC 26TH]

Margaret Cullum (nee Reed) saw herself in the photograph a guide excursion to Hunstanton (Memories 12th December) and can name several of the others, including Megan Lewis who, as Megan Milton, regularly features in the News along with her husband Alan for their lavishly decorated home at Christmas time. Margaret also attended Sunday School in St Columba's Mission in the 1940s and has memories of playing a tambourine in the Gypsy Band. Does anybody have a photo? Marion Bavey from Cambridge was also there and has been sorting her archives to produce another snap to get readers puzzling. It was taken about 1945 and shows the 19th Cambridge guides and brownies in the York Street Mission Hall. Amongst those shown are June Fordham, Margaret Wright, Joyce Prestell, Betty Germany and Doreen Ruffles. [SCAN OF GUIDE PHOTO]

On December 5th I featured a photo of the Beatles posing with a couple of attractive young ladies. Now Eddie Higgins from Aylsham has phoned to say that the girl between Ringo and George is now his wife, Barbara and was probably taken in the coffee bar above the Regal. She was then Barbara Northrop from Sawston who used to queue all night to get tickets for the shows. Her friend is, he believes Sue Sanford. [REPRISE BEATLES PHOTO FROM 5TH OCTOBER]

Further details have come to light regarding the means of transport used to get the pop stars to the venue. Whereas nowadays they may arrive in a stretch limo, then it was more likely to be a police Black Maria. In November 1963 it was due to meet the Beatles in Trumpington, but there was no sign of them. An emergency message was passed to all cars and Det Sgt Harry Fox of Cambridge C.I.D. spotted their car near Lensfield Road. Once safely on board the fab four were safely delivered to the Regal, where queues had been forming all day. Getting them out again would be another matter. At the close of the performance the singers dashed down a flight of stairs, out the back door and into the van. As police cars pulled up at the front of the cinema the Black Maria headed along Downing Place to where the screaming fans were waiting. But the Beatles were not in it. They were being driven the other way, through a back gate into the University Downing Street site and along Tennis Court Road, Lensfield Road, Gonville Place and Parkside to arrive at another back door – that of the University Arms Hotel where they spent the night. Getting them out next morning was another matter as hundreds of fans blocked the road causing traffic chaos as they waited for the Beatles to continue their journey to the next venue, York. [BEATLES ARTICLE/ NEGS? INCLUDING MORE OF THE AUDIENCE FOR PEOPLE TO IDENTIFY?]

Now Christmas is over many people will not be looking forward to their Credit Card statement in the New Year. But for most debt is something to be managed; not so in years gone past. For those who could not pay the solution was simple – the debtors cell, like the one at Ely. Still today people can experience the horror of seeing the world through bars and learn that they would have to pay the gaoler for the necessities of life – though how can you pay if you are imprisoned for debt? At least debtors have a chance of release, for others it was the hangman's noose – and there are gallows scratched on the cell walls, perhaps by one of its victims. The story of the Ely gaols and of the building that is now the Museum have been told

in two new publications just issued by the Ely Society – at prices that will not break the bank. If you have not experienced the cells for yourself then make it your New Year resolution to do so next time you are in Market Street; & as for local residents one ticket gives you free admission all year you may wish to take up residence! ‘Ely Prisons’ by Pam Blakeman, ‘Ely Museum at the old gaol: a history of the building’ by Kate Fearn.

Chris Godfrey was a man who would have appreciated the way the old Ely Gaol has been restored and converted. Chris was a conservation officer for Cambridgeshire County Council whose job was to ensure just such sympathetic use of historic structures; he died in January last year and now the council have published a book of his drawings of some of the county’s finest buildings. There is however one view that his colleagues cannot identify, a sketch of a quiet corner of a churchyard – but which one, or was it one he made up. Can you recognise the broken column or suggest where it might be? ‘Chris Godfrey’s Cambridgeshire’ costs £12.50 from Shire Hall or bookshops

Memories 9th January 2002, by Mike Petty

With the news dominated by the arrival of the Euro I thought it might be interesting to turn back to our own big currency conversion, the arrival of decimal coinage in February 1971.

What was wrong with the old system? We had a pound (represented by a ‘£’), which was made up of twenty shillings (‘s’) which in turn was made up of twelve pennies (‘d’ - short for ‘denarius’ an ancient Roman coin) which was made up of two halfpennies which was made up of two farthings (though these had been abolished in 1961).

There were various coins in circulation; some were silver in colour: a two shilling and sixpenny coin was ‘half-a-crown’, a two-shilling coin was a ‘florin’, a one-shilling coin was a ‘bob’, and a six penny coin was a ‘tanner’. Others were bronze; a three penny ‘joey’, a penny and a halfpenny, pronounced ‘haypney’. There were also ‘crowns’ and ‘sovereigns’ which I never saw and ‘guineas’ which was something one only heard about. Granddad had a collection of silver threepenny bits, but they were too valuable to play with.

Prices could be written as either 7s.6d or 7/6. What could be simpler?

In came three new decimal coins, the new 1p., 2p. and the halfpenny which would eventually replace the sixpence, the threepenny bit and the old penny. The two other existing coins, the shilling and the florin were to stay in circulation alongside the new silver five and ten pence coins. The £1, £5 and £10 notes remained the same, though the 50p coin had already succeeded the 10-shilling note.

On 15th February the News reported: “A wartime spirit could be felt in the city this morning as people helped one another over the hurdle of D-Day.” Shop assistants had been fully trained in the new money and some managers wore orange ‘decimal adviser’ rosettes to assist baffled customers. Some mums and dads made a point of taking their children shopping with them, so they could act as currency converters having been properly taught in school. In the event the expected chaos did not materialise, business was slow but smooth and confused customers few and far between.

In those days the Co-op would charge you 2s. for a packet of Cadbury’s Smash potato, 1s.7d. for a ¼ lb [QUARTER POUND] of its ‘99’ tea and 1s. for a tin of their baked beans – and on top of that they were promising double dividend stamps. All that converted to 10p, 8p, & 5p. in the new money.

If you fancied dining out then a set restaurant meal for four was £2.10s.0d. or you could escape for a week in Jersey, flying from Cambridge airport on Saturdays at £19.4s.0d return. A new two-bedroomed centrally heated flat on Milton Road, Cambridge, was on the market for £5,450 or you might prefer a three-bedroomed house in Highsett, Hills Road, with garage and fitted kitchen that would set you back £7,950. If you preferred to rent a cottage in the country there was a two-bedroomed property at Melbourn at £12 per week and for just £793.93 you could buy a new VW Beetle to commute to work. A brand new Austin 1100 was that bit dearer at £801.

If the prices seem cheap what were the wages like? Cleaners working two hours a night, five nights a week would earn £4 – if they were men, £3.10s.0s. for ladies. A Cambridge Water Company technician received about £1,400 a year; Eastern Counties bus drivers received a basic wage of £16.10s.9d while conductors – remember them? – earned 8s.9d. less per week and they had the hassle of customers who would not convert. William McMordie, a conductor in the Huntingdon area found it made his job much harder: “The majority of people did not take any notice of the decimal fares and told me the price in old money” he complained. Even in December a St Neots butcher was still using an old-style cash register and totted up the bills in old money, leaving his customers to work them out in decimal.

People thought decimalisation was bound to bring price increases, with figures being rounded up rather than down – not that you could understand them anyway. One granddad came home laden with 5lbs of lemons because he thought they were going cheap at threepence for two; another OAP complained “I just can’t believe people who say that the 2p pieces are worth fivepence. I spend the things and I know I don’t get fivepence worth”. Even a year after D-Day one pensioner still slapped his landlord on the back because he thought the price of beer had come down to sixpence.

But as well as being smaller the new coins were lighter. This presented problems for the banks during changeover. As D-Day neared banks experienced a last-minute scramble for cash before they shut down for four days. Like others Lloyds Bank in Sidney Street, Cambridge had spent years preparing for the change with staff acting the part of customers to test the procedures; but they also had the job of supplying other branches with the cash itself. They would deliver between 50 and 60 tons of new coins to banks, but then have to cart away the old coins – and they weighed between 150 and 160 tons. Nor could they relax security for the old money continued to be legal tender for eighteen months after D-Day.

Some lasted even more; it was two years after decimalisation when the old silver ‘tanner’ followed the ‘joey’ into oblivion. The News surveyed readers’ opinions in December 1972 and found almost all were happy to see it disappear; Shirley Batterbee, a housewife, said she got rid of them as soon as she could, Miss Margaret Squire of Balsham, a student at CCAT found it a nuisance. Shopkeepers like Paul Titchmarsh, from Mill Road said ‘Good riddance’, and Miss Ira Butcher, manageress of Salisbury’s handbag shop in Bradwell’s Court thought ‘The decimal system is much better. I thought it would be difficult because we were stuck in our ways. But now I can’t even add up in LSD’. One supporter however was young David Jopling of Chesterton who still accepted them, in fact he was going to start a collection because they may be valuable some time.

The authorities in 1971 were convinced that people would soon stop trying to convert prices back to LSD and that within a few years the old money would become just a hazy memory. How long before these sentiments will be aired again? [LIBRARY PIX OF OLD MONEY, CO-OP ADVERTISEMENT USED CEN 15.2.2001, BUS CONDUCTOR PIC]

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Perhaps you might like to test your memories of old and new currency by turning back the years to the January sales of 1952 when queues of bargain hunters are to be seen outside various shops. So what were the bargains of the day in Cambridge shops?

At Coad's in Sidney Street the main demand was for all-wood lumber jackets reduced from 29s 11d (£1.50) to 14s 11d. (75p), though long-sleeve wooden jumpers were being snapped up at 10s 11d (55p). The Belfast Linen Warehouse had a full-size down quilt reduced from £16 10s. to £3 10s. it was bought by a woman who started queuing at 2 a.m. Pillow cases were at half price, 2s 6d (12p). The first arrival at Rose's Fashion Centre sale was there at 5 a.m. and by the time the store opened there were about 100 people waiting, so many that the doors had to be closed and a few shoppers let in at a time. The biggest run was on heavily reduced taffeta dresses. Joshua Taylor reported people coming in from a radius of 50 miles with the first bargain hunter arriving at 4 a.m. to secure a handbag which at £2 2s was one-third of its original price. Girls double-breasted school coats reduced to 25s (£1.25) were snapped up and there was a rush on children's felt hats at 1s (5p) each. In the men's department ninety dozen socks were sold at the pre-war price of 3s 11d (20p) a pair whilst other popular items were gabardine trousers and sports jackets.

Business was not quite so brisk at Laurie & McConnal in Fitzroy Street: "There's just not the money about", said Director A.E. Turner; "the sales are put on too soon after Christmas and before people have any money to spend on sale bargains; but the trouble is the shops all scramble to get in first". It was a different story at Messrs T. Tobin, of Mill Road whose specialised in outsize clothes. There was a queue of over 60 people by opening time and all previous records were broken. He felt it was down to country people who were now showing more interest in bargain hunting – and needed outsize clothes.

**

Whilst browsing through the News negatives I have come across part of an old black-and-white photograph being used as a marker. It shows a children's' choir probably in the large hall of Cambridge Guildhall and was probably taken in the early 1960s. Does anybody recognise themselves or know the occasion. [SCAN]

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**

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Memories 16th January 2002, by Mike Petty

In January 1977 intrepid 'News' reporter, Richard Keeble, was sent out on a special assignment. It was, he was warned, potentially hazardous. For the people he was visiting were very wary of journalists, they had too much bad press and were being accused of depriving women of money that could be better spent on their children or on the rent.

He made his way to the addict's paradise near the very centre of Cambridge where every afternoon and evening hundreds congregated in theatrical, almost surreal surroundings, a brash, psychedelic mish-mash of colours – silver, yellow, red, green, rust, cream. It was a place with its own special vocabulary – last'un, flyer, ling double, quickie. And all concentrated on the confusing conglomeration of figures blazing out like the strange invention of a mad magician, and the relentless amplified voice that promised instant riches.

Yes, Richard had been sent to the Central EMI Bingo and Social Club in Hobson Street, Cambridge. The club was then just four years old and already boasted 10,000 members. But they would not let him in. First he had to complete a membership form; when he returned the following week the manager, John Jones, said he could not talk to any of the players, and none of the staff. There had been too many 'bingomania revelations' already. But, having phoned head office, he relented; Richard could speak to the players, if they would speak to him.

But none were prepared to give their name and address. If you played bingo you did not want your neighbours to know about it. EMI's spokesman blamed the reluctance on the 'class consciousness' of Cambridge. "If you go to Lancashire and Yorkshire, the real bingo playing country, people are happy to talk freely about playing bingo, but the further south you go the more careful people are", he complained.

Once Richard had broken through the players' reserve he found them all perfectly normal people – police officers, traffic wardens, doctors – and housewives. They were all quick to acknowledge that it was an addiction – especially the fruit machines that paid out up to £30 in 50-pence pieces; people dashed to them in the brief intervals between games, and long queues formed during the interval.

But the main money was to be made on Bingo itself; especially the jackpot when the Cambridge club linked up by phone with that at Oxford and there was £400 on offer.

Over ten years earlier, in July 1966 Dereck Harvey had made an earlier examination of the big bingo boom phenomenon with a visit to the Kinema in Mill Road, Cambridge. Then it was less high-tech. The caller sat at a large transparent container in which numbered ping-pong balls jostled with each other before being pushed up a tube into his hand; he called out the numbers and illuminated counter-markings on a big display board at the back. But this was impressive for its time. What used to be a simple family game for dark winter nights in an age before television, and as 'tombola' had been the only gambling game allowed on the

mess-decks of Royal Navy ships, had become the ‘slickest best-organised, most mentally-futile money trick every devised by men’. It took off in old cinemas around the country, at the Regal, Littleport in 1966, the Rex, Ely on Sunday afternoons in 1967, at the Regal, St Ives and the Haverhill Conservative Hall.

Dereck found 300 people at the Kinema on the night he visited in 1966; the manager, Mr A. Pink told him: “I’ve never seen anything like it. We had 9,000 members in the first nine weeks”. But it was even bigger at the Rex in Magrath Avenue where there were bigger winnings to be had. Faced with such competition the New Chesterton Institute were having to subsidise two houses a week in order to get members into their club, charging them 2s. (10p) to come in and offering a full range of refreshments and entertainment. At the Romsey Labour Club it was members only and there were no big-money fortunes to be made.

Back in the Kinema it was eyes down again as people concentrated on the numbers, hoping for the big break – like the one enjoyed by Mr E. Brauerski, head porter at the Blue Boar Hotel, who had just the week before hit the jackpot with a massive £1,000 in a national competition.

But the papers were full of even bigger wins; in 1967 there was news of gigantic prizes of £2,164 and £4,370 in September alone, won through the National Golden Scoop Club – but that was judged illegal by Law Lords the following February. Then in the 1980’s the national newspapers discovered the magic of bingo. A Cambridge man won £40,000 in ‘The Sun’, a Cambridge woman won £20,000 with the ‘Mirror’; and there was another big payout by the ‘Daily Star’.

Once more a News reporter was sent into the bingo hall. This time it was Chris Elliott who took the afternoon away from his desk in March 1983 for a return to the Central. Now there was the additional attraction of Parti Bingo, the kind of 20p-in-the-slot machines found in seaside arcades, before the main games started. Queen of the Club was Mrs Daisy Driver who’d been playing bingo since 1948. She went four times a week, paying 23p admission – pensioner price – and £1.70 for a couple of books. It was a home from home where regulars had their favourite seats; they met their friends and enjoyed the social repartee, it got them out of the house and kept them mentally stimulated. There was even a club party with a cabaret – Emile Ford would be the entertainer. And if they won – and prizes went right up to £1,000 on a Saturday night – then that was a bonus.

Nowadays the winnings seem tame compared to the twice-weekly riches dished out by the National Lottery. But for thousands nothing can beat the thrill of ‘eyes down’, ‘all the twos’ ... ‘Kelly’s eye’ ... ‘two fat ladies’, ‘unlucky for some’ – or has the language changed since I last played a dozen or more years ago?

If you have memories of Bingo, write to Mike Petty at the News [I HAVE MADE A SELECTION OF PICTURES OF VARIOUS DATES – THEY ARE IN THE NEWS LIBRARY PICTURES FILE UNDER ‘GAMBLING – BINGO’]

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Paul Loveday from Girton has contacted me with details of my mystery choir photo (Memories Jan 9th). He should know as he was the lad with the darker tie in the middle of the front row of sweet-voiced handsome lads from St Philip’s Boys School at the annual music festival for junior schools that culminated in a grand service at the Guildhall. It was a sort of Last Night of the Proms and all schools from the Cambridge area used to take part. The date he puts as either 1963 or 1964.

Another part-picture from the News files shows a group of dignitaries watching a billiards match – but where and who? It might be something to do with the police, fire or ambulance service. If you can help please contact me [SCAN]

Ted Austin from Over has been prompted by the recent opportunities for skating in the fens to write: “I wonder how many Cottenham readers remember Joe Norman. He was a masterpiece at acquiring ‘beer money’ and took full advantage of skating. He could be seen on his wooden skates at Bury Fen, Earith or Swavesey High. In his pocket a gimlet and a leather punch, round his neck a bundle of leather straps of various sizes and in his hand a three-legged stool. As he skated he called out ‘On, Off, or tightening’, repairing skates that were slipping where they shouldn’t. He loved to tell tales of his stool, since in the 1930’s the wearing of trousers by ladies was much less common than it is today! What a character!” Do you remember Joe, or similar ‘characters’

Cheryl Barden from Cambridge has sent me a copy of a Christmas card she found down the back of her fireplace. It shows the ‘Plough and Harrow’ on Madingley Road, Cambridge and was sent with a seasonal greeting by ‘Ivan and Chris’ to all their friends – and presumably customers. All we know by way of date is that the phone number was 55349 and that they offered hot snacks and parking. Does it ring any bells? [SCAN]

Edith Jackson from King’s Hedges, used to live in The Volunteer, Trumpington Road. She treasures a photograph of a line of old soldiers near the pub, proudly sporting their medals. There’s a Union Jack and a Band – but what was it all about. If you can help let me know [SCAN]

Memories 23rd January 2002

When reading one of my daily ‘Looking Back’ columns recently Ivy from Newmarket Road, Cambridge found her eyes drawn to a story that recorded the day she made headline news in January 1977.

The article read:

***Polio case confirmed at Addenbrooke’s.** A 19-year-old girl from the Royston area is in Addenbrooke’s Hospital, Cambridge, with polio. It is the first case reported in the region for several years. The Hospital stressed there was no need for undue concern but urged members of the public to check their own vaccinations, which is taken by mouth on a lump of sugar. In 1975 only one case of polio was reported nationally. Last year it rose to eight. It is believed the Royston girl is the second victim so far this year.*

Poliomyelitis was a word that spread panic half a century ago. In September 1950 the News reported that an Engineer from Brampton RAF Station had died in an Iron Lung. He’d been the third polio victim in Huntingdonshire that year and lived 200 yards from the home of another man who was progressing satisfactorily in Cambridge Isolation Hospital infected with polio. A Godmanchester man had died in Middlesex Isolation Hospital just the week before, within two days of contracting the disease. By 1956 a polio vaccine was declared safe and a wholesale vaccination programme put into operation.

Now for most of us polio is just a word. But for Ivy it is a sentence. Even last year, 25 years after her attack, she frequently goes back to Addenbrooke’s Hospital for continued treatment and care. It affected her immune system, kidneys, muscles; robbing her of an active life & causing her anger & frustration.

Ivy was a fit young, attractive, red-haired girl from Witchford who liked nothing more than working on the land, as all her family did – mum, dad, three brothers and three sisters. So

when she had the chance to visit her aunt at Royston, with a bit of potato picking thrown in, she jumped at it. There was a lot of flu about that year and few escaped, so when she began not to feel well & her legs went weak she thought little of it and carried on. Then her legs went down and she had to take to bed; sickness followed, her aunt knew something was wrong.

It was December 1976 and there was a Hospital strike. Royston hospital would not take her in; an ambulance rushed her to Addenbrooke's Hospital as she slipped in and out of consciousness. She awoke in a hospital bed, feeling lousy. Her arm would not move, her leg would not move; in fact she was paralysed from her neck downwards. Ivy was in a single room, she was in isolation; everybody who visited her was swathed in masks and gowns – and numerous doctors and students came to prod and pull. “Why can’t they leave me alone!” she despaired

Slowly some movement did come back into her arms, but she wouldn’t tell the nurses. Secretly she exercised improving a little day by day. December stretched into January and February and by then she was subjected to the humiliation of being collected in a wheelchair and wheeled down to physiotherapy by a porter. She didn’t want therapy, she wanted to be left alone, & certainly not wired up to some stupid machine – especially one that suddenly went wrong, making strange noises. The nurse called the doctor, the doctor rushed over to diagnose the fault. He knew what it was. The machine had not malfunctioned. Ivy’s legs had started to regain movement. “I think you’ve got life!” he told her.

That was the turning point; now she felt she had a chance. Soon she was propelling herself in a wheelchair, then she moved on to crutches. Inevitably there were setbacks; she fell off the chair, she trapped herself in a lavatory – and it was the porter who found her. In fact he was always there.

As she slowly improved, Brian, her porter, asked the Sister’s permission to take Ivy to the cinema; later they dined at the University Arms Hotel. Finally Ivy was well enough to go home to Witchford, but she had not seen the last of the porter. They married six months later in March 1978 at Cambridge Registry Office and moved into a caravan he’d bought behind the pub at Teversham. Then they got on the housing ladder.

Ivy, still severely handicapped, did voluntary work looking after babies until she was well enough to take paid employment, cleaning at Fulbourn Hospital & packing beef burghers. They bought a tandem so she could travel into the countryside that she loved. It was not all plain sailing; she suffered the agony of a miscarriage but they have now three healthy teenage children, each doing well at college.

But still Ivy pulls on her callipers, still she makes regular journeys to Addenbrooke’s Hospital and always she stares at the window of the room where she was held in isolation for three months 25 years ago. A room she knows she would not have left were it not for the dedication of Dr Jenner her consultant & the doctors, nurses – and porters - who would not give up on her, even though she had given up on herself. [SCAN OF NEWS ARTICLE

[IVY PANTER OF 684 NEWMARKET ROAD, CAMBRIDGE (292104) WOULD PREFER NOT TO BE IDENTIFIED].

Residents in Cherry Hinton have been digesting the news that – for postal purposes - they are now definitely part of Cambridge, and certainly no longer a village. Cherry Hinton formally became absorbed in 1934 but urbanisation had been going on for decades before that. Between 1881 & 1891 the village had increased in size from 869 to 1,639 people.

Today such expansion is often the source of friction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ residents but writing in 1891 and old inhabitant marvelled at the improvements that new development had brought. “Cherry Hinton can now vie with most in the comfort and convenience of its cottages, with their furniture, the result of the combined industry of male and female; the former so largely employed on the railway, the waterworks and asylum etc. One great improvement in the new cottages has been the building of detached washing places, so that the steam and exhalations from wet clothes does not furnish so much inducement for the head of the family to resort to the public house.

“Drunkenness is a rarity in our streets, though the number of public houses is still far too many. With eleven public houses within our boundary the amount spent in beer and tobacco cannot be small. The standard of morals, together with that of the marriage tie, has been much raised.

“In my early recollection, fustian and a figured smock frock, with a red cloak for more elderly women, were the extent of the labourer's aspirations, now broad cloth is the rule, and the employing classes can hardly be distinguished, by their dress, from the employed.”

Nor did the increased population bring increased crime: he spoke of the present “comparative security of property ... compared with the henroost robbing and the general insecurity of property in those days. The possession of the labouring man of more than enough to keep ‘the wolf from the door’ has led him the more to respect the rights and possessions of his more favoured neighbours. I would not be insensible to the gradual fusion of classes, and the breaking down of those hard and fast lines of distinction which, in earlier days, so stood in the way of that mutual trust and confidence that should more pervade the various classes of the human fraternity”.

But more and more houses have kept arriving; by 1962 there were complaints that it was “a village that was swallowed”, its individuality drowned in blanket development. Certainly an estate agent’s advertisement of 1971 offering homes in “the quiet, peaceful English hamlet of Cherry Hinton” would raise eyebrows today. As more and more homes have been built & more and more people move in so old-time residents can reflect: “I may not have your money, I may not have your brains – but at least I had the good sense to be born here!” [CHERRY HINTON PIX FROM NEWS LIBRARY]

There is another historical reflection on the postal changes. After Chesterton was absorbed into Cambridge some residents in High Street were quick appreciate a change in their social status. For central Cambridge had a King’s Parade, a Trinity Street, a Sidney Street. It had no High Street. So if Chesterton was now Cambridge then High Street Chesterton must surely now be High Street, Cambridge! At least that was the opinion of photographer Ted Mott who started to re-caption his Chesterton postcards, possibly in the hope of increasing sales to tourists. [SCAN, BETTER PIX FROM NEWS LIBRARY?]

More readers have responded to pictures featured recently in ‘Memories’

Mrs Sylvia Cooper (nee Ellis) of Cottenham recognised herself amongst the 19th Cambridge Guides and Brownies along with her younger sister Rosemary Doggett and several others she can name. She knew wheel-chair bound Miss Easton well as she often used to push her to the meetings at the Mission Hall from her home in Stone Street

Eileen Ward of Impington saw her elder daughter Karen amongst the children performing at the Guildhall concert in 1965-66 (Memories 9th January). Karen is the little girl in the left-hand corner, wearing a white Alice band. She was a pupil at Morley Memorial School then but is now married and living in Cheltenham. The concerts obviously continued for some time

since Mr M. Clements has another picture of the one in which he performed in the mid 1970s. [PICTURE FROM NEWS LIBRARY FILES?]

David Beynon is the first to E-mail to identify my picture of a billiards table (Memories 16th January). It was in the clubroom of the former Fire Station in Newmarket Road, Cambridge. He ought to know since he played many a game on it during a long career with the Brigade. The presence of the then Chief Fire Officer, Mr Bob Stepney, on the left of the line-up of worthies, suggests to him that it was taken during a traditional Christmas morning visit by members of the Fire Brigade Committee. This might account for the festive glass of sherry being enjoyed by those worthies in another fragment of a photograph taken at the same time

Joan Mitchell has telephoned to say that her grandfather, Frederick Marshall, was amongst the old soldiers gathered outside the Volunteer pub in Trumpington Road, Cambridge in the picture featured in Memories last week. It's pretty certainly a group of Trumpington men on an Armistice Day parade. Mr Marshall fought in both the Boer and First World War and returned badly injured to his home in North Terrace. He died in 1956 [REPRISE PHOTO?]

Way back in November I mentioned the large house that used to stand in the middle of Wandlebury ring. Pat White, keeper of accessions for Fulbourn village society, has now unearthed a very rare photo of the vanished home, virtually covered in ivy. Her Society are always looking to add to their archive of Fulbourn material so if you can help ring her on Cambridge 881037. [SCAN]

Memories 27th January 02, by Mike Petty

Last week's News broke two stories that seem destined to fill its pages for months to come – as they have done in the past.

The first was of the proposals for the possible restriction of traffic in Silver Street. This has for long been an inconvenient and narrow entry into Cambridge and plans for its improvement go back to at least 1889, when at the opening of Victoria Avenue there was a plea for a new road and bridge to carry traffic from Lensfield Road to Newnham, thus relieving Silver Street.

Perhaps closure was also envisaged in 1904 when the Cambridge Electric Traction Syndicate proposed the electrification of the existing horse trams with new lines down Silver Street & along the Backs, though this was opposed by those to whom the prospect of overhead power lines did not appeal. Another report of about the same time also received little support; it included filling in the Mill Pool – which might make space for an additional car park.

Motorists found the street difficult to negotiate, in 1911 there was a petition about notoriously bad egress from Silver Street into Trumpington Street. The situation dramatically improved in 1926 with the opening of Fen Causeway, but inevitably deteriorated again and in 1971 came plans for a Western relief road across Lammas Land, parallel to the Causeway

Then in 1958 came the most obvious comparison with the current plans. The great floods of 1947 had weakened Silver Street Bridge and a new one was needed; a temporary bridge was erected while rebuilding took place, it reopened in August 1959. Does anybody recall this disruption to traffic flow?

But one cannot permanently ban all traffic of every description from such an important thoroughfare and plans are being canvassed for barriers or rising bollards to enable emergency vehicles and others to have access. Should this happen it will be a repeat of the situation before 1824, when there was a toll-bar across the street. It's a long way back, but

the story goes something like this – and if some of the dodges of those days seem familiar today it just shows that history goes round and round.

For as long as people could remember Cambridge Corporation had demanded a toll of 2d for every loaded waggon that came into town over Silver Street Bridge. If the waggon unloaded there was another 2d charge and if it took a fresh load that was 2d more.

James Ratcliffe had been a dealer in earthenware back in the 1790s and he had always paid the fee whenever he was caught by the toll-collector, although sometimes he went to Cambridge early and came out late so that he got away without payment. He later became a toll-collector himself. Then there was the old widow woman, Mrs Norris, who did the job in 1760. She hobbled along with a stick and put the money in a pitcher which she always carried. William Royston was a farmer at Hardwick as his father had been before him, as a lad he remembered going to Mr Beale's at Cambridge to deliver corn for milling or to collect coal; sometimes they went over the Small Bridges and down Silver Street, sometimes not. But if they were spotted they always paid the toll and had their waggon marked with chalk - a different colour for each day. Of course if they came in empty- or had arranged the load so that the collector could not see it above the side of the cart - they were not charged. If the carrier refused to pay then his goods were distrained.

In justification for the charge the Corporation claimed that it needed the money to pay for the upkeep of the streets and bridges. There had been a bridge at Silver Street for centuries and in the old days there used to be a hermit who took tolls and repaired the bridge. History recorded that when he had died in 1494 the Corporation had had to make the bridge passable again so quickly had it deteriorated. They'd rebuilt it in 1648 and were always being forced to pay out for repairs.

However others pointed out that as a result of an Act of Parliament in 1788 these responsibilities had been transferred to a new body, the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners who were authorised to levy taxes for road repair. Why then should people pay twice and what were the Corporation spending their toll-money on anyway. Was the £700 spent on the town's prison or prosecuting wrong-doers - no for that came from the High Constable's rate which also paid for the expenses of the Aldermen who undertook duties at the Petty Sessions. Did the money go to subsidise the poor, the disabled soldiers or sailors that were always present - no for that too came from other rates. Weston Hatfield was convinced that he knew where the money was going - "on scenes of riot and gluttony, on feasts monthly annual and occasional on every pretext, on midnight orgies" for councillors. It was an example of the corruption of the Corporation in the 1820s, just part of the sad state of affairs at that time.

So in 1824 Messrs Beales and Company refused to pay the tolls which he considered a "grievous tax upon the industrious people who bring provisions to the town to supply the necessities of its inhabitants". They were taken to court. The trial involved extensive readings from ancient documents dating back to the Domesday Book; charters and statutes were quoted legal arguments raised. The hearing lasted for a day and a half by the end of which the Lord Chief Justice "was so inaudible from exhaustion" that he could scarcely be heard as he summed up the case. The jury had no doubts: the case was found in Beales' favour the Corporation had no right to the tolls they had collected for so many years.

Two more cases followed; the Corporation won the second but lost the decider and the tolls came to an end. Anybody could cross Silver Street Bridge without let or hindrance – but for how much longer?

The other modern news story last week was the suggestion that part of Christ's Pieces might be taken for an extension to Drummer Street Bus Station. This recalls the controversy of

August 1925 when the original proposals to take a slide of the Piece to create a bus station and car park generated a great protest. A meeting attracted a crowd of over 2,000 people to Drummer Street and after a resolution of protest had been passed the crowd decided to take it to the Mayor that night. Something like a 1,000 people staged a midnight march to the Mayor's house drawing a tumbrel wagon with their leaders on it, urging her to call another council meeting to overturn the decision. But the council stuck to its guns and the bus station went ahead.

Soon the new area was too small and another area of open space – New Square – was being canvassed for a car park. The *News* was asked to lead opposition to the proposals but declined. “Most people smile when they think of tremendous agitation worked up against Drummer Street ... but nobody is one penny the worse. The only fault is that Drummer Street is not big enough - hence the need for New Square” the editor opined in March 1929. We must watch the editorials to see his opinion this time round! [OLD DRUMMER STREET & NEW SQUARE CAR PARK PIC FROM NEWS FILES; CHRIST’S PIECES PIC SCANNED – OR FROM FILES]

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Melissa Aves has E-mailed to solve the mystery of the Christmas card featuring the Plough and Harrow, Madingley Road, which was discovered behind a fireplace in Bermuda Road (News 16th January). She not only knows who sent it – Ivan Nathan the publican – but also who it was sent to – her dad Graham Pledger.

Another old Christmas card has come in from Anthony Chapman of Cambridge. It was sent to him at Addenbrooke's Hospital back in 1936 and was signed by the boys from class 2A of the Central School and their master, Dick Annely. In those days classes were 40 strong and 39 signed the card. Several went on to become bemedalled heroes, successful businessmen, University employees and salesmen. Sadly at least 15 have now passed away. [SCAN OF NAMES, BUT MAY BE TOO DARK]

Mrs Laura Simmons crochets items for Mayfield School Christmas fair and there met an old gentleman, probably in his 80's. He recalled learning to knit at the old St Luke's Infants School in Victoria Road, Cambridge. Boys and girls all had to make squares using thick 'dishcloth' cotton which were used for wiping their slates. After the slates they progressed to thick pencils, then the notorious dip-pens. Laura recalls these herself from the days she was a teacher in the 1950s. “The ink came in powder form and every week the ‘ink monitor’ came around to collect the inkwells for refilling – and extracting the bits of blotting paper stuffed in them!”

Local historian Allan Brigham is seeking memories just like this of the Sedley School for a history / scrapbook he is helping to write in advance of its closure in the summer. The school was built to cater for the new Coleridge Road Estate in the 1920s and in particular he would like memories of the period before the Second World War. Can you help? If so contact Allan at 17 Romsey Road, Cambridge CB1 3DD (tel 212189) or go along to the course he is running at the Folk Museum on Monday afternoons from 11th February to 4th March. You will not only learn about old Cambridge but also have a chance to explore the Museum at the same time. [PIC OF SEDLEY SCHOOL FROM NEWS FILES?]

Mrs M.P. Owen of Cambridge lent me a picture she has of the old coal chute at Cambridge station. Her husband worked as a guard on the railways for over 50 years but can't quite remember when it was taken. Can you help? [SCAN]

Memories 6th February 2002, by Mike Petty

NOTE : SPORTS DESK HAVE SAID THEY MAY DO A SURVEY OF SOME OF THEIR CONTACTS AND BRING THE STORY UP TO DATE

The origins of the sport of table tennis seem to have been lost in the mists of time. Encyclopaedia Britannica thinks it may have been invented in England in the early days of the 20th century

The Times dignified it with an article on 30th December 1901 when it reported: “the pastime of hitting a tiny ball to and fro across a net upon a table has become popular”. So popular indeed that a three-day tournament had been arranged in the Queens Hall which attracted a large entry of competitors with more coming to watch, and perhaps pick up tips on technique. It had all been arranged by the Ping Pong Association who had issued a set of rules: matches were “20 up” with service changing every five points and players changing ends every ten points. The ball had to be served from behind the table and no volleying was permitted. But it was no longer ping-pong for the latest fashion was for wooden rackets that neither ‘ping’ nor ‘pong’.

It was, thundered the Times, not something for serious competitors: “One is inclined to think that a game at which a child can compete on equal terms with grown men cannot make much of a claim to be considered as anything but an occupation for the idlest, slackest hours. For gentle after-dinner exercise table tennis can certainly be recommended to such as have no billiard table. But few people would be content with such mild exercise and fewer still ... would devote very much time to a game in which the possibilities of exercising skill and judgement as so strictly limited”

But already the game had caught on in Cambridge. As the News reported in February 1902:

In at least one thing Cambridge is abreast of the times. She has the craze for ping-pong, or to call it by its more dignified name, table tennis. For a long time past on quiet evenings the not unmusical the ping of the racket could be heard coming from the houses of the up-to-date. It was then a drawing room entertainment; but the passion for the little celluloid ball extended, and after the cheapening of the materials, there were few people who had not found amusement in the game, and obtained flushed cheeks from crawling under the tables in search of the elusive celluloid.

By Christmastime ping-pong parties had become quite general, political and social clubs had imported the game, ping-pong clubs were formed and now Cambridge has been brought into line with the metropolis by holding a tournament.

The contest was to be held at the Conservative Club, Market Passage, Cambridge but owing to the large entry it was decided to transfer operations to the Corn Exchange where six Whitmore patent table tennis tables were arranged under the gas jets. The new tables had a

special rough surface to reduce bounce and enable the ball to take the screw, and give greater scope for real skill. Competitors played best of seven games of nine points each.

The tournament attracted a considerable entry for each of three categories: 60 entered the gentleman's singles, and 20 each the ladies and mixed doubles categories. Townsfolk took on University gentlemen on an equal footing. There were good players and indifferent players; tall players who relied upon speed and those of smaller stature who employed subtler arts, giving a wicked break in their service and making the ball fly in all directions. The one table reserved for ladies was always an attraction. The News commented: "The lady competitors, generally in smart costumes, played a milder game, though there were some who would have made the male sex jump about".

It was a thoroughly entertaining event, played for modest prizes and enjoyed by all. Then big money came in.

Next month, March 1902, an 'Imperial Ping-Pong Tournament' was arranged with handsome prizes valued at 45 guineas. This time it was more organised; four first-class tables by Messrs Feltham of London had been arranged in the Victoria Assembly Rooms on Market Hill. There were chairs in raised tiers so that spectators might have an uninterrupted view of the play and a refreshment bar had been provided.

But this time the crowds stayed away; only 31 gents and 10 ladies entered. They included G.F. Hotblack and R. Erstone Forbes, finalists in the earlier tournament, but the highlight of the first night's play was the match between E.P. Chance & R.S. Mills that contained one rally of 397 shots and three others over 200.

The tournament continued over the Wednesday and Thursday evenings and culminated in finals between R. E. Forbes & Norman Spicer, Spicer being victorious in a match kept interesting by the "absence of long and tedious rallies". In the ladies' final much interest was aroused in whether Mrs A.J. Ransom and Mrs E.W. Illsley would repeat their Corn Exchange finals battle again; they did and this time the much improved Mrs Ransom was victorious.

It appears that a national Ping Pong Association was formed in 1902, but broke up three years later; it was revived in the 1920s.

But what happened locally. Cambridgeshire Table Tennis Association celebrated its Silver Jubilee in May 1962 when its President, Mr W.J. Rogerson traced its history back to September 1936 when a Cambridge team comprising Messrs Humphries, Betterman, Stearn, Constable and Nunn beat a team from Bury St Edmunds. Then in September 1999 St George's Table Tennis Club celebrated its 50th anniversary with a barbecue behind St George's Church. News files contain dozens of pictures of young –and not so young – competing in tournaments, and the ping pong table used to be a prominent feature in youth and social clubs. But have they now been succeeded by pool tables.

[SCAN OF YOUNGSTERS PLAYING PING PONG AT THE FREEBOOTERS COFFEE BAR AND CLUB, WELLINGTON STREET, CAMBRIDGE 1961; I HAVE SELECTED SOME PICTURES AND PUT THEM IN A PASTIC BAG IN THE 'SPORTS TABLE TENNIS' FILES IN THE NEWS LIBRARY]

More information has come in from readers about the Fire Brigade social club photograph I featured on January 16th; Jim Higgins from Cambridge recognises two of the dignitaries as being Miles and Peggy Burkitt who lived in Grantchester.

The week before that I featured a sketch of a quiet corner of a country churchyard. It had been made by Chris Godfrey & appears in a posthumous collection of his sketches produced by his

former colleagues in the County Council Conservation Department. But none of them could quite place it. Now Lady Richenda Huxley has written in to identify it as the south-east corner of Grantchester church, and another mystery is solved. *Chris Godfrey's Cambridgeshire* costs £12.50 from Shire Hall. [PRINT USED 9TH JAN – I CAN'T FIND SCAN, IT MAY BE ON DISK FOR THAT WEEK IF YOU HAVE IT STILL]

Brian Warboys from Oakington was so fascinated with a recent picture of Histon school football team, 1935 vintage, that he has trawled through his own archives to come up with a picture of the 1938-39 team that he captained – being the oldest and biggest of the lads. The goalkeeper was Bert Warrington and Brian can name all the others, including Ray Unwin, 'Puggy' Adams and Eric Tolliday. The reserve, not in kit, was Horace Clark. Although he lived in Oakington Brian – then known by his first name, George – went to Histon school at about 10 years old, cycling with Alan and Gordon Stearn. There was another family named Flack who walked there from Kings Hedges. [SCAN]

Bill Spencer from Waterbeach has lent me a picture that will tease anybody who had relations there in the 1950s. It shows a Waterbeach British Legion ladies' party in their hall – now the Beach Social Club. If you see anybody you know then please let me know [SCAN]

Memories 13th February 2002, by Mike Petty

The News of the death of Princess Margaret which broke at the weekend has plunged the Royal Family into a period of mourning; the Queen has lost a sister, the country a Princess.

Just 50 years ago the mourning was even more intense; for then the country had lost a King, the Queen had lost a father, and Cambridge felt she had lost a son.

This son moreover had been with them in the April of the previous year, 1951, accompanied by his Queen, Elizabeth (the present Queen Mother), and their younger daughter, Margaret Rose. When the car flying the Royal standard had drawn up to the city boundary at Newmarket Road many mothers from nearby houses had brought their children along with little flags and some enterprising onlookers climbed on to one of Marshall's buildings to get a bird's eye view. Carried away by their enthusiasm many toddlers had continued to cheer and wave small Union Jacks long after the Royal party had passed.

The Royals were here to attend a Thanksgiving Service to mark the restoration of the stained glass in King's College chapel windows following their removal during the war years. It was King George VI's first visit to the *City* of Cambridge – for he had been graciously pleased to grant, what he described as that "high and well-deserved honour on the ancient borough" only a month earlier.

But he had known the town decades before; in 1919-20 the future King – then Prince Albert, Duke of York - and his brother Prince Henry, later Duke of Gloucester, had attended Trinity college. Though they resided at Latham Road he had entered fully into undergraduate life, attended debates at the Union Society including one occasion when Winston Churchill was speaking. It was to prove a costly excursion for as he left the meeting the future King was accosted by a Bulldog – one of the University policeman – and later fined 6/8. His offence: smoking whilst in academic dress. The porter who 'progged' him was sent to collect the fine from the Prince himself and found himself quite put at ease by the Royal transgressor. Indeed he told the Prince that he had spotted him smoking on a previous occasion when leaving the Corn Exchange – but had mistaken him for one of the people who had been performing inside – a boxer!

The Duke had returned to the Union Society in 1921 to celebrate its centenary. Next year he was back in July to unveil a Memorial to Victory at the end of Station Road – though the actual bronze figure that was to stand on the plinth was not actually ready in time, and a plaster cast had been substituted – and a war memorial at the Leys School. He had also attended the Royal Show at Trumpington and the University Senate House where he had been made an Honorary Doctor of Law. In 1932 he had brought his Duchess for her first visit to Cambridge to open a new wing at Addenbrooke's Hospital for children and private patients.

But then had come the Abdication of his brother and the Duke of York had become King George VI. Many of his subsequent visits were ringed with secrecy, for during the Second World War the movement of members of the Royal Family were kept censored. Yet he was always here & there – inspecting bomber bases, chatting to Land Army girls in the fens, shaking hands at a new Royal Air Force Hospital at Ely.

In June 1947 he paid an official visit to his old college, Trinity, on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of its foundation. Mrs P. J. Anderson from Cherry Hinton Road remembered in “Memories” how: “I was working in a Government Office in Station Road at the time and as they came by train we all trooped into the road to cheer them on. To make it seem more impressive our departmental flag was flown along with the Union Jack and it wasn’t until the royal couple had passed that we realised it had been flying upside down”.

Now he was to pass through Cambridge one final time, for the train that was to convey his coffin from the Royal station at Wolferton, near Sandringham House where he had died, would make its stately way through the county towards King’s Cross. It would be crewed by Cambridge men. The driver would be Mr S. Harding who first drove the Royal train when the King came down to Trinity, and the fireman Mr C. Pearman from Weston Colville. Also on the train, as fitter, was Mr W.H. Simmonds of Kelvin Close, Cambridge. Another local link was that the stationmaster at Wolferton, Mr Bernard Hodge, had formerly been in charge of Whittlesford Station.

Long before the ten-coach funeral train bearing the body of King George VI, was due to arrive large crowds had gathered at the main vantage points along the track. At Littleport and Queen Adelaide people waited patiently and sombrely. At Ely station hundreds of people including American servicemen & workmen who had given up part of their dinner hour assembled on both sides of the crossing, whilst lines of traffic extended for some distance. The Chairman of the Ely Urban Council, Col G.L. Archer, requested councillors should meet him on the station platform to pay their last respects, only to be told the platforms were to be kept clear. The ruling was relaxed so that a small party, including Major Harry Legge Bourke, MP could be present as the train rolled smoothly through the station.

At the little village station of Waterbeach about 100 housewives, farmworkers and children gathered. A crowd of more than 800 people including undergraduates alongside boys from the Technical College lined the marshalling yards on either side of Mill Road bridge, Cambridge. The long black funeral coach, with its windows blacked out passed exactly on time.

The train steamed slowly through Cambridge station where 200 people lined the platform and more peered through the station entrance. One carriage had its blinds half drawn but the scarlet coats of Guardsmen could be glimpsed in another, contrasting with the black clothes of officials in a third. A group of railwaymen, standing caps off near Hills Road railway bridge were sure they glimpsed the pale pensive face of their new Queen, Elizabeth II, as it passed. They were there in case of emergency, as was, standing spick and span near Cambridge South signal box, the olive-green Welbeck Abbey, a Sandringham class locomotive, one of three trains standing by on the route in case of breakdown on the journey.

There were no breakdowns – at least none mechanical – as the funeral train continued passed groups of mourners at Foxton railway station and a busload of passengers in a Premier Travel coach, one of many that stood motionless at railway crossings while the King's final journey was made back to London.

Then came a period of mourning and intense preparation. Flags flew at half mast on college tower and church flagpole; one flew from ropes surrounding the hole made by Gas men excavating in Park Terrace; Cambridge was a city of flags.

When on Friday 15th February the King's funeral procession was winding its slow way through London's streets, so hundreds in Cambridge joined in Britain's mourning for her late Sovereign at services in the city. City and County dignitaries combined at Great St Mary's church where about a thousand people filled the church. Most of the men wore black ties. The scarlet robes of City aldermen provided the one touch of colour; even the gilt of the maces was subdued by a draping of black. There were those in the uniforms of the Territorials, police and fire brigade; Ambulance, W.V.S., Girl Guides and Boy Scouts and representatives from the Women's Institute. But many more could not get in and the service was relayed to an overflow gathering in the Guildhall. Then as the congregation slowly moved away the church was already beginning to fill with members of the University for their own service. All around the city, and throughout the county similar heads were being bowed in homage.

Then at two o'clock a crowd of some 300 people gathered on the Cambridge Market Place. Men removed their hats and heads were lowered. Cars and buses came to a halt as the explosion of a maroon marked the start of a two-minute silence. But by then the Mayor and dignitaries were no longer in Cambridge; like 2,000 others they had journeyed to Ely Cathedral for a last act of homage. Here they joined University officials alongside the chief citizens from around the county, the High Sheriff in his black velvet coat, cocked hat and silver-buckled shoes, the 15 Deputy Lieutenants - two ceremonially dressed in scarlet and blue complete with swords and plumed cocked hats - and the hundreds of ordinary men and women in their Sunday best. A 150-yard procession of clergy moved down the long pillared nave and under the great Octagon, then itself threatened with Death Watch Beetle. All joined in the official burial service for the King, as sanctioned by the Queen – a Queen that some in the congregation had proclaimed from the steps of their Guildhalls and Senate Houses just a few days earlier.

Then it was turn to return to their mansions or council houses and look forward to a time when it would be a smiling Queen's face that they saw in a golden carriage window.

But for some railwaymen the memory would linger of that face pale with grief seen through a railway carriage window of a train driven by her loyal Cambridge subjects as she took her first glimpse of the City her father had loved, and which had loved him as one of her own.

SCAN OF PICTURE OF KING, QUEEN (MOTHER) AND MARGARET AT KING'S COLLEGE 1951 & OF ARRIVAL OF THE COFFIN AT KINGS CROSS I HAVE SELECTED PICS OF HIS PREVIOUS VISITS WHICH ARE IN A PLASTIC ENVELOPE IN THE LIBRARY "ROYALS. GEORGE VI" FILE. THE ONE OF HIM WITH PRINCESS ELIZABETH AND HER CHILDREN SEEMS PARTICULARLY GOOD. PHOTOGRAPHIC ARE TRYING TO GET A PICTURE OF THE TRAIN FROM THE PA. I HAVE SOME PRINTS OF NEWSPAPER HEADLINES BUT THEY ARE NOT VERY CLEAR AND WILL MAKE ANOTHER WHEN IN LION YARD WHICH I WILL DELIVER MONDAY PM. THERE IS A PHOTO OF HEADLINES FOR DEATH OF KING – CHRIS ELLIOTT HAD IT THE OTHER DAY

Memories 19th February 2002, by Mike Petty

George Dethridge from Bar Hill has sent me some of his reminiscences. His family came to Cambridge during the London blitz after their house in the East End had been damaged by a bomb. Their first home was a small end terrace house in Clement Place, close to the Round Church, with a Morrison air-raid shelter in the front room, taking up much-needed space. Then in 1941 came a new sister; now there were nine of them with mum and dad and they needed somewhere bigger.

George recalls: “We moved to Gwydir Street, off Mill Road, an end terrace house with a back yard with three bedrooms, an outside toilet and tin bath hanging on the side wall. Not forgetting that there were now nine in the family the three bedrooms were not really big enough but it was home and it was the best that could be done at that time. Mum and dad slept with my young sister in their bedroom and my two other sisters had the other bedroom, so that meant us four brothers had to share the third bedroom. With one double bed this meant that we had to sleep top and toe. We slept like this for many years to come.

“Downstairs was the front room with a fireplace and one gas lamp for lighting; this room was known as best room and only used on high days and holidays such as Christmas. The next room was the dining and cooking room with a cast-iron black hearth and a fire was always on the go to supply hot water. In the next and final room was the scullery with a brick boiler heated by wooden blocks for washing the clothes. Near the window was a deep sink with just a cold tap for the whole house.

“That was the inside of our home and the backyard was about four yards square, not a lot of space. In the yard was the toilet but no toilet rolls, just pieces of old newspaper squares that dad had cut up and hung on a piece of string. At the back of the house was a large warehouse storing magnesium, for incendiary bombs. This in itself caused problems with rats and other vermin so we had a cat to help to control this aspect of our daily lives. The garden was for growing vegetables, but as my parents did not have a garden they had to buy most of their food from the local shop in the street and maybe scrounge from whoever had some to spare. Many friends’ parents kept chickens and those who had bigger gardens kept pigs and ducks, so if there were any scraps of food left over it was taken to the house with the pigs

“As there was no electric in the house our wireless was powered by an accumulator battery which had to be recharged every so often. This meant taking it to a shop in Newmarket Road, carrying it either in a cycle basket or walking with a baby’s pushchair, as they were very heavy. Coal merchants delivered coal for the fire but on some occasions when we had run low we would cycle to the Gas Works on Newmarket Road and collect a bag of coke, then try to balance it on the cycle frame to get it home. If it was wintertime and the house was very cold and damp dad would give us a hot brick wrapped in brown paper to take to bed as we did not own any hot water bottles

“Saturdays was our family bath night, the tin bath would be put in front of the fire. Dad would be in charge of this operation, and he would keep topping up the bath with hot water from a kettle off the fire. Our sisters always went first, we boys were too dirty so we would be waiting our turn. As soon as the girls were done we would then get into the bath and try to get clean. There was always a scum around the bath as by now it had five or six of us in the same water. After the bathing of us all we would sit in front of the fire to dry out and mum would then go through our hair on our heads to check for hair lice (fleas or nits). Dad would empty the tin bath with a saucepan; this took some time to complete and was the worst job of bath night. Mind you we always had Donald Peers singing on the wireless and his opening tune was “In a shady nook by a babbling brook” and we listened with a cup of warm drink, so that’s how Saturday nights bathing would end, this happened week in and week out.

“Another thing we all had to do, as a family was to go to the Auckland Road every so often to have a bath in some sort of disinfectant. This entailed attending the baths, undressing and a large woman in a white overall would usher us into a cubical in which there was a large bath full of horribly smelling white fluid. The female attendant would watch over us a make sure that we got into the bath and that our whole bodies were submerged and that we ducked our heads under the contents, making sure we were well and truly covered top to tail. I believe we had to spend ten minutes in the bath we were then allowed to get out, dry ourselves and go off home. I was told that the baths were to get rid of all types of lice and to prevent scabies. One thing for sure it was horrible and not recommended.

“My eldest sister was 16 & had now married a GI and moved to the USA, so it came that eight of us moved from Gwydir Street to a new home in Kings Hedges Road. The house itself was much bigger although it still only had three bedrooms, but it had a bathroom, for us a luxury, the toilet undercover outside, and a hot water system from the open coal fire. The house looked like a two story pre-fab house made of sheets of asbestos. I can remember our first bath night in the new house. As usual it was a Saturday; we had a fire all day and with the fire we should have had hot water. We got into the bathroom, undressed as mum ran the bath for us all and guess what! The water was stone cold and poor mum had to put up with us moaning about the cold water, but needless to say we still had to have a bath and get on with it. The hot water system never worked in all the years we lived in this house. So dad had to purchase a gas boiler to heat the water and then it had to be carried up the stairs in buckets.

“In the late forties and early fifties Kings Hedges Road was very country-like as two thirds was open fields all the way across to Arbury Road. At the end of the road was a very large wooded area, which went all the way to Impington. But the real pleasure of the woods was a massive store of army tanks that were parked in an old army camp on the edge of Cambridge with the entrance on Milton Road. This camp backed on to the wooded area so we would scale the fence and climb onto the tanks to play but keeping an eye out for guards, as we were trespassing. It was an adventure to explore and if we were seen the guards would shout at us and we ran like rabbits back into the woods. There was a rail siding into the camp where all sorts of goods would be delivered and moved out but it was also where the dead American servicemen’s bodies would be prepared for return to the USA for burial, sad times for many families.”

In 1963, twenty years after George’s family moved away, News columnist Erica Dimock surveyed Gwydir Street for her ‘Down Your Street’ feature. The terraced houses looked much the same as they had since they were built in the 1860s, but the atmosphere of the street had changed. It was becoming ‘the Soho of Cambridge’ as young families moved away to be replaced with people from Italy, Jamaica, Poland, Yugoslavia and a variety of other countries. One man who knew the street well was Harry Pateman, a magistrate. He had lived in the same house for 70 years and could remember when they had their own chemist’s shop amongst the facilities on offer. The number of shops had declined but still included three grocery stores: Ernest Mills had been trading for 14 years, S.F. Cockell had moved there in the mid 1950s, and C. Harpur’s shop had changed hands only recently. One newcomer was Sadie Segal who had brought her second-hand clothing shop from Norfolk Street, having been trading for 23 years, ever since she moved down from London during the war. But trade was not what it used to be, since people could now obtain almost anything on credit.

Shoes would always be needed, and would always need mending. The British Shoe Corporation had its repair works in Upper Gwydir Street where some 1300 pairs were repaired each week, as they had since 1914. But now things were changing and craftsmanship was being eliminated by new processes, stitching having been replaced by sticking.

Beer was an important part of the life of the street. Dale’s Brewery dominated the area near Mill Road. It had been founded in the 1890s, when there were no fewer than 22 breweries in

Cambridge. But by 1963 it was being used as a distribution depot by Whitbread and its landmark seven-foot high cup, a reminder of the gold cup won for the best beer at the Brewers' International Exhibition in 1911, had been removed for safety reasons. Of the five public houses that had once traded, two were closed by 1963; the former Prince of Wales had been owned for a while by Peter Cook of Footlights and 'Beyond the Fringe' frame and was then a lodging house, the Gwydir Arms was a private house. The Brewer's Arms had a good darts team, but the Alexandra Arms had lost its once-famous skittles club and at the Dew Drop inn the licensee, Leslie Peck, was lamenting the recent closure of the Embassy Ballroom in Mill Road, that had considerably reduced his custom. The Beaconsfield Conservative Club had itself formerly hosted dances in its imposing hall, then being used as a furniture warehouse, but both city and university judo clubs continued to meet in upper rooms.

It is hard to associate urban Gwydir Street with exotic snakes, lizards or spiders, but they were a regular hazard for H.W. Barnes, director of Whitehead's wholesale fruit and vegetable warehouse. They had hanging space for 900 stems of bananas some containing creepy crawlies, a quite impressive sight, & something like seven tons were received and despatched each week. Although oranges and South African apples were still very popular there was an increasing demand for more unusual fruit and continental produce.

But perhaps the most important building in the street was the Bath House with its nine baths for men, nine for women. It had been established in 1927 at a time when few houses had bathrooms of their own. By 1963 it was open from Tuesday to Saturday each week, charging a shilling a person, for which you got a hot bath, towel and piece of soap – with a supplement for scented bath cubes – and was used by 300 men and 100 women each week. But as housing improved so fewer people had need of its facilities, by 1975 it was losing £7,000 a year and its boilers – second hand when installed – were on their last legs. The baths closed in 1977.

Did you use the Gwydir Street baths, or do you have other memories of bath night. Write to Mike Petty

Memories 20th February 2002, by Mike Petty

Skittles hit the *News* headlines in February 1977 when reporter Alan Kersey took himself off to the Burleigh Arms on Newmarket Road, Cambridge, to meet men of great skill and dexterity. These sportsmen were members of the Cambridge & District Skittles League. Not for them the game where you swung a ball on a bit of string to knock down a few puny pieces of wood. They pitted their wits against other eight-man teams in a three-dimensional game that had its own terminology. Well how would a novice attempt to demolish London Bridge or shoot crows? Did he know how to stay in the hockey while coming round or most important of all, could he register more floorers than tackers when the game depends on pins?

Alan soon discovered that despite the apparent gibberish of the terminology there was more skill involved than in tenpin bowling or old fashioned skittle alleys – or those little boards with ball and string.

In this macho game teams of eight would hurl, toss or spin a flat, flying saucer-shaped cheese at a table resembling a large, sparsely padded armchair upon which were spaced nine wooden pins. The object was to knock as many down as you could in as few throws as possible. Get them all down in one go and you have notched up a "floorer". Hit the front and there is a derisive groan: a "tacker".

Each player had a maximum of four throws to demolish as many as possible, next the other members of the team took their turn. Then it was time for their opponents to respond and if at

the end the score was tied it was down to each player having one final throw, most down wins.

But 25 years ago the dedicated band of serious skittles players were a dying breed. Whereas players used to have three regular practice sessions a week, now they generally arrived just in time for a game and then turned their attention to the one-armed bandits or other attractions of the 'seventies pub scene. In the old days, he was told, coachloads of players used to arrive long before the game to limber up; though perhaps an account of how the team from the George and Dragon in Thompson's Lane, Cambridge used to travel by coach to the Maypole – just three hundred yards away – may have been somewhat improved in the telling.

For the world was changing. Many of the pubs had themselves closed and in others landlords had thrown skittles out because it was too noisy, drowning even the noise of the jukebox; the game was in danger of disappearing

Ron Mansfield recalled sadly that of the 12 teams belonging to the League in 1964, only three remained. It was still going strong at the British Legion Club in Mill Road where two teams practised regularly & Pye's had recently formed a club. There were innovations – there was now a cup for mixed doubles, and hopes for an all-women's team, but somehow it was not the same. "Why worry", said Dick Brown, captain of the Burleigh Arms team. "It's a good night out and we all have a laugh" But is it still played – and do you recognise any of the Burleigh Arms team of 25 years ago

[NEG 2147712 – ALAN KERSEY'S CONCENTRATION IS DIRUPTED BY SLIGHTLY INEBRIATED MEMBERS OF THE BURLEIGH ARMS SKITTLES TEAM. THE CHEESE IN MID AIR IS ABOUT TO KNOCK OVER THE REMAINING PINS AND WIPE THE CYNICAL SMILES FROM THEIR FACES; OTHER PICS IN NEWS 'SPORTS.SKITTLES' FILE]

Meanwhile just down Newmarket Road the regulars of the Five Bells public house were hoping to achieve greater fame – a World Record, no less. They had trained assiduously with the assistance of various Cambridge chippies; they had contacted the Guinness Book of Records, they had even been donated a commemorative trophy. But their hopes of setting up a World Mushy Pea Eating Championship were doomed to ignominious failure. The problem was the peas themselves. "You just wanted to be sick, they were so foul", said landlord George Low. "They were so terrible no one could eat them. I was looking to eat 10 bowls-full myself but could only manage two". The processed peas had been provided free by a commercial soup firm, who defended their product. They were blended to meet the delicate palates of customers in the North of England, Cambridge folk just did not appreciate them. Despite the taste – "like eating flour and water with nasty undertones" - Ronald Toates managed to down nine bowls-full to win the challenge trophy. Paul Currington won the race for the fastest half-pint bowl with a time of 14 seconds – "I reckon he did it so fast so he could get them down without having to taste them", said landlord Low. Despite their failure all were determined to try again – only this time they'd use their own home-made mushy peas.

[NEG 56377 – COMPETITORS TACKLE THE PEAS]

Tony Brothie has responded to my request for information on the early days of table tennis with a photograph of officials of the Cambridge and District Table Tennis Association taken in 1961 when they celebrated their 25th anniversary. He has another of a tournament in the Corn Exchange in 1962, the same venue that had been used 60 years earlier. My continuing delving through the files of the News have now turned up evidence of the formation of perhaps the earliest Cambridge 'Ping Pong' club, in February 1902. It was based in the New Town Conservative Club, Russell Street where two Whitmore patent tables had been

provided, & was open to residents in the New Town district of Cambridge. The honorary secretary was Mr E. W. Illsley of 23, Bateman Street

[SCAN OF PIC OF TABLE TENNIS ASSOCIATION MEMBERS IN 1961 AND GAME IN CORN EXCHANGE 1962]

More readers have contacted me to say they've seen family members in recent 'Memories' photos; Gwen Lister from Girton saw her youngest son at the Schools Music Festival; they lived in Littleport then and the Martin School choir always took part. She also recognised the Mrs Joan Talbot of Ely at the piano

By peering through a magnifying glass Elizabeth Braybrooke (nee Halcrow) from Gt Shelford, recognised Bob Stepney, Ida Taylor and Captain A.C. Taylor on a visit to Cambridge Fire Station alongside her mother who was Mayoress of Cambridge in 1961-62. Joyce Todd from Bar Hill spotted her late husband Peter on the picture of Histon school football team.

Mr G.S. Spencer from Littleport saw his sister-in-law amongst the ladies attending Waterbeach British Legion party, and Mrs S. Howell (nee Bavester) tells me her mother was there too; she was born and brought up in the village before moving across the road to Landbeach in the 1950s

Mr J. Williamson saw his wife amongst the 19th Cambridge Guiders at York Street Mission Hall in 1945. He has lent me a copy of 'The authentic route map and guide and advertisers' directory for Cambridge' which must date back to the 1930s. Amongst the companies advertising are Cambridge Service Motor Company (incorporating Hunnybun & Co) of Hobson Street, W. Ridgeon corn and seed merchant of Sussex Street, Harper and Oliver corset makers from St Andrew's Street and Bunty's Restaurant "under the personal supervision of Misses Alison & Edgar", 22 Market Hill. Do any of these ring bells with you?

Derek Barham from Cambridge has supplied details of the Locomotive Cooling Tower at Cambridge railway station; he watched its demolition by explosives on 1st November 1964. Even then it took several days of pounding with a swing ball from a mobile crane to finally bring it down the sturdy structure, supporting the feeling of railmen that it was so well built it would stand upright on any one of its four legs. Derek knew it well: "I remember as a young cleaner just starting on the footplate grades (which led to firemen, then driver) climbing the staircase to the engine house at the top of the tower, which had a two rail handrail. By sitting on the top rail, locking my feet on the lower rail and leaning back as far as possible it was possible on a clear day to see Ely Cathedral"

Mrs Olive Osborne from Comberton remembers the old Silver Street bridge; she writes: "It was in May of 1953 when I took my first driving test in my father-in-law's 1934 Morris 8 Saloon car, after quite a few trips being taught by my husband. Starting at Parkside with the examiner I eventually drove along Silver Street across to the Sidgwick Avenue area for the three-point turn, returning back across the bridge for my assessment. The only adverse comment was that I overtook a cyclist on Silver Street Bridge, which possibly was more noticeable than it would be today. In spite of that he gave me the all clear, I had passed first time! Someday I must take a stroll over the bridge before they close it to traffic. Happy memories.

Memories 27th February 2002, by Mike Petty

With the prospect of road tolls once more in the news people will doubtless be thinking of ways to buck the system. Perhaps they could learn from the experiences of a Waterbeach man

who, 25 years ago, found an efficient way of travelling to Cambridge: horse power. Only this time it was on four legs, not four wheels.

Dick Dunford arrived at Waterbeach during the Second World War as part of the ground crew with 514 Squadron, he later worked at Marshall's and then at Stansted Airport. His wife, Margaret, joined him a year or so later – she saw herself on the picture of the Waterbeach British Legion ladies I featured the other week.

Dick had always liked horses and when one winter he spotted Fred, a grey/ chocolate brown pony standing bedraggled in water down the fen he decided to buy him. He found stables at Milton and when it was time to do the shopping they made the trip together into Cambridge.

In those days the traffic was somewhat lighter but Dick experienced more parking problems than normal commuters. Well what do you do with a horse? Fred would be quite content being left in a car park – but car parks did not quote a parking rate for ponies. Cycle racks made convenient hitching posts, but in Cambridge they could be full of bikes. Fortunately in those days there were parking meters and the News photographer caught up with Fred waiting patiently in Fitzroy Street, his reins securely tethered, while his master made his calls.

Dick always paid the going rate for his stay but, unlike many motorists, he never got a parking ticket – “the traffic wardens seem to like him”, he claimed.

In the end Fred got too old to make the journeys and Dick himself died four years ago. But Margaret still has fond memories of her four-legged friend – even if she never actually rode him herself. [SCAN OF DICK DUNFORD AT METER, FRED IN FITZROY STREET]

While on the issue of ponies and traffic, can anybody shed any light on this intrepid rider waiting a chance to cross Hills Road in April 1968 – hopefully they're not still there! [SCAN OF PONY RIDER]

Another answer to transport problems is to let the train take the strain. But in early 1977 the folk at Somersham were agitating to get rid of their railway station. The old wooden buildings were, they claimed, an eyesore and a danger to children and they petitioned the owners, Cambridgeshire County Council to do something about it. Then the news broke that a mystery buyer had come forward who intended to dismantle the station and transport it, lock, stock and ticket office and re-erect it on a private railway line in Berkshire. Good riddance! was the villagers' reaction with parish council chairman hoping that the purchaser would take the signal box as well. But did the plan go through and does anybody know where Somersham station now is [SCANS OF SOMERSHAM STATION, ONE SHOWS CHILDREN]

In February 1977 the News carried another railway story, this one not about a station, but a carriage. It had been built in the 1890s and used on the London to Edinburgh express until 1921. When it came to the end of the line it was taken off the track at Offord Darcy where it served for 50 years as a home for Sid Dighton and his family. It was an ideal place to live, very cosy and with no draughts or anything, claimed Joan Athow who had lived there since she was a child. But now time had taken its toll, the old carriage had started to deteriorate and it had to go. Once more an enthusiast rushed to the rescue. A London businessman stepped forward to finance its restoration and the carriage was to be removed to a railway museum at Tenterden in Kent where it would give summer visitors a glimpse back into the steam era. News photographers took some snaps of the familiar landmark before it left Offord Darcy for the final time – do you remember it? [SCANS OF JOAN ATHOW AND THE CARRIAGE]

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Memories, 6th March 2002, by Mike Petty

The headlines last week were dominated by the news of the death of Spike Milligan, the last of the Goons and the tribute paid to him by one of his greatest fans, Prince Charles. Then came the furore caused by a flippant remark by Prince Philip, who is amongst other things Chancellor of Cambridge University.

But there is a connection between the University, the Prince and the Goons that seems so far to have gone unrecorded – and it concerns the ancient sport of Tiddlywinks

The pastime was first patented in London in 1888 and the game essentially consists of teams competing to squidge winks into a pot, players take turns, first one to get them all in wins.

Not much to it you might think. But then in 1955 great academic brains did begin to think about the technicalities and at Cambridge University a group of undergraduates got together to form a club for the sole purpose of playing tiddlywinks. It was the first in history – but being the first they had great difficulty in finding other groups to play against. They sent out challenges to well-known people. Gilbert Harding, the broadcaster, declined; he said he “gave up the sport at the onset of adolescence at the age of six”. Denis Compton the cricketer did not think he was fit enough – and anyway he could not find anybody else to form a team.

Then the C.U.Tw.C (Cambridge University Tiddlywinks Club) issued a challenge to the Goons offering to play them “anytime, anywhere, at your convenience”. They anxiously watched the post for a reply - the Goons’ convenience was unfortunately too small for a game of Tiddlywinks.

Eventually their challenge was accepted by Noel Whitcomb of the ‘Daily Mirror’ who formed a team composed mainly of girls from West-End shows and theatres. The University was victorious. It was some time before other challengers could be encouraged to compete; Addenbrooke’s Hospital fielded a team, as did Westminster College, but then things went quiet again.

While the fruitless struggle for fixtures continued the Club produced a thesis on the Science of Tiddlywinks. They analysed the flight, spin and roll of a tiddlywink, and the effect of external factors such as wine, women and song. They undertook expeditions to Eaden Lilley’s carpet showroom to experiment on the various varieties of playing surface before deciding that the ideal was the isotropic compressible Berkshire needleloom carpet.

Work also continued to redefine rules and tactics resulting in a new concept: the “squop”, or cover. Nobody could now play a wink that was being covered, however slightly, by another wink. When one team has all its remaining winks covered the opponents are allowed three shots for every wink of their own not covered or engaged in covering, after which they must free one of their opponents’ winks. The new rules were perhaps too complex for ordinary citizens to understand, the game seemed doomed to disappear.

Then in 1958 came the headline that changed the tiddlywinks world for ever. It appeared not in the Daily Mirror but in The Spectator. “Does Prince Philip cheat at tiddlywinks?” it screamed. Off went an official challenge to Buckingham Palace, this time it was accepted! But the Prince would need a team – and this time the Goons responded to his request. Spike Milligan, Harry Secombe, Peter Sellers would be there & together with BBC announcer Wallace Greenslade, Graham Stark, Max Geldray and writers Alan Simpson and Ray Galton would join Prince Philip on the mat against the might of the C.U.Tw.C

In late February 1958 the eyes of the world were trained on Cambridge Guildhall where the battle of the winks would be fought. The Cambridge University team practised, training on Babysham. The Royalists trained on Guinness supplied by the team leader. Quite what liquid refreshment was taken by the umpires, John Snagge of the BBC and Chris Brasher of Cambridge University, has not been passed down to history.

Then came tragedy; just before the match came the news of a Royal injury. John Snagge read a message from the Palace: “Unfortunately while practising secretly I pulled an important muscle in the second or tiddly joint of my winking finger”. It continued in suitably diplomatic terms. “Please give my best wishes to the two teams taking part in the great contest” ... but then Snagge was urged: “but try, if you can, to do it in such a way that you convey that I wish the Cambridge team to lose and my incomparable champions to win a resounding and stereoscopic victory”. It concluded: “Wink up; fiddle the game and may the Goons’ side win. Philip”

But without the presence of HRH the battle was doomed to defeat. From the moment Chris Brasher fired the squidge-off the University lead player, Peter Downs swept into action. In a brilliant opening session he succeeded in establishing a All-England record for the most points scored in the Cambridge Guildhall on a rainy Saturday by cupping all five of his winks without any of them being squopted first by the visiting players. In fact it was this element of the game that was to prove the Goons' downfall; only once in the entire match did they succeed in this essential strategy, and that was when Mr Harold Secombe managed to cover captain Spike Milligan's wink. The resultant language would have made even a Royal Prince blush.

During the half-time interval for refreshments of leeks, sticks of rhubarb and glasses of champagne perry the Goons were noticed to be perspiring badly. Knowledgeable exponents of the finer points of the game agreed out that their team uniform of voluminous yellow surplices, orange, yellow and black striped caps and grey ties bearing the insignia of the Royal Tiddlywinks Club was not helping

Falling increasingly further behind the visitors tried various diversionary tactics. A riot almost broke out when "Slugger" Secombe was accused of bellying Blue winks away from the cup every time he bent down – but the umpire ruled that his stomach extended beyond the three-mile limit and so he had no jurisdiction over it. Then Peter Sellers stopped the proceedings by invoking Bluebottle but to no avail. The 600 screaming spectators saw the Goons massacred by a massive 120½ to 50½.

Prizes were awarded by the Mayoress of Cambridge, Mrs B.J.S. White and the tournament ended with an inspired rendering of the "Tiddlywinks Anthem" to the tune of "Men of Harlech" before the Royal champions slumped off, roundly defeated.

The reaction from the Palace was not recorded, but it was to be many years before members of the Goons received royal honours – and it was Prince Charles, not his father, who presented Spike Milligan with his honorary knighthood!

But Prince Philip's involvement with the Cambridge University Tiddlywink Club had not finished. In 1961 he awarded a Silver Wink, which still bears his name, to be competed in an annual championship between the University of Cambridge team and another – only in the absence of the Goons it is now the University of Oxford!

[IN THE LIBRARY 'SPORTS TIDDLYWINKS' FOLDER THERE IS A PLASTIC ENVELOPE WITH PAGES FROM THE OFFICIAL PROGRAMME AND PICTURES OF OTHER TIDDLY WINKS MATCHES. THERE IS ALSO A PICTURE OF PRINCE PHILIP TAKEN IN 1956 IN WHICH HIS TIDDLY FINGER IS SHOWN GRASPING A BATON AND SOME NEGATIVES OF SPIKE MILLIGAN TAKEN IN CAMBRIDGE IN 1974]

Does anybody know what became of the old Somersham station, I asked. Yes came the reply from several readers, including Judy Clegg and Mike Gates. They confirm that it was bought by Sir William McAlpine and re-erected on his private estate at Henley-on-Thames. The had a private track running through the grounds and his architect suggested he needed a station to complete his train-set, so he bought Somersham where it now does duty as a tea-room on the four times each year when it is opened up to selected groups. The Cambridge Railway Circle visited it some time ago and it also featured in a Sunday supplement article.

Julie Evans (nee Bavey) of Duxford was first on the phone to identify the mystery picture of schoolchildren taken in 1963. They were youngsters at Gt Shelford primary school and she can recognise several of the lads, including a Townsend, Pesky and Ellwood while the blonde in the background was Linda Platt

Charles Cornwell has e-mailed to say he recognises various of the skittle players (Memories 20th February), including Dick (Rustler) Brown, Alan Fordham (landlord), Johnny Brittain

and Dave Barker. He used to play in the team himself, but escaped having his picture taken. Karen Fawcett from Harston also contacted me to say she recognised her dad, landlord Fordham; she describes him as “the one in front with the wobbly legs”.

Memories 13th March 2002, by Mike Petty

Mothering Sunday in the quiet little village of Steeple Bumpstead in March 1977 was proceeding peacefully, there was hardly a car to be seen as the congregation began to assemble in the parish church. Then things started to turn ugly. Suddenly a convoy arrived carrying people from Norfolk, Suffolk, Kent and London. They were not there to celebrate Motherhood but to protest.

The new arrivals were members of the Hunt Saboteur’s Association and the object of their anger was the Vicar, the Rev Eric Wheeler, a supporter of the local Puckeridge and Thurlow Hunt. Soon they were outside his church, waving their banners and blowing hunting-horns. The Vicar and villagers ignored them as best they could as they started their worship. Then the congregation inside the church suddenly increased in number when some 30 young demonstrators filed into the front pews. They refused to acknowledge the service until the end of the first hymn. Then they rose to their feet to sing: “All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small. All things wise and wonderful, the vicar kills them all”.

When the 69-year old, bespectacled cleric appealed for quiet he was greeted by chanting; undeterred but red-faced with anger he confronted the unruly youths ordering them out: “I will not have interference with the divine worship” he told them. His parishioners rallied round, chanting back at the demonstrators and helping to clear the church. Then they continued to pray.

At the end of the service the congregation refused to be cowed by the incessant noise of the protestors in the churchyard and escorted the vicar to his car. It was prompted attacked and rocked from side to side, while some anti-hunters jumped on to the bonnet. Police cleared a passage and the vicar left. “It’s no good saying anything to these people. They are not prepared to listen too anyone’s point of view”, he said later

A spokesman for the Hunt Supporters’ Association acknowledged that the demonstration did get a bit rowdy, but that they were essentially peaceful protestors. It was not a view shared by the mums at Bumpstead 25 years ago. [NEGS REF 81077 – SERVICE IN PROGRESS, 8117726 – PENSIONERS LEAVE SERVICE – SHOULD BE WITH NEGS]

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As Cambridge continues to evolve so new plans emerge to revitalise or replace buildings and shops in various parts of the city. The latest involve the Chesterton Road “Mitcham’s Corner” area and one benefit claimed for the redevelopment will be the opportunity to improve congestion at what had long been a traffic bottleneck. With so many roads converging at one spot road engineers have over the years devised various improvements to ease the flow. It was during the Great War that somebody came up with a new idea. Each morning a wooden structure with posts was carried into the centre of the road, and motorists went round it; each evening it was removed, to the amusement of local residents. The mini roundabout had arrived. It was 1932 that “Milton Road merry-go-round” – Mitcham’s permanent roundabout – was installed and it was soon working so well that another was constructed at the Four Lamps at the other end of Victoria Avenue. In 1935 more roundabouts were being considered for the junctions of Cherryhinton Road with Hills Road and Perne Road and others followed. [PICS OF MITCHAM’S CORNER IN LIBRARY FILES, SCAN OF MITCHAMS 1930S]

In March 1977 the brave experiment of 1915 was repeated on another of Cambridge's traffic arteries: Newmarket Road which was then being widened and improved to cope with horrendous delays. The scheme called for new and better traffic lights at the junction with Coldham's Lane, but they were not quite ready. This time somebody had the idea of taking an old tractor tyre and laying it in the middle of the road. They called it an experimental mini-roundabout and its impact was immediate. Even at the height of the rush hour traffic was suddenly flowing smoothly. One driver said his driving time to his home in Chesterton had been cut from 20 minutes to five. Police Chief Inspector Maurice Murden said: "To think our problems have been solved by an old tractor tyre! It is something we have advocated for years, and now we just hope that it will become permanent".

The News sent a photographer to record the scene in pictures that are a reminder of just how much change there has been on this major approach to Cambridge over the last quarter-century. [SCANS OF NEWMARKET ROAD ROUNDABOUT 1977]

Can you help Steve Odell who runs three community and local history websites for the villages of Wimpole, Orwell and Arrington. He is specifically seeking information on the American Military Hospitals in Wimpole Park during and after the war. It was located just inside the Arrington Gates in what is now an empty field on the Wimpole Hall National Trust estate & no traces remain of the large complex of buildings that were finally demolished around 1960. Steve has received a significant number of e-mails from Americans who knew they were born at "Wimpole Park" & want to know what and where it was. The hospital site was effectively American territory, and babies born there qualified for automatic American citizenship. A Wimpole Park reunion of servicemen and 'babes' is held every year in the States.

Steve would like to locate some contemporary photographs of the hospital - both when it was a wartime Army Hospital and also when it reopened in 1952 as a United States Air Force Hospital. He'd also appreciate the loan of any Wimpole Park hospital memorabilia, maps or data. Related history, articles, information, memories and reminiscences from anyone who used or worked at the hospitals would be particularly welcome.

There's one specific puzzle. Joan Kjargaard (nee Knight) who worked at Wimpole Park from its re-opening in 1952 until she left in September 1957 to emigrate to Canada, has written to Steve to say: "I was the base seamstress and my office was in the Linen Control building. I met hundreds of Americans in the course of my work. Initially I furnished the hospital, then the Interdenominational Chapel, using my furnishing skills to provide for the three religions that practised there. I (together with most of the English staff) painted many of the Chapel windows during lunch hours - it was a gift to the Americans from us. I know several people are wondering if any windows survived when Wimpole Park was restored to its former Park setting, or perhaps there are former members who have photographs?" So can any News readers locate any of the original windows surviving in an attic somewhere or provide photographs of the chapel or the windows? If you can help please contact Steve Odell at 31 Cambridge Road, Wimpole, Royston SG8 5QD or e-mail him on steve.odell@dial.pipex.com [PIX OF US SERVICEMEN IN NEWS LIBRARY WAR FILES]

[HOLD THIS STORY BACK?] Another American military connection features in a letter from Colin Kidman of Great Shelford. He writes: "In 1943, faced with a growing number of fatal casualties resulting from the bombing raids on Germany, the American Army Air Force decided that there was an urgent need for a Cemetery in East Anglia. Initially it would provide a temporary resting-place for coffins until the end of the war following which they were to be sent to their home towns in the U.S.A. if the relatives so desired. A decision would then be taken if the cemetery should become a permanent home for those who remained.

“My late father, Major A.V.Kidman, MC was, in 1943, District Commander Royal Engineers for the Cambridge district. Part of his responsibilities were to liaise with the American Forces who had an enormous Supply Depot on Milton Road, where the Science Park is now located. The Commanding Officer at the Depot, Col. Barksdale discussed the problem with my father and asked him to seek out a suitable site. It had been decided that Cambridge would be a good area, providing ready access for relatives coming from America. After much discussion at home, looking at large scale maps of the district it was decided to suggest that Madingley Hill would be ideal. A sloping piece of land with distant views across the fens with Ely Cathedral clearly visible on a good day was chosen.

“Once the Americans accepted the idea Major Kidman made an approach to the owners, Trinity College, who readily agreed to the proposal. The legal requirements were quickly dealt with and what followed is now a well-known part of history.

“In recognition of his efforts my father was made an Officer of the American Legion of Merit the medal being accompanied by a Citation signed by President Truman. Colin has now given these back to the Cemetery and they are displayed in a glass topped table in the Reception Room.” [PIC OF MADINGLEY CEMETERY IN LIBRARY FILES]

One feature of the American Cemetery story that always intrigues me was that it was dedicated at the end of May 1944 with much publicity and headlines about the presence of famous service chiefs. But newspapers were severely restricted about what they could report during the war – so why so many column inches. Could it be that at the time the CDN was headlining the numbers of military men at Madingley the real centre of activity was down on the south coast where the D-Day invasion fleet was being assembled. Was it was all part of an effort to distract German attention from the forthcoming invasion – especially when planning for D-Day had taken place in Cambridge with Montgomery and Eisenhower visiting in March 1944. Does anybody have pictures of them?

And can anybody help Margaret Pearl who is seeking details of which troops were stationed in Cambridge during the Summer of 1918. She has heard that Australian and Welsh soldiers were billeted on private households in the Mill Road area. And there were also American soldiers in Cambridge at that time, for there is a picture of them playing baseball at Fenners cricket ground while some 250 Russian officers and their families from the Archangel area were encamped near Newmarket until 1920. It's all a long way back but does any of this jog memories?

Mr G. Flack from Quy has written to identify the pony and rider I featured in Memories on 27th February. The young lady rider was Val Belts whose parents then kept the Red Lion at Cherry Hinton and the pony's name was Skylark – it was a well-known jumping and gymkhana pony. They were on their way to Mr Webbs, the blacksmith in Russell Street. [PIC OF WEBB THE BLACKSMITH IN LIBRARY FILES, RUSSELL STREET]

Whilst on the subject of ponies does anybody have any pictures or information about the riding school in King Street, Cambridge? Margaret French of Stapleford reminded me of it. She also has very special memories of the Royal Tiddlywinks Match between the Goons and Cambridge University: she was actually there at the Guildhall and has a programme with the autographs of both sides. Even this has an unexpected twist for Harry Secombe had to leave quickly at the end of the match and had no time for signing. Not to be put off she finally managed to make contact with him in May 1989 – over 30 years later - and he then obliged. This must make her programme unique – unless you have one too [SCAN OF PROGRAMME AUTOGRAPHS & PIX]

More readers have added details of the whereabouts of the former Somersham railway station, including Mr A. Tall from Colne and John Gray from Cambridge. Mrs V. Ellwood from Gt

Shelford is the mum of one of the boys shown in the picture of Gt Shelford school in July 1963. She also attended the school along with her ten brothers and sisters.

Memories 20th March 2002, by Mike Petty

Next Sunday Cambridge United are up for the Cup. They and their supporters will make their way to the new, superb Millennium Stadium at Cardiff for the final of the LDV Vans Trophy against Blackpool.

It has not been the best season ever for the U's but if history is any guide they should do well, for the second year of the decade has traditionally been a good one for the team.

- 1912 : the club was formed, as "Abbey United" and played their first match under a street lamp in the Stanley Road area of Cambridge
- 1921-22 : played their first season of competitive football in the Cambridgeshire Football League Division Three, coming top of the league and winning promotion into Division Two
- 1922-23 : topped the League and were promoted to Division One; next season they moved to a new ground just off Newmarket Road which was known as the "Celery Trenches" because of the long furrows that ran the length of the pitch. It now forms part of the Whitehill Road housing estate.

The 1920s saw the most successful season in the Club's history when in 1928-29 the first team won five trophies and ended up topping the new Cambridgeshire League Division One section A.

- 1932 : in August the team moved to a new ground, their present Stadium. They had won promotion to the Cambridge League Premier Division in 1931 but the old 'Celery Trenches' were unsuitable for top-rate matches and the club had played home games on Parker's Piece. With a new ground Abbey United re-entered the F.A. Challenge Cup but on the first match on the new pitch they went down to Histon Institute 5-4

During the war years sport had to take second place to fighting but the team continued to play football to prevent the ground being requisitioned for military use. When competitions began again they applied to join the United Counties League and in October 1947 formed their own Abbey United Sporting Club. The 1949-50 season saw the team bring professional football to Cambridge for the first time

- 1951-52 : the team started the season with a new name, Cambridge United, so that when they became nationally known other teams would know where they were from. They appointed their first full-time manager, Bill Whittaker and completed the Supporters Club canteen and clubhouse. By the end of the decade their application to join the Southern League was accepted. For the first time in their history both Cambridge Town and Cambridge United would be in the same league.
- 1961-62 : Cambridge United started their first season in the Premier Division of the Southern League having taken the decision to make all their first-team players full-time professionals. The floodlights were improved and the ground was referred to for the first time as the "Abbey Stadium". The team had a fine cup runs, beating Margate in the Southern League Cup final, Hitchin Town in the final of the East Anglian Cup and only

narrowly missed the Treble by losing to Cambridge City over two legs in the Cambridgeshire Professional Cup.

United were in Germany, playing an International Tournament – and losing to Bayer Leverkusen in the final - when the news broke at the end of May 1970 that they had been elected to the Fourth Division of the Football League. Supporters travelled to Royston to meet the team on their return home and drove into Cambridge in a triumphant cavalcade of vehicles. Thousands greeted them in the streets and there was a crowded reception in the Guildhall. [ANY PICTURES THIS IN NEWS FILES?]

- 1972-73 : excitement was intense as the final match of the season saw United face Mansfield Town; some 10,542 fans set a new attendance record and “the whole of Barnwell shook with a deafening roar” when Ronnie Walton hooked home the winning goal – for it secured promotion to Division Three. [SCANS OF PICTURES USED IN MEMORY LANE BOOK, THE ORIGINALS ARE IN LIBRARY FILES]. Sadly it was for one season only and they slipped back the following year. Following a poor start to the 1974-5 season Manager Bill Leivers was replaced by Ron Atkinson & they reached the third round of the F.A. cup before losing out to Mansfield Town. The club made more headlines in April 1977 when “pace-setting, record-breaking Cambridge United” became the first club in the country to reach 50 points in a 4-0 hammering of Halifax and they ended up champions of the League. Next season they gained promotion yet again and were in Division Two, though Atkinson had moved on to manage West Bromwich Albion. The Seventies ended on a high-note with a F.A. cup-run that saw a First Division team play at the Abbey Stadium for the first time; United held the visitors, Aston Villa to a 1-1 draw. The replay saw thousands of fans journey to Villa Park to establish a record crowd of 36,835 spectators – never had United played in front of so many people - and they took the lead, only to be finally defeated by four goals to one.
- 1982-83 saw more Cup action; in the Milk Cup (Football League Cup) they crashed out to Barnsley 5-2 on aggregate but held their nerve to beat them in the Fourth Round of the F.A. Challenge Cup before losing out to Sheffield Wednesday. It was a season of mixed fortunes, including a massive 6-0 defeat by Chelsea at Stamford Bridge but United still ended up mid-way in the Canon League, division Two. Then fortunes turned sour. Next season saw them relegated to Division Three, where they came bottom, some 25 points below the next team, Preston North End. The 1985-86 season was as bad, although they did end up above Preston they still faced the prospect of relegation to the Vauxhall Conference – but were re-elected. Disappointment in the League was forgotten next season with a fine run in the League Cup. Leighton Orient were despatched in the first round, Wimbledon in the second. Round three saw improved floodlights installed for a clash with Second Division Ipswich Town when United won by the single goal. Excitement rose to fever pitch when the news came of their next opponent – mighty Tottenham Hotspur. In November 1986 the Abbey Stadium was packed to its 10,033 capacity who roared as a Mark Cooper header cancelled out an early Spurs goal. But the class of the visitors – whose team cost a massive £3 million eventually told. Spurs later spent even more, acquiring United’s leading goalscorer – the man who had embarrassed them in the cup-tie. [PICTURES OF SPURS NOV 1986 FROM NEWS FILES?]
- 1992 – I DON’T HAVE ANY NOTES AT HOME, CHECK LIBRARY INDEXES & ADD WORDS – IF THERE ARE ANY!

Now in 2002 United languish at the bottom of the League and relegation once more stares them in the face. But history shows that in the big matches the team pulls through. On their last appearance at a National Stadium – Wembley in May 1990 – United beat Chesterfield to win promotion once more to the Third Division. It was followed by a triumphal procession

through Cambridge in an open-topped double-decker bus to a civic reception in the Guildhall. It's time to repeat the experience and give another generation of football fans something to cheer about, another memory to cherish in the club's long history. [SCAN OF PICTURE OF CIVIC WELCOME – ORIGINAL IN NEWS FILES]

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Ex-railwayman Ron Gooch from Gt Shelford has sent a photograph showing the old Somersham Station in its new location on Sir William McAlpine's private railway in Buckinghamshire [SCAN]

Thanks to the people who wrote in to identify the children at Gt Shelford school I have now managed to track down the negatives. They were taken at a Music Festival there in July 1963. One of them shows a wider group of children [THE NEG WAS SCANNED FOR USE THIS WEEK, SANDRA KNOWS ABOUT IT]

This week's mystery picture discovered amongst the News' archives is really a puzzler. It shows a group of youngsters on some sort of machine – could it be part of a fire engine? There's just one older gentleman standing with them. It was probably taken about 1963. [SCAN]

Memories 27th March 2002, by Mike Petty

I am very grateful to one of my regular correspondents, Mrs Daphne Foreman of Cambridge who has written with her memories of one of the old National Schools in Cambridge that she says people might easily overlook. But she has also opened up an area of the city that seems not to have been much discussed: Occupation Road, near the junction of East Road and Newmarket Road.

“A year or two after I came to live in Cambridge in the late 1940s I was asked to play the piano on Sunday afternoons at a Sunday School run by two ladies from St Paul's church, Miss Maltby and Miss Atkinson. This was held in the old National School in Occupation Road, their idea being to get off the streets on Sunday afternoons the many children who lived in Occupation Road, Gas Lane and the other small streets in that area.

“We sang simple hymns and choruses with prayers and bible readings by the ladies. I do not remember any of the children's names, except that there was a Charmaine, which seemed to amuse the ladies and one ‘big girl’ or young woman named Joyce Tinker who, I think, was a sort of pupil-teacher and was also from St Paul's. I remember one lovely Christmas party there

“The building was ‘L’-shaped, set back behind a rectangle of ground – perhaps the old school playground – with the main room gable-ended on to the road. The other premises, including toilets were in the other branch of the ‘L’, parallel with the road, behind the yard.

“For some years then I lived on the other side of the city, the two ladies have died and when I came back to live in the area the school had become an antiques shop and then later a bookbinder's workshop. By then it was in very poor condition, with buckets catching the drips from the roof, but the men produced splendid work under those adverse conditions and after it was finally demolished moved to Cobble Yard behind the Grafton Centre where they are still operating.

“Since the building of the college hostel, Varsity House, in Occupation Road, it is difficult to remember exactly where the school stood. As I remember it was at the end of some buildings,

with a small 'lane' running behind it to the East Road roundabout. There was a large red-brick building with green doors on the right-hand side of the 'lane' which I believe had been a fire-engine house or even a fire station, but which had stood unused as long as I knew the area. I think the hostel covers both buildings, including the lane in between. It was an attractive-looking building even in its last derelict state and I always wished I had the money to buy it and convert it into a Roman-villa type dwelling"

To jog your memories further I have included a map of the area in 1927 and list of occupants back in 1904. By the mid 1970s the directories mention just Kingsway Tyres and the Cambridge Book Binding Company. One of the few photographs in the News' library shows a decaying area of abandoned cars; it was taken in 1966 at a time when Cambridge seemed to be mired in planning indecision. But what are your memories of this patch of the city? [PICTURE IN NEWS LIBRARY FILES 'CAMBRIDGE. OCCUPATION ROAD'] [SCAN OF MAP 1927 & DIRECTORY NAMES 1904]

One indicator of change is the developers' crane; a monster version was on King's Parade the other week lifting new accommodation modules to the roof of King's college. A recent radio programme indicated that there were now crane enthusiasts – just as other people watch out for railway engines or certain long-distance juggernauts. I have been delving in the News photo files for a few examples.

Lion Yard redevelopment seen from the Guildhall, January 1973 with and the north side of Petty Cury, Lloyds Bank and St Andrew the Great church [SCAN NEG 663/12A]
Construction work in the early 1970s on the New Museums site, off Corn Exchange Street when the crane seems about to add more spires to King's College chapel [DZ.Mus.K7 47427]
Cranes, like giant storks, at work on the Rosie Maternity Hospital, early 1980s [NEG 3695817]
Giant cranes erecting prefabricated houses in King's Hedges Road in 1927 [B.Milt.K27 36346]
Crane dismantling part of French's windmill off Victoria Road, 1970s

These days new developments need planning permission and when something goes ahead that seems out of place there is a tendency to suspect that somebody has had a word in somebody else's ear, that it's not what you know, but who you know that counts. It wasn't like that in the olden days – or was it?

Quy historian Peggy Watts has just produced a little book charting the early days of the Cambridgeshire Constabulary, 150 years ago. It was a traumatic time for those establishing the new force in the land, and there were rules to be followed. First they needed a Chief Constable; an advertisement was placed and 35 applications received from which five were short-listed. The job went to a coastguard officer, Captain George Davies, who just happened to be well-known to an influential member of the committee. There was one snag – he was 47 years old, and the Home Office regulations laid down a maximum age of 45. But knowing the right people helped and he was granted special exemption and allowed to keep the job. Six years later when Huntingdonshire finally got round to establishing their own police they decided to join up with one of the existing forces. Neither Godmanchester nor Huntingdon boroughs – who already had their own police – wanted to amalgamate with the county so it went in with Cambridgeshire. Chief Constable Davies was appointed to head both forces, despite now being legally far too old!

Then came the question of erecting police stations in the rural areas and in 1858 a committee drew up specifications and invited tenders to be submitted by the 5th May, with the strict proviso that the cost should not exceed £800. Professional architects submitted a large number of designs from which three were shortlisted. One was promptly disqualified as it had

arrived after the closing date. But before the others were considered one magistrate rose to say that there was another set of plans that he thought should be looked at – even though they had not been sent it. His colleagues agreed and the new plans were produced. They were costed at 990 guineas – far above the limit – but were duly accepted! After all they ought to be what was wanted – for they had been drawn up by the chairman of the committee himself!

“The formation of the Cambridgeshire Constabulary 150 years ago”, by Peggy Watts costs £3 from the author at 8 Orchard Street Quy, CB5 9AE

Mrs Chris McLean from Cambridge was responded to Margaret Pearl’s question about the Welsh troops trained in Cambridge during World War I. She writes :

“Some years ago, my husband's grandfather Samuel Bagshaw, on hearing that we had moved to Cambridge, told me that both he and his brother, who had both served in the Royal Welch Fusiliers had been camped in tents on Parker’s Piece, before travelling to France. I have seen photographs of soldiers posed with the regimental mascot, a goat.

“My own grandfather, Frederick Webster, was a Welshman who had served in the 1st Monmouthshire’s. The regiment moved to Cambridge just before Christmas, 1914. They lived in tents, or were billeted with townspeople. Research shows that on 11th February 1915, the King inspected the First Welsh division. By the end of February 1915, the regiment had left for Southampton and France. Tragically, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Monmouthshires were decimated at Ypres. By May 1915 the losses were so great that an amalgamated regiment was formed of just 900 men. Furthermore, throughout the war the regiment sustained high losses, for the men were very often in the frontline. If they were not fighting, they were digging trenches and tunnels for as miners they had valuable expertise. I join Margaret Pearl in seeking any information about the Welsh brigade's stay in Cambridge between 1914-1919”.

If you can help please write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories of the Queen Mother, by Mike Petty

I’M NOT SURE IF YOU WANTED A QUEEN MOTHER MEMORIES OR IF YOU’LL HAVE COVERED IN ON MONDAY. IF YOU NEED ANOTHER SUBJECT PLEASE RING – 01353 648106. IF YOU NEED ME TO COME IN TO FIND PIX PLEASE RING

The death of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother has brought sadness to most people; few have known a time when she was not an important part of the scene, both nationally and locally, and Her Majesty had many connections with Cambridge.

Her husband, Prince Albert, Duke of York had attended Trinity college in 1919-20 and knew the town well but it was in July 1932 that he brought his Duchess for her first visit to Cambridge. They drove from Cambridge station to Papworth to open a new hospital, then back to Cambridge for lunch in his old college, Trinity. Later crowds flocked to see the Duchess and her husband drive to Addenbrooke's Hospital where they opened a new wing for children and private patients. [WE USED A PICTURE OF THIS ON 13TH FEB]

In January 1934 Elizabeth was back, this time with her Mother-in-Law, Queen Mary. First they visited the Cambridge Tapestry Works in Thompson’s Lane where they saw a tapestry being specially woven for Lord Fairhaven at Anglesey Abbey by a skilful team of weavers. Sylvia Clark from Newmarket Road Cambridge recalled in Memories two years ago how she spent many hours on this tapestry, working from the back and walking round to the front of the loom periodically to ensure everything was accurate. Like all the other girls she worked in silence as so many important visitors were always

popping in – like Queen Mary and the young Elizabeth, Duchess of York who congratulated them on for the beauty of their work.

Then the Royal ladies were off shopping. Queen Mary was a connoisseur of antiques and paid regular visits to Stanley Woolston's antique shop in St Andrew's Street. People packed the street for a glimpse of the Queen & the young Duchess.

But then came the death of the King and the Abdication of his heir. The Duchess of York's husband was now King George VI and she was his Queen. In January 1937, five weeks after her accession but four months before her Coronation, the new Queen Elizabeth accompanied Queen Mary on another of her trips to Woolston's antique shop. It was a routine they were to repeat each January until the start of the war, and although unannounced news of their visits inevitably attracted crowds of well-wishers.

But many of the Queen's subsequent visits were ringed with secrecy, for during the Second World War the movement of members of the Royal Family were kept censored. Yet she was always here & there with her husband – inspecting bomber bases, chatting to Land Army girls in the fens, shaking hands at a new Royal Air Force Hospital at Ely, maintaining morale in days of danger. [SCAN OF KING AND QUEEN MEETING LAND ARMY GIRLS IN BURWELL FEN]

As soon as the war was over the Queens were back shopping in Cambridge during their New Year stay at Sandringham. But in 1947 there were more formal visits when, with the King, Elizabeth paid an official visit to Trinity College on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of its foundation. Mrs P. J. Anderson from Cherry Hinton Road recalled how: "I was working in a Government Office in Station Road at the time and as they came by train we all trooped into the road to cheer them on. To make it seem more impressive our departmental flag was flown along with the Union Jack and it wasn't until the royal couple had passed that we realised it had been flying upside down".

In June 1948 Queen Elizabeth paid her first solo official visit as part of the celebrations of another college, Queens'. As Marion Colthorpe reports in her book *'Royal Cambridge'* the college court was crowded with undergraduates, most of whom were ex-Servicemen who gave three cheers as she entered. She dined on a celebration lunch of salmon, duckling, strawberries and cream before touring the ancient kitchens, an undergraduate's rooms and watching rehearsals for a student play. Later she mingled with a thousand guests at a Garden Party described as 'a kaleidoscope of colour, gaiety and elegance' – whose conversation was enhanced by music from bandmen of the Black Watch. Never, said the President, had the college seen a more auspicious occasion. For them 1948 would always be remembered as 'Queen's Year'. It was a visit she was to repeat in 1961 when the News cameramen captured the scene. [GOOD PIX OF THIS 1961 VISIT IN LIBRARY FILES]

But the real headline news came later in 1948 when nearly 740 years after its foundation the University of Cambridge awarded a Degree to a woman for the first time. That woman was Queen Elizabeth. She drove from Anglesey Abbey to Christ's College where she was welcomed by the Vice Chancellor before driving down Petty Cury to the Senate House for the historic ceremony during which she was conferred an honorary Doctorate of Law. There she spoke of the special affection she felt for the University and of the exciting new status of women's education at Cambridge. [SCANS OF QUEEN AT CHRISTS COLLEGE AND IN DEGREE PROCESSION]

Her final official visit as Queen Consort was in April 1951 when she accompanied King George VI & Princess Margaret to a Thanksgiving Service to mark the restoration of the stained glass in King's College chapel windows following their removal during the war years. It was their first visit to the *City* of Cambridge – for King had granted that status only a month earlier. [SCAN OF LEAVING KINGS CHAPEL]

The death of the King in 1952 was followed next year by the death of Queen Mary, but the Queen Mother continued to visit Cambridge, sometimes privately – shopping at Woolstons again in 1954, this time with Princess Margaret as her companion. But she undertook many official activities; opening a

new wing at Homerton in 1957, a new Angel Court at Trinity in 1960 – when she also watched the May Races. There was the unveiling of an extension to the Leys School in 1961, and the first phase of Cambridge's third women's college, New Hall in 1965. [SCAN OF VISIT TO NEW HALL 1965]

Time after time crowds flocked to see her – at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Girton college centenary celebrations, Wesley House and more. [SCAN OF ARRIVAL AT FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM 1975 WITH LADIES BEHIND CAR]

HER LAST VISIT TO CAMBRIDGE WAS – PLEASE CHECK WITH LIBRARY

– and no matter what the occasion she was always graceful, always waving and – many were convinced – always smiling just at them – AS THE NUMEROUS PHOTOGRAPHS SNAPPED BY NEWS CAMERAMEN GIVE TESTIMONY

If you have memories to share write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories 10th April 2002 by Mike Petty

This Easter holiday the streets have echoed to the sound of four-wheelers; they have performed complicated manoeuvres, sometimes spinning on the spot, other times leaping high into the air before crashing down again. Were these feats performed by joyriding youngsters in motor cars then action would have been taken. But these are performed by thrill-seeking kids on skateboards.

Skateboards are the latest craze – or at least they were 25 years ago in April 1977 when they hit the Cambridge headlines for the first time. Keen lads were honing their skills in the safety of school playgrounds – and being banned from them. For said a county education spokesman: “If there is a serious accident at the school the educational authority would be responsible”. But, said a council road safety officer it was better to have skateboarding off the road “and on to places like school playgrounds”. The council promised a policy decision. Meanwhile the youngsters were honing up on their law; skateboards, they claimed, were conveyances propelled by the rider, the same as a cycle; so provided they used hand signals there was nothing to stop them using the roads.

Cambridge had what seemed to some a ready-made skateboard park, the little-used Heidelberg Garden above the shops in Lion Yard. By August up to 200 youngsters were gathering each evening to perfect ‘Catamarans’ (board jumps) or “three 60’s” spins. But with the proliferation of plate-glass windows and disapproving glares from librarians in the children’s department alongside, it was obviously not an ideal place. So the youngsters formed a group calling itself the Cambridge Sidewalk Surfers to press for a purpose-built skatepark. When the news broke in October 1977 that Prime Minister James Callaghan would be visiting Cambridge the Sidewalk Surfers assembled outside the Union Society building, anxious to seek his support in their cause. Sadly he had more important things on his mind.

Eyes turned to the old bandstand on Christ’s Pieces or to the underpass at the Newmarket Road roundabout. A proper park opened in Cheddar’s Lane in 1978, only to close in November the following year; as years have passed slowly facilities have been developed. But still youngsters practice their skills in the streets or sneak on to school playgrounds in the evenings, using seats and benches to provide the ramps they need for their thrills, as their fathers and mothers did before them. [PIX OF LADS IN THE SCHOOL PLAYGROUND, IN THE HEILDELBURG GARDENS AND WAITING TO LOBBY PRIME MINISTER CALLAGHAN]

Earlier generations of youngsters found excitement on two wheels, heading off on their bicycles to explore far from home, returning at nightfall tired, muddy and perhaps soaked to the skin. Two lads found themselves involved in a life-or-death struggle against the elements deep in the fenland as the waters rose in the rivers and started to overtop the banks, threatening the safety of those living in the cottages below – but it was only a story.

Last weekend some sixty people assembled at Ely to pay homage to a book published 50 years ago that most people in the city have never heard of. Yet such is its appeal that it brought devotees from the mountains of Wales and the rolling downs of the south coast to clamber to the top of fenland river banks in a lazy wind that did not bother to go around them.

They were members of the Malcolm Saville Society who make annual pilgrimages to places that form the settings for the children's books that he wrote as the 1940s turned into the 1950s. They combine adventures and localities, one set in Blakeney, Norfolk, another in the docklands area of London and a third the mountains of Cumbria. But 'The Luck of Sallowby' was set in and around Ely. The plot revolves around an attempt by unscrupulous antique dealers to steal Hereward the Wake's ancient battleaxe – the 'Luck' – from an ancient fenland manor house – 'Sallowby'. But all this takes place during a period of great fen floods – obviously based on those of 1947. Malcolm Saville researched his locations as well as his plots and now his own children were amongst those who had come to retrace their father's footsteps.

So the devotees took themselves off to Prickwillow, Ten Mile Bank, Denver sluice and Hilgay – to that ancient manor house, the 'Sallowby' of the title which was tracked down by researcher Peter Oates. There they were welcomed by the present owner, who had been unaware that his ancient home had ever featured in a book. Or was it actually the house at all – for although Saville always researched his stories he gave his imagination reign.

One mystery is the location of a tea-room in Ely run by an aunt of the central characters. The author calls it 'The Copper Kettle'. There are several clues: the house was very, very old. The café downstairs warm and comfortable with a log fire burning in a big fireplace with a wide chimney, and plenty of polished tables reflecting the flicker of the flames. The building was narrow with sloping floors and steps in unusual places, but the living room over the café was unexpectedly large. There were bedrooms on that floor and others up another flight of narrow stairs to a room high enough to see over the roof opposite right to the cathedral.

There is a picture of the cafe in Saville's book and it all looks so similar to 'Ye Olde Tea Rooms and Museum' in Fore Hill that was run for many years by Vernon Cross. That housed a combined bakery, confectionery shop, restaurant and private museum with articles displayed in cases, on the walls or hanging from the oak beams. But others think it may have been the Minster Tea Rooms which fits another of the author's criteria – its nearness to the traffic lights at the Lamb Corner. So can you help solve the mystery? Does anybody have a picture of the Minster tea rooms in the 1940s-1950s. Did you ever go to either of them as customer or waitress, and what were the rooms like upstairs?

And the biggest mystery of all is the present location of 'The Luck of Sallowby' – Hereward's battle axe, rescued by the intrepid children from the dastardly villains. Amongst the items that were auctioned off when Vernon Cross closed down his museum in April 1964 were pewter and brass, agricultural hand tools, clay pipes, Roman pottery, firearms, swords and bayonets. But was there ever a battle-axe dating back to Hereward's time. And if so, where is it now?

Or is it all just a figment of an author's imagination. But whether true or not it all makes for a jolly good read and if you can track down a copy of the book you can follow the clues for yourself and – like last weekend's visitors – discover just what a fascinating place the fens

can be. [PIX OF CAFÉ – DRAWING AND PHOTO AND VERNON CROSS WITH HIS MUSEUM]

‘The Luck of Sallowby’ by Malcolm Saville was published by the Lutterworth Press in 1952.

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Do you remember Occupation Road, I asked. Yes replied Michael & Barbara Rooney of Cambridge:

“We moved into 33 Occupation Road in June 1954: I was 23, Babs 18. Our neighbours on one side were a Mr & Mrs Fordham who were just a little older than us, and on the other side a nice elderly lady named Mrs Harvey. In the communal yard was a toilet block, not nice at all, very basic with many spiders! At the rear of the yard was Jack Reynold’s sweet factory; he had a shop of Newmarket Road and ran stalls on markets and fairs. Many mornings we head the noise of sweets being riddled and the smell was always strong.

“When we first got the key and saw the inside it was in a very sorry state, as it had been lived in by a tramp-type. It was a four room cottage and had obviously once been two cottages as there were two stairs – one front, one back. I boarded up the stairs in the front of the house as we thought it spooky with two sets. The rent was 10s (50p) per week. We worked hard to get it habitable and decorated before we actually moved in. I repaired the chimney and replaced some slates. In the front downstairs room there was no fire surround, but after much badgering I managed to get the agents, Haslows, to have a brick one built. After that was finished I fully decorated that room and we brought new furniture for it from Thompsons who were in Fitzroy Street.

“My wife Babs was now expecting a child and the front room had been finished and in use for about 6-7 weeks when one winter afternoon she was sitting by the fire reading and the old lathe and plaster ceiling collapsed upon her. The agent would not repair the room, so everything was covered up and the room not used again. The little house was condemned as unfit and we were re-housed to a new home in Alex Wood Road in January 1957.”

Miss Ruth Howell of Cambridge also has memories of the old school building in Occupation Road. Like Daphne Foreman she went there on Sunday evenings in 1939 and throughout the war years. She recalls: “The meetings were first held in the old church hall in Christchurch Street. We did physical jerks on Wednesday evenings and bible study on Fridays. Eventually it had to close but we continued bible study at Grange Road, the home of Miss Atkinson, and later Newton Road”. Miss Howell has lent me a picture taken in the garden of the school in 1940-41. It shows on the back row, Lillian Harvey, Miss Atkinson, Ruth herself – making a face at the camera at the wrong moment – and Margaret Wright. In the front row are Phyllis Tinkler, Hilda Trevalyan, & Jilly Cornwell [PIC OF THE GIRLS]

Memories 17th April 2002 by Mike Petty

The problem with history is that things that seem always to be there suddenly disappear and you can’t quite remember what they were like. Ron Ryder of 58 Montague Road, Cambridge cites an example:

“When you travel along the Elizabeth Way, Cambridge into town there are white boards behind which are being built 120 new houses of “St Andrew’s Park”. I am seeking information on the old Pye factory entrance in what was Cam Road to see who planted the

trees which have now been removed. They had a stake and nameplate, which, I believe, said who and why they were planted – but what did it say?

“They were happy days when hundreds of Pye workers at lunch break came streaming along to the corner shop in Montague Road, with others on their way to Mitcham’s Corner. In the evening the buses came to take them home. Have any of the retired workers of the Pye factory produced any of their working day memoirs – I hope somewhere the Pye story is in print for future generations to read. It is a pity to just be forgotten”

The Pye Group started life in a back garden in Humberstone Road, Cambridge, where in 1896 William George Pye decided to put experience gained at the Cambridge Instrument Company and Cavendish Laboratory to good use by making apparatus for school laboratories or elementary university classes.. After a few years he leased premises in Mill Lane before in 1913 moving to a larger factory in Cam Road – part of the site now being redeveloped. During the Great War the firm produced gun-sights and other military instruments but when that market collapsed with the peace he diversified into a new development, wireless. As the radio side of the business grew so more and more space was needed and the site expanded. They also experimented with television and had sets in production by 1936. When war again came the company turned its attention to military two-way radios and radar, erecting a high mast which was later used in their pioneering work in television as an adjunct to their radio and stereo developments. Pye demonstrated colour television in 1949 but the Government of the 1960s was less focussed and indecision and delay over its introduction hit production and contributed to a drop in profits. In 1967 the company became part of the Philips empire. *There was massive expansion on the site, with a new complex opening in 1988 – but only after the site had flooded. But the rest as they say is history – THIS MAY CHANGE AFTER VISIT TO NEWS – SEE PRINTED TEXT*

But were you part of that history; were you one of those who worked from the factory in St Andrew’s Road & walked past those trees daily – and if so can you remember what the notice said and put Ron out of his agony?

[SCAN OF PYE WORKERS, PIX FROM NEWS LIBRARY]

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One of the people who were helping to influence developments in the mid 1960s was John Forster, who now lives near Daventry. He treasures a picture the News took in 1967 when aged just 25 he became the youngest member of Cambridgeshire & Isle of Ely County Council. His election is being celebrated by fellow Labour councillors Frank Symons & John Hughes and Paddy Reilly who represented Cherry Hinton on the City council both as an official Labour Party member and an Independent. But who is the man with the hat on the right?

John served on the council for three years but did not seek re-election. In his day job he was Accountant and Company Secretary for Cambridge Consultants who then had premises in Histon Road. He moved to Warwickshire in 1977 and now, in retirement, compiles and presents general knowledge quizzes. [SCAN OF FORSTER ELECTION]

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Brian Lane from Ely has responded to my request for a picture of the Minster Tea Rooms at Ely, one of the candidates for the teashop featured in Malcolm Saville’s book ‘The Luck of Sallowby’. In October 1934 it was rented by Vernon Cross, who also ran the tea shop in Fore Hill. He let the upper rooms as a flat and converted the ground floor into a tea room, with

umbrellas in the garden during good weather. The teashop closed during the winter months and ceased in the early 1940s. It was connected with the SPCK bookshop run by H.G. Tyndall who was also an Ely photographer. It was a pretty Queen Anne house with a Victorian glass porch in the middle of the front and had once been home to Thomas Kempton, organist of Ely Cathedral in the early eighteenth century. The building was demolished in the mid 1960s to make way for Ely branch library which has itself now moved to the new Cloisters development. It now houses the Cathedral education office. [SCAN OF MINSTER TEA-ROOM – AND PRINT; SCAN/PIX OF ELY LIBRARY THAT REPLACED IT]

In those days old buildings were treated with less reverence than today. In Cambridge there were plans for the redevelopment of the corner of Bridge Street and Round Church Street where the early sixteenth-century buildings had been allowed to fall into decay. Their plight was highlighted in a major report on Cambridge Townscape drawn up by David Urwin and published by the City Council in autumn 1971. By then a more enlightened attitude to redevelopment was evolving with proposals to retain the historic frontage and redevelop offices behind. When the Mayor of Cambridge, Coun Bob Wright, formally opened the scheme just 25 years ago, in April 1977 he praised it as an outstanding example of how a new building could be fitted into its environment and how old buildings could be preserved. “If only”, he added, “the architects had been involved in Lion Yard then things might have turned out differently there”. [PIX OF BRIDGE STREET/ROUND CHURCH STREET CORNER BEFORE AND AFTER REDEVELOPMENT]

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A couple of Saturdays ago all eyes were fixed on the Thames when Oxford and Cambridge rowers battled for supremacy in the traditional Boat Race. As we know, Oxford came home in front, despite trailing for most of the distance. But at least it was on neutral ground. It has not always been so. In February 1944 a large crowd turned out to watch Cambridge take the lead only to have Oxford storm past to record a victory by three-quarters of a length in a time of eight minutes six seconds. It was always known that the winning time would be a record – for this was the first time at boat race crews had battled over this particular course. For this was not the Thames, it was the Fens, more precisely the one-and-a-half mile stretch of the Great Ouse at Queen Adelaide Bridge near Ely. It was the third war-time boat race and is largely forgotten. But now Terry Overall from Ely is hoping to arrange for a re-run in two years time, to mark its jubilee, and he is anxious to track down anybody who took part or witnessed that original race 48 years ago. If you can help then contact Terry on 01353 610649 or write to me at the News.

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Sid Lowe from Canada has sent a copy of a photograph of the Central School Football team who won the Schools Cup in April 1940 when they beat Coleridge School 3-0. He has a note of most of the names and would be delighted to make contact with any of his old team-mates. You can write to him at 605-5200 Lakeshore Road, Burlington, Ontario, Canada L7L1C5 or e-mail him at slowel123@cogeco. [SCAN OF PIC]

Memories 23rd April 2002, by Mike Petty

It is that time again when planners are contemplating the site of the next addition to the Cambridgeshire scene, once more considering just where the additional housing is to be accommodated to cater for the county's ever-increasing population.

But this is not just a 21st-century phenomenon. Cambridge has always needed to expand; from an initial settlement on the highland north of the river – Castle Hill – housing spread to colonise the slightly higher lands in the marshy south – Market Hill, Peas Hill, St Andrews

Hill, Senate House Hill and the rest. Along with houses were religious settlements, homes to friars and priors, and when riots at Oxford drove out the young men training to be priests there then many of them found a welcome amongst the other clerics in Cambridge. At first they lodged with townsfolk but then increasing numbers caused problems and hostels were established; hostels led to colleges, colleges needed land. The abolition of the monasteries by Henry VIII provided the expanding University with additional sites, but still they needed more. As land within the town came vacant the colleges had the funds to acquire it, ordinary people were squeezed more and more into less and less space. By 1800 Cambridge was still a small town, surrounded by water; for the Cam to the north and west was echoed by a ditch around the east and south, and the buildings clustered right up to it – like some modern-day bypass soon becomes the boundary for new development.

Then came the Inclosure of the open fields that had tightly surrounded the town – equivalent to the modern Green Belt. Once this land was available for development then building boomed. The small village of Barnwell expanded dramatically and there was a New Town – originally called New Zealand (it was so far from the old Cambridge) – in the area off Hills Road and a Sturton Town and a New Chesterton. Housing spread till it reached the line of the railway that was constructed in the distant fields in 1845. But this time the boundary did not check development; houses grew beyond with another new town - Romsey – and on to encompass the Newnham district of Grantchester & the old villages of Chesterton, Cherry Hinton, Trumpington.

But there were never enough houses for the expanding population; despite massive housing programmes in the 1920s more were needed. Through the 1950s Cambridge councillors continued to clear old slum properties – in the by now old New Town & Barnwell areas – and replace them with new. But there had to be somewhere to accommodate the population whilst rebuilding was underway. So the open fields between Milton and Histon Roads were developed as the Arbury Estate and joined by King's Hedges in what was described by some as a massive New Town on the edge of Cambridge – but a new town without the new facilities one normally associated with such developments.

But still more homes were needed and neighbouring villages were being expanded until they too reached capacity. The solution was a new village, just outside Cambridge which could cater for the increasing demands without submerging old villages under more housing estates. That village was Bar Hill, though it was not universally welcomed by the neighbouring parishes. But still more houses were needed.

By now there was an established planning procedure to meet the Government-dictated expansion. The Structure Plan mechanism ensured there would be debate as to where all the new houses would go. Once more there would be a new village, or was it one village and one town – nobody seemed quite sure. Various sites were canvassed – Swansley Wood, Six Mile Hill, Waterfenton, Westmere – but Cambourne was chosen. And once more fields are being turned into homes. Yet before that development is complete there is need for more.

Should it be an expansion of Cambridge itself, should Marshall's move their airfield to release land for homes – as they have done once before to allow the development of the Whitehill estate off Newmarket Road – or is there to be yet another new village? Once more the debate continues

But this is not something that just affects Cambridge; surrounding towns have seen their own massive changes, including the London overspill developments at Oxmoor, Huntingdon, St Neots and Haverhill. The City of Ely is currently undergoing a building boom, prompting concern about the provision of schools, doctors, dentists and all the other infrastructure needs – and of course roads. For people need jobs and if their jobs are not where their houses are then they need to travel, and roads become jammed, increasing travelling times and

prompting people to move nearer their jobs, except that those houses are too expensive – and the circle continues.

But what would happen if they built a town and nobody came? The Romans found the answer to their cost when they constructed a new settlement at Stonea, near Chatteris. It had been the site of an earlier important settlement, an iron-age hill-fort deep in the fens that had seen the final resistance of local folk to these Roman invaders. The new rulers put in roads, built buildings, including a massive tower which dominated the district. But nobody wanted to live there and soon the structures were knocked down to lie forgotten until only recently the archaeologists have rediscovered them. But then in the 1630s came plans for another new town at nearby Manea, this time to be designed by King Charles I himself. It would be built as a lasting memorial of his achievement in doing what his subjects could not – draining the fens. But the King's dream of his magnificent 'Charlemont' was not to be realised and not even the plans remain, though Cambridge artist Robin Stemp has turned her talents in art and digital photography to produce her interpretation of Charles' vision in an exhibition at the Fire Engine House, Ely.

But what the Romans and the Royalists failed to do was finally achieved by a Methodist lay preacher. In 1838 William Hodson created a utopia for socialists at Manea, a community where money was abolished, where residents dressed alike in clothes of Lincoln green. Their houses would have all modern facilities, be brick built and centrally heated. Their children would enjoy the best of education, with their own schoolroom and teachers. They had a range of leisure facilities - their own boat and fishing in the nearby Old Bedford River. They had music while they worked but not for them incessant labour in the fields - they worked just four hours a day. But those who flocked to join this rural idyll were townsfolk, they did not understand agriculture and needed help from locals who were highly suspicious of this new hippy commune. And the residents were not what the developer intended – "penniless in pocket and bankrupt of moral qualifications" they gave up and went home "spreading gossip to disguise their own inadequacies". So within three years utopia was abandoned and the colony disappeared back into the earth from which it had arisen.

And now new planners design new visions of modern lifestyle, with houses, schools & leisure facilities to give new residents new chances for a new life – new pioneers in a new community, just as generations of others have been before them.

Have you been a pioneer in a new community, be it Arbury, Bar Hill or Cambourne – and what are your memories of seeing it grow, develop and change. Send your memories to Mike Petty at the News

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Various ex-Pye employees have responded following my request for details of the trees planted at the gateway in Elizabeth Way. Peter Prime from Ely says that after the new bridge was put in and the traffic increased tremendously the gate was sealed for safety reasons and the trees planted by Mr Pye's granddaughter or great-granddaughter. He worked there from the 1950s producing television sets for the Coronation – and recalls that the ladies and girls who worked on the production line delighted to chase their male colleagues around the factory at Christmas time! Peter worked on an underwater television camera which they tested at Banham's boatyard, lowering it into the water on the cranes they used for boats. It was to facilitate under-water research and the location of wrecks and was fitted to the recovery vessel H.M.S. Reclaim. It could operate at a great depth than any diver and its visual range was far greater – but when it was demonstrated at Pye's Radio works in May 1952 the camera was set up in front of a goldfish tank owing to the high mud content of the River Cam! Derek Wilkin completed 50 years of service with the company and retired in 2000. He still has a booklet they used in staff training.

Can anybody help solve another mystery. Andrew Brett from Teversham has been busy recording and transcribing the memories of his gran, Grace Hinchcliffe, who lived in the Milton Road area of Cambridge during the Great War. Grace always remembered groups of dirty and tired looking men being marched up Milton Road by guards on horseback. She was then only a small child, but thought that they were German prisoners of war. She was told that they were being marched to an encampment beyond the railway gates. Lydia (Grace's mother) took pity on them and handed them scraps of bread as they passed the Bretts' house. Grace always remembered the contrasts in the scene: the guards on their fine horses - smart and upright - and the dishevelled men shambling along beside them. Does anybody else have memories of details of a prisoner-of-war encampment in this area in about 1917 that will back-up her recollections?

John Sparrow from Littleport remembers seeing an American glider that came down there in September 1944, about the time of the 'Bridge too Far' raids on Arnhem. It was full of orange crates and biscuits. It was on the ground for three months and then 'snatched' up by a Dakota, but the elastic rope broke and it came down again at Ape's Hall. Did anybody else see it or know more about it?

Memories 1st May 2002, by Mike Petty

Friday 3rd May 1977 started like any other for the residents of the Oxmoor Estate at Huntingdon. Children went off to school, as usual, people went to work, some on building sites, some in factories, some cutting grass on the estate itself. There was the familiar drone of the Canberra returning to its base at nearby RAF Wyton.

As 12.15 approached the children of the Sapley Park School heard the familiar and welcome sound of the school lunch-time bell and prepared to walk home across the playing field for their snacks. But there was something unfamiliar about the noise from the sky. For the drone had ceased and there was silence. Then there came a high-pitched whine. Looking up they saw that the plane that had been flying level was now nose-diving, spiralling as it fell, apparently aiming straight at their school.

All eyes were fixed on the sky as the stricken plane plunged to the ground; it missed the school, it missed the houses and ploughed into the ground with an almighty crash with part of its wing resting against houses in Norfolk Road. There was no explosion. But aviation fuel sprayed out and ignited causing a fireball that swept through a terrace of seven homes. Windows cracked in the heat, smoke billowed out and neighbours rushed towards the scene of the inferno, fearful that there might be people trapped in the by now fiercely blazing buildings.

But there was nothing they could do, although they grabbed ladders to get to the upstairs bedrooms they were beaten back by intense heat and smoke. They could hear children inside calling for help, but they could not help them.

Firefighting crews were there within minutes and were well rehearsed – there had been a major air disaster exercise at Wyton just a month before – and the flames were contained, but even they could do nothing for the three youngsters trapped inside. Two little girls and one boy died and the whole of Huntingdon – old town and new estate, locals and Londoners – wept. Hundreds packed the funeral service, which was held in St Barnabas church – because the nearby Catholic churches were too small to hold so many mourners.

As people recalled their own memories of the tragedy it became apparent that it could have been even worse. If it had happened just moments later dozens of children from Sapley Park School could have been caught in the inferno as they made their way home to lunch. If the

plane had continued in the air just a few seconds longer it would have ploughed into the school itself. If the pilot had ejected from his stricken aircraft, instead of fighting the controls to aim it away from houses he might have saved his own life – though the body of his navigator was found dead in his ejector seat.

People asked how could it happen, why should flying be allowed over the homes of hundreds of people. But the airfield had been there first and the London overspill estate built under the flightpath. Later it transpired that the plane had been practising what to do in the event of engine failure – and something had gone tragically wrong.

As Oxmoor tried to cope with its losses the bulldozers moved in to demolish the shattered and blackened wreck of seven houses. As they did so children's toys tumbled from upstairs bedrooms, piles of invitations to a christening fluttered in the wind and the remains of a lunch that was never eaten disappeared under a shower of rubble. Rebuilding would begin as soon as possible, the Council said; the houses would be rebuilt exactly as before, the Greater London Council were searching their files for the original plans and lists of building materials.

But nothing could replace the lives that had been lost or erase the terrible memories of that May day of 25 years ago.

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May Day used to be an important day in the calendar, a day associated with fertility rites and trade union rallies; a day when early risers might see the ghosts of those who had been drowned in the fen rivers, when labourers could renew their credit with landlords, children parade their dolls around the village or young men express their opinions of village girls – while a girl of amiable disposition might find a branch of whitethorn beside her cottage door, a girl of loose manners could find a blackthorn by hers, whilst a bunch of nettles tied to the latch was a sure sign that inside their dwelt a nag.

“Such Old English customs are, unhappily, dying out slowly but surely. Even the romantic revels which formerly attached to May Day have to a large extent disappeared and but little remains to mark what was an important day in the calendar” – so said the News of 100 years ago. But, it added: *“May Day is essentially a day for youthful jubilation and in one place in Cambridge is at least observed as such. Scholars at Eden Street Higher Grade Schools annually take part in a quaintly pretty ceremony of choosing a May Queen. Queen Nellie – last year's queen was escorted to her throne and formally abdicated. Votes were taken and it was announced that Miss Daisy Coulson had been elected and she was crowned with a crown of roses”*

One person who remembers the tradition continuing until more recent times is Pat Kendall from Hemingford Grey. Whilst browsing through some old photographs she came across a reminder of the day that she herself was crowned May Queen at the Central School for Girls in Melbourn Place, Cambridge in May 1942. There was to be only one more May Queen after her for the lovely celebrations came to an abrupt end in – she thinks – 1944. Pat says that there is a May Queen book in existence which photographs dating back to 1896, an absolutely magical reminder of a tradition that has passed away – or has it.

Do you have memories of Maypole dancing or other celebrations of the coming of spring – write to Mike Petty at the News [SCAN]

Can anybody help solve another mystery. Andrew Brett from Teversham has been busy recording and transcribing the memories of his gran, Grace Hinchcliffe, who lived in the Milton Road area of Cambridge during the Great War. Grace always remembered groups of

dirty and tired looking men being marched up Milton Road by guards on horseback. She was then only a small child, but thought that they were German prisoners of war. She was told that they were being marched to an encampment beyond the railway gates. Lydia (Grace's mother) took pity on them and handed them scraps of bread as they passed the Bretts' house. Grace always remembered the contrasts in the scene: the guards on their fine horses - smart and upright - and the dishevelled men shambling along beside them. Does anybody else have memories of details of a prisoner-of-war encampment in this area in about 1917 that will back-up her recollections?

John Sparrow from Littleport remembers seeing an American glider that came down there in September 1944, about the time of the 'Bridge too Far' raids on Arnhem. It was full of orange crates and biscuits. It was on the ground for three months and then 'snatched' up by a Dakota, but the elastic rope broke and it came down again at Ape's Hall. Did anybody else see it or know more about it?

Memories 8th May 2002, by Mike Petty

It seems that almost every week brings some new plan for the future, some will come to fruition, most disappear under a pile of paper – and perhaps it's just as well.

Just 50 years ago Cambridge city and Cambridgeshire county councils were at war over just such a plan. Known universally as the "Holford Report" it had been produced by planning consultants Profession William Graham Holford and Henry Myles Wright on behalf of the County as part of their new powers under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947. But right from the start there was controversy; the city felt it had not been properly consulted and that its objections were not taken notice of. For a full assessment of the issues and opinions you should see Anthony Cooper's study of 'Planners and Preservationists' issued by the Cambridge Preservation Society in 2000 (ISBN 0-9510655-2-1) but today I thought it would be interesting to consider some of the suggestions that occupied minds in May 1952

The proposals and counter-proposals then being put forward by councillors and planners would have produced a Cambridge radically different from that we know today. There would have been new roads carving through the city from Castle Hill to Corn Exchange Street via Jesus Green and Christ's Pieces. The ancient buildings in Magdalene Street would have been torn down to make way for a wider road that would continue to Jesus Lane. In the city centre the church St Andrew the Great would become marooned in the centre of a traffic island & houses in Emmanuel Road pulled down for a new bus station

So who was suggesting what & what, if anything, happened

Spine Relief Road

The County proposed the creation of a new wide inner by-pass running from the top of Castle Hill to Jesus Lane. It would start by cutting through houses in the Hertford Street area & there would be a roundabout on Chesterton Lane with a new bridge over the Cam at Jesus Green. Park Parade would be widened and the road would cut across Jesus College hockey field to Jesus Lane.

The City said no: the tremendous dislocation would be out of all proportion to the advantage gained. There was little doubt that if it was approved it would then continue into King Street and on to join with Emmanuel Street, cutting across Christ's Pieces and they were not prepared to sacrifice this valuable and beautiful open space. It was an amenity to be preserved intact

What happened? Following widespread protest the road was never built.

Chesterton Bridge

The need for a new bridge between Chesterton and Newmarket Road was agreed by both parties.

The County wanted it to be built along the line of Walnut Tree Avenue and down East Road.

The City said no: it would cut through Banham's Boatyard and cause East Road to become a through trunk route, increasing congestion at the junction with Mill Road and at the Catholic Church. They would prefer a new bridge to be built opposite River Lane and divert through traffic down Coldham's Lane and Brooks Road to Trumpington and the London Road, thus relieving congestion in the centre of the city

What happened? Elizabeth Bridge was built where the County suggested; part of East Road was widened.

Magdalene Street

The City said Magdalene Street should be widened to provide a new better approach into the centre – a continuation of the work already undertaken to widen Bridge Street. This would involve removing the ancient buildings – described as “obsolete property” - opposite Magdalene College – as the College itself had proposed in 1932. Magdalene Bridge should be remodelled to allow traffic to flow more easily down the already-widened Bridge Street.

There would be a new road from the Round Church to Jesus Lane and the one-way system in Trinity Street-Bridge Street should be reversed.

The County proposed Magdalene Street be closed to vehicles

What happened? Today Magdalene Street is regarded as one of the jewels of the Cambridge streetscape; the ‘obsolete property’ that the city council wanted to rip down has been preserved and new college building put up behind them.

Magdalene Bridge was strengthened but kept in its original state. Magdalene Street, Bridge Street and Trinity Street are now closed to most traffic

Bus Station

The County proposed a new county bus station on the site of Christ's Lane – the narrow street linking Drummer Street with St Andrew's Street

The City said no: this was not big enough and would create a bottleneck; a new bus station should be built to the East of Emmanuel Road, replacing houses; until this land could be acquired New Square car park should be used. Drummer Street would then become the stopping place for country buses.

What happened? Drummer Street bus station was retained but has been remodelled and is still subject of debate. New Square car park reverted to grass following the opening of the Grafton Centre. Christ's Lane was closed when Bradwell's Court shopping arcade opened.

City centre roads

The County wanted a wide street leading southwards from the Guildhall across the Lion Yard, parallel with Corn Exchange Street, with a new car park on the ground between them. There would also be a new road north of Downing Street continuing through to Emmanuel Street.

The City preferred a road running south from the junction of Petty Cury and Sidney Street with a widened St Tibb's Row. Corn Exchange Street should be widened to improve traffic circulation with a new road linking Wheeler Street, down Post Office Terrace and via a widened Christ's Lane to Drummer Street. This would leave the church of St Andrew the Great on an island site with a new multi-storey car park on the remaining portion of Lion Yard

What happened? The proposed roads were not built; much of the area from Petty Cury to Downing Street was razed for the Lion Yard redevelopment, with a second phase now under way. There are plans for a Grand Arcade to continue the scheme. A multi-storey car park was constructed in Corn Exchange Street and is to be demolished and rebuilt.

Time will tell whether these plans come to fruition, or whether, like so many others, they will become a part of the Cambridge that never was.

Readers write

Lynn Green (nee Stamp) of Melbourn believes she was the last May Queen to be crowned at Milton Road Junior School, Cambridge in 1963; she is standing next to the abdicating Queen but can't remember any of the names of the other children in the photograph. Can you? [THIS WAS E-MAILED TO NEWSDESK FROM COLYNNGREEN@TALKGAS.NET ON 2ND MAY. THERE IS AN ATTACHMENT WITH THE MESSAGE, BUT I'VE ONLY GOT THE WORDS SO DON'T KNOW WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE!]

Dick Roberts from Dry Drayton has responded to my article about Pye by sending a snap of an outing to Southend in 1936 of staff in the short wave section. Where are they now, he wonders. [ON DISK] John Howes from Stapleford recalls W.G. Pye, electrical engineers on Newmarket Road, Cambridge, opposite the old News offices way back in the 1930s.

Mrs M. Wright from Soham has written to say that it was her late husband, Wilfred, who had the idea of using the old tractor tyre as a mini-roundabout at the junction of Coldham's Lane and Newmarket Road in 1977. He was road foreman for the County Council and thought it would prevent accidents to the public and increase the safety of his own workmen at this busy junction. He himself had been hit by speeding vehicles at the site

Can you solve a mystery that has been plaguing an Ickleton reader? She remembers that about 50 years ago x there used to be a shop opposite Woolworth's in Sidney Street, Cambridge, with a brown lino floor. It also had a lift with a concertina gate that was worked by girl who wore a dark green pillbox hat at a jaunty angle. Was it Coad's?

Memories 15th May 2002, by Mike Petty

Susan Mintern from St Ives has sent in some interesting notes on her family's involvement with Pye of Cambridge

Both my Dad – Frank Mintern - & Mum worked for Pye. In fact they met in the register office – more properly called the registration department – when they were listing all the shareholders. I have the romantic notion of boss and secretary, especially as I think they tried to keep it quiet to start with. They married in 1955 so if it had been a secret it was out then.

Dad spent his 21st birthday on the beach at Dunkirk & when the war was over had a short time working at Boosey and Hawkes in London before moving up to Cambridge to work for Pye as a Cost Accountant. Initially he lodged at Trumpington Hall where his Aunt was companion to the "Old Mrs Pemberton" (as we knew her). Later he rose through the ranks to become Financial Accountant, having spent several years completing his accountancy qualifications at night school.

Mum worked in the typing pool and used to travel in to work from Bartlow on the Haverhill works bus. She recalls that every morning C.O. Stanley walked through the offices and – as the staff saw it – checked that everyone was in and working. She moved on to become a personal secretary & in 1953/4 was sent off to London for the launch of PAM Radio – a radio station set up by Pye. He first office there was a room above Boosey and Hawkes – so the

circle goes round. She left the company to become a full time Mother just before I was born in 1956.

During their courtship a work colleague, an Australian girl, became a good friend to them both and became my Godmother. She was secretary to Freddie Keys, at that time the Company Secretary, & later left Pye to work at Cambridge University Press. She has now retired and is back in Australia.

As a youngster I remember going to the Cam road factory to pick up Dad from work. For some reason I remember the building as a pale blue colour - maybe it was the paintwork? Mr Day was always on the gate with some friendly words (and at Christmas he always gave my sister and I a box of Milk Tray chocolates). We would then go into the offices - they had windows between them that started half way up the walls so you could see into the next one - it was always relatively quiet as Dad usually worked late so we could run about and make plenty of noise and make sure he packed up and came home!

During this time my sister and I were both proud owners of the Pye musical televisions. Small models of TVs in plastic orange cases that used to play "D'ye ken John Peel" - they drove Mum mad! I think one had a very square angular screen whilst the other was a little more curved. Both stood on short silver coloured stands and were replicas of the TVs being manufactured at the time.

On occasions Dad would bring a TV set home to trial (black and white of course in those days), either a new model or one that had been repaired. It was quite a special occasion for an otherwise TV less household. Radiograms were another thing, we had this piece of Pye furniture in the house for years. A coffin like box on legs, with a centre section that opened up to reveal a record deck and radio tuner with two big speakers, one on each end.

Dad was then transferred to the Newmarket road offices for a short time before a move to those at Prittwell Park in Southend. That was probably around the time Pye became part of Phillips. Prittwell Park closed down after a couple of years and we were moved back to Cambridge where Dad worked in the Gwydir street office until retirement in 1982

In this day and age it's hard to imagine working for the same company for all those years. Whether I'm recalling things through rose coloured specs or not I don't know, but I have the impression Pye in particular was a good company to have worked for, it didn't just look after it's workers it was mindful of the family as well. [THERE WAS AN E-MAIL FROM SUSAN MINTERN [smintern@waitrose.com] on Thurs 18 April 10.44 pm that had an attachment – possibly a picture. CAN WE CHECK TO SEE WHAT THIS WAS AND IF APPROPRIATE USE IT. SCAN OF CAM ROAD FACTORY IN 1920S, SCAN OF NEWMARKET ROAD FACTORY 1973]

##

Bridget Ulmann from Bishop's Stortford has been studying a picture of the Volunteer pub in Trumpington that I featured in Memories in January. It had been lent by Edith Jackson who used to live there and always wondered what the picture actually depicted.

Bridget believes it may show Trumpington Air Raid Personnel on parade at the beginning of the war. Bert Johnson, of the building firm Johnson & Bailey, lived in Long Road, and was a member of the ARP; it may be him on the right of the line of men with his coat over his arm. She points out the cottages on the left where Mr Dilley the policeman lived and the police box where he used to stand if not attending to other duties.

She continues: Having live in Long Road since 1936 it brings back great memories. In Long Road the gas man used to manually pull on and off the gas street lights each morning and

evening, carrying his ladder on a bicycle. Milk would be delivered by horse and cart from Clay Farm and the inhabitants of The Old Mill cottages would sit outside at the front of the cottages on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. The cottages had one gas light in their back rooms and used candles in the rest of the house. Between the cottages and the telephone exchange were the Trumpington allotments; one man kept pigs and it was fun watching them being put into a small trailer to be taken to market. Corn crops were cut by harvesters and baled and then a traction engine would hoist it up to stacks which were thatched. At the end of a field one was allowed to glean corn for chickens. Mrs Peck (whose husband had three chemist shops in Cambridge) used to keep chickens and everyone used to take her their potato peelings.

Everyone rode bicycles. There was one bus per hour from Bishop's Road to the Guildhall which was always full with as many people standing as could be fitted in. The fare was one penny.

During the war soldiers were camped between Clay Farm and the bridge with quite a large gun – very noisy! Leyton House (now the Perse School) was occupied by the RAF for administrative purposes. The Home Guard used to go out if the siren went – they gathered at Stone Bridge, where Brooklands Avenue joins Trumpington Road – and their headquarters were under the bridge. One bomb fell in Barrow Road, killing one man. He and his wife had just sent their children to the States a few days before. There was a Prisoner of War camp just past the present Park and Ride site on the Harston Road. To begin with they were mostly Italians. They used to work on the farms in their uniforms with a spot on the back and went by lorry with a soldier (and gun) with them. Towards the end of the war they were allowed to walk into Cambridge – I believe two at a time – without guards. [SCAN OF TRUMPINGTON GROUP]

##

When the war was over Cambridge remained a major centre for men in uniform; but it can be a lonely place for visitors. So the Women's Voluntary Service contacted the City Council for a site for an Anglo-American and Allied Services Club to give them somewhere pleasant to go when they were on leave in Cambridge.

A year later, in spring 1952, two large huts were erected on a piece of waste land at the top of Castle Street, Cambridge. They were tastefully and brightly decorated and provided with old furniture renovated by the W.V.S. One would serve for games of various kinds and the other for dancing. There was a snack bar and that "must" for Americans, a juke box. But there were still some essentials lacking and an appeal was launched for a wireless set, a gramophone and records, garden furniture, a ping-pong table and a clock – particularly the clock.

The complex was opened by the Foreign Secretary, Mr Anthony Eden, on 2nd May 1952. He praised the work of the WVS and the assistance of the U.S. Air Force and the Air Ministry. The club would be open every evening during the week and, Mr Eden said, would lure out American Service men from the attractions of their camps so they could learn "what extraordinary animals the English are"

The WRVS continued to run the centre for many years but it is now operated by the County Council. It is now called the Hilltops Day Centre and is based in Primrose Street, off Victoria Road. Over the years I have spoken to various groups of elderly people with wonderful memories but sadly many of them have now passed away. Now the County Council are planning to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the centre with a day of events on May 29th and would appreciate readers' help in filling in gaps in its story. So if you were you in at the birth of this organisation or have you any memories you can share then Bronni Bruce would love to hear from you. Ring her on Cambridge 712056 or contact me at the News

##

Mrs P. Anderson from Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge found her attention caught by an article in the News about the former station master's house in Great Shelford, which may become an Italian restaurant. She seems to recall reading somewhere that the father of Sir Peter Hall, the theatrical producer, was station master for a while and Sir Peter lived there when a schoolboy at the Perse. Or is her memory playing tricks, she asks. Can anybody put her mind at rest? [PIC OF SHELFORD STATION HOUSE – 38861 PUB'D IN NEWS]
##

Mystery Picture

This mystery picture from the News files of 1963 shows a thatched cottage overshadowed by a giant crane constructing Cambridge's first multi-storey car park – can you identify it and add any information as to its fate? [SCAN]

Memories 13th May supplement

Readers have been quick to identify the young May Queen and her attendants at Cambridge's Milton Road school in 1963. Mrs J. Buchanan was a teacher there then and remembers most of them including Rosemary Pearson on the left, the tall Angela Soltys, Lynn Stamp the Queen and Sally Hitchborn. The girl on the right she remembers but can't recall the name. That leaves the girl second from left, somebody Tiplady, she thought – and she's right. For that girl is now Sandra Ashton from Cambridge who has also written in. She recalls the young page-boy was called Trevor – but Trevor who? And who is the girl on the extreme right? [REPRIESE PHOTO FROM LAST WEEK]

Both Mrs C. Slater from Longstowe and Miss Mary Rayner from Cambridge confirm that it was Coad's shop in Sidney Street, Cambridge that had puzzled our Ickleton reader (Memories 8th May). It did indeed have the brown lino floor, lift with the gates and the girl with the pillbox hat. But, as they both tell me, I got the location wrong. Coad's was sandwiched between the "old" Woolworth's and the splendid "old" Sainsbury's in Sidney Street. Miss Rayner recalls that it had a partly hidden entrance with display windows round an oval with a central "island" display window before you got into the shop & one of those overhead pulley systems to whiz money round the shop. She actually has two summer skirts that she bought there which, being 'proper' cotton, are still wearable. [PICTURE OF SIDNEY STREET]

My article on the Oxmoor plane crash tragedy brought particular memories for Bob Francis of Whittlesford. He is a professional photographer who had been commissioned to take the photographs at a wedding a few months later. The pilot killed when he steered his doomed plane away from the school was to have been best man when his sister married another RAF officer. The couple decided that the wedding should take place as planned – but without the best man. The ushers and many of the guests were all RAF officers from the same squadron and everyone was in their place – but with a gap deliberately left for the missing man. This was extended to the photographs afterwards and in all the pictures of the family there was a gap where her brother would have been. Bob says it was the most difficult wedding he has ever photographed. All mention of the accident was avoided until the speeches in a local riverside restaurant when the dead pilot was remembered in the traditional way.

Memories, 22nd May 2002, by Mike Petty

PLEASE DOUBLE CHECK THAT THERE IS A BEER FESTIVAL – I HEARD IT ON THE RADIO BUT DID NOT SPOT A MENTION IN MONDAY’S PAPER.

As another Cambridge beer festival gets under way connoisseurs of real ale, and many others, will be making their way to [MIDSUMMER COMMON?] in search of a favourite ale or a new discovery. It has become a ritual event for many years & there have been several venues. But somehow intrepid News photographers have sought them out to capture the atmosphere and some of the participants, though others doubtless disappeared once they saw the cameras, just in case their bosses saw them in the paper, rather than at that business meeting as they claimed! But if you see yourself – or your boss – in these pictures taken at the Beer Festival inside the Corn Exchange about 30 years ago please let me know. [PIX FROM NEWS FILES]

Over that period the Campaign for Real Ale have lobbied for traditional British beers served in the traditional way. In 1976 there were only 32 pubs in Cambridge serving “real ale” – in 1934 there had been 181!

Pubs need beer; 100 years Cambridge had 16 breweries; this number had dropped to six by 1925, five of which were still working in 1950. The last of these, The Star Brewery in Newmarket Road ceased brewing in 1972 and was demolished a decade later. The fame of their products lingers on in old advertisements like this of 1900. In that year the public analyst inspected Bailey and Tebbutt’s Panton Brewery and proclaimed: “I am unable to detect any trace of Arsenic or other deleterious matter; I consider the beer is perfectly pure”. Dale’s Brewery in Gwydir Street won a gold cup for their beers at an International Exhibition in 1910 and erected a replica of the cup on the front of their building. It was taken over by Whitbreads in 1955 and brewing ceased three years later, although the premises continued to be used as a store and depot. [SCAN OF PANTON PRICES AND ADVERT FOR THE STAR BREWERY, 1900, SCAN OF DALE’S BREWERY, & STAR BREWERY]

The pressure on pubs had come from various areas, including the Temperance Movement. Writing in 1906 Eglantyne Jebb summarised the problems of continual drinking which, she claimed, was common amongst college servants in Cambridge.

- It lowers the physique and the evils it produces are hereditary, being traceable to the third and fourth generation
- It conduces to various forms of disease
- It is often a cause of early deaths, for a constitution undermined by the drink-habit makes a weaker resistance to the attacks of disease and cannot derive support from the use of medicines which have been deprived of their stimulating power
- It impoverishes the family. In the present state of society men are often compelled to live and bring up their families on earnings which can only provide the bare necessities of life. The money spent on drink must then be taken away from the children’s’ food
- It lowers a man by causing him to associate with bad company
- It degrades his character, deprives him of his self-respect, undermines his will-power, tends to produce inertia, moroseness and bad temper and inevitably lowers his whole standard of conduct.

In those days there was one pub per 138 inhabitants and along Newmarket Road there was a pub every 36 yards, all competing for business. Landlords dare not offend customers by refusing to serve them and when – as often happened – he himself needed to go out to work then the pub was managed by his wife. This, said Eglantyne, contributed to female intemperance, “as the woman is naturally tempted to gather her friends around her and they pass the time drinking together”.

Over the years many of the old pubs have closed down as Cambridge itself has changed. Massive redevelopment in the 1950s and 1960s saw the clearance of 'slum' housing and street-corner pubs that had served them. They were replaced with new housing estates with their own public houses. Other old pubs have been renovated and in 1976 the first 1,000 pints were on the house when friends of traditional British draught beer packed the Salisbury Arms, Tenison Road, Cambridge for its reopening under the ownership of CAMRA Investments Ltd. The pub had been bought from Whitbread for £22,000 and renovated from top to bottom; it was their first pub in East Anglia.

In the city centre some pubs have disappeared, others been modernised and new ones established, some in old cinemas such as the Tivoli and Regal.

But in the 1960s there was major controversy over the loss of a pub that did not serve beer. The Central Hotel on the corner of Peas Hill and St Edward's Passage had at one time been one of Cambridge's most famous inns, the Three Tuns, patronised by Samuel Pepys and generations of members of the University. In the 1860s Cambridge University & Town Coffee Palace Company was established to attract custom from gin palaces and supply the needs of artisans; they acquired various premises, including the Central Hotel, but was wound up in 1950. The building was featured in the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments survey of Cambridge in 1959 but by then its future was in doubt for King's College had announced plans to demolish the old Hotel and build a new hostel on the site. This proposal came in for great debate by the conservation lobby but the development went ahead. [SCAN & PICTURES OF CENTRAL HOTEL]

Do you remember the Temperance pubs, or did you work for a local brewery – your memories please

##

Did Sir Peter Hall really live in the station master's house at Great Shelford, asked

Yes replied a number of readers, including Albert Truelove who remembers that he had his interest in the theatre at that time. Mr G.S. Spencer from Littleport was a relief signalman who used to work at Shelford station from time to time; he recalls a Mr Hall being station master at Whittlesford for a number of years, though he does not recall him at Shelford. Miss Irene Curtis got to know Sir Peter well; she writes: "When he first came up to Cambridge to St Catharine's College he had two rooms and was lodged with us when he lived in Fulbrooke Road. My mother told me he used to come home covered in greasepaint (as of course he was into acting & drama). I used to help mother with things and helped her make beds, so saw this for myself, as she used to wash the pillowslips so often. His mother and father used to come and visit him from Shelford". Nigel Richardson, headmaster of the Perse School sends a few pages from Peter Hall's autobiography "Making an exhibition of myself". In it he recalls how his railwayman father was promoted to "relief", replacing stationmasters who were on holiday or sick at a variety of stations over a large area of East Anglia. This meant that the family had to move to Cambridge but neither Peter nor his mother wanted to make the change. He was then a shy child but made friends at the Morley School in Blinco Grove & when he moved to the Perse. About half-way through his time there his father was again promoted, this time to become stationmaster at Shelford. "Once more we lived over the shop, but now forty or fifty trains went thundering past the bedrooms every night on the busy Cambridge to Liverpool Street line. Shelford was already virtually a suburb of Cambridge, but you could still see the village. There were a few shops, a post office and a church; and fields where I could fly ...". What? Sadly the photocopied pages end! Do you have a copy of the book that tells us more?

One of those friends from the Morley School days was Mr Bryce-Smith who can also add details about the thatched cottage and Park Street car park. He writes: "I was an Engineer with

the City Engineer's Dept & was involved with supervision of the car park's construction by Messrs Truscon Ltd, the Contractor. The thatched cottage in Clement Place belonged to Dr. Erich Schaefer who would not sell it at the time. So the car park was built round it in the shape of a 'U' to preserve the cottage and its rather beautiful garden. A few years later Dr Schaefer died, and the City bought the cottage and land that went with it. The cottage was demolished, Clement Place disappeared, and the car park was completed in the shape it is today". The cottage also rang a bell with Sally Carlton who recalls that Dr Schaefer had a workshop or laboratory in Thompson's Lane. He was a physicist eminent in the development of plastics, recalls Ryszard Lesik, a decorator who worked on the cottage for him from 1954 to the Doctor's death on 31st December 1965. The house was kept in pristine condition and featured beautiful gardens that and provided a great deal of pleasure to countless passers-by. Then it was demolished to complete the car park in all its concrete glory! [SCAN OF RETHATCHING COTTAGE IN CLEMENT PLACE]

The picture of the Pye outing to Southend (Memories 8th May) came as "a really nice surprise" to Mrs Janet Lawrence of Histon for the lady centre front was her mother, Olive Goodchild who died in 1988.

Pat Kendall's picture of the Central School May Queen interested Roger Neal from Hauxton as his sister – then Joyce Sandfield – was at the school then but has no photographs of those times. Are there any pictures that might show her anywhere, he wonders?

Barrie Coombes of Cambridge has dug out an old News photograph of Milton Road School May Queen just 50 years ago, the year he left the school. There are a wealth of faces to pour over, including his own – disguised as a pikeman at the front left. Amongst the names jotted down on the back are D.Lilley, R. Porter, Michael Rumbelow, R. Blows and P. Fluck - is this another connection with the entertainment world? [SCAN OF MILTON ROAD MAY QUEEN 1952]

Memories 29th May 2002, by Mike Petty

As the country gears up for the Queens' Golden Jubilee celebrations it seems impossible to believe that 25 years have passed since the last one. June 1977 was Jubilee month; Cambridgeshire went red, white & blue with people dressing, decorating, drinking, planting, buying selling and even eating anything that stayed still long enough to have a Union Jack printed on it. Everything that is except the official Cambridge Jubilee Year souvenir books, even at half price some thousand copies were left. Nor did everybody join in the spirit of Jubilee as the original bill of £500 for street decorations soared to £988 because of the cost of replacing vandalised bunting.

The planning for it all had taken some months; Stapleford was not alone in starting its deliberations in October the year before. They, like many others, were having to contemplate just what sort of events ought to be organised. Again like many others, decided to include Jubilee sports, decorated vehicles and a Street party for the youngsters, with other celebrations for the not so young, who could actually remember the Coronation in 1953 and even the previous Silver Jubilee way back in 1935.

Cambridge itself sought inspiration from even further back, basing its programme of sports on Midsummer Common on the rustic sports that were themselves revived for Queen Victoria's coronation. But now Supermarket Trolley races were included along with more traditional fireworks, bands and parades

"J" stood, it was said for "Jollity, Joy and Jubilation". Almost inevitably it also stood for "Juveniles", the children's day, to be remembered in years to come as "the day I went to the

street party and the sandwiches got soggy and the crisps got soggy"; in fact "all the food was soggy so we did not eat it". The inside story of the Cambridge Jubilee was published by children from Kings Hedges School in the July 1977 issue of their magazine "Rooftops", capturing the child's eye view of the day.

Some of the pupils watched the Queen on the telly; there in the golden chariot was the lady "nobody hates, because she is nice to everyone and everything ... she even cares for the insects which is very nice of her".

But there were other things to do besides watching telly. Street parties had been arranged, at Crathern Way 300 people came, but the weather was unkind. "It was raining and we had some nice food and first of all we went to the Magic Man and then we had the food. It was still raining so we went to the community centre to have our food. I had two jam tarts and four slices of bread and we had two cakes"

Then there was the Carnival: "it was quite fun and was very exciting". "I was a bear in the carnival. I did a dance; it was scary", "and then the dragon came, scaly back, fiery mouth, then the St George came to the rescue, throwing spears and thrusting swords, then the dragon goes and in comes Robin Hood playing games with his Merry Men in the woods". "My mask had a nose like a pigs. My brother thought I was a pig when I went by him. When I came home I had a meringue cake with a cherry and a cup of tea". "I was a prince on a float. The floats were lorries decorated with flowers and flags... on the float it was very cold. Every time we went round a corner we nearly fell off". I did not like it one bit because it was freezing cold"

But not all children could play all day: "I got up and I did the washing up, the wiping up and putting away. Then I did the dusting, swept the carpet, then I had a wash. After that I had my breakfast". "I took a Jubilee cake up to an old lady for her tea and I pushed an old lady in the procession and we all got a flag and a red, white and blue lolly"

Food and fun meant thirst. For most it was a glass of orange squash, for others "a drink of coke and a drink of punch and I did not get drunk". But for at least one eleven year old "my mum got us some cider to drink and some cakes as well. I got drunk and I was sick so I went to bed. Next day I was a little bit better and I really enjoyed it"

And so did thousands of others throughout the county and throughout the country in celebration of a Jubilee like no other, and yet like all others.

At **Haverhill** there were flag-draped homes and organised sports and entertainments with parties organised by streets and courts on the town's estates. On Jubilee Day itself there was a basketball match on the recreation ground between Haverhill Girls & the USAF. It would all culminate with a torchlight procession and bonfire. At **Linton** there was a wheelbarrow race & all old age pensioners received free food tokens with jubilee crowns distributed to schoolchildren. **Horseheath** staged a village fair with a fancy dress competition, while **Clare** had a four-day junket starting with an Old Tyme Music Hall in the country park. **Kedington** had ladies comic soccer and a knobbly knees contest and **Great Wratting** arranged a conjurer to entertain the youngsters at a tea party. A town crier in full period dress heralded the jubilee message around **Wickhambrook**, visiting each of the eleven 'greens' which make up the parish. Church floodlights were turned on at Great and Little **Thurlow** who also arranged a flower festival and the crowning of a Rose Queen, 18-year-old Sharon Atherton, by the village's oldest resident, Mrs Enid Farrow, aged 90. **Histon and Impington** combined for a village gala – and another knobbly-knees competition, whilst something even odder captivated people at **Willingham** where Owen Lee constructed a wonderful contraption featuring a small motor turning an array of levers and pulleys made from old bedsteads and cycle wheels.

The News reporters & photographers were there to record it all – but what do you now remember? PICS FROM NEWS FILES / NEGS 1593.77.18 – Robert Brown, Ross St, 1620.77.27 – Akeman St

##

Martyn Seekings' attention was caught by recent memories of milk being delivered by horse and cart. His father, Charles Seekings, used to deliver milk this way & he has send a photo taken in Alpha Terrace, Trumpington sometime before the war. Martyn adds that the horse knew which houses to stop at and where it would get titbits. But who is the tot in the doorway? [THIS WAS E-MAILED TO THE NEWS ON 18TH MAY FROM W.SEEKINGS@TESCO.NET]

Shirley Brown from Trumpington would be interested in other pictures like this for a new book of old photographs she is producing of that area, past and present. Any snaps of buildings that have gone, ordinary people doing ordinary things, interesting events – even the Waitrose site as it was before the supermarket was built – like when it was an army camp – would be useful. If you get a picture accepted you can buy the book at half-price when it's published. Contact Shirley Brown at 85 Bishop's Road, Trumpington, CB2 2NQ or phone her on Cambridge 841559

##

Many readers have contacted me to correct Mary Rayner's positioning of Coad's shop in Sidney Street – including Miss Mary Rayner herself – but then it was a long while ago.

Mrs B. Edwards from Landbeach has found an old directory from 1940 which lists the shops from

Lloyds Bank onwards as:

no.6	Miller & sons, Music dealers
no.7	Stiles Ltd, Bakers and confectioners
nos.8-11	Marks and Spencer
no.12	Coad, W.A. Draper & ladies & gentlemen's outfitters
nos.13-15	Woolworth Ltd
nos.16-17	Sainsbury Ltd
nos.18-19	Heffer & sons Ltd
nos.20-14	Hawkings Ltd, caterers and confectioners; over the top of the shop was the Dorothy Café.

She backs this up with her own memories that Coads was incorporated into Woolworths and their

escalator stands on the site of Coads old shop.

Roger Coleman from Cambridge confirms: "I remember their incredibly narrow frontage looking intimidated between the two 'nationals' as I stood queuing as a child with my mother waiting for the 101 bus opposite the church railings. The wording 'Coads' was in large art deco styling taking the full width of the shop and was on a yellow background in blue neon. Marks had expanded in the late '50's to the night, absorbing the space occupied by Stiles cakeshop where my aunt Grace worked and we used to collect beautiful crisp bread rolls! Not to be outdone, Woolworths took over Coads a short while later, about 1960-61, and built the new Otis escalator (the first in Cambridge) in the space. We used to ride continuously on it as it seemed such a sensation! The old wooden staircase on the right of the shop was then removed. Finally in the late 1960's Marks finished its expansion towards Lloyds Bank when it took over Millers Music Shop, with its distinctive 1930's curved glass frontage, and this is how both shops remain to this day"

Mrs Pearl Reed of Cambridge remembers the overhead pulley system they had as it kept her amused as a child, while Mrs RA. Clarke (nee Parr) from Cambridge used to operate it as she worked there from the time she left school until the shop closed – and she knows the name of the girl who operated the lift – it was Rhona Rank who lived in Bottisham. Mrs Jean Clements remembers she had a bad limp

But Coad's had been in Cambridge much earlier; the Cambridge Chronicle of 19th June 1929 has a picture of their inaugural sale from premises at 7-12 Burleigh Street; they were in Sidney Street by 1936 as a cutting from 17th October shows when part of the footpath was widened. [SCAN].

##

Nick Wise has e-mailed with more details of the thatched cottage in Clement Place: "The house, originally two if not three separate tenements, and possibly originally occupied by grooms servicing the adjacent stable yards and inn yards, had the distinction of being the last thatched property in the centre of Cambridge and was probably built in the late 18th century. Other

properties were built in the early 19th century around the access to this house - these properties and the roadway serving them were to become known as Clement Place. The thatched cottage survived the damning report of all the other Clement Place properties recommended for demolition by the Public Health Committee in 1938. The cottage next survived the 1957-8 proposals by the City Council for compulsory purchase of all the Clement Place houses, the owner Dr Erich Schaefer securing on appeal to the local Magistrates bench agreement whereby No.10 and No.13 remained but adjoining land was sold to the Council. The first phase of the construction of Park Street multi-storey car park took place from 1962 to 1963. Sadly No. 10 did not survive the car park's later extension in the early 1970s."

##

More memories of Sir Peter Hall once having lived at Shelford station have come in from David Jones & David Gillingham of Cambridge. He recalls that Mr Hall senior was a highly respected relief station master who would on occasion have to travel to the station at Hunstanton when the late Mr Walter Westley was station master. Michael Payne recalls Sir Peter in his earlier days; he e-mails: "I remember, while a pupil at The Perse School between 1945 and 1951, I was given six of the best with a gym slipper across my nether regions by him for being cheeky! I remember I was used as a prompter by a Mr P. Tanfield, when he was given the title role in "Hamlet" in, I believe 1949 or 1950 and even then I considered him to be a genius". Winnie Foulger of Cherry Hinton has a copy of Sir Peter's autobiography – she knew his mother when they lived in the railway houses on Mill Road, while Godfrey Waller from Cambridge University Library – where of course they have virtually every book on everything – has sent a photocopy of the page that tells me what Sir Peter flew – it was a model aeroplane. He also occasionally joined his father for a drink in The Railway Tavern beside the level crossing at Shelford – but didn't enjoy it! When he was 13 he supplemented his pocket money by hand-pumping the church organ at Stapleford – a strenuous occupation if the hymns were long or if the organist became over-excited in the last verse and pulled out all the stops. Has anybody else such memories of pumping church organs?

Memories 5th June 2002, by Mike Petty

This week one Jubilee, next week another; only this time it is not the Queen whose long service is commemorated, it is her husband, Prince Philip

For come Monday 10th June he will be celebrating the silver jubilee of his formal installation as Chancellor of Cambridge University.

Many an eminent personage has been appointed to that office over the centuries and when the post became vacant in February 1976 the University authorities started to compile a list of likely candidates. Lord Ramsey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, and Mr Selwyn Lloyd, then recently retired as speaker of the House of Commons were considered, but perhaps there might be a Royal candidate. "Informed sources" disclosed that Prince Charles, recently graduated from Trinity College, was offered the post but turned it down because of his naval commitments with HMS Bronington. But if not the Prince of Wales, why not the Duke of Edinburgh: he had for many years maintained a close formal and informal interest in Cambridge and had seen Cambridge life from the student viewpoint through unannounced visits while Prince Charles was up at Trinity. The Duke was formally nominated in November 1976 and his accession duly agreed.

So it was that on his 56th birthday, having watched jubilee fireworks until late the previous evening, the Duke flew by helicopter to land at St John's College playing field. There to greet him was the Lord Lieutenant, Sir Peter Brassey, the Mayor of Cambridge, Coun Maurice Garner and a flag-waving crowd of about 1,000 people, including teenagers Jenny Nedderman and Katheryn Horsfall who were carrying a hastily-made banner wishing the Duke a happy birthday. Later at the Senate House he was to receive a surprise birthday card and present from 16-year-old Julie Dunham while crowds sang 'Happy Birthday'.

But, it appeared, not all were happy to see him. For outside the railings some 70 women chanted slogans and waved banners – not this time of birthday greetings, but of protest. The Prince seemed to have some difficulty in understanding the aim of the demonstration – but it was not aimed at him. It was directed at another of the celebrities, who had claimed that children up to the age of five should be looked after full-time by their mothers – whereas the mothers wanted the university to provide nursery facilities for their young children.

But the protest was only a temporary hiccup in the ancient ceremonial that saw Prince Philip, dressed in golden gown led in procession for his formal installation as the new Chancellor. He was greeted at the door by the Vice-Chancellor, Miss Rosemary Murray and guided into the Senate House by two of the University's most senior dons, Lord Butler, the Master of Trinity College and Professor Owen Chadwick, Master of Selwyn College. Then in accordance with tradition he was presented with copies of the university's statutes and ordinances which – speaking in Latin - he gave a solemn pledge to uphold.

Next it was time to perform his first official duty, one which, he said, served no useful purpose – the award of honorary degrees. But how else, he asked could universities demonstrate their admiration for people who had made particularly valuable contributions to human civilisation. People like Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who as Dr Frank Stubbings, University Orator, put it "saw the multitudes and had compassion on them; she went alone, in poverty, to the homes of the poorest, tended their illnesses and set up a school in the midst of the slums".

Later the new Honorary Doctor of Divinity told a congregation of more than 1,500 people packed into Great St Mary's church about her work amongst the dying and destitute of India and asked them "not to give from abundance, but from their love, till it hurts". She also touched briefly on social problems in the Western World

But Cambridge had that very day solved one of its own social problems. For whilst all this was going on, just across the Market Place in the Guildhall another tradition was taking place. Another well-known character took centre stage. He was to some a personality in an age of conformity. He was, said others, an awkward and difficult old drunkard who cursed and swore at those who passed by as he half lay propped up against the base of the old fountain on the Market Hill. He was both, but as Trevor

Hughes entered the city's magistrates court and said "Good afternoon everybody", he looked thinner than usual and unfamiliar without his famous bobble hat or bushy beard. He pleaded guilty to being drunk and disorderly in the Market Square. "I won't deny it, but I can't remember", he said. "I like a little drop of tiddly, but I'm not abusive. But people say: 'look at that dirty old so and so', and I lose my temper". He was sent to prison for a month. It was not his 25th, nor yet his 50th – for on 10th June 1977 he reached his century of convictions. He was to have 13 more before dying in December next year aged 66. A congregation of fifty people, including police, solicitors, market traders & a college Dean gathered for his funeral. Then they exchanged reminiscences about the man whose service they were attending, paid tribute to his memory and went away.

If you have memories of meetings with Trevor Hughes or the Chancellor of Cambridge University write to Mike Petty.

PICTURES OF PRINCE PHILIP AT THE SENATE HOUSE ETC ARE WITH CHRIS ELLIOT. THEY INCLUDE ONE OF PRINCE CHARLES WHEN HE WAS A STUDENT – "FOLLOWING IN HIS SON'S FOOTSTEPS" PERHAPS. THERE IS A PIC OF MOTHER TERESA AS WELL. I ATTACH A SCAN OF TREVOR HUGHES, THERE WILL BE OTHERS IN LIBRARY

Do you remember the Cambridge breweries I asked.

Yes replied Hubert Cutting of Cambridge; he was an office boy at the Star Brewery on Newmarket Road, Cambridge from 1941-47; the managing director was a real gentleman named Frederick Freeman, the brewer a Mr Ramsay and Alderman Meadows – then over 80 years old – was chief clerk. Mr M. Parker from Fen Ditton tells me his father looked after the sixteen shire horses that were used to pull their drays around the various pubs in the 1940s. Freda Smith phoned to say she started at the Panton Street Brewery on the day war broke out and worked through all the department while Mr E. Purchase from Meldreth has sent me an unusual reminder of Dale's Brewery in Gwydir Street. It is an advertisement for their Gold Cup Champion Beers printed on the back of a one penny Ortona bus ticket [SCANS]. He used to work for G.F. Levitt, haulage and removals of Milton, who used to trade with the brewery. Do you remember them? [SCAN OF LEVITT CARD]

Joan Bulloch (nee Peck) from Swavesey E-mails to say that her grandparents, Ted & Ellen Peck kept the Central Hotel in Peas Hill right up to its closure. During the war it opened from 9 to 11 pm for the aircrews from the surrounding bases to get tea and sandwiches while waiting for the buses back to camp. In the hotel there was a passage that led under Kings Parade to King's College, there was also a room on the top floor which was only accessible from the roof, supposedly used for "priests' women friends". The hotel was haunted by a lady dressed all in black who appeared on Christmas Eve – her grandmother saw her the basement.

My picture of the Cambridge Beer Festival brought particular memories for Mrs M. King of Shepreth. She writes: "I was thrilled to see my late father, Albert Bebee's photo at the Beer Festival in 1976. He would have been so pleased to think you had still got it, as he was on the day it was taken. He came home that day and said he thought he could be in the paper."

With everybody apparently going football crazy can anybody identify any of these supporters from the 1960s and tell me where they were off to? [SCAN]

Memories 12th June 2002, by Mike Petty - draft

It was some years ago that my wife saw a dinosaur; I was too timid to go.

In June 1952 the News broke the story of how Great Ouse River Board workmen had been tipping a lorry load of clay on a river bank when their attention was caught by a number of bones. Many exciting discoveries have been made in such operations and the archaeology of the county is full of accounts of ancient swords or spears, and sometimes old boats, but this was special.

Work was halted while a telephone call was made to the Sedgwick Museum of Geology at Cambridge University who sent out some of their experts. They returned to the site of the excavation, a clay pit on the Wicken Road at Stretham. There they discovered more of the bones, buried just five feet beneath the surface, though sadly much of the skeleton had been destroyed, including the animal's small head.

Nevertheless they were able to identify it as a giant Pliosaur, a marine creature that had probably died and then been eaten, its bones being disturbed in the process and also by immersion in the water that had then covered the area. The experts took many of the bones that formed the creature's paddle, rib and shoulder, wrapped them up in sacking and newspapers and had them transported to the basement of their museum in wooden boxes. They left the rest.

News of the discovery quickly spread, PC Bill Lythell was delegated to stand guard over the body and scores of people travelled to the site to view the remains, many leaving with dinosaur pieces as souvenirs.

Only later when they had made more detailed studies did the experts discover that what they had found was unique – a new species – and they needed a new name. It was called a 'Stretosaurus' after the place of its discovery. But as it was unique they really needed to get as much of it as they could – and by now many of the other bones had been removed. Hence it was that in 1956 senior University palaeontologists came to Stretham school and asked 'Can we have our bones back please'. Many were surrendered, many others still survive within the village. Those that were returned are on display in the University Museum of Geology, Downing Street, Cambridge, as for the rest – well that remains a secret.

Such a discovery must surely have been a once-in-a-lifetime event. But no. For in July 1966 the excavators were back again to the same clay pit, by then being used as a rubbish dump. Bernie Miller of Pymoor and Derek Hills of Little Downham, who worked for Darby's Sand and Gravel of Sutton were digging steps down the slope when they found more giant ancient bones. Hopes that this might be more of the Stretosaurus were dashed however once Dr C.L. Forbes of the Sedgwick Museum arrived on the site. He identified it as a water reptile – reckoned to be about 150 million years old -and the bits that had come to light were parts of its vertebrae. By the times the News reporter got to the scene Dr Forbes had reached the beast's shoulder and was working forward along six or eight feet of neck towards the head. But once more it made a wonderful excursion for children from Stretham school who attended en masse for their close acquaintance with prehistory. [SCAN].
Do you recognise yourself or anyone you know amongst the onlookers?

##

Mrs J.D. Mansfield, nee Phillips, writes from Cambridge to recall an a different schooldays incident that sticks in her mind – it was the day her schoolmistresses wore lipstick! It was when she was a pupil of the Chesterton Senior School between 1941-44 and they were visited by an American Officer who came to give a talk on schools in America. After the talk Miss Farnsworth asked for a demonstration game by the school netball team. "No shouts or games skirts then, it was navy nicks with legs rolled up as high as decency would allow!" she recalls. They had previously been to Fenners to watch a baseball match between two American service teams where they had been given a doughnut by one team member with instructions to

yell out “Up the river and down the lake, the pitcher’s got a belly ache” while the other side were batting.

##

“I thought I was too young to feel nostalgic!” e-mails Andrew Brett following the Memories article on the Silver Jubilee celebrations in Akeman Street, Cambridge.

Andrew continues: “I attended the party in Akeman Street. It was organised by local residents and shopkeepers and open to the whole district. Fay and Maurice Magasiner ran the general store. They had a cine film of the area before and after the bunting went up. I wonder what happened to it?

“We were all given pin-on tags made of silky material with the Jubilee crest on to prove that we were bona fide guests. I also wore the fashionable 1977 look - huge flared trousers, Terry Wogan style hair and a Punk scowl. I cheered up a bit when the boy next to me gave me his ham sandwiches, but I drew the line when the music began - 'The Hustle'! How un-punk could you get?! I went home - scowl intact.

“The woman on the far right of the photograph is my aunt, Christine Hinchcliffe, who still lives in Bateson Road today.”

In fact Andrew himself wrote an article in 1985 for 'Neighbourhood News', the city council's newsletter when he interviewed Mrs. Chapman, who ran the Akeman Street bakery with her husband from the 1st of June 1959 to the late 1980s. She recalled: “We had a big long table at the front of the shops for all the local youngsters”. Andrew says he loved their shop. “Mr. Chapman would be up at 4.15 every morning - earlier on Saturdays - and off down to the brick bakehouse in his garden. Their fresh bread, cakes etc. were highly popular (I adored their hot sausage rolls!) and they contributed to the jubilee party food supplies. They were a lovely couple and their shop was well frequented!”

Do you have other memories of bakeries?

Other readers have asked to see any pictures of the Arbury Carnival of 1977 that I mentioned in the article. Do you recognise anybody from 25 years ago. [NEGS 1603.77.19A & 26A]

##

As the Queen continues her Golden Jubilee tours throughout the realm I wonder if her powers of observation might, like those of Queen Alexandra, avert a railway disaster. The following snippet appeared in 'The Boy's Own Paper' for 23rd August 1902. “Not far from Sandringham a road is crossed by a railway bridge. One day Her Majesty took a snapshot of a train crossing the bridge. On developing the negative the bridge seemed to be lower in the middle than at the ends. Thinking something was wrong with the plate, she took another of a train crossing the same bridge. With the same result. She thought it well to send copies of the photographs to the railway authorities, who had the bridge examined, and found that it was in a most unsafe condition, and needed immediate repairs. Thus Her Majesty's snapshot probably averted a serious calamity” Can anybody identify the bridge referred to?

The old volume was lent me by Mrs Joan Smith, from the Arbury area, together with of the magazine “Holly Leaves” for Christmas 1950 which contains some excellent pictures and articles on various aspects of the area. It includes a fine painting of Ely cathedral from Stuntney with the old Hall in the foreground. After a considerable period of dereliction work is now underway to rebuild some of the old house that occupied such a prominent position on the hill. [SCAN].

It's an area known to Mick Lambourn-Brown of Girton who used to drive through the village every day in the late 1960s. Stuntney farmer, Cole Ambrose, was one of the last farmers to use shire horses, some of which the News photographed on a frost morning in January 1965 [SCAN]

Meanwhile last week Sutton folk were reminiscing about the olden days – when it was common to see cows being driven through the streets. Such sights seldom get recorded, though the News were there in November 1964. Does anybody else have such pictures of what were once everyday happenings that have now vanished? [SCAN OF SUTTON COWS]

Everybody recalls schooldays, but does anybody recognise members of their family on a snap of Elsworth school taken about 60 years ago. It was sent in by Mrs Dorothy Johnson (nee Brand) who can spot herself along with Bernard Wolfe, Fred Mobbs and Douglas Hodson – in fact she can name them all! [SCAN]. Michael Chandler has a different problem; he has obtained a photo of a group at Bartlow School taken in 1937, it has the name of Mrs K. Taylor hand-written on the back. Can anybody tell him anything of the school or Mrs Taylor?

Can anybody assist Christine Woodhouse of the Martin Centre, University Department of Architecture in Chaucer Road. She writes: "In the basement is a metal-clad door which presumably was used as a cold room when the house was used as a domestic building – Lord Acton the historian, once lived here. This room is always referred to as 'the morgue'. We understand the body of somebody who was killed in Cambridge by enemy bomb during the war was placed in this room". Sadly there were a number of people killed in air-raids but is there anything in this story. Please write to me & I'll pass the message on.

Memories 19th June 2002, by Mike Petty

Following all the excitement of the Royal celebrations, Mrs Joan Smith, from the Arbury area, has lent me a copy of the magazine "Holly Leaves" for Christmas 1950. This contains some excellent pictures of the well-known Cambridge royal celebration – that of Queen Victoria's Coronation in 1838 when thousands of people sat down to an outdoor meal on Parker's Piece. It all took a tremendous amount of organisation, as those who have celebrated the Royal Jubilee will appreciate. [SCAN OF VICTORIA'S CORONATION CELEBRATIONS, PARKERS PIECE, JUNE 1838]

Then in June 1902 came the Coronation celebrations for Queen Victoria's successor, King Edward VII. Once more there were months of planning, debates and discussion but everything was finally in place as the great day neared. The organisers planned another meal on Parker's Piece for those Cambridge folk who were over 60 years of age. Some 2,500 people would be fed, this time under the shelter of maquees. Then as the great day neared came an alarming announcement – the King was seriously ill and needed an operation. The Coronation would have to be postponed. Amidst fears for His Majesty's health came the realisation that all the events planned would have to be cancelled, but there was a major problem. The food for the old folks' meal was already in the ovens. Cooks from Trinity College and Trinity Hall had already baked 68 large meat pies and 58 big gooseberry and cherry tarts – and what were they to do with them?

It was agreed that rather than waste it the food should be distributed to its intended recipients, they would have to eat it in their own homes rather than on the Piece. What happened next was described in the pages of the Cambridge Daily News for 27th June 1902

"Several hundred of the poorest inhabitants of Cambridge gathered outside the Corn Exchange when the distribution began. Along all the streets those who had come for a share of the good things hastened towards the entrance as quickly as their too-evident infirmities would allow them. The halt, the lame and the blind were there. Some hobbled along on

crutches, others moved slowly with the aid of sticks. Baskets, bags and all manner of receptacles had been brought. Some with less forethought had brought nothing in which to receive their share. Quite a number who had come empty-handed wrapped up quantities of fruit tarts in newspapers – grimy newspapers – that could hardly have improved the semi-liquid contents. One old lady no sooner got clear of the table than she dropped the basin in which she was carrying her tart. She appeared to be keenly anxious as to whether she would be given any more. This was soon settled. ‘Bring her back and give her an extra lot for luck’, said a committee man, and the aged dame was soon departing, her face wreathed in smiles.”

So many turned out that extra food had to be found; 400 lbs [POUNDS] of ham, 300 lbs [POUNDS] of gelatine of veal, 200 lbs [POUNDS] of roast beef, 144 packets of Kops’ lemonade and a large number of packets of Chivers’ jellies were disposed of – and still the people came. The doors had to be closed for a time until a fresh supply could be obtained. Five lambs were obtained and cut up into pieces of about 1¼ lbs [ONE AND A QUARTER POUNDS] and this just about met the demand.

All this is a very long time ago, but sometimes history has a habit of repeating itself. Next Thursday, 27th June – 100 years ago to the day – the Mayor of Cambridge is preparing to entertain hundreds of old folk at the Guildhall. I only hope she has learned from the lesson of the past and not under-estimated the appetites of the modern senior citizens of Cambridge! [SCAN OF FLAGS ON MARKET HILL, 1902]

Unusual Jubilee memories have been sent in from Miss Kath Skin of Cambridge. She was in the Elburz Mountains in Iran in 1977 as head teacher of a school for the children of the English contractors who were building a dam and other projects. It was a multi-national project with firms from Italy, Germany and Scotland also engaged. Kath decided to celebrate the Silver Jubilee and invited the other schools to join in. The Germans were enthusiastic, provided she collected the children by hired bus; the Italians were happy, the Scottish less so. One belligerent Scot was having none of it: “Not my Queen”, he said. He changed his mind when Kath pointed out that his firm’s children would miss all the fun. Then it was off to make the arrangements, bake cakes, organise balloons and jellies. Thus it was that the Jubilee was marked with a street party, puppet shows, games and dancing round the Maypole while in the background the Iranian mountains were covered with snow. Next day the German headmaster wrote a charming letter thanking the English children for the happy day his pupils had enjoyed “on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth the Great”. Even the belligerent Scot was won round at a drinks party next day – despite celebrating with bottles of Japanese Suntory whisky – and proposed the Loyal Toast. But there was a cruel ending to the celebrations, as Kath writes: “On my way back to my house, I was attacked by several shepherds’ dogs and was rushed down to the French clinic in Tehran. There, every day for a week I had an injection into my stomach against rabies. Yes I remember the Silver Jubilee celebrations in that far-off land. How can I forget?” [SCAN OF INVITATION CARD TO THE CELEBRATIONS IN IRAN]

Meanwhile the other week Sutton folk were reminiscing about the olden days – when it was common to see cows being driven through the streets. Such sights seldom get recorded, though the News was there in November 1964. Does anybody else have such pictures of what were once everyday happenings that have now vanished? [SCAN OF SUTTON COWS ON LAST WEEK’S DISK]

Various readers have written following recent Memories articles.

Mrs J. Jenner from Bourn had her memory stirred by reference to the Central Hotel in Peas Hill. She writes: “I was in the ATS stationed on Donkey’s Common (now Parkside swimming pool) in 1947. My friend Betty (better known as Punchy) and I had our 48-hour pass together and our boyfriends, later our husbands, booked us into the hotel. When I was posted to

Guildford, Surrey, I still came back on leave and Betty arranged to have hers at the same time. We always had the King's Room which overlooked the Guildhall and market place. It was a very large room which could quite easily sleep six. Residents had a side door as a second entrance down the passage. My late husband stayed there whenever his landlord and landlady were away. None of us ever knew why the King's Room was so called and I would love to know". Can anybody enlighten us? [SCAN OF CENTRAL HOTEL 1935]

Michael Biggs from Cambridge saw his former home at 47 Bridge Street, Cambridge (Memories 8th May) with the room in which he was born. His parents kept a fruit and vegetable shop and his mother looked after a lodging house at the rear. Amongst her lodgers was Cecil Beaton. The buildings were demolished for St John's college development in the late 1930s. [SCAN OF BIGGS SHOP, BRIDGE STREET]

Christine McRitchie Pratt of Fulbourn was struck by the reference to Trevor Hughes. She writes: "Trevor was very much part of our childhood. My father, Rev Arthur Dowle, was the Chaplain of St Edward King and Martyr and I think as a clergy family we were regarded as a soft touch. Trevor was a regular visitor to our house where he would be given a meal and sometimes an old suit of my father's – never money. We had an arrangement with the Salvation Army Hostel, the White Ribbon, where he could always go. He called my father 'padre' and we were told that he had never managed to settle down after the war. He always tried to commit some petty crime just before Christmas so that he could spend the festive season in Bedford Jail!

Megan Timbrell from Bristol, tells me that her great uncle, Ernest Banks, was regularly to be found in the Plough and Harrow on Madingley Road, Cambridge – where he was landlord in the 1920s. He was photographed outside with his wife, Laura in the late 1920's, with his son, Harry, who took over from him and married a girl named Winifred – but then they lost touch. The doors labelled 'Bar Parlour' and 'Public Bar' seem the only clues that the building was indeed a pub. [SCAN OF PUB]

Can anybody assist Christine Woodhouse of the Martin Centre, University Department of Architecture in Chaucer Road. She writes: "In the basement is a metal-clad door which presumably was used as a cold room when the house was used as a domestic building – Lord Acton the historian, once lived here. This room is always referred to as 'the morgue'. We understand the body of somebody who was killed in Cambridge by enemy bomb during the war was placed in this room". Sadly there were a number of people killed in air-raids but is there anything in this story. Please write to me & I'll pass the message on.

Memories, 26th June 2002, by Mike Petty

Aviation artist Rod Kirkby has been mad about aircraft since the age of eight and having gained a Physics Degree joined Hawker Siddeley Dynamics' Future Projects Department in the Aerodynamics Research Group before coming to Cambridge with British Telecom's Overseas Liaison and Consultancy Division. He ended up running the largest intelligence-gathering database in Europe, outside of the military.

But he has a problem that he wonders if anybody can solve. And its all to do with an inn sign that he was commissioned to paint at St Ives.

He writes:

"At 6:30, on Saturday evening, 23rd March, 1918, 19 year old student pilot Kenneth Wastell landed his DeHavilland DH6 biplane on Hemingford Meadow, St Ives.

He had flown there from the nearby Royal Flying Corps training base at Wyton, and, so the official story goes, had landed to ask directions to return to Wyton.

It has been said that you can never underestimate the ability of student pilots to lose their way, and the official line was that it was misty, so it is possible that the pilot was indeed lost, and seeking directions. In clear weather, Wyton could have been seen from the air from St Ives. Of course, in those days, it was quite normal for pilots of the day to land in a suitable field, to check some aspect of their aircraft or their whereabouts before setting off again, since those early biplanes could take off at speeds which seem impossibly slow to us today.

However, an eye-witness report casts some doubt on the official explanation. When author Noel Hudson wrote "St Ives, Slepe by the Ouse" in 1989, he spoke to Fred Favell, who saw the 'plane land on the meadow'. Fred Favell, a 15 year old boy in 1918, reported seeing an RFC sergeant get out of the 'plane, so, in all probability, 2nd Lieutenant Wastell had just given the sergeant a lift to St Ives for a Saturday night on the town. Since it was forbidden for a student pilot to carry a passenger, the 'official line', about mist and seeking directions was possibly concocted afterwards, to shield 2nd Lieutenant Wastell, or the sergeant, or both.

At about 6:45, Kenneth Wastell took off again, and the 'plane climbed steadily, heading in a westerly direction, with everything seemingly in order. Then, according to eyewitnesses, the 'plane was suddenly seen to swerve to the right, and almost immediately struck the south side of the steeple of the St Ives 15th century Parish Church of All Saints.

The 'plane must have struck the steeple head on, because the upper 40 feet of the steeple broke in two as the 'plane rebounded from it, and the light and flimsily constructed biplane could not have done this much damage with its airframe alone. A 'direct hit' by its engine would have been needed to cause so much damage.

As the two parts of the steeple crashed through the aisles on both sides of the south-west end of the church, the aircraft was seen to drop, tail downwards, into the interior of the church, amidst a cloud of dust and debris. The unfortunate pilot died instantly from a dislocated neck, and his body was later found amidst the pews.

The official report says that the court, having duly considered the evidence and also visited the scene of the accident are of the opinion that –The aeroplane and engine were in perfect condition and that the accident was caused through an error of judgement on the part of the pilot. The Casualty Card reads, "Collided with Church Steeple in mist".

So, why did the aircraft suddenly swerve to the right and into the steeple? I would hazard a guess that the pilot was climbing close to the stall, and the starboard wing suddenly stalled, flipping the 'plane sharply to the right. But was it merely incredibly bad luck that caused the stall to happen so close to the steeple, or is there some other reason for the stall occurring at the worst possible moment?

I have yet to discover whether there are weather records to show if there was any wind that fateful evening, but, if there was a wind, it could explain the tragedy. In the lee of an object such as a spire, the wind leaves the spire twisting first one way, then the other. In aerodynamicist's language, (and I used to work in Aerodynamics Research) there is a 'vortex street' on the downwind side of the steeple.

If Kenneth Wastell was flying fairly close to the steeple, which is something that might indeed have appealed to an inexperienced pilot, the sudden loss of airspeed on the starboard wing as that wing flew into the vortex street would have caused it to stall, with catastrophic results.

The cost of restoration to the Church was over £7,090, towards which the Government agreed to pay £3,873-15shillings, leaving St Ives's population (3,015 in the 1911 census) to find the

rest! It was 1920 before the Church could be used again for services, 1924 before the spire was rebuilt, and 1930 before the bells were re-hung”.

So, knowing so much, what is the problem. Rod was given the job of repainting the Pub Sign of “The Aviator”, that stands near the church. The sign depicts Kenneth Wastell’s DH6, the Church, and the pub. He followed the previous artist’s liberal use of ‘Artistic Licence’, in highlighting the Church, the Pub and the Aeroplane, and washing the background away into the distance with as little detail as possible.

The difficulty was the Aeroplane itself. The DH6 is not often depicted in the usual reference works & could have one of two engines: an American Curtiss which had the engine cowled in a rather clumsy looking housing & a British engine which was very exposed. No amount of research, either at the RAF Museum Hendon, the Norris Museum in St Ives, or from Squadron Leader Kevin Dalley at RAF Wyton, could establish which engine was fitted to Kenneth Wastell’s DH6. But this was important, from the point of view of the aircraft’s appearance. Rod decided to depict the British engined version, which also looked suitably flimsy, in keeping with the stick and string nature of these early aircraft.

But can anybody prove it, he asks.

The answer might lie in a sketch by the Cambridge artist, Harry Moden. By day he was a quiet office worker who became buyer & stores manager for the Cambridge Scientific Instrument Company. By night he was a shrewd observer of the Cambridge scene who translated his observations into cartoon drawings that he issued as postcards & sold to the ‘Cambridge Chronicle’ newspaper. Along with his contemporary Frank Keene he provided a wry commentary on local issues between 1903 & 1914 when his health began to fail &, on doctor’s orders, he cut back on his cartooning though he brought his pens out again to record the celebration of peace in 1918. He died aged 79 in 1960.

In one such commentary on the Cambridge traffic scene he produced a postcard depicting the possible impact of plans to electrify the Cambridge horse trams. In the background is a pilot exclaiming ‘Great Scott, it beats me!!’ as his plane is left behind. And in front of the plane’s engine is a church steeple with the top being sliced off. This scheme was being discussed in 1904 – 14 years before the St Ives crash. But in 1918 Moden took up his pen again to depict the crash at St Ives. The original cartoon was amongst a wealth of unpublished sketches deposited in the Central Library some years ago but sadly this particular view has, for the moment, flown itself off into some obscure corner. So does anybody else have any clues to help put Rod’s mind at rest.

You can see examples of his work on Rod Kirkby’s www.rodsart.com or phone him on Cambridge 833136

Memories, 3rd July 2002, by Mike Petty

Last week I had the privilege of attending the Mayor’s Day In at the Cambridge Guildhall – though I had to sing for my lunch by showing some slides to the 200 or so other people who had also accepted her invitation.

They too had earned their lunch, participating in a large-scale discussion of the needs of the more elderly citizens. Topics such as ways the council might improve the system of mobile wardens in sheltered accommodation and others needing Government backing – give a decent state pension of £250 a week for everyone and a Christmas bonus of three times the weekly pension, £750. It was part of the Phoenix 2000 Project which is dedicated to helping the older

folk across the city by providing information and advice, including their own web page, and liaising with other agencies such as Age Concern and Directions Plus.

But well before the day itself many of them had been contributing their own memories of the Cambridge they had helped to shape, some of which had been compiled by project members to form a display of photographs and newspaper headlines that will tour various venues in the weeks to come. [NEWS PIC OF DISPLAY TAKEN IN GUILDHALL LAST THURSDAY]

Carolyn Biggs, one of those responsible for the interviews, tells me that their principal memories had been of the 1950s – a period I refer to as the ‘forgotten fifties’ – between the ‘fighting forties’ and the ‘swinging sixties’. So what do we remember of those now long-distant years.

The war may have been over – but there was another one on the way. In 1950 North Korean communists invaded South Korea and the country became synonymous with battles far more deadly – and even more competitively fought than those which have kept us glued to our television sets recently.

And Cambridge felt war had been declared by the County Council with the publication of the Holford Report on the future planning of what was very shortly to become the City of Cambridge. One minor battle of that war was fought in front of both the protagonists’ own headquarters.

On Market Hill the ornate canopy of the fountain in the middle of the Square was crumbling. The structure was not yet a century old, having been erected following the great fire of 1849 that had devastated the houses which formerly stood adjacent to the east wall of Great St Mary’s church. Renovation would be costly, it would be better to remove the top completely said the city. No said the county – it was an important structure. Rot! said the city [MARKET HILL FOUNTAIN AND PARKING]

Rot prompted the second round of the battle for it infected the very symbol of county government, the Assize Courts on the top of Castle Hill. Dry rot was found to be rampant and anyway the building was old and no longer needed – there was a nice new Shire Hall just behind it. But, said the city it was an important structure and should be preserved. In that case you can have the frontage and the figures that stand on the top, replied the County. [ASSIZE COURT, CASTLE HILL]

It a situation like this there was one obvious compromise and in 1953 both the historic top to the fountain and the historic Assize Courts were demolished. Honours even.

The year saw other battles; on the East Coast a vicious combination of wind and tide saw the sea surge through the shore defences to gush inland, destroying hundreds of buildings, washing away scores of caravans. Cambridge was not directly affected but was in the front line in the fight back, with the Women’s Voluntary Service mobilising hundreds of helpers and taking over a former aircraft hangar at Madingley as a base to pack donated clothing for the flood victims. University students also responded to the call, journeying north to join river workers and other volunteers to close a breach in the river bank near Kings Lynn. [1953 FLOOD]

Other youngsters used up the excess energy in other ways. Teddy Boys with drainpipe trousers, velvet-collared jackets and bootlace ties burst on to the scene as the rock’n’roll revolution hit Cambridge. In 1956 the City Council banned jiving at dances in the Guildhall but people kept jiving to waltz music & magistrates asked cinemas to ban the film ‘Rock around the Clock’. But the Rex Ballroom allowed rock and roll sessions, the Kinema in Mill Road showed the banned film in 1957 – and even installed a juke box. Next year the Central

screened 'Jailhouse Rock' and vast crowds turned up at the Regal to see the latest, sexy singing sensation, Cliff Richard in 1959. On Thursday those youngsters who had grown up in the era of flick knives were tucking into ham salad with the aid of plastic cutlery. [KINEMA, JIVING, PERHAPS NEG – 1939.77.11 OF NETHERHALL SCHOOLBOYS CHRIS ROSE, SHANE CARTER & GARY SCOTT WHO RECREATED THE FASHION FOR A SCHOOL PROJECT IN JULY 1977]

Some remember the 50's was the era when we had 'Never had it so good'. Rationing ended but there was still little money for meals out. A British Restaurant that had been established in the University's prestigious Pitt Club had closed and been superseded by a Civic Restaurant at the corner of Petty Cury where "it was cheap, it was good. Everything was home-made. None of that fast food there". The affection with which this is still held was obvious when spontaneous applause broke out when I showed a photograph taken just before its closure as part of the Lion Yard redevelopment. [CIVIC RESTAURANT]

Soon one in five Cambridge houses had a TV aerial and a little television set with a nine-inch screen – "we put a magnifier over the screen to make it bigger", one person recalled. But many people in the post-war years did not have a home of their own and were having to live with parents, or apart from their families. This was being addressed by the council with a massive slum clearance and new house building programme, the first home being completed on the new Arbury estate in 1955 - which some remembered when it had been all meadows. The new houses might have indoor toilets but the area was initially felt to be bleak and unwelcoming, certainly when compared to the small back street houses off Lensfield Road where pedlars sold from a horse and cart, and pie men brought hot meal pies. Milk came in churns and there were few fridges in those days – "we always had a larder and a meat safe outside for butter, cheese and meat" one recalled [PEDLAR'S HORSE AND CART OFF LENSFIELD ROAD, ARBURY ESTATE]

The price of petrol rose but for many that was academic as few had cars. Those who did parked them on the Market Hill, on New Square or at the back of the Lion Hotel. City and county were debating about a new car park being constructed somewhere behind Petty Cury. But others were saying parking should be outside the city centre, or under Parker's Piece, or in a multi-storey car park on Park Street – this idea of parking above the streets was feasible, as undergraduates demonstrated when they hoisted an Austin 7 van to the roof of the Senate House. [PARKING AREA AT BACK OF LION HOTEL]

One person whose table I shared on Thursday was Mr A. Sloots who spent his career catering at Trinity Hall. He pointed out, many the young men who came to Cambridge in the early 1950s had been fighting for king and country. They may have seen Gay Paris, may have been Corporals or Captains – but now they were undergraduates and colleges had rules about locking the gates at reasonable hours. But that did not stop ex-soldiers & 'Climbing in' became the norm. Porters had instructions to keep an eye open for such transgressions – though often it was a blind eye. To deter such infringement of college rules the Master of Trinity Hall decreed that barbed wire should be erected along the tops of the walls. Contractors worked long and hard to make the college secure. The very next morning the newly-erected barbed wire was neatly rolled up in front of the college – the new undergraduates were proving they had escaped from far more secure accommodation than that! [NIGHT CLIMBERS]

Some things carry on as ever. Midsummer Fair continued to attract visitors by the thousand; but has this now changed, asks Barbara Rooney from Chesterton after a visit last week. She writes; "We were amazed that on a lovely warm dry evening just how few people there were about. And what has happened to all the stalls that used to be there – the Mad Bag Man, the stalls selling china and linen. As young newly weds we walked home carrying a roll of lino from "Miller the Lino King", thrilled to bits with it! And the old rides, the Moonrocket, the

Jollity Farm and the Cake Walk, all gone. I suppose they would be called tame by today's standards. But we found one children's ride still there, just as it was when it was built about 1936, as the lady who owned it was telling us. We have a photo of our two children, Martyn and Helen having a ride about 1960. They would choose where they wanted to sit and then had changed places the next time they came into view! But summer wouldn't be the same without the Midsummer Fair, however much it's changed and we enjoyed our visit." [SCAN OF THE ROONEY CHILDREN AT FAIR 1960]

If you have memories of old Cambridge, or just like to hear tales of days gone by then why not come along to the Manor and Mid-day on Mondays from September. At the Manor Community College opposite Arbury Court we shall be looking back on Cambridge's history over 10 lunchtimes – bring your sandwiches and your thinking caps and come and join us. Phone Tessa Mitchell on 508740 for details.

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Memories 10 July 2002, by Mike Petty

Last week a gathering of residents at Lt Thetford said a sad farewell to one of their most popular villagers, Tony Badcock, who is starting his retirement by starting a new life in Ireland. Tony was for a time the village Father Christmas, donning his Santa robes on Christmas morning to deliver presents directly to delighted children, and being rewarded by a mince pie and a glass of sherry. At each house. Thus it was one particularly busy Christmas day that there was a somewhat red nose making its way past the church – a nose that did not belong to Rudolph. Inside the church the congregation were in full voice with a Christmas Morning hymn – and somehow it did seem to Tony that it would be an appropriate gesture if Father Christmas should wish each and every one of them as Merry a day as he himself had already experienced!

Many of us spend Christmas in front of the television, and Tony in his earlier years was a television aerial erector. When a schoolboy it was sometimes my job to climb nervously up the ladder that reached up to the roof and 'take the strain' as Tony shinned up another laid across the tiles to the chimney, carrying not a sack of toys but a large H-type aerial. From his lofty perch on the chimney-pot he would call out to people passing below who'd look around in alarm at this greeting from the sky.

Today the exploits of such aerial gymnasts are celebrated with a BBC television trailer showing a man jumping from rooftops and performing a handstand high above the pavement – and of course by the Spider-Man film currently packing people into cinemas.

But Cambridge had its own climbing heroes - undergraduates. Cambridge colleges had strict rules. Their gates closed at ten o'clock and at midnight the college porter took to his bed; after that nobody could enter without a late pass from the proper source, dean or tutor and such privileges were grudgingly granted. Even for coming back between ten and twelve there was a penalty of a few pence to be paid as gate money. So to save that expense, or to get in once the gate was barred the students considered the option of climbing in. What happens next was recorded in a book found by Pat Hull of Norwich in a charity shop. 'The Night climbers of Cambridge' by 'Whipplesnaith' was published in 1953 and its language captures the spirit of the time

"Now comes his first difficulty. He finds that the authorities have anticipated his naughtiness and barred the ground-floor windows. Wandering round the college, he finds that the obvious ways are guarded by revolving spikes, which are apt to spin under the drunkard's foot and drive into his thigh. Every year there are a number of minor accidents of this sort in Cambridge.

"So he wanders round, trying a side door here, testing a bar there, wondering whether he can squeeze round some spikes, or surveying longingly an easy drain-pipe running up past a first-floor window. Usually he has been told of an easy way in - 'An absolute cinch, any fool can do it' - but when the time comes he finds it somewhat fearsome. Twelve feet of easy drain-pipe is not so easy when he is eight feet from the ground; stepping over spikes is an operation requiring flexibility of joints and great delicacy of balance. He hesitates, and keeps looking round to see if a proctor is coming to catch him and send him down from Cambridge to his weeping parents. At last, the ordeal ended, he hinds himself in college, not quite sure whether to be proud or ashamed of himself. After the first few minutes, sure he is safe, he is no longer doubtful, and he will often climb in again."

At the Mayors Day In the other week I shared a table with Mr A. Sloots who spent his career catering at Trinity Hall. He pointed out that after the war, many the young men who came to Cambridge had been fighting for king and country. They had seen Gay Paris, had been Corporals or Captains – but now they were undergraduates and colleges had rules about locking the gates at reasonable hours. 'Climbing in' became the rule and to deter such infringement of college rules the Master of Trinity Hall decreed that barbed wire should be erected along the tops of the college walls. Contractors worked long and hard to make the college secure. Next morning the newly-erected barbed wire was neatly rolled up in front of the college – the new undergraduates were proving they had escaped from far more secure accommodation than that!

It was a small step from climbing in out of necessity, to climbing up out of devilment – a n activity known as roof-climbing or night-climbing. The result of such nocturnal adventures are sometimes to be seen on the Cambridge skyline. Tales abound of sundry unusual items found decorating spires and pinnacles, of 'Peace in Vietnam' banners strung from King's college chapel and the rest. But the University takes very seriously such dangerous – and potentially damaging activities - and the penalties for discovery can be severe. Although on one occasion in 1943 'official' photographs of students climbing into Peterhouse were taken to be published in a Russian magazine.

Generally the only people who were on the alert to detect roof-climbing were the porters, as 'Whipplesnaith' confides in his book: "The weary policeman trudging round his beat is usually a friendly fellow, as unwilling as the climbers to break the peace of the night. If they meet him on their way home, most climbers treat him as a confidant, tell him what they have done and swap stories with him. And if no damage has been done- as it never is - all will be well. The Robert is a friend.

“The dons also give no trouble. A clumsy party sometimes causes a, petulant old head to come to a window to see what all the clatter is about, but that is all. Even then he probably thinks of it, not as a heinous offence, but merely as an exhibition of bad manners to wake him up. The younger dons, indeed, are often roof-climbers themselves. In fact, if you tactfully broach the subject to your supervisor, he may be able to help you considerably. And if you are very fortunate, he may even lead a midnight expedition in person. But like a naughty monk who slips out of the monastery after bed-time, he prefers the matter to be concealed from his colleagues. It is only the official side of authority which disapproves of roof-climbing. Let no man think, however, that because many of the High Table are sympathetic, the punishment of offenders will be any the less if they are caught.

“There are numbers of night-climbers about, but you will seldom see them. They seldom even see each other. As furtively as the bats of twilight, they shun the eyes of the world, going on their mysterious journeys and retiring as quietly as they set out. Out of the darkness they come, in darkness they remain and into darkness they go, with most of their epics unrecorded”

“You may meet them in the early hours, or soon after sunset, padding along the streets in gym-shoes and old clothes. Perhaps, standing motionless in a dark doorway, they will startle you as you pass, as they study some building which they are about to climb. Or, capless and gownless, one of them may speed past you on his feet, pursued by a relentless and athletic anachronism in a top-hat, the proctor's bulldog”

It all seems like something out of the movies, but if [PLEASE ADD NAME OF THE ACTOR WHO PLAYS SPIDERMAN] were to play the undergraduate night-climber who would they cast in the role of University Bulldog?

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Mention of the St Ives aeroplane crash of 1918 brought back memories to 92-year-old Mr A. Mansfield of Cambridge; he writes: As a boy of eight years I was living in a lane called the Wilderness at the back of St Ives railway station which was a very important station and had a Smiths book stall. At the time of the crash I was in the garden with my father. About a week later another plane crashed in Meadowland, the lane behind our house. The plane landed in a field but the field was not long enough and it finished up in a ditch. At the time my friend's grandmother lived in the house on the old bridge which had an upstairs then.

Keith Hamilton writes from Cambridge about the decline of Midsummer Fair traders, as raised by Barbara Rooney last week: As she rightly says the old time traders have all but disappeared taking away a lot of the colour of the fair and its appeal to perhaps a slightly older generation. Possibly the reason for this is that things one could once obtain cheaper at the fair such as lino, carpets and reasonably-priced china are now so readily available in every high street and the superstores. I recall when I was a kid it seemed every other person walking away from the fair was carrying some goods or other they had purchased from the stalls. A number of old time rides still exist but they now have limited appeal to the teenage market and generally only be seen on the odd occasion at events such as vintage and engine rallies and shows. Only one Moon Rocket ride still exists in working order and this only opens a couple of times a year at shows. Some of the most popular fairs continue to be those held in the streets and among those that come to mind fairly locally are those in the autumn in Baldock and Stevenage old town. One of the biggest of these is in Scotland where the Esplanade in the coastal town of Kirkcaldy is closed for the week long fair which stretches a good mile in length. I can't see our city and university fathers ever agreeing to a fair along the length of Regent Street and St Andrews Street however popular it might be!

Memories 17th July 2002, by Mike Petty

Last Friday the News broke the story of a possible new river crossing over the Cam, linking Chesterton with Cambridge's Riverside area. It would be the first river crossing since Elizabeth Bridge which opened in July 1971.

But unlike that bridge this one will be for pedestrians and cyclists only and it is a considerable time since such a structure was last built, that of a bridge linking the Green Dragon, Chesterton with Stourbridge Common in 1936. It would have made it much easier for people to visit Stourbridge Fair, except that the fair had been abolished in 1934. This new bridge replaced two ferries; one was a heavily built craft that could carry horses and cattle across to Stourbridge Common, alongside it a light passenger ferry. When the river was been lowered in October 1920 to allow repairs at Baitsbite lock the two had been placed across the river with planks crossing the gap between them but this was only a temporary expedient. Throughout 1935 people watched as foundations were put in & listened to the thud of the pile driver in November but it was May 1936 before the bridge was actually open. The smaller ferry was moved to become a private ferry for Banham's boatyard and was used by the engineers constructing Elizabeth Bridge. [SCAN OF GREEN DRAGON BRIDGE BEING ERECTED WITH FERRY ALONGSIDE, SCAN OF ELIZABETH BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION & FERRY SCAN OF GRADS PUNTING PAST GREEN DRAGON]

Several ferries once plied across the river, the ferrymen making a useful living from the tolls they charged and the residents not being too inconvenienced by the delay in crossing. Sometimes when the ferryman had gone home people took themselves across, turning the handle that engaged the chain that ran across the bed of the river although when the ferry was on the other side it had to be pulled over by tugging on the chain itself, slimy - and worse - from the depths of the river.

The first to disappear had been the one operated by William Bates which was made redundant after the opening of Victoria Bridge in 1890. It was part of a bribe to encourage the ratepayers of the then independent Chesterton to become part of greater Cambridge – a bribe that failed. Chestertonians welcomed the new crossing, but rejected amalgamation

A little further along the residents of Ferry Path continued to cross the river in the traditional way by ferry despite the tragic loss of life at Fen Ditton when the Red Grind ferry sank during the Bumping races and people were drowned in 1905. In 1913 the Borough council, having won its battle to absorb Chesterton, decided that a bridge was needed between Ferry Path & the Fort St George though it was another 14 years before it actually opened. William Pauley had operated the ferry since 1887 and carried an estimated one and a quarter million passengers. Those waiting to make a last nostalgic crossing were disappointed when the ferry sank just before the new bridge opened. [PAULEYS FERRY WITH BIKE ON BOARD]

Meanwhile occupants of the new houses on the De Freville Estate had been campaigning for a footbridge to replace a ferry, worked for years by the Dant family. They finally got it in May 1927 when people lamented it had been a very long time coming. Within five years the ferry was back in use while work was put in place to reconstruct the approaches to the new Pye footbridge.

There were other footbridges; in about 1836 locks at the Fort St George which had left the pub on an island were moved to Jesus Green as part of a scheme to improve navigation. There a new bridge was built across the river which featured a steep rise over the new locks. It survived until being replaced in 1892 by the present, more convenient design, similar to the other footbridge spanning the Cam at Robinson Crusoe Island, which had been erected some five years earlier. It still stands, largely overlooked, alongside the present Fen Causeway

bridge which opened in 1926. [SCAN OF JESUS GREEN BRIDGE DURING FLOOD OF 1879 – 64.46]

But the most important footbridge also crossed to an island. Findsilver Lane was the last of the public thoroughfares that once linked the centre of Cambridge with the river, the others having been closed following the construction of the various colleges that now form 'The Backs'. Although the island has long disappeared the right-of-way survives as Garret Hostel Lane and provides a most useful cycle-link into the city centre. Various bridges have been erected at this point, including the original wooden bridge, of which the 'Mathematical Bridge' at Queens' College is a copy. This was replaced first in 1814 and later by a cast iron bridge which survived to 1960 when it was succeeded by the existing award-winning modern structure, making it the last public footbridge to be constructed across the Cam – until now. [LIBRARY PIX OF MODERN GARRET HOSTEL BRIDGE]

The newly proposed bridge will serve both pedestrians and cyclists and already there is discussion about a suitable design to accommodate the needs of each class of user. It may not be easy.

Anybody who has tried to cycle over Garret Hostel bridge will know that the approaches are particularly steep, making extremely difficult to climb up – though exhilarating to speed down the other side. And in July 1927 a letter appeared in the Cambridge Daily News relating to the then newest footbridge – the one linking De Freville and Midsummer Common, the Pye footbridge. It reads: "Sir: There was a good deal of grouching before the inhabitants of Chesterton had a footbridge over the Cam at Dant's Ferry. Now they have got one they have found something else to grouse about. At five minutes to eight every morning the instrument workers at Pye's are hurrying to work from the other side of the river. They curse and groan, trip and stagger under the burden of carrying their bicycles up and down a steep double flight of steps. Sooner or later some panting person carrying a bicycle will fall backwards or pitch into the river" [SCAN OF PYE FOOTBRIDGE]

The new bridge, wherever it goes and whenever it opens will not repeat the mistakes of the last two – will it?

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LEFT OVER FROM LAST WEEK

Mention of the St Ives aeroplane crash of 1918 brought back memories to 92-year-old Mr A. Mansfield of Cambridge; he writes: As a boy of eight years I was living in a lane called the Wilderness at the back of St Ives railway station which was a very important station and had a Smiths book stall. At the time of the crash I was in the garden with my father. About a week later another plane crashed in Meadowland, the lane behind our house. The plane landed in a field but the field was not long enough and it finished up in a ditch. At the time my friend's grandmother lived in the house on the old bridge which had an upstairs then.

Keith Hamilton writes from Cambridge about the decline of Midsummer Fair traders, as raised by Barbara Rooney: "As she rightly says the old time traders have all but disappeared taking away a lot of the colour of the fair and its appeal to perhaps a slightly older generation. Possibly the reason for this is that things one could once obtain cheaper at the fair such as lino, carpets and reasonably-priced china are now so readily available in every high street and the superstores. I recall when I was a kid it seemed every other person walking away from the fair was carrying some goods or other they had purchased from the stalls. A number of old time rides still exist but they now have limited appeal to the teenage market and generally only be seen on the odd occasion at events such as vintage and engine rallies and shows. Only one Moon Rocket ride still exists in working order and this only opens a couple of times

a year at shows. Some of the most popular fairs continue to be those held in the streets and among those that come to mind fairly locally are those in the autumn in Baldock and Stevenage old town. One of the biggest of these is in Scotland where the Esplanade in the coastal town of Kirkcaldy is closed for the week long fair which stretches a good mile in length. I can't see our city and university fathers ever agreeing to a fair along the length of Regent Street and St Andrews Street however popular it might be! [SCAN FROM LAST WEEK]

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Another reader has added her contribution to the story of Coad's shop in Sidney Street. Muriel Mayes (nee Benstead) from Papworth Everard started working there when she left school in 1955 and knew Rhona, the lift girl. Muriel writes: "When I went for my interview Mr Lunnis the manager's office was right at the top of the building across a creaky wooden corridor". She however worked at the front of the shop: "I used to sit just inside the front door mending nylon stockings. I wonder if anyone remembers me", she asks.

Kathy Skin from King's Hedges adds her reminiscences about pumping the church organ. She writes: "When we lived at Little Eversden my brother Cecil pumped the organ for Mrs Fossey the organist at both Little and Great Eversden, while the rest of us (3) sang in the choir. This was in the 1930s when the Rev E.E. Wilkinson was the vicar. Towards the end of his sermon, perhaps on a pre-arranged signal, the organ began to wheeze and gasp as my brother began to pump madly and Mrs Fossey found her place in the hymn book. Once or twice Cecil was day dreaming at the required time, and a sudden clout brought him out of his reverie, his head being conveniently close to the organ seat" [LIBRARY PIX OF EVERSDEN?]

Memories 24 July 2002, by Mike Petty

Catherine Moubray is a Society Wedding Photographer from Surrey who used to have her studios beside the Tower of London. For many years she took the 'girl with the pearls' photograph in "Country Life" and regularly finds member of the Royal Family in front of her lens. She offers a full wedding service, including the tiaras and was up in Cambridge recently while covering an event at Woburn Abbey.

But Catherine has a particular wedding photograph that is driving her mad. She has been staring at it so long that she feels she knows the people concerned, even though they were married long before she was born.

Some ten years ago Catherine bought a box of old glass negatives at an auction sale in Surrey. For a long while they lay in her darkroom but recently she has got around to printing them. She was faced with the question as to where were they taken, what and who did they show – and who took them. It is these mysteries that she is seeking to solve.

The majority of the photographs depict crowds of fashionable people lining a river bank. There are enough clues to identify that they show spectators at the University Bumping Races at Fen Ditton and one even contains an advertisements for a special newspaper supplement that will feature pictures of May Week. Some show people on the Pitt Club lawn, others in front of the tea rooms, or The Lawns, a large house that is up for sale on one picture. Behind the crowds are the cars parked on the grass, and in the distance several larger vehicles with their chauffeurs. There is even a horse-drawn carriage. On one is the ferry that would convey people across the river, alongside the bank in another is a punt with a gramophone and there

is a boat with an outdoor motor. But most of all there are face after face in all their finery. Catherine would love to put names to them all, but the pictures were probably taken in the 1930s and that is impossible. [SCAN OF CROWDS]

Amongst the other negatives were pictures including a Pye rowing group with their flag bearing the 'Rising Sun' logo & dinners of what seems to be the Ceylon Society. There is also one of the Quinquaginta Babes dance band. Presumably this is related to the Quinquaginta Ramblers dance band, formed in 1926 by two Cambridge undergraduates and enlarged by Fred Elizalde who went on to lead his own band at the Savoy Hotel. The Cambridge band made various gramophone recordings and even took part in a broadcast from the B.B.C. Studios at Savoy Hill. One of its members was Jack, later Lord, Donaldson one-time Minister for the Arts who in those days played bass saxophone and clarinet. [SCAN OF PYE ROWERS & BAND]

And there are wedding scenes; one shows a group outside what is thought to be Meadowcroft on Chesterton Road and there is what seems to be a very posh wedding of a Naval man – but who are they? If you can identify faces please let me know and I will pass the information on to Catherine. [SCAN OF WEDDINGS]

As for the photographer who recorded the scene. The most likely candidate was the firm of Kidd and Baker who had premises in St Mary's Passage from about 1905 to 1939 when they were forced to close due to lack of materials during the war. The firm comprised James Henry Kidd who died in August 1941. He had previously worked for Messrs Faulkner-White & Scott & Wilkinson photographers in Cambridge before opening a studio in Great St Mary's Passage where he was joined by a Miss Baker who'd also worked for Scott & Wilkinson. Do any of these names ring a bell, can anyone explain why some of their negatives might have ended up in Surrey – and where are the rest of their pictures?

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Identifying the who, what and where of photographs is always difficult but Cottenham is fortunate in that it has two experts, Francis Garrett and Mervyn Haird who have for decades been building up a photographic record of their community, drawing on old negatives taken by Fred Smith and a wealth of other snaps by many local amateur photographers. Time after time they have packed village halls as people flocked to their slide shows, and at each show they have learned a little more about the pictures. The problem was that they were so busy collecting, sorting and refiling their slides that they never had the time to write down all that they knew about them. So Liz Milway took a tape recording of one of their performances and then typed each word out. She passed the script to the historical duo who were then stimulated to add even more details to produce a new book of over 150 pages. On Saturday half of the village seemed to be queuing at the Cottenham Village Society's stall at the Charity Gala for their own autographed copy and most of the 2,500 print run must surely have been sold. It contains fascinating stories of the 'Cottenham Gulpers' – such was the village's reputation for drinking when they had 34 public houses for a population of just 2,414. But it was not just beer they consumed. Mr & Mrs Thoday made a fruit drink called 'Penny Monster' which they sold from their shop in High Street until one day in June 1931 when a fire started in the roof. The call went out for the village fire engine, but it had been so long since it had been needed that the grass had grown so long in front of the engine house doors that they could not get the fire engine out. So they went for the hoses stored at David Ingle's workshop opposite the Jolly Millers public house and loaded them into a wheelbarrow. Despite the urgency one of the men pushing it stopped to light his pipe three or four times on his way to the fire. The Chivers fire engine, called out from Histon, did eventually arrive, but the Cottenham one never did! "Cottenham in Focus" is available in the village or by post from Cottenham Village Society c/o Liz Milway, 90 Rooks Street, Cottenham CB4 8RB. It costs £7.50 plus £2.50 postage. [SCAN OF COTTENHAM FIRE]

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Family photographs are a great way to get into history; often you can seek physical similarities over the generations – same eye colour, shape of ear etc, or you can get some idea of their age and then track them down through parish registers, or census returns. You might then trawl through the photographs in the Cambridgeshire Collection to try and find a picture of the house they were living in, or identify the job they did and then dig up a picture of that. Many hundreds of people do just this – but it is not an exercise just for the elderly. Now the Cambridge University Heraldic and Genealogical Society – which sounds much less daunting as CUHAGS – has launched the Eve Logan Prize for an essay or video produced by a pupil at school which examines these or other aspects of their family heritage. It is a prestigious prize that could contribute to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and will bring complimentary membership of the Society amongst other benefits. There will be support and advice from members of the Society, giving students an excellent opportunity to work alongside some of the country's top experts in the field. The first step is to apply for an application form which is obtainable from Dr G. Wright of Clare College, Cambridge CB2 1TL or by e-mailing president@one-name.org. Closing dates for entries is 20th September which may supply just the stimulus needed to get to grips with a summer-time project that could enhance your future academic career.

Readers write

Dr Harry Porter from Cambridge has dropped me a card to say that the author of the book on Night-climbing who disguised himself under the name 'Whipplesnaith, was a King's college graduate, Noel Sympington. He became a farmer in Leicestershire. Henry Button, of Christ's College, recalls another climbing incident, this one in May 1932 when two parties of students, most of whom were skilled mountaineers, climbed to the pinnacles of King's College chapel to fix open umbrellas to the tops. They found it a hazardous operation as the stonework crumbled under their hands and a fragment of masonry crashed down whilst the Dean was walking across the court below. Henry has sent a fragment from the student newspaper, Varsity that reported the incident on 14th May 1932. But like all such cuttings it poses another mystery. If the grads got the umbrellas up there, how did they get the brollys down. The clue lies in a headline, "Umbrella shot down by don's son; Tenth bullet scores direct hit" - but the rest of the article is missing. Can anybody help? [SCAN OF VARSITY ARTICLE]

Mrs K. Mansfield of Green End Road, Cambridge has responded to my mention of church organ-blowers; she says her husband first pumped the organ at Arbury Road Baptist Church at the age of 11 and was paid 15/- (75p) a quarter for his efforts. After a while he moved from behind the organ to the front and played for his first service at the age of 12. Apart from National Service and a spell at three different Anglican churches is is still playing at Arbury, some 45 years later. Can anybody match his long-service?

Memories, 31st July 2002, by Mike Petty

One of Cambridge's great old companies has come under the spotlight in a new book on C.O. Stanley. The name will be immediately familiar to hundreds of Cambridge folk as the man who bought a small radio manufacturing business from the Cambridge scientific instrument maker, W.G. Pye, and transformed it into one of the world's leading electronics firms. They diversified from radios designed to bring entertainment to peoples' homes to radios needed for a world at war and then developed the country's first transistor radios. They pioneered work on radar and mobile telephones, becoming the world's leading exporter of radio-telephones in the mid 1960s. They brought out gramophone records – and much more.

Many of their greatest developments were in the field of television. While some lucky people were watching the Queen's Coronation on small-screen back and white sets Pye was broadcasting the only colour television pictures from two cameras overlooking the route. Few saw the pictures that were only beamed to the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children, to the Daily Express offices in Fleet Street and to a private flat in Park Lane where C.O. and a few of his friends had gathered to watch. One who will not forget that day was Bill Wakefield, who now lives in Stretham. He was then a young engineer selected to look after the screen in the Park Lane flat. Like others he was delighted at the success of the experiment, but did not celebrate the occasion quite as much as his boss. Though he went on to pioneer many developments for the firm Bill will forever be recorded in its history for his achievements that day. But the official account of how he guided an 'overexcited' Stanley to the bathroom, put him to bed and brought him a cup of tea lacks something of Bill's own graphic version of events.

Pye became involved in every aspect of television: the provision of cameras, the equipment used in the studio, the transmitters needed to broadcast and the sets themselves on which people watched. They were even involved in making programmes for C.O. was a leading figure in the battle for the Independent Television that increased the demand for cameras, transmitters and sets.

By 1966 C.O. Stanley had built Pye into an international enterprise employing 30,000 people in Britain and abroad. And then it collapsed.

The account of the dramatic reversal of fortune is explored in detail by Mark Frankland in "Radio Man: the remarkable rise and fall of C.O. Stanley", published by the Institution of Electrical Engineers at £25.

The author has interviewed many local people in his researches and *News* readers played their part in the story. Several months ago Nicholas Stanley appealed in "Memories" for any accounts of outworkers during the war. As German bombers flew over Cambridge the Government was urging factories engaged on vital war work to move some of their production elsewhere. In Pye's case they suggested Swansea as a good site. But C.O. Stanley was adamant that he had no wish to be lumbered with a split workforce should the war be won. So he claimed that Cambridgeshire people would be reluctant to move and came up with the idea of establishing small groups of workers in villages. Some of the workers came from boys at the Cambridge College of Arts and Technology who had their own benches and tools but most of the new workforce were women who turned village halls and their own kitchens into workshops. The scheme proved such a success that the Ministry of Production sent a team to study the experiment and adopted it in other parts of the country. When a Trade Union official accused him of asking too much from his workforce his workforce sprang to C.O.'s defence. But there was one subversive element. When a pile of Communist Party leaflets attacking the war was discovered in the Cambridge plant Stanley was incensed and broadcast an announcement over the factory loudspeakers challenging whoever had brought them to a fight in the canteen. No one turned up. Perhaps they will now come forward and enable another detail to be added to a most readable account of a Cambridge enterprise. [SCAN OF SAWSTON OUTREACH FACTORY, SCAN OF PYE WORKS, SCAN OF COVER]

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Ernest Harvey of Waterbeach has been quick to e-mail to say that he recognises some of the faces in the photograph of Pye rowers featured in last week's *Memories*. He identifies Bob the custodian in his trilby hat, Ken Walker, Nat Bell, Bert Whiffen, Archie Carder, Gill Anderson and L.W. Jones. He thinks the picture would have been late 1920s.

Identifying the who, what and where of photographs is always difficult but Cottenham is fortunate in that it has two experts, Francis Garrett and Mervyn Haird who have for decades been building up a photographic record of their community, drawing on old negatives taken by Fred Smith and a wealth of other snaps by many local amateur photographers. Time after time they have packed village halls as people flocked to their slide shows, and at each show they have learned a little more about the pictures. The problem was that they were so busy collecting, sorting and refiling their slides that they never had the time to write down all that they knew about them. So Liz Milway took a tape recording of one of their performances and then typed each word out. She passed the script to the historical duo who were then stimulated to add even more details to produce a new book of over 150 pages. Half of the village seemed to be queuing at the Cottenham Village Society's stall at the recent Jubilee Gala for their own autographed copy and most of the 2,500 print run must surely have been sold. It contains fascinating stories of the 'Cottenham Gulpers' – such was the village's reputation for drinking when they had 34 public houses for a population of just 2,414. But it was not just beer they consumed. Mr & Mrs Thoday made a fruit drink called 'Penny Monster' which they sold from their shop in High Street until one day in June 1931 when a fire started in the roof. The call went out for the village fire engine, but it had been so long since it had been needed that the grass had grown so long in front of the engine house doors that they could not get the fire engine out. So they went for the hoses stored at David Ingle's workshop opposite the Jolly Millers public house and loaded them into a wheelbarrow. Despite the urgency one of the men pushing it stopped to light his pipe three or four times on his way to the fire. The Chivers fire engine, called out from Histon, did eventually arrive, but the Cottenham one never did! "Cottenham in Focus" is available in the village or by post from Cottenham Village Society c/o Liz Milway, 90 Rooks Street, Cottenham CB4 8RB. It costs £7.50 plus £2.50 postage. [SCAN OF COTTENHAM FIRE SENT LAST WEEK, POSSIBLY OTHERS]

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[IF YOU NEED TO CUT PLEASE HOLD THIS STORY OVER]

Andy Hall from Huntingdon has sent me an early photograph of a mother and baby, a label on the back says that was taken by a photographer named J.H. Priest from Bridge Street, Cambridge. He asks for further information.

Joseph Henry Priest is listed in directories from the 1900s up to the 1920s as the University Stationery stores and picture dealer with premises in Bridge street and Ram Yard. The Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library has a collection of his original negatives which include a series of street scenes of Fen Drayton and Fenstanton. He had an eye for the news photograph too. A view of the Leather Gaiters public house at Hauxton after the fire of 23rd October 1909 comes with Priest's caption giving researchers all the necessary details to enable the event to be read up in the columns of the local newspapers. He did not restrict himself to Cambridgeshire and some depict seaside scenes at Gt Yarmouth whilst a dramatic set of negatives show the effect of what seems to be some type of depth-charge explosion with a sailing boat passing serenely by.

The Cambridge Mammoth Show was the highlight of the August Bank Holiday when areas of Jesus Green were fenced off to provide a showground for a vast array of activities. Joseph Priest found it a rich source of photographs with pictures of the obstacle race with men running with a bucket over their heads or Master M. Townsend winning the final of the 100 yards boys race when just 2 years 10 months old. But it was the cycle races that attracted the crowds, especially when Cambridge had champions like Arthur Markham who held the world endurance tricycle record in 1907 for riding 307 miles in 24 hour. Other sports which caught Priest's eye included football, rugby, cricket, rowing and skating with S. Greenhall pictured wearing the National Skating Association champion scarf. Cambridge had a veteran running champion in Charles Rowell of Chesterton who won the Long distance world championship belt in the USA in 1879 but who nearly 30 years later took part in a professional marathon.

Out of training he dropped out but the strain contributed to his death in 1909. It was that year that Priest photographed military manoeuvres by the University Officer Training Corps whilst a most interesting a series showing a march past along Petty Cury about 1910 apparently showing the OTC in mess uniform. There is also a snap of a funeral procession along St John's Street, but whose? [SCAN OF PRIEST VIEW OF FUNERAL, ST JOHN'S STREET]

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Memories 7th August 2002, by Mike Petty

It is that time of year when many people finish their schooldays; some move on to other schools, some to colleges or universities, others on to retirement. All will have memories that they will carry with them and next term their places will be taken by others

But for Sedley Infants School in Malta Road, Cambridge, there will be no next term. The school has closed after 70 years; next term pupils will start at the new Ridgefield school. But it has not bowed out quietly and has produced a book of reminiscences by former and present pupils.

Many things will bring back memories to schoolchildren everywhere. Take school milk which cost a halfpenny for a third of a pint when introduced in the 1930s. Those families who couldn't afford the milk were given it free - by 1936, this was a quarter of the children, an indication of the hardship in this area of Cambridge. When war broke out milk was subsidised to the extent that all children were given it free, alongside Cod Liver Oil and Mal. It was discontinued in the early 1980s. Miss Thynne remembered collecting the five halfpennies from the children for their school milk on Mondays and staff had to make sure the right money was laid out for the milkman each morning.

Not everybody appreciated it as Malcolm Campbell who attended the school between 1958 and 1961 recalls: I was ordered to drink another boy's milk! I had already drunk mine and put the bottle back but many had left theirs half drunk and he grassed me up falsely to the teacher and nobody believed me. I can still see his grinning face as teacher stood over me until every drop of his milk had gone down my throat - I nearly threw it up!

But there were benefits at being at primary school, Malcolm recalls: "I remember getting engaged at Sedley! Linda and I were going to marry each other when we grew up, it was all sorted out. I backed up my proposal by voting Linda for May Queen, sadly it was the only vote that she got. For some reason that I can't remember the girls also had to vote for a boy (perhaps to be the May Queen's suitor or something), Linda voted for me - it was also the only vote that I got. I didn't care, she was still May Queen in my eyes. But true love never runs a smooth course and on 26th July 1961 Linda went to Romsey and I went to St Andrews (now St Albans), I never saw her again."

Different generations have different memories of schooldays: "We learned to write by putting sand on slates and tracing letters out with our finger". "Memories of the dental treatment remain with me vividly to this day. The clinic was opposite Romsey. The lady dentist operated the drill by foot power, so had varying speeds and when it hit the nerve all Hell was let loose. There was a card system if you needed dental treatment. The teacher used to come in with the cards and if your name was on a coloured one you had to have something done, if it was a white one you were OK until the next visit." "I would like to apologise to the little girl whose dolly I stuffed down the girls toilet, that poor girl was so upset - so was I when they sent for my mum to join in the dressing down". "What amazed me most, when I looked around the school recently, was how minute everything seems now and how large it looked when I was so small 44 years ago. The hall where Uncle Dennis and Auntie Jean entertained us with puppets teaching road safety has shrunk with age, the sandpit has been replaced with an adventure playground and the green in the centre, that hosted so many Maypole dances, has been replaced with a Secret Garden"

As for the modern pupils: "I like doing jigsaws in the corridor", "It's a very fun school", "The school is nice because it has toys and my friends play with me on the grass", "I like singing old songs, I like "How much is that doggie in the window?" "It's been here a very long time and I don't have to wear a school uniform"

One thing that all pupils, young and old, recall is the May or Rose Queen festival held at Sedley School from 1934 right through to 2002. All voted for someone who was kind, honest, helpful, hardworking and a good friend. Page after page of the school's history is taken with snaps of young girls each wearing a crown of flowers and a cape. But there is no picture for 1964 for that year the boys rebelled and demanded a May-King, so no ceremony was held. Can anybody add further details to this outbreak of male equality, which lasted only one year - the rebels moved on and the Queen regained her throne in 1965

Sheila Glasswell, a teacher at the school has spent many hours compiling a volume of memories of 70 years of the Sedley school. Her success is summarised by Malcolm Campbell: "I think it is a fantastic job that you are doing in collecting and preserving the history of a lovely old school, thanks to your efforts, even when the building has gone the memories will live on" [SCAN OF GROUP OF MAY QUEENS FROM THE BOOK, SCAN OF CHILDREN IN GARDEN AT THE SCHOOL IN 1930S, OTHER PIX FROM NEWS LIBRARY]

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then typed each word out. She passed the script to the historical duo who were then stimulated to add even more details to produce a new book of over 150 pages. Half of the village seemed to be queuing at the Cottenham Village Society's stall at the recent Jubilee Gala for their own autographed copy and most of the 2,500 print run must surely have been sold. It contains fascinating stories of the 'Cottenham Gulpers' – such was the village's reputation for drinking when they had 34 public houses for a population of just 2,414. But it was not just beer they consumed. Mr & Mrs Thoday made a fruit drink called 'Penny Monster' which they sold from their shop in High Street until one day in June 1931 when a fire started in the roof. The call went out for the village fire engine, but it had been so long since it had been needed that the grass had grown so long in front of the engine house doors that they could not get the fire engine out. So they went for the hoses stored at David Ingle's workshop opposite the Jolly Millers public house and loaded them into a wheelbarrow. Despite the urgency one of the men pushing it stopped to light his pipe three or four times on his way to the fire. The Chivers fire engine, called out from Histon, did eventually arrive, but the Cottenham one never did! Another hazard of Cottenham life can be glimpsed in a photograph of the High Street where a cyclist seems to be pedalling away at full speed from a wandering cow! "Cottenham in Focus" is available in the village or by post from Cottenham Village Society c/o Liz Milway, 90 Rooks Street, Cottenham CB4 8RB. It costs £7.50 plus £2.50 postage. [SCAN OF COTTENHAM FIRE, HIGH STREET WITH COW]

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Alan Radford asks for you help in locating any photographs of a business that has traded in the Kite area of Cambridge for nearly 30 years. Jays Records and Tapes started at number 2 Burleigh Street – now demolished, moved to 22 Fitzroy Street – also demolished, after which they moved to 17 and later 50 Burleigh Street. Now it is closing with the retirement of Jed and June Radford. Sadly they have few mementoes of their various premises since their snaps were stolen in a burglary some time ago. If you can help please write to me and I'll pass things on. In the meantime I have found one picture of Fitzroy Street to puzzle you; it was taken in 1974 and shows crowds queuing for bread – do you remember why, or spot anybody you know? [SCAN OF QUEUE FOR BREAD IN FITZROY STREET 1974]

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Rosemary Roberts, nee Cross, is trying to track down members of the Business Studies Course at the Cambridge Technical College, 1947-49 to arrange a reunion next summer and has sent a picture of the group. She would like to contact Ann Gillingham, who then lived in Ely, Michael Hodge (Histon), Dorothy Matthews (Barton Mills) and Arthur Stockdale, then of Mildenhall. If you recognise them or can put her in touch please write to Rosemary Roberts, Obaco, Cherry Orchard Drive, Ash Lane, Wells, Somerset, BA5 2LN [SCAN OF CLASS PHOTO]

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Matthew Williams would like to paint the railings in front of his house at 10 Hope Street, Cambridge. The only problem is that they aren't there any more. He thinks they were probably taken down for salvage during the Second World War and would like to get replacement copies made. Does anybody have a photograph to show what they looked like. Please contact him on Cambridge 413244

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Memories 14th August 2002, by Mike Petty

Television pictures of a Harrier jet crashing into the sea at Lowestoft the other week have brought back vivid memories for Harry Bye of Littleport.

As a lad at Shippea Hill Harry was plane-crazy so when he learned that there was to be a flying display and parachute drop at Littleport show he felt he had no option but to take half a day off work and bike across the fen to see it. In those days – July 1932 – times were hard and money harder to earn but Harry was thrilled to find two Gipsy Moth biplanes at the show, each giving flying trips. One would take you looping the loop for 10/- (50p), the other flew a circular trip to Chettisham and back to Littleport. This cost 5/- - which was a third of his weekly wage. But he paid up and still remembers folk in Granby Street looking up at him as he flew over.

Afterwards he watched the aerobatics and waited for the highlight of the show, the parachute descent. The weather was blustery – too rough some said – but the 21 year-old parachutist would not let down those who had come to watch him perform. Harry saw him climb in to the plane and off it flew. Soon it was back and the crowds watched as the stunt man prepared for his descent. But sadly he did not descend. His parachute became entangled in the rudder of the plane leaving him swinging in the slipstream – a ghastly sight. The pilot tried looping-the-loop to release the helpless man, but to no avail. He had no option but to attempt a crash-landing in a nearby cornfield. The crowds rushed to the site, ignoring the pleas of the farmer who tried to stop them doing more damage to his crop. But the efforts of the ambulance crew in attendance at the Show were in vain, the parachutist had been killed. The pilot however was alive, though badly injured. The Show ended with the band playing the National Anthem.

Harry has a picture of the crashed plane taken by George Butcher of Main Street. Littleport but needs no help in remembering. He writes: "The unhappy incident happened 70 years ago, but I can still remember seeing the helpless man in white swinging from the tail of that plane. The recovered pilot paid a visit as a guest the following year (minus plane), apologising to Mr Martin for the damage to his cornfield. Only once has an aeroplane been to the Show since, when in 1987 a lone plane gave a flying display. People prefer the Dagenham Girl Pipers, Cilla Black, Willie Carson or other personalities to air showers". [SCAN OF CRASHED PLANE, PIX FROM NEWS FILES OF LITTLEPORT SHOW, INCLUDING PARACHUTE DESCENT]

Harry Dison has also been reliving memories of flying dangers. He was born in Liverpool in 1925 and, aged 16, joined the Merchant Navy taking war supplies to the Eighth Army in Egypt, then crossing the Atlantic and running the gauntlet of U-Boat attacks. As ship after ship was torpedoed he decided that this was no life for him, he was young enough to leave and turned from sea to air. He trained as a Flight Engineer and in August 1944 found himself in a transport vehicle driving along the Ely Road, destination the new RAF station at Waterbeach.

His first operation saw him in a Lancaster bomber in a daylight raid over marshalling yards in northern France. Over the target the aircraft directly behind theirs was hit by a bomb falling from above; it failed to explode but bits and pieces fell from the plane, including the body of the bomb aimer. On his second operation they were attacked by night-fighters and in the vicious corkscrew manoeuvres the pilot tried in order to break away the hatch cover above his head flew off with a bang, sucking up the navigator's black-out curtain. Somehow they returned safely. Harry still wanted to become a pilot, and occasionally was allowed to take over the controls, giving the pilot an opportunity to visit other parts of the plane. He finally achieved his ambition – but not until he was 65!

Many of his companions did not survive to reach that age. Harry has tracked down many of those who served with him in 514 Squadron and recorded their memories of Lancasters at Waterbeach. It is not just a record of names and numbers, this is the personal testimony of those who experienced the terror of war such as anti-aircraft fire “a shell splinter smashed through the front Perspex window and hit Ben, the Flight Engineer, in the back of the head, killing him instantly”. It recalls the agony of having to make decisions: “... the aircraft was doomed and the pilot ordered ‘Bale out, bale out’. I at once prepared to jump, but Roy called on the intercom to say he couldn't get out of his turret. I felt in a dilemma, whether to open the forward escape hatch and get out, thereby clearing the way for three others to follow, or to go back and help Roy. I opened the escape hatch and rolled forward into 22,000 feet of very cold dark sky. Andy McPhee still speaks of his relief at getting down into my compartment and finding it empty with the escape hatch open. The aircraft went out of control soon afterwards and the five other lads just couldn't make their escape”

But danger could come much closer to home as Cedric Thomson recalls: “One evening at dusk the first aircraft at take-off raised it's undercarriage too soon and with full bomb and petrol load skidded along the runway on it's belly, stopping with it's nose hanging at the edge of the Cambridge - Ely road. The bombs on this operation had time fuses which once set could not be defused. All other aircraft took off but were recalled before reaching the coast. We were ordered to reduce landing weight by jettisoning fuel and then to discharge our bombs on a disused bomb practice site. All aircraft eventually landed and taxied to their dispersals. As our dispersal point was close to the main runway where it adjoined the Cambridge road, we were instructed to stand by as the fixed fused bombs were removed from the damaged Lancaster and transferred to our plane. When fully loaded we took off into a lowering cloud base and flew to the Wash where we dumped the bombs with just twenty minutes to spare before some were timed to go off.” But things did not always work out so well; Group Captain Michael Wyatt recalls how just one bomb, falling from a bomb rack, blew up one aircraft and damaged others, killing several of the ground crew.

Once the war was won Waterbeach continued as an operational airfield until August 1963. Even then it had not ceased to resonate with the sound of aero engines and continued to host major air displays organised by the Burma Star Association. Thousands of spectators flocked to witness a variety of aircraft and other attractions, such as motor cycle displays and parachute jumps. But just 25 years ago, in September 1977, the organisers staged their final event, the old soldiers felt they had earned a break, having contributed over £20,000 to ex-service charities. They bowed out with a bang, making record profits, attracting record crowds – and fittingly the star of the show was a Lancaster bomber escorted by a Spitfire and Hurricane.

It is now more than 50 years since 514 squadron was disbanded but thanks to Harry Dison there is now a record of the experiences of some of those who fought and died from this one English field. "Lancasters at Waterbeach" is available at Waterbeach airfield museum or from Harry Dison, Cottage Bungalow, Manley Road, Alvanley, Frodsham, WA6 9DF for £6 plus £1.50 postage [SCAN OF WATERBEACH AIRFIELD ENTRANCE 1962 – SCAN 52.89, PIX OF BURMA STAR DISPLAY INCLUDING AMERICAN FLYING FORTRESS FROM THE FINAL, 1977, SHOW, COVER OF FINAL PROGRAMME]

The little village of West Wratting was also home to a wartime airfield and various army units were based at the Hall or in tents in the meadows, the troops complaining about a plague of earwigs which tormented them at night. Now Suzanne Langford and Elsie Webb have started to compile a photographic record of how things used to be. They are staging a display of their pictures in the Village Hall next Saturday and Sunday afternoons and would be grateful for any assistance in adding to their files, or understanding what they already have. [OLD PHOTO OF VILLAGE FROM NEWS FILES]

But it is unlikely that anyone will be able to add personal memories of the earliest flying from their village. For it was at West Wratting in 1867 that E.P. Frost designed a flying machine with flexible wings that would flap up and down and lift it into the air. By 1877 he had built it and all that was needed was a 25 horse-power engine. But in those days there was only steam available and the power was not there, so the machine was left under the trees in the park. By the time a petrol engine was available, 30 years later, the weather had left it a wreck. [SCAN OF FLYING MACHINE]

But the village has another claim to fame – its windmill. In 1932 Philippa Burrell came upon it by chance having boarded a bus to the highest point in East Anglia - which she decided was West Wratting. Taking lodgings in the village she soon bought the windmill for £600 - including cottage, granary and 20 acres of good farming land. High & isolated she found it a little paradise – and promptly left to study in Paris! She returned to help the Labour candidate in the 1934 Cambridge by-election but when the excitement of the campaign was over, Burrell found herself once more in an undecided state. She visited the Public Library and read the literature shelves from end to end. She wrote plays and tore them up. She learned about planting and pruning – and all the while the windmill was watching her with its broken sails, cap all out, windows rotten and rain going in. It was an unwelcoming part of the property, and one she used to hide in when the bailiffs called.

A millwright gave her an estimate of £100 for repair and to raise the money she studied cookery books and made date cakes which she sold from an old pram on Cambridge market, a picture of the mill fixed to the side. It was an immediate sensation and soon she was selling teas to the hundreds of people who journeyed to see the mill, sitting contentedly on rustic tables in the orchard. After two seasons however she closed the business as the mill was restored. It was not the end of the story for she wrote a play "The wind and the mill" which was performed by the Festival Theatre Company in the fields around – England's first Theatre Camp. [SCAN OF CUTTING, PICTURES OF WINDMILL FROM NEWS FILE]

Do you have memories of other windmills, did you see them when they were working – write to Mike Petty

Memories 21 August, by Mike Petty

For the last two weeks the eyes of the world have been focused on the tragedy being played out at Soham; how could such things happen in such a small peaceful community. But sadly

Soham has seen tragedy before and its church of St Andrew was then, as now, at the heart of it.

In the very earliest days of Christianity Saint Felix became the first Bishop of the East Angles. He founded a cathedral at Soham about 630 AD b Felix moved away to Dunwich, close to the town that commemorates his name. When he died his remains were brought back to Soham to lie in peace. But he was not to lie peacefully. Danish raids prompted fear of destruction and his bones were removed further inland for safety. Monks from Ramsey rowed over by boat to take them to their own Abbey. But such relics were important and would bring pilgrims, pilgrims would bring income with them. Monks from Ely decided to intercept them & to take the remains by force if need be. They too set off by boat towards Soham with a large force.

A chronicler from Ramsey recorded what happened next: "It came to pass that just as the ships of either party were approaching one another under a bright and cloudless sky, suddenly, to the discomfort of the large force and the benefit of the smaller, a dense fog arose which separated the two parties. And so, while their adversaries were vainly wandering in different directions, our boat was carried onward in a straight course and safely deposited by the aiding waters on the bosom of our native shore"

If the body of St Felix was safe, the people of Soham were not. The Danes ransacked the town about 870. They drove the priests and all the people into the cathedral and set fire to it. All perished in the flames and such was the destruction that nobody now knows where the building stood, though it is thought that the present church may have been built on the site.

Soham subsequently suffered the trials and tribulations of most communities; but it was in June 1944 the town was nearly destroyed for a second time.

On the night of 2nd June 1944 engine driver Benjamin Gimbert and fireman James Nightall set off from March marshalling yards with a consignment of fifty-one wagons full of bombs and detonators. Their journey proceeded without incident through Ely and on towards Soham at a steady 20 mph..

Then driver Gimbert noticed the leading wagon with its forty 500-lb bombs was ablaze and knew that something had to be done. He stopped the train and fireman Nightall ran back to the blazing bomb load; he disconnected that one wagon from the other fifty and rejoined his driver on the footplate. Together they steamed through the station pulling the burning load clear.

When the train stopped Guard Herbert Clarke noticed the burning ammunition wagon and he walked the length of three wagons toward it, within seconds he found himself thrown the length of six wagons back. In the signal box "Sailor" Frank Bridges looked along the track & could see the danger. He came down on to the platform to offer assistance.

Soham citizens slept soundly until their windows shattered and their beds shook as five tons of high explosives detonated and a crater fifteen feet deep and sixty-six feet wide appeared where once their station had stood. Those first on the scene found the twisted machinery, the shattered signal box and the wrecked bodies of Fireman Nightall and Signaller Bridges. They also found the heroic Driver Gimbert and fifty other fully-loaded ammunition wagons amazingly still intact. And because of their actions Soham survived, though the streets were covered in shattered glass.

The community of Soham have never forgotten the heroism of the railwaymen who saved their town. St Andrew's church was packed for a service although fragments of glass were still dropping down from the windows as the Reverend Percy Boughey began his address with

the words: "But for such men as these ..." They are commemorated at Soham Village College.

But the loss of children is particularly poignant, and Soham has known this too, though this time as a neighbour. For at Burwell, just across the fen, in September 1727 children were getting very excited and asking permission from their parents to attend a marvellous entertainment that would be acted out on the Friday night at Burwell - a visit from Mr Shephard and his puppets. Everybody was careful to save up the penny that would pay the admission charge and as the great night came the fens were alive with people making their way. John Blinkensop from Reach went along with Benjamin Collis, Rose Rooke & Thomas Leggitt; John Prigg's daughter Mary travelled from Upware. Mary and Elizabeth Killingbeck were there from Swaffham Prior - in all over 140 people.

Amongst them was Thomas Howe aged 16 years. He paid his penny and entered the great clunch barn, its walls nine feet high with the great thatch roof overhead. The barn was nearly seventeen feet wide and stretched over 45 feet in length. But only one third of it was available for the show; much was packed with bundles of straw and at the far end was a stable. Thomas squeezed through the one narrow door just three feet wide and scrambled up to a beam just under the great thatch roof - and quite close to the old dead cobwebs that hung there. From there he could look down on the people he knew below - Lettuce Starling, Ann Bye, Sincere Warren and the rest. He recalled what happened next. "First there was the conjuring tricks they done on the oval table then they moved that out of the way and started the show proper. Old Mr Sheppard acted the part of a lover and his wife the coy mistress - you should have seen how they jigged the puppets and how they danced; then they acted out St George and the dragon".

Outside it was about 9 o'clock when Richard Whitaker the hostler came to feed the horses. He worked in the barn - but tonight they would not let him in unless he paid his penny. But taking his candle and lantern he went into the stable and climbed up to the top of the partition which divided it from the puppeteers. Pushing some of the hay aside he wriggled over the bundles of straw until he could look down from just under the great thatched roof on to the performance below.

"The dragon he was going at St George, blowing out fire and smoke ..."; meanwhile in the barn itself a small fire had in truth started. Thomas Howe saw the fire when it was small enough to have been extinguished by his own hands; saw it before Richard Whitaker screamed out the alarm; such a small fire but it spread along the thatched roof like lightning.

"Everybody was thrown into terror. They rushed towards the door but that opened inwards and they'd put the table they used for the conjuring tricks against it & the crush was so great they could not open it."

Outside people could see what was happening - already sparks from the thatched roof were spreading to surrounding buildings. Thomas Dobedee from Wicken broke down the door and dragged as many as he could from the burning ruin. Before he left his task the very hair on his head had been singed by the flames but out of the small hole he made 60 people scrambled to safety. Thomas Howe was amongst them: "I sprung down from the beam and landed on the people lying upon one another to the depth of three or four feet - one had fallen down, then others fell on top of them - there was nobody near the door that was standing up". Shortly afterwards the great thatched roof fell in - and the anguish, the cries, the shrieks of the sufferers were ended in one universal silence and death.

"In the Morning that was a hideous scene - skulls, bones and carnage. The mangled relics was gathered up, shovelled into carts and buried in two a large pits dug in the churchyard". Scarcely a family in the area escaped the tragedy. Thomas Howe's own sister perished - not a single woman had survived. Parents bewailed the loss of their children, children mourned lost parents, sisters lost brothers, brothers sisters. Over 80 people died. For years the ruins of the barn were visible; now they are gone. But a gravestone containing a representation of a flaming heart still stands in the churchyard at Burwell. The horror of that night has become part of the story of Cambridgeshire, as have the events of the last few days at Soham.

Memories 21 August, by Mike Petty REVISED TEXT

Tragedy and children is sadly nothing new. At Burwell in September 1727 children were getting very excited and asking permission from their parents to attend a marvellous entertainment that would be acted out on the Friday night at Burwell - a visit from Mr Shephard and his puppets. Everybody was careful to save up the penny that would pay the admission charge and as the great night came the fens were alive with people making their way. John Blinkensop from Reach went along with Benjamin Collis, Rose Rooke & Thomas Leggitt; John Prigg's daughter Mary travelled from Upware. Mary and Elizabeth Killingbeck were there from Swaffham Prior - in all over 140 people.

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area escaped the tragedy. Thomas Howe's own sister perished - not a single woman had survived. Parents bewailed the loss of their children, children mourned lost parents, sisters lost brothers, brothers sisters. Over 80 people died. For years the ruins of the barn were visible; now they are gone. But a gravestone containing a representation of a flaming heart still stands in the churchyard at Burwell. The horror of that night has become part of the story of Cambridgeshire.
[PIX ON DISK]

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Margaret Wilsher from Frinton-on-Sea writes following my mention in last week's Memories of the West Wrattling windmill. Her father knew the owner and in the 1960s Margaret went to have a look at the mill close up. She is a real windmill collector and has recently managed to find a postcard of Balsham windmill which was taken down in the 1960s. This a fate that has befallen many such mills and in a paper read to the Cambridge Antiquarian Society on 5th November, 1928, H.C Hughes reported: "Windmills are disappearing so fast that in many parts of the country they are a forgotten race. Some day antiquarians will be examining and digging in mounds, having quite forgotten that they were the mounds of old windmills made to raise them a little above the surrounding land."

Together with J.H. Bullock he set about making a record of windmills existing, in whole or in part, in Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely in the winter of 1930-1, in conjunction with a Windmill Survey being undertaken by the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings.

They found the oldest mill at Bourn had been out of commission for some six years. The sails had been smashed in a gale in 1925, finishing its working life. But the tenant would not let the owner pull it down & it was subsequently given to the Cambridge Preservation Society and restored. [PROBABLY A PIC IN NEWS FILES]

Although French's Mill in Cambridge was still standing, [PIC FROM NEWS FILES] as was the tower of the windmill in Hurst Park Avenue, of the mill at Long Road Trumpington there was no sign. But a Miss Moore, the daughter of the last miller could report it had been built in 1812, with part of the works coming from an old mill which had then recently been pulled down near Barrington. It stopped working in the spring of 1887 and a year later was sold to John Peile, the Master of Christ's College. He tried to let it but failing to do so had it pulled down that same year. Photographer R.L. Lord snapped it in its prime [SCAN ATTACHED]

One danger was that if the corn ran out the friction of the millstones made the stones very hot, sometimes causing fires. A windmill with the sails burning at night is one of the most terrifying of all sights, Hughes reported, adding that many Fordham people still remembered the sight of their mill burning

The drainage mill used to be a very familiar sight throughout the fens, and the Antiquarians have a picture of a group of small mills at Soham taken in 1914. [PIC FROM NEWS FILES]. There was also a large mill at Soham mere, belonging to the Cambridgeshire County Council with the old type of tail beam and old types of sail. "Long may they be preserved by the bodies that own them" he exhorted. Sadly it was not to be. By 1947 the mill was thought to be dangerous and the Council that the only answer lay in demolition. Enthusiasts protested at the loss of this rare survival of a drainage mill but to no avail - it was just too dangerous. So the demolition men moved in to pull it over with a tractor. They failed. Undaunted they returned with gunpowder. They failed. So in the end eight charges of gelignite had to be used to topple the "dangerous" structure. Ironically just eight years later another drainage mill, much younger, much less impressive and in a much worse state, was re-built and erected just

next door, at Wicken Fen, where it is lauded as the last of the fenland wind drainage mills.
[PIX IN NEWS LIBRARY]

In 1928 Hughes reported: "To those who regard the windmill as a piece of useless antiquated machinery it is surprising to find how many mills are still working, though their number grows less every year, and it is almost useless to depend on a list for long. The long irregular hours needed to make the most of windy weather and the long spells of enforced idleness are a great difficulty without some auxiliary power; while the absence of a fuel bill is counteracted by the expense of repairs. There is no room for the elaborate cleaning machinery of the modern mill. Some windmillers, however, still make wheat flour. A notable example is Mr Lawrence of Stretham, who keeps quite a good business going".

The mill at Stretham lost its sails during the Second World War when it was taken over by the Royal Observer Corps as a look-out post. Now there are plans to put the sails back, though the machinery has gone for ever. [PIC FROM NEWS FILES]

Tony Manning has E-mailed to say that in 1953 he bought Mill House and Ingle's mill in Willingham. At this time the Mill had only three sails, the fantail was incomplete and old heavy tarred boards were falling off. He contacted every organisation that he could think of but no one was interested, so in the interests of safety having two young children playing under it daily he decided to pull it down. He found it was obviously built from second-hand timbers and has been told then often came from Battleships. Is this true, he asks and are there any records of the mill. Meanwhile another Willingham mill, Cattell's, was been restored.
[PIC OF CATTELL'S MILL IN NEWS LIBRARY]

The News files has pictures of several Cambridgeshire mills which supplement those taken by the Cambridge Antiquarians, whose files are deposited in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library. But do you have others, and stories to go with them? [PIC OF FULBOURN MILL WITH TRACTOR IN FOREGROUND]

Memories 28th August 2002, by Mike Petty

Last week a reader from Barton Seagrave in Northamptonshire wrote to complain of the number of trees along Queen's Road, Cambridge: "I thought I would inspire my son by driving along the Backs to see the magnificent architecture. We might as well as driven through a forest. Not a college to be seen, just overpowering foliage. Nineteen out of 20 of these post-mature specimens need to come down to reveal the magnificent vistas which probably looked their best in King George's Golden Jubilee year", lamented Dr J.H. Fitton.
[NEWS 21ST AUG]

Indeed the Backs are probably one of the areas of Cambridge that have changed most radically since the celebrations of 1935, but not in the way one might imagine. For many of the present trees are mere saplings compared to what was there before.

The demise of the previous giant trees has sometimes been dramatic. In November 1950 Cambridge was rocked by a series of explosions. Newspaper reporters scurried round to find the cause. Was it yet another fire at the Cavendish Laboratory - there had been two within eight months earlier in the year, or were the Civil defenders rehearsing their plans to see how the town would cope in the event of attack.

The Laboratories still stood intact, there was no broken glass in college courts yet Cambridge had undergone a radical transformation. Sixteen giant elm trees each older than the buildings they framed had been dynamited along the Backs.

It was just the latest stage in the removal of the mature trees in that area. The Avenue at Trinity College had been removed in 1948; that at St Johns was to follow in 1951. There was more felling along the Backs in July 1974 and the winter of 1981-82 when Dennis Gifford of Victoria Park, recalled: We were felling the elms on the Backs when my outside thermometer went down to five degrees Fahrenheit. Our contractor had to thaw out his diesel pipes, which were frozen solid, with a lighter rolled up newspaper before he could grind out the stumps. We were not able to replant before March”

Elms have been the victims of many attacks. As early as 1922 those lining Brooklands Avenue were being described as dangerous; 180 had been planted in about 1850 but disease was taking its toll. By 1937 50 had been destroyed & the disease was so endemic that there was no point in planting new. By 1950 only 92 of the trees remained and they were coming down at the rate of between one and five a year. Elsewhere Parker’s Piece trees were dangerous by 1962, a decade before the notorious outbreak of Dutch Elm Disease which led to the removal of a particularly rare specimen from the corner of Drummer Street in 1978.

Trees have a finite life but in 1894 perfectly good trees were being uprooted in Victoria Avenue to benefit farmers. The Royal Agricultural Show was to be held on Midsummer Common and people feared that the rows of trees newly planted to soften the impact of the great new roadway carved across the common to carry traffic to and from the new Victoria Bridge would be damaged. So they were dug up, to be replanted in Chesterton and replaced once the Show had departed.

New trees have often been planted for special occasion. In 1897 limes along Chesterton Road were seen as one way of celebrating Queen Victoria’s Jubilee. The willow population along the River Cam was greatly enhanced to commemorate the centenary of the Cambridge Evening News in 1988

The lost trees along the Backs were replanted **as part of a Blue Peter [CHECK] project in GET DATE FROM LIBRARY OR OMIT**. Dr Fitton’s letter is testimony the success of that replacement programme but it will be generations before residents and visitors will once more witness the magnificent trees of King George’s time, most of which have vanished, unrecorded and unremarked in the years since 1935. [PIX OF MATURE TREES ALONG THE BACKS C1910, TREES BEING FELLED & CLEARANCE PRIOR TO REPLANTING; PIC OF BROOKLANDS AVENUE & PARKERS PIECE – FROM LIBRARY FILES, ON ROS’ DESK]

In one respect the Backs have in recent months been reminiscent of the Second World War. This year the yellows and blues of the famous springtime flowers were supplemented by multi-coloured builders’ vans, helping to frame the view of King’s College chapel, and Degree Day saw the area converted into a large car park for the cars of proud parents. This was something anticipated by the News some years ago when they produced an impression of what the area would look like with an underground car park. But in the dark days of war the vehicles sheltering under the trees were military lorries, the leaves concealing their presence from German planes. [SCAN OF VANS THIS SPRING]

Following the events in New York last year the world will soon be remembering September 11th. But as Mrs E. Nightingale of Cambridge reminds me there is another September date etched in the memories of many people; September 3rd 1939 and the declaration of the Second World War.

She has lent me a faded newspaper cutting that means a great deal to her; it shows a group of Cambridge boys in the 250th Field Company, Royal Engineers who were then stationed at Parkside. It was taken just after the momentous news of the declaration of war had been made. Her husband is amongst them, on the back row, in front of Sergeant Riggs. How many of those happy lads are still around today, she wonders. [SCAN]

Albert Waldock of Fulbourn has also sent in another wartime photograph. This one shows members of no.18 Platoon of C Company, 1st Battalion Cambridgeshire Regiment Home Guard and was taken in 1944 when the units were disbanded. Beneath the picture someone has listed the names of all the soldiers, though these are now fading. Albert has managed to decipher most of them including O.Z. Barnes, recently deceased, from whom he obtained the picture. The Company had been formed in February 1941 and been commanded initially by Major J.S. Chivers and from April 1943 by Major H. Payne.

On 14th May 1940 Mr W Eden, secretary of state for war, had broadcast an appeal for a citizen force to be called the Local Defence Volunteers, to be organised within various regions. People flocked to the call and were entitled to claim expenses - a bicycle allowance, payment for underclothes torn on barbed wire - but it remained a volunteer force until 1942. Some weapons were available, in 1940 standard issue at one checkpoint was packets of pepper, short lengths of lead casing and iron tubing. But many had their own shotguns. Then in July Cambridgeshire received its share of the million rifles sent by the United States when 8,000 arrived at the Cambridge Corn Exchange - all thickly covered in grease. For two weeks hundreds of helpers were kept busy cleaning them - and ruining many garments in the process

What could they have done these ordinary people, lacking discipline and cohesion without proper weapons against a victorious army of young ruthless fighting men armed to the teeth. They would have had no chance in a pitched battle but that was not their role. They were the local defence of their homes, farms and village where intimate knowledge of every hedge or ditch could have delayed or harried the invader, and there was also the danger of landings by parachute, spies who could flash lights to guide enemy bombers or sabotage electricity stations

Initially the LDV were subject of much merriment – their initials, it was said, stood for 'lousy, dirty and verminous'. One wag at Ely remarked: "it won't matter now if Hitler does come for when he sees this lot he'll just die o'laughing". But they provided a home defence, blocking roads and potential landing sites, guarding bridges and power stations - jobs which a would otherwise have needed regular troops. When they posed for their photograph in December 1944 any feelings of regret that their fighting training had not been fully utilised was tempered by the relief that the bloodshed and destruction in which they would have played their part had been avoided and the objects for which they were established had been accomplished without the need to fight - as they said at Barton - to every last round, or bomb, or man.

Mr Waldock's picture will be passed to the Cambridgeshire Collection at Lion Yard Library, where the original negative may well be stored. For it was taken by Stearn and Company of 72 Bridge Street who continued to record the local scene during the war - a scene which included many of the organisations evacuated to the safety of Cambridge. But after the bombing raids in central Cambridge Stearns sent their glass plate negatives to be processed in Brighouse, near Leeds for safety from which they were later returned for addition to the Cambridgeshire Collection. Sadly the rest were destroyed when the Bridge street premises were vacated following the firm's merger with Eaden Lilley's photographic business in 1970. [SCAN OF HOME GUARD PHOTO]

Memories 4th September 2002, by Mike Petty

When I met Margaret Curran at the Hill Top Club, Primrose Street, Cambridge, she shared some of her memories of living in Park Street in the 1920s. Her father, Arthur Stone, was an upholsterer who had lost his leg in the Great War, and the family lived over William Thompson's shop. He was a clockmaker who would cycle in to Cambridge every day from his home in Barton and spent much of his time winding up clocks in the colleges & at Addenbrooke's Hospital. From their attic windows Margaret could look down on the activities in the street and witness the comings and goings at the ADC Theatre and Friends Meeting House. Margaret attended Park Street School until she was about nine years old, then moved on to Brunswick School on Walnut Tree Avenue, Newmarket Road. She asked if anybody had set down their memories of the Park Street area.

In May 1964 the News sent its reporter, Erica Dimock to survey the views of residents as part of her 'Down Your Street' series of articles. Originally a street just sufficient for two cars to pass along it had been transformed by the building of the new multi-storey car park. This had started in September 1962 and been officially opened by the Mayor of Cambridge, Coun J.B. Collins in October the following year. It was the first major car park in Cambridge and formed an integral part in catering for the needs of Cambridge's harassed motorists; a scheme that had seen the arrival of parking meters.

But the parking meter system now made it impossible for residents to leave their own cars outside their houses during the day. "Husbands coming home to lunch or before 6.30 in the evening, are obliged to put a shilling in the meter or else walk quite a distance from wherever they have managed to park their cars outside the city centre", she reported. One or two people had found a solution to the problem, though it had meant some sacrifice on their part - they had decided to park their cars in their precious front gardens.

The increased traffic which inevitably accompanied the opening of the car park did not seem to have worried local people unduly, Erica found. "One lady who does not manage to get out very often says she thoroughly enjoys watching the people going in and out of the park: 'It's like Piccadilly on a Saturday morning'"

The car park had replaced some 50 small cottages that used to stretch back to St John's Street. Mr and Mrs. A. Beaumont who had lived in Park Street since 1929, regretted the loss of some of their neighbours in the demolished cottages but liked it even more now that the street had been widened - there was more to watch as people went by on their way to the car park.

More change was in the air with the Maypole public house due for extensive alterations when it would be turned back to front, so that it faced along Park Street. The licensees, Mr & Mrs Collins had been there just over a year, having moved from Romford. They were enjoying running their first public house, the bar decorated with dolls from foreign countries. Their trade was mainly locals but they included undergraduates amongst its customers.

Erica sketched the history of the ADC Theatre, formerly part of the taproom of the Hoop public house and subsequently used as billiard rooms until converted to its present use. It had been badly burned in 1933 and entirely rebuilt with a seating capacity of 200 people. But, she added, it was "hardly of the standard of which a University which rears many of the country's greatest actors could be particularly proud".

Park Street school then catered for just over 100 children, aged from five to eleven, most of whom lived in the area, or had recently moved following the demolition for the car park. The head, Miss V.B. Pratt, had a staff of three full-time and two-part time teachers. Although the

playground was not adequate for football games this proved little problems since Jesus Green proved an ideal place for more energetic parts of the school curriculum.

Those who actually live in this curve of Park Street have a most attractive outlook over Jesus Green and across to the river, Erica found. Their children, tired of their own back gardens, had plenty of freedom on the green, which is also an ideal place on which they could take their dogs for a walk.

But there was a problem: “The only disadvantage of living in these small terraced houses is the lack of a bathroom and indoor toilet. Some of the slightly larger houses round the corner have managed to have bathrooms installed and, with this very necessary amenity, have turned their homes into lodgings for undergraduates.” So what with new bathrooms and parking in their gardens Park Street had come a long way in a few years – did you live there?

Erica surveyed many other areas of Cambridge in the early 1960s; are there any that have special memories for you that you would like to see featured? [PICS OF PARK STREET FROM NEWS FILES, SCAN OF BUILDING CAR PARK, AUG 1963, OPENING OF MAYPOLE PUB 1965. PARK STREET IN 1920S AND 1930S]

##

Memories of Diana, Princess of Wales, have been evoked by a new video produced by the East Anglian Film Archive. “Royal Century” features various regional celebrations and includes footage of Diana’s visit to Cambridge in 1993 when she met crowds on Market Hill. A few years earlier, in 1975, another Royal, Princess Anne opened the Lion Yard redevelopment and there is most interesting footage showing the old Petty Cury and the work of rebuilding as well as the actual opening walkabout in the presence of many of the city’s dignitaries of the day. Cambridge also features briefly on ‘The Home Front, 1939-45’, a record of Home Guard, rationing and all the events of the period. A third video features the Singing Postman, Allan Smethurst in a film intended to launch his career in America in 1966. The promotion never happened and the film never broadcast but it is a most interesting record of how life has changed over the last 35 years. Today his hit song “Have you got a light, boy” would be banned as promoting smoking, there would need to be several pages of notes explaining the significance of “They’re all playing dommies in the bar” – and what was a postman on a bike anyway? The films are obtainable from the East Anglian Film Archive, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ or at any of the public showings that are given around the county by the Archive’s staff, who are always on the lookout for additional films for their files. [PHOTOS OF PRINCESS DIANA ON THE MARKET, PRINCESS ANNE AT OPENING OF LION YARD AND SCAN OF DOMINO PLAYERS AT THE RAILWAY TAVERN, SHIPPEA HILL 1977]

##

Andy Hall from Huntingdon has sent me an early photograph of a mother and baby, a label on the back says that was taken by a photographer named J.H. Priest from Bridge Street, Cambridge. He asks for further information.

Joseph Henry Priest is listed in directories from the 1900s up to the 1920s as the University Stationery Stores and Picture Dealer with premises in Bridge street and Ram Yard. The Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library has a collection of his original negatives which include a series of street scenes of Fen Drayton and Fenstanton. He had an eye for the news photograph too. A view of the Leather Gaiters public house at Hauxton after the fire of 23rd October 1909 comes with Priest's caption giving researchers all the necessary details to enable the event to be read up in the columns of the local newspapers. He did not restrict

himself to Cambridgeshire and some depict seaside scenes at Gt Yarmouth whilst a dramatic set of negatives show the effect of what seems to be some type of depth-charge explosion with a sailing boat passing serenely by.

In 1909 Priest photographed military manoeuvres by the University Officer Training Corps whilst a most interesting series showing a march past along Petty Cury about 1910 apparently showing the OTC in mess uniform. There is also a snap of a funeral procession along St John's Street, but whose? [SCAN OF PRIEST VIEW OF INSPECTION OF UNIVERSITY OFFICER TRAINING CORPS MOTOR CYCLE SECTION 1909]

Memories, 11th September 2002, by Mike Petty

On Monday morning members of Chatteris Probus Club stood in tribute to the memory of Maurice Kidd, who has died following a fall in the house in which he had been born 92 years before.

Maurice was a true fenman. But he was not the sort of fenman under the spotlight 25 years ago when in September 1977 *'New Society'* devoted some paragraphs to a controversial article on Fen Tigers. I had been at the Probus meeting to talk about this ancient breed of people and their battle to preserve their landscape from the changes of the seventeen-century, but their survey was more up-to-date.

It presented a picture of an area close to suave, metropolitan, cosmopolitan Cambridge which remained remote and uninvestigated. Its people were mysteries and its ways seen as tough, primitive and atavistic, the author, Anne Garvey, reported.

In 1977 she found it an area struggling against poverty: "Land work is badly paid. Wages are as low as anywhere in the farming world and struggling to maintain a family on £27 a week is a monumental fight. Women working is a longstanding tradition and a modern necessity". Yet when the *News* sent Pauline Hunt to investigate she found wages were double that figure and the fen farmworkers higher paid than in most parts of the county. Certainly on Monday many of those born and bred in Chatteris seemed to be thriving. True there were no ladies present but not, I suspect, because they were labouring in the fields.

Mechanisation was emptying the land. "The people are going and so are the animals. Littleport's retired vet recalled the days of community, of horse competitions and a dozen animals in every smallholding. Now there are few. Farming for the big fen farmer means machinery, investment, crops and produce. The land is farmed so fiercely that cabbages, sugar beet or maize hug the roadside where they are abruptly fenced off by barbed or electric wire." On Monday this week there were few signs of electric fences or heavy horses. There were steam lorries and smoking monster traction engines making their way home from the rally at Haddenham, but no traditional carrot lorries. "Chatteris is the carrot capital of the country", Clement Freud claimed in his recent autobiography when recalling his election as the local Member of Parliament. But today there are no carrots grown in the fields around the town, the soil will no longer support them.

Workers in 1977 were kept down in the tied cottage system or lived in council houses with a good show of vegetables in the garden – "huge cauliflowers, beetroots sprout and multiply, cabbages and sprouts crowd up to the front doorstep". Today few front gardens grow vegetables, most have been turned into lawns or car parks – for transport is a necessity.

But the population was growing. The new residents were uprooted families of dispossessed East Enders from London, almost all depressed and subject to a rash of psychosomatic complaints, who have given up trying to find houses in the capital. The huge housing estates built to welcome the newcomers were known in each village and town as ‘Colditz’ or ‘Auschwitz’. The locals lived in council homes that were “grim and comfortless within”. True Maurice Kidd’s home was not one that would feature in the glossy magazines; it was the home of a bachelor – a somewhat eccentric one at that - full of homely comforts and mementoes. Ever since he could walk Maurice had climbed the stairs to his bed, it was some mischance that on his last night at home he should have stumbled and fell.

A bachelor living in his family home – that was surely unusual even in 1977; but then, claimed *New Society* life in the fens was different from other areas. “The old patterns of courtship, marriage and family contact hang on. The result is damaging. Inbreeding, between related families throws up recessive genes which, with a less stable pool, would remain hidden. Inherited subnormality is exacerbated by this sort of inter-family contact - to a pathological degree”. No wonder the article raised a stir.

“Children in the fen are a good barometer of expectation at its lowest, they have very little experience of the outside world. They learn very little at home not even about the land and the countryside”, it claimed. But Maurice was a fen child who had visited virtually every country in the world, apart from China. And he used that knowledge as a teacher at the Cromwell School, Chatteris inspiring generations of children with his love of history, geography, and the fens.

His own education had been gained at King Edward School, Chatteris, where his father was headmaster, and the County Boys School, Cambridge, making the journey each day by train. From there he went to Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge and obtained a Master of Arts degree. In 1977 Pauline Hunt found three Fellows of the college had also been born in the fen, as had the former Master – hardly evidence of backwardness!

“Fen villages sleep. There are few clients for the little churches and chapels. The picture places are gone and there are only the bingo halls left for entertainment. Solutions for fen boredom are slow in coming” *New Society* found. In Chatteris today there are two social clubs, the Working Men’s and the Conservatives, back to back, where meetings such as Probus attract dozens of residents both old and new and which Maurice enjoyed attending.

Chatteris also has a thriving branch of the Worker’s Educational Association which sees upwards of 60 people meeting in an old schoolroom to study topics as diverse as the history of food and dining, or the local history of their area. Maurice Kidd used to give such lectures, illustrating them with slides from his travels or of old pictures of Chatteris and the fen. I was privileged that he agreed to act as guest lecturer at one of my classes there a couple of years ago, when his great knowledge and enthusiasm shone out, keeping the class entranced.

It was typical of Maurice that he should ensure that his great wealth of local history materials should be passed for safe keeping to the Chatteris Museum, just around the corner from his house. Here the community has collected a wide range of local artefacts that they display in a former doctor’s surgery, using the skills of local people to arrange and exploit. It is a hidden treasure in a fenland town too often overlooked by both tourists and locals.

As I drove home through driving rain a dull grey fenland morning I wondered whether to pause there with a coach load of members of Melbourn University of the Third Age on Wednesday. But as the article of 1977 says: “No one on a country jaunt would touch the fens; it’s too flat and boring to the visiting eye”. Certainly it now lacks one less character than it did.

Yes with his mixture of a wide range and breadth of knowledge, humour & colourful language Maurice Kidd was a true fenman. He will be greatly missed and lovingly remembered.

##

In September 1977 Cambridge children were following the Pied Piper of Westwick. Veteran charity fundraiser Snowy Farr led about 150 of them around the city centre. It was part of a new television series being filmed for foreign networks. But the sun refused to shine, Snowy took a wrong turning and helpful police had to radio around the route trying to locate him. Over-exuberant children kept overtaking his bike; cats fell off the trailer and the goats couldn't get through the crowd. Then to cap it all, sirens screamed and blue lights flashed as three fire engines raced up Trinity Street to the Whim Restaurant where a fire had broken out in a chip pan. After that things calmed down and the children, their parents, granddads, grannies, dogs and bicycles joined the Pied Piper procession again singing "Old Macdonald had a Farm". It was an exhausting day for all concerned. Sadly the series never went ahead. But were you one of the youngsters? [NEWS NEG 2643.77.25]

##

Pictures of soldiers in Memories for 28th August have brought responses from several readers. Cyril Moore and his wife from Impington were both interested in the picture of the Home Guard as both their fathers served in it. They recognise several faces including Corporal Nathan Wakefield while the officers seated in the centre are Charles Unwin of Unwins Seeds and Cyril Williams who owned the Histon Chemists shop. Norman Summers from Cambridge saw himself in the picture of the 250th Royal Engineers and Eric Maxim from Cambridge has further details. He writes: "The Royal Engineers (250th) were situated at the Drill Hall, East Road, before the war, but increasing numbers on the outbreak caused them to be moved to Parkside, now occupied by Cambridge Police and Fire Service. There were three Sections of 'RE's,' one was under Sgt. Riggs the other by Sgt. Roper and the third by my Father Sgt. (Bob) Maxim. Bob joined the 'Engineers' as a Territorial in 1932 but like many others were called up just before the outbreak of war in 1939. The three Sections were very popular as well as being very friendly, competitively, and I should imagine many people can remember the drills my father, Bob took the troops through, on New Square on Saturday mornings. The units were soon split-up, the 250th going to France, and the newly formed 287th Field Co. were earmarked to go to Singapore with the Cambridgeshires. My father volunteered for Bomb Disposal, and was sent near to Guildford, to a new section, placed around the Vickers aircraft factory at Weybridge" Eric has lent a picture of the 250th at one of their summer camps, showing his father, Sgt Bob Maxim and Sgt Riggs. [SCAN]

Eric himself was an apprentice the Unicam Instrument Co, a reserved occupation but with the help of a friendly recruiting Naval Petty Officer, managed to secure entry into the Navy. Last week I was speaking to the Cambridge Naval Association where I met Albert Freestone. He recalled the old bandstand on Christ's Pieces where dances were held to music from Josephine's Gypsy Band, while on Sundays the Salvation Army and Military Bands played concerts. In those days there were six-foot-high railings all round the Pieces and you had to pay to attend. Albert lived in Willow Place, now the Grafton Centre car park, and used sometimes to go to Coldham's Common where there were rifle butts with railway sleepers to stop stray bullets going over the top. He and his friends used to dig out bullets to take as playthings. He also recalls stories of an ox being roasted on the frozen river Cam at Quayside about 1900. Does any of this ring a bell with anybody else, and do you have snaps? [SCAN]

OF BANDSTAND AND BOWLS ON CHRIST'S PIECES WITH RAILINGS BEYOND, 1930S]

Memories, 18th September 2002, by Mike Petty

It was a day that Mother Duck and Mrs Chicken were unlikely to forget. They were off to Cambridge again, as they often did. But this time it was different. The cats and mice would be there too, along with the goat – but they usually joined in their Cambridge excursions anyway. There would be children – but children always stopped to look and stroke them, and a particularly brave kitten would decide that this was his day to climb on top of the hat. There would be cameras – but everybody took pictures. Only this time they would be television cameras.

The animals would have to be on their best behaviour & look their smartest. Their whiskers were preened, just like the whiskers of their chauffeur who would convey them to international stardom. Their carriage was given an especial polish, its paintwork gleaming as never before, the bunting flying.

In September 1977 Veteran charity fundraiser Snowy Farr from Oakington and his menagerie were off to recreate the story of legend, how the Pied Piper of Hamelin had led thousands of rats a merry dance. Only this time it would be 150 children and their parents who followed his progress around Cambridge. And it would all be filmed as part of a new television series to be shown around Europe.

But it did not quite go according to plan. The sun that was to reflect off the polished roadman's trike refused to shine. Over-exuberant children on bikes kept overtaking them – they had not had to cycle in from Oakington to start with. Some of the cats fell off the trailer and the goats couldn't get through the crowd. Then to cap it all Snowy took a wrong turning.

For a moment it was panic – how could a mass procession of children and their parents get lost in central Cambridge; surely somebody must have seen a man with snow white whiskers, wearing a red coat and top hat? Police radioed round the route to track them down, and soon they were on the right road again.

But then sirens started to scream and blue lights flashed as three fire engines raced up Trinity Street to the Whim Restaurant where a fire had broken out in a chip pan.

After that things calmed down and the children, their parents, granddads, grannies, dogs and bicycles joined the Pied Piper procession again singing "Old Macdonald had a Farm". It was an exhausting day for all concerned. Sadly the series never went ahead. But were you one of the youngsters? Do you have memories of your reaction when you first saw Snowy and his animals – or those of your children. For all that was 25 years ago and Snowy has been a regular part of the Cambridge scene for generations.

[NEWS NEG 2643.77.25 FROM LAST WEEK]

My appeal for memories of Park Street, Cambridge has brought responses from several readers.

Mrs Rita Dench e-mails to say that her parents, Mr & Mrs Sidney Frost lived in the first house and that her husband owned the white Ford Popular car shown parked in the driveway. Mrs J. Pearson from Girton went to Park Street school in the 1940s and remembers seeing the air raid shelters on Jesus Green. She recalls the corner shop selling vegetables and everyday items, the Maypole pub run by Mr & Mrs Shepherd and the large house next door where Mrs

Harper ran the Birdwood Club for local kids. "I remember playing 'Charades', having Christmas parties, Halloween, apple dunking with a big bowl of water with apples floating about which we had to get with our mouths. There were also lots of maps and globes of the world", she tells me. She has lent me a snap of a nativity play and can remember some of the children were from the McLean, Cook, Griffen and Collier families. [SCAN OF PLAY]

Patrick Schicker from Cambridge both shares and seeks information. He writes: My memories of Park Street date from late 1940s & 1950s when my mother was warden of the Friends' Meeting House on the corner and we lived above F M Wilson & Sons insurance agency. My room was in the attic, the further dormer window shown in the picture with your article. The writing on the end wall of our flat was an advert for beer. Our flat & Wilson's offices had originally been a Pub, until a benefactor bought it for the Quakers, to stop the rowdy Sunday morning beer drinkers disturbing the quiet of the Quaker Meeting next door! Evidence of the building's previous use was still very much in evidence when we lived there. The central heating boiler was housed in a magnificent Wine cellar beneath Wilson's office. At the Jesus Lane end of Park Street there was barely room for a car & a bicycle to pass each other. I could tell if the driver of an oncoming car, met on my way down to Park Street School, was a stranger by the look of horror on his face as I approached on my bicycle. Few believed there would be room for me to pass them.

I still have memories of the night in June 1949 when the Friends' Meeting House burnt down and we had to escape into the street at about 3 am. My father had been woken by the central heating feeder tank, for some unknown – but lucky- reason situated in our flat, overflowing. The heat of the fire had caused the water in the radiators to boil forcing water back into the feeder tank.

The fire is the tenuous connection to my second reason for writing. It was traced back to a cigarette end dropped into the back of a sofa by a member of Cambridge International Club, who at the time were using the Friends' Meeting House for their meetings.

Cambridge International Club was founded in 1932, so we are celebrating our 70th birthday this year. My mother has been associated with the club ever since she was their organising secretary in 1934. Unfortunately now that her memory is less sharp (she's 91) I realise how many gaps there are in my knowledge of the history of the club.

When the International Club was founded it had a Clubhouse in St Peter's Terrace (behind the trees opposite Browns Restaurant) with meeting rooms, dance hall, offices & even residential rooms to let. My impression is that it was based on a "gentleman's club" in London. It was mainly, but not entirely, University orientated with overseas students providing a large part of the membership, which was probably several hundred. At some point before 1934 the club became part of APA (All Peoples Association). APA then went bust & Eva Hartree - who was I believe Cambridge's first Lady Mayor - rescued Cambridge International Club by purchasing their assets from the receiver. The lease of St Peter's Terrace was then in her name. When Eva Hartree died (I think in about 1947) Peterhouse declined to renew the lease & the club became homeless. Until the above-mentioned fire they met in the Friends' Meeting House. [SCAN OF TRUMPINGTON STREET 1963, THE CLUB MET BEHIND THE TREES ON THE LEFT]

Then follows my main gap in my knowledge. By the time I joined the club in 1958 we were renting a grotty little house, from the YMCA, in Falcon Yard, (almost exactly where the Red Lion statue in Lion Yard now stands). Activities included Sunday night talks, informal Saturday afternoon teas (a rest from shopping!), sing songs & parties. A record Dance was held each Friday in the YMCA & every Monday there was (& still is) International Folk Dancing in St Columba's Church Halls. In those pre race-relations act days it was one of the few places where Asian & African members could ask a local girl for a dance without the

danger of racist comment, or worse. Membership was probably a couple of hundred. Then Lion Yard redevelopment made us homeless again. St Columba's Church came to the rescue with an old storeroom which we converted to a clubroom. But over the years use of the clubroom declined, due in part to stricter security measures making access difficult. [SCAN OF FALCON YARD c1973]

Many of the needs addressed by the original International Club have, luckily, now gone. Not only has the race relations act removed the fear of racial incidents at most places of entertainment, but the whole of life has become more cosmopolitan. Cambridge International Club now has about 40 members. Folk Dancing continues on Monday nights (although with only a dozen or so attending not as fun as in the '60s when 40+ was the norm), we meet for a meal each Sunday night in the "Grad Pad", and try to arrange some other activity, often in member's homes, most weeks. A small & friendly group always happy to welcome new members! [PERHAPS PIX OF INTERNATIONAL CLUB FROM NEWS LIBRARY]

Patrick would love to contact old members who might be able to fill in some of these gaps, and also to invite them to the celebration party which they hope will take place one Saturday in November. If you can help or would like to join the party, or the club, please write to Patrick Schicker at 138 Milton Road, Cambridge CB4 1LE

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Memories 25th September 2002, by Mike Petty

I received a phone call the other day from one of the good folk at the Arthur Rank Day Centre, Cambridge. They provide hospitality, companionship and a nice meal to a variety of mainly older people to give them a break from those who care for them at home, and those at home have a few precious hours to themselves.

Was Union Lane one of the streets that had been featured by Erica Dimock in her 'Down Your Street' series in the News, she asked. Indeed it was – and this is what she found in February 1963 – nearly 40 years ago.

Union Lane, the link road between Milton Road and High Street, Chesterton, was the home of the old Chesterton Union Workhouse and the stark building still dominated the road, though memories of the harsh and bitter regime of that institution had almost disappeared. By 1963 it was a Hospital dedicated to the care of elderly people and along with Langdon House on the other side of the road was setting an example for similar projects elsewhere.

One of the oldest residents of the houses near Milton Road 1963 was Mr. Ernest Mansfield, then 85 years old, who had lived there for 60 years. He had seen changes as new people moved in and there was far more traffic. He preferred the older days: "People tell me these are better times, but I can't see it. If you get more money you only have to spend it because everything costs more", he reasoned.

He could remember some old cottages that stood on the corner of Union Lane and High Street until the 1940s. They projected so far out that the corner was virtually blind for traffic & it was said they incorporated beams that had been floated down the River Cam. Two of them had been used as a Wayfarers' Rest. Tramps waiting for a night's accommodation at the Union were not permitted into that institution before a certain time, and so they spent a few hours in the cottage where they could get a cup of tea and something to eat. They were then taken upstairs into what was known as "the chapel", a section of the Bible was read to them, and afterwards they moved on to the Union.

In about 1925 the East Chesterton Conservative Association set up its headquarters on the other corner next door to the Premier Dance Hall and roller skating rink. The property was acquired by Mr. L.W. Hallen in 1937 and part of the old dance hall incorporated into a garage and workshops. By 1963 it was their main service station and operational headquarters with a modern service showcase called Chesterton Autocars at the Herbert Street corner of Chesterton Road and premises in Hawthorn Way devoted to mopeds, motor cycles and motor scooters. The firm had pioneered a motor cycle and scooter training scheme, giving instruction off-road to prepare customers for taking their Driving Test. The old Hallen's Garage has now been replaced by flats. [SCAN OF HALLENS GARAGE UNION LANE 1963]

But Union Lane was home to other firms. The Cambridge Electro Plating Company had moved there at the end of the war and specialised in painting and electro-plating items from car bumpers to silver or the large copper urns used in college kitchens to prevent them rusting. The in-thing in 1963 was cleansing, polishing and lacquering of old-fashioned gas lamps which people were using for all sorts of purposes, from hanging outside their front doors to garden ornaments. About 50 people were employed and golf trolleys, car accessories and dustbin lifters were also manufactured on the premises. The lifters had proved very popular, making it possible to wheel away a dustbin without strain and without getting dirty – a forerunner of the wheelie-bin.

Renbros Radio and Television used a converted garage for repairs to radios, televisions and record players while the Leys Laundry had done a considerable amount of business – including employee's overalls from Chivers' factory at Histon - and had employed between 50 and 60 people until it closed about 1960. [SCAN OF CHIVERS GIRLS OUTSIDE FACTORY]

But the dominating feature was the old Union Workhouse, then Chesterton Hospital. The Union had been built in the 1830s and for many years was surrounded by open fields. It was intended for paupers or for those who had got into debt. At Chesterton there was also a maternity ward for the wives of casual labourers who went round from place to place doing odd farming jobs, with a schoolroom was provided for their children.

As time went by some of those accommodated became old and ill and eventually a one male and one female ward were opened to cope with them. The County Council had taken control of the building in 1931 and ran it until the establishment of the National Health Service in 1948 when it became part of the United Cambridge Hospitals, though the Council maintained 64 social welfare beds. By 1963 it was functioning as a dual-purpose hospital with 141 beds devoted to hospital cases. New wards had been opened and attempts made to brighten up the interior of the bleak-looking building. Groups of volunteers were raising money and organising excursions for patients and matron, Mrs N. Mace was experimenting with increased visiting times – though she stressed she did not want people staying for hours and hours. Patients should be encouraged to remain active – too often relatives did too much for their loved ones, which encouraged early senility. The elderly should be allowed to do things for themselves, no matter how long it took. [SCAN OF HOSPITAL 1963, SCAN OF BEGGAR 1930S]

Almost opposite the Hospital was Langdon House, one of the most up-to-date residential homes for the elderly in Cambridge, which had been officially opened by Princess Margaret in July 1957. Already it had proved its worth and an appeal was about to be launched for a new wing, including a unit for those who fell sick. The warden, Mrs Findlay, was finding working with elderly people very rewarding. But it was also frustrating: "Sometimes it is pathetic the numbers of requests we get to take in elderly men and women. There is a crying need for more of these homes". She had organised entertainment and illustrated talks to keep her residents stimulated and active.

This is something repeated these days at day centres throughout the region where visitors are privileged to meet so many interesting folk with tales to tell. [UNION LANE PIX FROM NEWS FILES]

One person who appreciated this more than most was Enid Porter who devoted nearly 30 years to recording memories to add to the treasures housed in the Cambridge Folk Museum. No person, especially no person aged over 70, should be neglected as a possible source of folklore, she believed. It took infinite patience, and an ability to know what to believe, and what not – skills she demonstrated with her interviews with W.H. Barrett out at Brandon Creek, who was stone-deaf when she met him, meaning that all her questions had to be put in writing. The result of hours of story telling was distilled into two books, *Tales* and then *More Tales from the Fens* which continue to be read and enjoyed 40 years later. Then there was Arthur Randall, a fenland railwayman and molecatcher who could have rid the fens of moles, but of course did not – for then he would have no job. But her notebooks were also filled with a mass of reminiscences of old Cambridge folk who would pause in their struggle up Castle Hill to join her in her little office at the front of the Museum, taking care not to scorch their legs on the one-bar electric fire, as they talked of days long gone. Much of their knowledge was distilled into the monumental book 'Cambridgeshire Customs and Folklore' published in 1969 and in numerous articles in the *News*. But then Enid's own health failed and she retired from her one-woman crusade and her curator's cottage behind the Museum,

but not before she had been honoured by the Folklore Society and the University of Cambridge. Now Enid too is part of Cambridgeshire history, her name fading from memory. Or at least it was. For two Cambridge Academics, Carmen Blacker, an expert on Japan, and Hilda Davidson former Lecturer in Anglo-Saxon and Vice-President of Lucy Cavendish College, have included her in a volume of essays entitled 'Women and Tradition: a neglected group of folklorists' alongside other enthusiasts from the 1750s.

Readers ask

Does anybody have memories or mementoes of the visit of Mahatma Gandhi to Cambridge in the 1930s when he spoke at the Cambridge Unitarian Church in Emmanuel Road. If so Stephen Lawrence of 8 Supanee Court, French's Road, Cambridge would love to hear from you. Phone him on Cambridge 564373

Christopher Jackson is compiling a history of St Laurence's Roman Catholic Church in Milton Road, Cambridge. He has tracked down newspaper cuttings of the laying of the foundation stone in March 1958 and of the dedication of the church that August. But does anybody have any photographs of the event please. Contact him at 3 Lansdowne Road, Cambridge or phone on Cambridge 353260 [

Dave Howchin from the Royal Albert Homes, Hills Road, Cambridge has sent me a cutting of the Coleridge Intermediate XI football team who won the schools' league shield in their first season under Mr Kingdon in 1937-8. In what must surely be a record they thrashed St George's 10-0, the Catholics 3-0, Central A & B 7 and 8-nil and put 12 goals past Chesterton 1st year as they slammed in 46 goals without conceding one in reply. If cricket, rather than football, is your game then you may be interested in a new history of the Cambridge Town and County Cricket Club between 1700 and 1890 which is being launched at the RSPCA shop in Mill Road on 18th October. It will cost you all of £3.50 and any copies sold on the night will add £1 to the coffers of the RSPCA

Can anybody identify faces or name the outing shown in a picture found by Mr A. Gray if Waterbeach in his uncle's house at Milton. His aunt, Miss Amy Butcher used to work at Marshalls, which might prove a clue. If you spot anybody please let me know [SCAN OF MYSTERY GROUP]

Memories 2nd October 2002, by Mike Petty

In September 1972 the News sent a reporter [I'LL TRY AND FIND THE NAME] to interview Jean-Jacques Burnel, BA, Hugh Cornwell, B.Sc. and their friends. But before he could reach them he had to get past Rat Rancid and Garry Gangrene.

He met Rat and Garry outside the Cambridge Corn Exchange patiently queuing for a concert, having travelled down from King's Lynn. It was obvious they were music fans – perhaps it was the safety pins through their cheeks, or it may have been the chains through their noses – they were horrible, but precisely what he had come to meet - punks that looked every bit as vile as the ones he'd read about. "They snarled and leered while my colleague, Mike Manni, took their pictures. And then something rather sweet happened. Rat put down his can of Party Seven and scribbled his address. Could we send some prints when we had a spare moment? 'To Rat Rancid', I asked. 'Oh, no', he gasped. 'My mum wouldn't like that. You'd better put Reg Smith on the envelope' In a second all the rebellion, all the punk symbols, crumbled and the green-haired punklet became plain Reg Smith"

Soon the reporter had got inside to interview the group that had attracted such a wide following: The Strangers. Jean-Jacques was the bass-player- "Come and talk to Hugh, he said, dragging me across the room. 'There's someone here wants to interview you', he

shouted to a locked door. No reply. Whereupon Jean-Jacques, former Hells Angel, leaped at the door and smashed it open. Hugh Cornwell, lead guitarist was revealed sitting on a lavatory seat, his trousers around his ankles. He looked a little put out”

In the event they were not quite what he’d been led to expect. He found four individuals quietly eating cold sausages. They had no rings through their noses, their clothes weren’t held together with safety pins, they didn’t fake East End accents. Perhaps they were getting too old for all that. Certainly one of the fans thought their aggression was put on and did not come out as naturally as some of the other punk bands. It was even said that Hugh disliked being ‘gobbed at’ (spat at) – the traditional punklore form of adoration. And shock was what the punk movement was about - shocking people out of apathy.

Then came the transformation as the time came for them to take the stage. Over 1,000 people were packed into the Corn Exchange, another 400 were still pushing outside. Inside the building was dark, hot, cavernous and violently loud. The group prowled the stage like menacing rats, pointing their guitars like sub-machine guns. The sound was just a barrage of unrelenting, stationary noise. The songs, when you could hear the words, were songs of protest. Even when the words were inaudible the music screamed rebellion. Everyone stood and faced them, some doing the punk dance – jumping up and down like pogo sticks.

Analysing the punk scene the reporter concluded that the worst thing was the lack of any positive values. It was rebellion for its own sake. The punks were rebels without a cause. Their preoccupation for excrement, sewers, disease and physical ugliness had diverted them from shocking people with the facts of war, torture, mechanisation and pollution. The best thing about the punk movement was its commitment & its energy. It had given a whole generation an awareness of the need for change. It forced people to think. And in the case of Rat Rancid gave him a photo to treasure amongst the family snaps. I wonder if he still has it.

I never attended a Strangers concert, and every time I use a safety pin it sticks in my finger. But were you a punk, do you have memories of those days, or snaps to share? [PIX FROM NEWS FILES 26 Sep 1977]

Meanwhile a more gentle form of music, that played at Cambridge Christ’s Pieces bandstand, has continued to bring back memories for Mrs Jean Pope of Comberton. She recalls the dances and Sunday band concerts held there; “As children living close by, my mother used to take us there often & on Thursday evenings during the summer months they used to put on Varsity Concerts. I can remember enjoying them very much. What a pity the bandstand was pulled down. Cambridge was such a lovely place in those days”.

Beryl Bonner from Whittlesford has lent me her own picture of the bandstand, taken in 1933 on her Box Brownie. Beryl was born in Cambridge in 1920 and lived with her grandmother in Malcolm Street. She writes: “My grandfather used to take me to listen to the band on a Sunday. We rarely sat on the slatted seats, price 6d., but he used to hold me on the railings outside so I could be close to the band.” She continues: “I went to Park Street School and in the snow of the winter of 1926 I slipped on the ice going to the school’s outside toilets, caught cold in my wet dress and knickers & developed pneumonia. When fit again I went to Newnham Croft school. On my way to school, alone at five years old, I went down Park Street. In the cottages on the left lived my grandmother’s sister and in the first tall house with bow windows lived my ‘Auntie Bee’. [SCAN OF HER PIC OF BANDSTAND PERHAPS MALCOLM STREET PHOTO FROM NEWS FILES]

Val Haynes from Over also remembers Park Street. “I lived there from 1946 to 1949 in an old house which had three storeys. It was owned by Jesus College (where my dad worked) and was demolished to widen the top of the road, which was so narrow. Our house was next door to the clockmender. My sister and I had the top rooms as playrooms and used to pelt passers

by with my dad's seed potatoes, until someone complained to our mum! It was directly opposite the ADC Theatre & we used to watch the actors and actresses coming and going – and there were one or two assaults on children by one or two actors. One old man was taking me to buy sweets from the corner sweet shop but my mum caught him. So although people say it was safer for children in those days parents still had to be vigilant. I was very sad when they demolished the houses to make way for the multi-storey car park.

Tony Haslop from Bar Hill was quickly on the telephone to say he recognised some of the faces in last week's mystery picture. He spotted Jim Laughton, Barry Hales and Derek Kilby and thought it might be connected with a building firm. But then Bernard Cornwell from Histon has come up with full details. It shows workmen at F.L. Unwin's Hazeldene Works, Station Road, Histon and was one of the works outings to London. They had a meal, made their own entertainment in the afternoon and went to a theatre show in the evening. Between 1950 and 1960 over a hundred men were employed at Hazeldene Works and on building sites in and around Cambridge. Bernard was one of them and can name all the men shown. Amongst the different trades were carpenters, joiners, wood machinists, bricklayers, painters, labourers and office staff. The firm also made agricultural implements such as hay sweeps, elevators, milking machines, corn conveyors and the weighing machines made of elm that weighed potatoes on the farm fields. A picture of the construction of some of the elevators appears in the book of Photographic Memories of Histon compiled by Eleanor Whitehead and Bernard has a slide showing a similar outing as well as some of their trade literature. [SCAN OF UNWINS HAZELDENE WORKS, HISTON]

Ralph Warboys from Oakington has responded to my request for information on windmills with a copy of his researches on the mills at Oakington and Westwick. There was a windmill in the parish in the 13th century and one ancient postmill burnt down in January 1863. Old postcards show a tower mill but the four sails had become dilapidated by the 1920s and an oil engine was used to drive the stones. To start the engine the cylinder had to be heated by two blowlamps; the engine would then be turned over by a man walking up the spokes of the flywheel, hastily jumping off when the engine turned. Because it stood at the end of the runway of the aerodrome it was decided the mill must be demolished. Its owner, Mr Papworth, made hasty efforts to get it working again, perhaps to increase the amount of compensation! Ralph was amongst the village schoolchildren who were shown over it in 1939, just before it was demolished with explosives. He was then asked by Mr Ernest Papworth to go to the mill and look for a brick with his name on it. Ernest said the mill was built by his father when he was a small boy and he had been strapped to the back of a builder and taken up the scaffolding to lay the last brick, which had his name on it. Sadly Ralph could not locate it amongst the big pile of rubble. [PERHAPS OAKINGTON PIC FROM NEWS FILE]

Beryl Ginn from Cambridge writes: "After reading the account (Memories August 28th) of how young Horse Chestnut trees along Victoria Avenue were dug up in 1894 and later replanted, I was reminded of the time when every other tree was removed, presumably to allow each one more space to grow. I believe this was carried out in the late 1940s? There are now twenty-four trees on the Midsummer Common side of the Avenue and twenty-two on the Jesus Lane side (if I have counted them correctly), although one or two are not the originals. My late mother told me that a hundred trees were planted, fifty on each side. Many of your older readers will remember the 'thinning out' of the trees but I would be interested to know the year it happened". Can you help? [SCAN OF VICTORIA AVE TREES]

Photographs of protest marches and banners have been appearing everywhere recently. But do you recall this mobile advertising hoarding photographed in St Andrew's Street, Cambridge in the 1960s. He is promoting the Castle Hill Driving School where expert tuition in dual-control cars cost 15/- (75p) an hour. [SCAN]

Memories 9th October 2002, by Mike Petty

Shirley Brown from Trumpington has solved one mystery, but discovered another.

In June 2000 Trumpington Local History Group published 'Twentieth Century Trumpington' which recalled a long running saga that first hit the headlines in 1973. The found a photograph showing Manor Farm House standing alone on the edge of a new development (Beverley Way). It was then the last obstacle to plans for a 67-bed motel to service The Green Man and The Red Lion. For the next two years a battle raged between developers and conservationists. Interested parties joined in on both sides and as the arguments continued the house deteriorated. Despite ongoing protests it was finally demolished. The timber frame was carefully taken apart and – it is said - reconstructed elsewhere.

Shirley's historians asked several people what they remembered about the fate of this house but no-one could recall much about it.

Then when the book was published they were told that the Manor Farm House had been red brick, whereas theirs was made of lath and plaster. Surely there could not have been two houses with the same name. Then in June this year Anthony Pemberton lent a set of photographs taken in 1921 at the unveiling of the war memorial. In the background stood both the contenders for the title of Manor Farm House. It proved the historians had got it wrong, Manor Farm House had been demolished earlier for Beverley Way. But could the older house have been the original farmhouse & the redbrick a replacement built later as a more fitting residence for the farmer. The History Group would love an explanation. [SCAN OF WAR MEMORIAL UNVEILING AND THE TWO 'MANOR FARM HOUSE' CONTENDERS]

Now the Trumpington History Group are compiling another book, and have another mystery.

In 1860 Francis Frith set up a photographic company in Reigate, Surrey & undertook the daunting task of photographing every city, town and village in the British Isles. He took with him his wife, two servants, four photographic assistants and a growing number of children - six of them eventually. The task was not one to be rushed for Frith saw himself as a chronicler of his time, an artist using the new medium of photography in the same way that other artists had used brushes and canvas. For the first few years he took all the pictures himself but later recruited a select group of artist-photographers to assist him. By the time of his death in 1898 some 40,000 views had been taken including a series of Cambridge scenes dated 1890, with views of Ely 1891, St Neots 1897 & Huntingdon 1898. When in 1900 the Post Office allowed postcards to be sent through the Royal Mail the increase was dramatic. A network of photographers were recruited and by 1914 there were 52,000 pictures in the company's files and numbers soared later.

When the Company closed in 1971 they left a legacy of thousands of pictures, many of which were acquired by the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library. And amongst them is one headed "The Dove Garden, Trumpington". It was taken about 40 years ago – almost yesterday. But Shirley's historians can't find anybody who remembers it. They are anxious not to repeat their experiences with the Manor House – and so have appealed to 'Memories' readers for assistance.

All facts, theories and surmises please to Shirley Brown, on 01223 841559. [SCAN OF DOVE GARDEN PHOTO]

But not even the photographers know where they are sometimes. The same photograph appears in two of the Francis Frith books of Photographic Memories. In the Cambridge

volume it is captioned as 'Fen Ditton, the village 1914' whereas the Cambridgeshire book gives it as "Trumpington, the village 1914". But which one is it – or was it actually taken somewhere else? Your opinions please
[SCAN OF FRITH PHOTO]

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There is now no doubt as to the mystery picture featured in Memories on September 25th. Letters have continued to pour in confirming it was an works outing of F.L.Unwin the Histon building, carpentry and joinery firm. John Rayment of Cottenham joined as an apprentice and served for 25 years until it was taken over by Ridgeons; Neville Smith from Swavesey took a bricklayers apprenticeship there at the same time. Mr R. Gawthrop saw himself on the picture, Mrs M. Brown from Earith tells me her husband was there too and Mrs H. Land from Histon can also identify several of the faces. Mr B. Hales from Willingham was the small lad in the front row while Michael Taylor of Cottenham points out that the coaches were from Harveys of Cottenham. Mr Harvey lived next door to the Cross Keys tavern on Cottenham green. He was also a haulage contractor and once owned a racehorse named 'Parker's Piece'. At that time the landlord of the Cross Keys, was Jim Lampard who had played in goal for Barnsley pre-war and trained some of the lads in the Cottenham village football team.

Given the amount of interest I reproduce another picture of an Unwins outing, this one supplied by Bernard Cornwell [SCAN OF OUTING]

Another picture of the start of an excursion – though one with less happy memories – has been sent in by Mr B.W. Gurner of Cambridge. It shows four members of the 250th Field Company, Royal Engineers, leaving Cambridge station in mid October 1939 en route for the Second World War. It shows Mr Gurner, Sapper Percy Taylor with the forage cap, Corporal Taylor, top right, and Sapper Ernie Baker. He writes: "On our scramble to reach Dunkirk in late May 1940, separated from five of my colleagues and being shelled in a small town, I was taken prisoner by a German infantry unit. It was the day before my 21st birthday! I spent the remainder of the war in prison camps in Upper Silesia and was released on May 8th 1945"
[SCAN OF SOLDIERS]

Mr G.D. Howard from Over found his attention caught by one of my 'Looking Back' snippets from 1952. It told the story of how two Meteor jet aircraft collided in mid-air above Over. One of the pilots landed near the church & the other near the Pike and Eel public house prompting the landlady to observe: "We often have pilots calling here – but not by parachute". He writes: "Our family remember it very well, as they collided over the top of our churchyard just as they were lowering my Grandfather's coffin into the grave, and one of the bearer party the graveside and called the emergency services"

Memories, 16th October 2002 by Mike Petty

Archaeology is always in the news these days, with numerous television programmes following the progress of various investigations and making celebrities of those who spend their time in trenches.

The Cambridge archaeological community has been saddened recently to learn of the death of one of its most prominent members, Joyce Pullinger, for several years Director of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society's Archaeological Research Group. She led a team of professional archaeologists and trained excavators. But they were supplemented by a handful of volunteers, including Odette Wylie, Mary Miller and Pat White, just ordinary housewives for the most part. The ladies formed a small group willing, at a 'phone call's notice to rush off to any site which needed 'rescuing'.

Pat White from Balsham recalls some of the discoveries she shared: “Joyce participated in the excavations at Arbury Camp and when I first joined her she was digging the important Roman site at Ridgeons Gardens at the top of Castle Street, opposite the Shire Hall.”

Joyce’s team discovered what they believed to be a Roman religious shrine. They found tiny slivers of human bone in what seemed to be burial shafts for children. Each child was lying on a rush blanket and every grave had a mature dog buried in the south corner. But more mystery was added by the presence of some 200 wine flagons and thousands of oyster shells, together with evidence of fire – leading to speculation that the shrine had burnt down and then the ancient Britons and Romans had held a party, leaving their rubbish behind them. But as Joyce said: “All we can do is show the evidence and then it is up to the experts to do the arguing amongst themselves”.

Then in 1977 came a dramatic discovery that sent the team out again: “At Dry Drayton we uncovered the skeleton of several victims of the hangman’s noose”. It began after a workman digging the Cambridge Northern Bypass discovered a Saxon glass beaker and took it home with him to Ipswich. When he took it to his local museum for identification the curators contacted Alison Taylor, the Cambridgeshire county archaeologist, and Joyce’s housewives were quickly on the scene. They soon unearthed some shallow graves. Alison knew that there had been a gallows on the site in medieval times – it was a prominent position on a crossroads and at a high point in the landscape. And the fact that the bodies were not given a Christian burial pointed to them having been executed for some ancient dastardly deed.

Pat continues: “We excavated a Roman kiln at Harston whilst huge earthmoving vehicles rolled to and fro beside us, in the wake of a new road, shaking the ground as we trowelled. Our group helped at a University dig at Wilbraham Common to discover a causeway camp and for a number of years excavated as much as we could of a Roman villa and farmstead at Teversham. Not to mention all the other times we rushed to keep an eye on various pipelines and proposed developments in the county. And during all this time Joyce patiently handed on her skills and knowledge to us.

“Alison Taylor has spoken of how, when she was appointed the first County Archaeologist, she came across the sight, at the bottom of an enormous hole, of three middle-aged housewives trowelling busily and carting bucketfuls of soil to a very large spoil heap. It was Joyce Pullinger and her volunteers. We learnt so much from her and will not forget her.”
[NEWS PIC NEG 17417722 - JOYCE PULLINGER (RIGHT) & ARCHAEOLOGISTS, 1977, PERHAPS OTHER PIX FROM FILES]

Now Alison Taylor edits the Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, the latest volume of which has just been delivered to members. It contains reports on another ‘shrine’ – this time at Pampisford & of more work on the Arbury Camp, expanding the knowledge gained by Joyce and her team. Other papers investigate the landscape of Litlington, the water-meadows at Balsham and detail some of the discoveries when constructing the new Processional Way at Ely Cathedral. But not all discoveries come out of a hole in the ground. Tucked away amongst the papers at the Scott Polar research Institute in Cambridge is a journal compiled by the wife of Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin. In it she chronicles some of her own expeditions – including a trip to Cambridge at the end of June 1811 when Trinity College undergraduates seemed all too happy to escort her around the sights. One area she would have got to know well is the Market, and the houses which in those days clustered around the east end of Great St Mary’s church and spread into the centre of what is now the Market Square. They were to perish after a great fire in 1849. One thing she would not have noticed however is the Bull Ring – a post to which the bull would have been chained to be baited – considered a reliable method of tendering the meat before slaughter. Now Peter Bryan and Nick Wise have examined ancient maps and records to establish just where this stood in medieval days, part of a major reconstruction of what the Market Place was like in

the period before 1400. The Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society for 2002 are available for £14.50 to non-members of the Society; members receive one free as part of their subscription. [LITLINGTON SCAN, SCAN OLD MARKET PIC 1801]

The Proceedings also, for the first time, incorporate “The Conduit”, a comprehensive programme of the lectures and activities of many of the Cambridgeshire local history societies. This has previously been produced in conjunction with Cambridgeshire County Council, but following a fiasco last year – when Conduit was published long after all the events had taken place – the Antiquarians have taken back responsibility. So if you’re interested in the Paranormal you should get out to Duxford History Group on 22nd October, if you’ve not heard Michael Bowyer on Cambridgeshire under attack 1940-45 then you attend the meeting of Cambridge Industrial Archaeologists at the Friends Meeting House, Jesus Lane on 9th December, whilst the notorious Cambridge Spinning House – the University’s private gaol will form the subject for Cambridgeshire Local History Society in January. The various groups welcome visitors who are assured of a warm welcome.

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Wardy Hill is a small community in the fens between Sutton and Ely. It is famous for its whist drives, reported week by week in the columns of the News and attracting players from around the district. It also hosts a harvest supper in the small community hall that was once the village Methodist Chapel. On Saturday night diners were reminiscing about the old days, when a London man who used to have a house at Witcham Gravel would arrange for the Camberwell Band to pay a visit and play for dances. Those were the days when the road to Jerusalem was just a track and he was collected a man in a pony and trap. But last week the Jerusalem Road – the single-track that links Witcham and Coveney – was chock-a-block with traffic following an accident that had closed the main road. Never before had they seen so many vehicles – it was just as well that was a different day from the one that the sheep escaped and wandered through the hamlet. We tucked in to soup, salad, apple pie, cider and for the non-drinkers, orange squash – but do you remember the ‘Thirst Quenching Crown Mineral Waters and Fruit Squash’ manufactured by H. Simmonds and Co at the Crown Works in Ditton Walk, Cambridge. The firm also manufactured ‘Robot’ Bleach. They advertised in the programme of the Cambridge Trades Fair for 1950 which attracted over 76,000 visitors. Also advertising were Naylor’s Stores of Hills Road who sold paints, wallpapers and ironmongery, H.B. Holttum ‘the Light Tractor Specialist’ of Cherry Hinton Road and Fella Bros manufacturers of delicious ice cream in Mill Road. If any of these ring a bell, or you have snaps then please jot me a line. [SCAN OF SIMMONDS ADVERT, SCAN OF WARDY HILL 1930s]

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Mrs Sheila Proctor (nee Crisp) from Fen Ditton has been raiding her photograph album for a wonderful snap of a group of children at St Barnabas Church of England School, off Mill Road, Cambridge in 1948. It is unusual to see interior groups, especially posing so nicely with their books in the school library [SCAN OF SCHOOL GROUP]

##

Mrs P. Anderson from Cambridge has added her memories of the Christ’s Pieces bandstand; she tells me that in the 1930s local amateur dance groups and singers used to perform concerts there – she was one of them. She’s also sent a snippet from Saga Magazine in which Peter Hall recalls how he heard that war has been declared in 1939. “Neville Chamberlain broke the news on the radio as I shredded beans for my mother on the doorway of 121 Blinco Grove, Cambridge. Father was on relief Sunday duty at some country station, we weren’t sure where, so we wen to down to Cambridge station to ask, and they didn’t know either. Then he

came home, as he came home every day throughout the war. Most families had hideous separations. We had none”

Mr K. Bright of Cambridge half-remembers the windmill on Milton Road; he recalls a five-bar gate and a long drive and believes the late Stanley Baker of University Arms Dance Band fame once lived there. Is there a picture, he wonders. I have one taken from Milton Road about 1908, but does anyone had a better view

Memories 23rd October 2002, by Mike Petty

A massive new 600-page history book has just been published, yet it covers only about 25 parishes in the eastern edge of Cambridgeshire – places like Soham, Fulbourn, Cherry Hinton, Wilbraham, Bottisham and the Newmarket suburbs.

But for many of these places this is the first detailed local history book that has ever been published. It has been compiled by a small team of historians from the Institute of Historical Research of the University of London – and how can London historians know about Cambridgeshire villages?

To research their history they have delved back into the ancient records stored in all the places such documents can be found. Depositories such as the Public Record Office, the British Library and Cambridge University Library have been carefully searched. They spent many hours at the Cambridge County Record Office at Shire Hall, umpteen more in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Lion Yard Library, and they went out into the countryside itself to meet local people.

Open the new book at any page and you will find about one quarter of it is not history at all – it is footnotes recording where they found the information. And many of those footnotes are to stories appearing in Cambridgeshire newspapers. Chris Jakes recalls how one of the researchers, Dr Peter Wright, would come in to the library and ask for the last 240 years of newspapers – just so he could track down a few dozen stories. It is a task that would daunt anybody. Indeed it would have been totally impossible, were it not for a team of volunteers who have undertaken a massive indexing project to record news for each village in old Cambridgeshire from 1770 to 1900, supplementing the library’s own newspaper cuttings files from the 1960s. Other enthusiasts have been undertaking other projects; the Family Historians have been copying out the crumbling inscriptions on gravestones and transcribing parish registers and census records. And numerous individuals have been beaver away on some aspect of local history, be it a place or a bus company, producing their own small publication and passing a copy to the Cambridgeshire Collection.

Because all this work has been undertaken far more history can be written, but for the same reason it takes much longer to compile. Even so it is almost inconceivable to think that a team of professional historians should have been working for decades to produce such a volume. No reason the Lord Lieutenant, the Chairman of this and that, and local people came together to celebrate its completion!

But they were celebrating more than one book; for this was the 10th and last volume for Cambridgeshire, part of a series that began before the second world war, well before the electronics and high-technology industries that are covered in the latest volume were even thought of!

So what does it have to say about your parish –

Ashley: most of the post-war prefabs in Silverley Way were pulled down in the later 1980s and replaced by sheltered housing for the elderly

Bottisham: much of the land had been abandoned by 1765 owing to defects in the drainage system

Burwell: in the 1890s most farmers were just surviving by drawing on their capital

Cherry Hinton: in 1927 Elijah Pamplin gave four acres to be maintained as a meadow for use as a recreation ground

Cheveley: had 59 houses in 1674, most lined the village street from the church to the park wall

Fen Ditton: a schoolmaster was licensed to teach grammar to boys in 1579

Fordham: amongst those disputing the lord's common rights c1250 were a smith, a carpenter, a weaver and a tanner

Fulbourn : traders in food were recorded from the late 14th century ... a Co-operative store opened by 1933

Isleham: a windmill, supposedly 300 years old, was damaged in 1850

Kirtling: in 2001 Upend had shrunken to barely twenty houses by demolition and the knocking together of pairs of cottages

Snailwell: in 1684 King Charles II's Lifeguard were billeted here

Swaffham Bulbeck: in 1926 a new minimally Gothic chapel, build of concrete blocks was opened in Commercial End

Teversham: Marshall's flying school trained 20,000 RAF pilots during the Second World War

Wicken: by 1873 the vicar held winter cottage lectures for the distant hamlet of Upware where a wooden mission hall was erected in 1883

Of the dozen or so other parishes covered Soham is the largest and has over 60 pages devoted to its settlement, communications, inns, economic, manorial and religious history. The story of its Grammar School, the great fire which swept Fountain Lane, the arrival of the Mormons – and their speedy departure, the establishment of its monastery by St Felix, its fields, fens and feasts are recorded.

But despite all the care taken by the professional historians it can never be a complete history. Somebody somewhere will stumble upon something else, perhaps a piece of pottery, perhaps a bundle of documents, perhaps just a forgotten booklet, and a new paragraph or a new footnote will need to be added to your community's story.

Many village histories are sold by the local newsagent or post office. They cost just a few pence. Not this one. The Victoria History of the County of Cambridge, volume 10 will set you back £90 if you wait for your Christmas book tokens. But there are savings to be made; buy before the end of December and the cost plummets to a mere £67.50. Or you can get it for only £35. For as a special offer the publishers will sell you the complete 10-volume set of the VCH for Cambridgeshire for £350, a bargain for those who have space on their bookshelves. Postage is £3 extra per individual volume. Contact Boydell and Brewer at PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 3DE, phone 01394 411320.

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The prospect of visiting every parish in the old county of Cambridgeshire & the Isle of Ely is both enticing and daunting. There are just so many of them. But one man who has done just that is Hugo Brown of Queen Adelaide, near Ely. He allowed himself just 15 minutes in each place, took out his camera, snapped and scarpered to the next.

The results of his epic journey can be seen on a new CD-Rom in the 'Cambridgeshire Explorer' series. But who will want to see photographs of Cambridgeshire villages taken this year. If it included old photographs – colour postcards from the early 1900s, or photographs

from the 1920s that had not been published before, then that might be something else. So Hugo has added these too - about 1,000 of them. There is a minimum of five pictures, old and new, of every village – except one. Childerley. For Childerley is now a private estate and they would not allow him to take photographs. So Hugo has just a single picture – a Christmas card issued by the owners of the estate in 1901 that shows six different views.

Originally Childerley had two churches but both were destroyed and the village depopulated by Sir John Cutts about 500 years ago when he wanted to form a deer park. Later King Charles I was brought prisoner to Childerley Hall during the Civil War. These snippets come not from the VCH but from a Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire published in 1904. It goes on to list the boot and shoe makers, tailors, millers, brewers and horse dealers – not in Childerley for there were none, but for all the other parishes in the county at that time.

These Directories were issued between 1847 and 1937 and can still be found in antiquarian bookshops. They are arranged by village and list names of gentry and tradespeople. This is fine unless you are interested in tracking down a particular surname. Then it is an impossible page-by-page plod.

But not any longer. For Hugo has indexed every name appearing in the 1904 Kelly's Cambridgeshire Directory and included these on his CD-Rom as well. So you just look up a name, click on it and are transported to the relevant page of the directory. There is also an index by trade, so at the click of a mouse you can track down cabinet makers, hair dressers or motor car agents. And if you are not sure of your way around the county then there are maps to guide you, and if you do want to see what it looked like then, and now, there are more than 1,650 pictures.

It has been a massive undertaking, and like the VCH has been supported by the Cambridgeshire Collection. Being an interactive CD-Rom you have to read it on a computer, but there are links to other sources – including this column on the News' website. The Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire, 1904 CD-Rom costs £22 from The Cambridge Explorer, Ash House, Prickwillow Road, Queen Adelaide, Ely, CB7 4TZ

The pictures featured in this article are all taken from the Cambridgeshire Explorer CD Rom

Memories 30th October 2002, by Mike Petty

On Sunday over morning coffee I noticed a woodpecker working its way up an electricity pole. A few minutes later and the power went off. Like so many thousand other people that was the last we knew of electricity until Monday morning and we had to remember how to cope without it.

Most of us take it for granted that we can banish darkness at the flick of a switch but electricity is quite a modern innovation certainly as far as some of the country villages are concerned. It was in 1884 that Peterhouse in Cambridge became one of the first places in the country to introduce electric lighting when they installed their own generating plant. This fed light to bulbs which were equivalent to 10 watts - a little better than candle power - with each bulb costing the modern equivalent of over £30. The new technology s did not please the Cambridge laundry ladies who used to hang their washing on Coe Fen for smuts from the college generating plant got on to their nice clean sheets.

Then in 1891 a Cambridge firm, Baily Grundy and Barrett started the town's first public electricity supply from a dynamo in the basement of their shop in Gt St Mary's Passage. They covered only a small area around King's Parade and Peas Hill but in addition supplied and installed private generators including one at Milton Hall in 1898. As this business declined the company moved into wireless, the design of temperature control equipment for laboratories and other specialist apparatus. In the early days they had charged accumulators for the University labs & some people thought that this was how electricity would be spread to outlying areas with accumulators being delivered door to door along with the milk and paper. As darkness fell on Sunday we would have been pleased to have had one!

In 1892 a rival Cambridge Electric Supply Company was established. They chose a site in Thompson's Lane and put in large steam turbines that initially they ran only during the hours of darkness but in 1894 became continuous. The Company's business started to expand as more consumers adopted the electric light. Despite plans to expand into other sites the generating station with its smoky chimney continued to operate until the 1960s.

By then, of course, many changes had taken place. One was the establishment by act of parliament in 1925 of the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Electricity Company who based their operations at St Neots near the main projected power house at Lt Barford. Initially they had to take electricity from companies based in London, Bedford and Cambridge with a fourth source, Peterborough, coming soon after and allowing the development of the northern area. For a start they supplied power to 13 towns and villages from Lt Paxton to Ely as well as to Sawston paper mills and Cambridge cement works. By 1929 they had put in 100 miles of overhead line and 45 miles of underground cable with plans for expansion - a line between Whittlesey & March, another from March to Ely with connections to Chatteris Ramsey & Littleport amongst others. Soon an additional 19 villages were connected and when the National Grid came into being the company became one of the first to take power from that source.

Consumers varied from big business to a small tradesman who had just three lights and declared that electricity was the best and cheapest form of lighting. There were various tariffs in 1929; you could pay 10d per unit for lighting but far better was an annual service rate - a fixed charge of £2.14.0 per year for a medium house and then just three farthings a unit. This made it economical to heat and cook as well; alternatively if you lived in a council house or had a rateable value of less than £1 (10/- in towns) you could pay £3 per year for which a you got 120 units free. On top of this there was a charge for meter rental of 2/6 per quarter.

Slowly electricity spread to other Cambridgeshire villages, as E.M. Barraud recalled in her book "Tail Corn" published in 1946 it was not without trepidation on the part of consumers: "Once again we have been told we shall have electricity in the village by the end of the year. The promise has by now become a hardy perennial but so far it has borne no flower. First it was the war, since then it has been labour or materials that nipped it in the bud, but the pylons are marching steadily towards us: if not this year, then next year, sometime. There are times when I would give anything for electricity. Clean safe lighting at the turn of a switch with no danger of a flare up and smoked glass and sooted mantle and a major operation to put things to rights again. A cleaner effortlessly sucking up the dirt and dust from the floor, from my books. A fire for half an hour, and no grate to clean up afterwards, on chilly spring or autumn mornings and evenings. Radio without the menace of an exhausted accumulator just when the one programme of the week is due, a gramophone with no handle to turn. No one in their right mind could fail to appreciate all these things, to say nothing of being rid once and for all of the infinite permeability of paraffin where food is concerned. And yet it will not be all gain when the lamps and stoves are put up on the top shelf and then relegated to the tool shed. I shall miss the not unpleasant faint aroma of burning paraffin wafted through the place while the early morning tea kettle boils, and the soft glow of an oil lamp adds warmth as well as light to the scene".

On Sunday night many of us would have been delighted to have such luxuries.

After the war electricity was nationalised though there were still private enterprises. One of these were the Bullingham Brothers of Prickwillow who in 1953 generated and distributed electricity for themselves and their neighbours - and lit the village streets. When Mr Bullingham had had his tea he switched the generator on, when he went to bed he turned it off again; this was a bit awkward for consumers if he wanted an early night - but usually operated 4-11 pm in winter.

As we made our way on Sunday night for a hot meal we saw that up near the windmill lights blazed from a house which, like Mr Bullingham had its own generator – as does the village pub, our destination. But they did not need it, for the bottom half of the village had proper electricity, the church was floodlit as ever.

Perhaps our village neighbours with their lights, televisions and kettles envied us our candles, our battery radio and heating water in a saucepan on the coal fire. It took us back to the good old days. But I was mightily relieved to wake to find the electricity engineers had wrought their magic and brought us back into the 21st century again.

Do you have memories of coping without electricity – write to Mike Petty [SCAN OF ST MARY'S PASSAGE, GENERATING STATION, INSTALLING GENERATOR, ELECTRIC SUPPLY SHOP, PARAFIN STOVE; PIX FROM LIBRARY]

Lynda Robinson has e-mailed from Whittlesey having finally caught up with a Memories article from 22nd May. She writes:

“I can't tell you how thrilled I was to be given this cutting yesterday (albeit rather belatedly!). You can imagine how thrilled I was when my mother gave me your page with THE picture on it yesterday, particularly as I was on my way to the County girls reunion at the time, so the whole day was spent reminiscing.

“I left Milton Road School 50 years ago and have often talked about this event especially recently. I think I am on the photo, sitting behind Barrie Coombes, next to the girl covering her face. The May Queen was Anne Rowlands, and although the faces are not familiar the names certainly are. Michael Rumbelow, Roger(?) Blows and Peter Fluck, who I often wondered whether he is the same Peter Fluck who has been on TV. He was tall, thin and quite a character. Other names I remember from our year are Suzanne Rose, Margaret Summers, Peter Cook, Roberta Maskell, Sandra Swain and a boy called Richard Dilks who used to throw my satchel into a tree on the way home and whom I would dearly love to meet again as I am probably as big as him now!! We were all in Mr Leach's class and left at the end of the summer term to go to our various secondary schools. If any of these recognise my name then (Lynda O Fuller) I would love to hear what became of them. Particularly Roberta Maskell and Margaret Summers, whose names cropped up yesterday at the County Girls Old Girls Association Annual buffet lunch at Long Road. It is now 50 years since we entered the County and had hoped that more of our year would have been there to celebrate. In the end there were six of us. Where are the other 80-odd from our year?

“Back to May Queens. I am currently involved with our local primary school (Coates, near Whittlesey) and amongst other things they are maintaining the May-Day tradition of crowning a May Queen. I have often mentioned how beautifully it was done at Milton Road School, with the crown made of fresh spring flowers and the wonderful processional music, but I had no picture of it - until yesterday. I have also been making all sorts of enquiries lately to find out what the processional music actually was, because I can remember it was the first classical music to really impress me. Is there anybody who can enlighten me please?”

If you can help both Lynda and the youngsters at Coates school please write to 37 South Green, Coates, nr Whittlesey, Peterborough, PE7 2BJ or email to leonard.robinson@btinternet.com [SCAN]

Mrs Laura Simmons of Cambridge was walking in Sussex Street, Cambridge the other week when she spotted a bit of Cambridge history. Julia Heffer's jewellery shop was being completely refitted, including the entrance and on the floor in mosaic she saw the legend "Greenlees and Sons. Easiephit Footwear Ltd". Then on the end wall of the former almshouses in King Street at Pike's Walk there is an advertisement in fading paint for Centaur Cycles. Do either of these ring a bell with anybody? [LIBRARY PIC OF SUSSEX ST?]

Mr T. Gooding from Godmanchester has written to add further details to my story of two Meteor jets colliding above Over church in 1952 (Memories 9th October). He tells me that both aircraft were F4 variants operated by 206 Advanced Flying School, and he even knows the serial numbers. That same day in other parts of the country three more Meteors crashed with two fatal results. The loss of five planes and two pilots must have been one of the worst peace-time days for the Royal Air Force, he adds.

Memories 6th November 2002, by Mike Petty

Last Saturday a number of rowers on the Great Ouse between Ely and Littleport found their passage obstructed by a riverboat containing councillors and assorted, mainly elderly, residents

Many of them were making the voyage for the first time but soon the exciting part of the voyage had passed. The magnificent vista of the cathedral from the river had been supplanted by a glimpse of Roswell Pits & a close-up of the old Sugar Beet Factory wall where once dozens of barges had moored with their cargo of beet. But ahead lay the bridge at Queen Adelaide thronged with about a dozen spectators who had gathered to witness the occasion. Then it was just water and river banks as the sun went in, the skies became cloudier and it started to rain.

Inside the boat soup and coffee were served and as the voyage progressed people started chatting to each other.

But this was no council junket. For amongst the passengers were a small group of even-older folk who had made the passage before, though in less comfortable circumstances. They were members of the Oxford and Cambridge University Boat Race crews who had competed along the stretch of river from the junction of the Rivers Ouse and Lark to Adelaide Bridge back in the wartime days of 1944, when the usual contest on the Thames had been cancelled.

Most of the Cambridge crew members had not met one another since their Varsity days and recalled how they had led for much of the race, only to be overhauled at the end as they neared Ely. The one representative of the winning, Oxford, crew thought that they had raced the other way – but then it was a very long time ago and this stretch of river lacks the landmarks of the normal Putney to Mortlake route.

Newly-discovered film footage of the original race shows that crowds lined the river banks, with some on horseback galloping to keep up with the rowers. And amongst scores of people who had come to relive the occasion on Saturday there were numbers of local folk who as boys and girls had journeyed from Littleport or Prickwillow to witness a once-in-a-lifetime occasion. Some also recalled other unusual river sights of those days, such as military vehicles being ferried across the River Lark on canvass-boat-bridges in preparation for other

river crossings when the onlookers would be less friendly, speaking German, and trying to prevent them.

Many of the councillors disembarked halfway through the voyage, to be whisked back to Ely Cathedral for a special service before turning out again for the bonfire night celebrations. The rest of us returned at more sedate pace, being overtaken time and again by rowers who probably did not know that some at least of those on board could give them a run for their money – or at least could have done 58 years earlier!

The 1944 Oxford and Cambridge boat race was never formally recognised in the annals of University rowing but the sport's historian made the journey to Ely to celebrate the get-together. In two years time he hopes to return, together with more of the Varsity rowers, more of the spectators and more of the world's media.

For in Ely a voluntary community group calling itself Diamond44 has been set up who want to contact anybody and everybody who was there and ensure that the full story is recorded for posterity. They also hope in two years time to bring together the Varsity rowers of 1944 with their modern equivalents & organise a re-enactment of the race. Who knows, they may even get the Oxford and Cambridge crews together just a few weeks before they meet on the Thames on 24th March 2004 for the 150th official University Boat Race.

If you can help add to the celebration, or have any memories then contact Jack Waterfall - Hon. Secretary, Diamond44 - at 1 Castelhythe, Ely, CB7 4BU or log onto their new website at www.diamond44.com. [SCAN OF PHOTO OF OXFORD CREW AT END OF RACE – THERE ARE OTHER PICTURES ON THEIR WEBSITE, ADELAIDE BRIDGE 1930S, ELY SUGAR BEET FACTORY 1963, Prickwillow bridge construction 1962]

Another group are being commemorated in an exhibition at the Emmanuel United Reformed Church in Trumpington Street, Cambridge for the rest of this week.

They are some of the remarkable Cambridge ladies whose achievements are often overlooked. They range from Lady Margaret Beaufort, foundress of Christs' and St John's College – whose name is further commemorated by a boat club – to Daisy Hopkins who was propelled to prominence when she was arrested by the University as a suspected prostitute and won a case for wrongful imprisonment.

In the 1860s any woman could be accused of prostitution. If the woman accused had never been married she would be given a virginity test, and would be issued with a certificate to say she was disease free and could therefore become a prostitute. As a result of her new reputation, all honourable forms of employment would become unavailable to her, therefore leaving her no other choice if she were to survive. Josephine Butler was one woman who took the leader in the campaign against the state regulation of prostitution. Then in 1867, she was introduced to Anne Jemima Clough & became involved in the campaign to persuade Cambridge University to provide more facilities for female students. This resulted in the provision of lecturers for women and later the establishment of Newnham College, Cambridge.

Another important social reformer featured in the displays in the church is Eglantyne Jebb, founder of the "Save the Children" campaign. In 1895 attended Lady Margaret Hall, at Oxford University to study history, but was not awarded a degree because she was a woman. She came to live with her mother in Cambridge and involved herself in the work of the Charity Organisation Society. In 1906 she published a report called 'Cambridge- a study in social questions' which investigated the lives of working people in Cambridge during the Edwardian era.

Work in those days was, she found, “of a severe and monotonous character” and youngsters often “frittered away their leisure hours in amusements which fail to afford any real rest or recreation. The girls who can find no better happiness than that of parading the streets in their best clothes grow up into the women who spend the day gossiping on their doorsteps or in reading penny novelettes. The boys who loaf at the street corners grow up into the men who spend their evenings in the public-houses. Thus we manufacture not simply loafers, slatterns, and drunkards, but hooligans and criminals”.

But there was an answer – to channel the youngsters’ energies into social clubs and organisations such as the Albert Institute. Many of their members earned their livelihood by indoor and sedentary occupations but their Athletic Clubs did remarkably well. The Harriers succeeded in winning the Cross County and Three Miles Road Championships, their gymnasts were giving excellent displays and on the river their first boat went up three places and the second one. Such activities, Eglantyne concluded, might question whether physical deterioration was, after all, the inevitable accompaniment of town life.

Steve Foreman of Girton has lent me a photograph of one such sports club; the Newnham Croft Institute football team of 1920. His grandfather, Steve Johnson, is amongst the players, but who were the others. And do you recall the Institute, at the junction of Hardwick Street and Merton Street in Newnham? [SCAN OF FOOTBALL TEAM]

Mrs M. Brookes from Cherry Hinton has sent me a cutting discovered amongst her late mother’s papers. It comes from the Cambridge Chronicle of 21st October 1925, but I wonder what it was that had caught her eye all those years ago. The stories include an account of a fire at G.P. Hawking’s bread depot next to the Dorothy Café in Sidney Street, Cambridge. The report reads: “There was a fierce blaze and at one time the flames reached half-way across Sidney Street. The flames spread with great rapidity and the shop was all ablaze when the firemen arrived. Ten minutes however was sufficient for the brigade to get the fire well in hand but even then the basement and shop were practically burnt out. The rooms above the shop, those occupied by H.H. Maharaja Jam Sahab of Newanagar (Ranji Singhi) when he was an undergraduate at Cambridge were not damaged”. [SCAN OF CUTTING]

Terry Waters has e-mailed: “I recently found a piece of pottery on the bed of the River Ribble at Clitheroe which has “Colin Lunn & Son, Cigar Importers, 3 Bridge Street, Cambridge” inscribed on it. I have established that he was a cigar importer and cigarette manufacturer around the turn of the century and he had premises in Oxford for a period of time but that’s about it. I would be grateful if you could supply any further information about him.”

I believe the firm opened in 1899 and was still going in 1984. At various times they had shops in King’s Parade, Bridge Street and Trinity Street – but can anybody assist further.

Memories 13th November 2002, by Mike Petty

This year Armistice Sunday in our village of Stretham was even more sombre than usual. This year there was no parade of veterans marching with their banners behind the band. For there was no band and there are now very few veterans left to march.

As in so many communities most of the old soldiers have faded away and now, fortunately, there are fewer of us with personal experience of war. But there are more of us who remember when our parents did march with the Royal British Legion behind the band and that adds to the poignancy of the day. We scan old photographs of previous parades for faces of

people whose names are now fading from our memory, unlike those whose names are carved in stone on memorials and recited each Armistice Sunday. [PICS FROM NEWS FILES OF OTHER PARADES]

The names of the dead from the Great War are also commemorated on two framed lists dating which are proudly displayed in Stretham Royal British Legion Hall. But the Legion are now surrendering that hall and seeking another meeting place. Previously their base had been an old first war army hut, which itself fell victim to old age and was pulled down by its members, many of whom are now commemorated on their own gravestones. [DEMOLITION OF STRETHAM OLD BRITISH LEGION HALL]

Another reason that this year there was no band is the problem of ensuring that those marching are safe from modern speeding vehicles. Yet ironically this year the village was unnaturally quiet for the road is closed whilst traffic calming measures are put in place. To older villagers this road to Wicken is the Military Road, itself a product of conflict.

For during the First World War there was a danger of invasion with enemy troops landing on the East Coast. But there were few roads linking the Midlands to the coast, making rapid movement of men and equipment difficult. So in the early months of the conflict army engineers arrived to construct a new hard road toward Wicken where it would link with the existing road to Soham and the world.

Wicken folk looked forward to the new opportunities it would bring their community. For Wicken had extensive areas of grassland and the military horses – for this would surely be a war fought on horseback – would be sure to pause for their night in their village, bringing trade to the pubs and shops. But in this they were disappointed.

For although the army built their Military Road, nobody could decide who should pay for the construction of the Military Bridges over the Rivers Cam and Old West. So they were not built. For a while pontoons spanned the rivers, allowing some traffic to pass, but then they were taken away and grass began to grow through the new highway. [FAIR ON WICKEN GREEN, 1960s]

Not until the Great War had been won did the bridges arrive on the Wicken Road. But by then increasing traffic demanded better bridges elsewhere and the old Stretham Ferry Bridge on the main road from Ely to Cambridge was replaced with one more suited to modern needs, as were the old wooden bridges over the New Bedford River at Mepal and Sutton Gault. [TESTING THE STRETHAM FERRY BRIDGE 1925, THE NEW BRIDGE AT MEPAL UNDER CONSTRUCTION 1930]

There was also a demand for new roads – leading to the construction of the Twentypence Road from Wilburton to Cottenham. And the old roads needed to be improved, so the wall of our churchyard was set back, nearer the war memorial. On Armistice Sundays crowds overflowed into the road to watch the laying of wreaths, the playing of the Last Post and the recital of the names that we remember, even if we never actually knew them.

But for some the names are those of fathers or brothers and for them the Remembrance continues, not one day a year, but every day, band or no band. And, hopefully, thanks to their sacrifice, we may never see again the mass parade such as that of May 1965 when over 7,000 old soldiers assembled at Ely Cathedral for the dedication of a new Legion Standard – a mass of faces, still remembered by their families.

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Ted Austin from Over has responded to my recent for memories of electricity – but his memories go back further than most – to the 1920s. “My best pal at the Perse School – sadly no longer with us – was Emmerson (Mo) Gardener who lived in Thompson’s Lane. His father was manager of the Cambridge Electric Supply Company whose generating plant was opposite his house. I therefore had many opportunities to visit the works. I well remember the high-pitched hum of the dynamos and how the whole place was spotlessly clean & the dynamos all polished up. I believe however that their system worked on 200 volts, not 230 as was generated elsewhere. The steam turbines were cooled by water drawn directly from the river at Quayside and discharged back again when hot. This stretch of river was always a few degrees warmer and attractive to fish. Jesus Green open air swimming pool in those days also drew water from the river and was reported to be warmer too – though personally I doubt that”.

Ted continues: “My friend Roy Burgess of Cottenham went as an apprentice to the Cambs and Hunts Electricity Company when he left the Perse School and worked for them for some years. Mostly he was engaged in installing electricity in homes as the supply arrived. They had plenty of work since the company would install three lights and a five-amp plug free of charge & were expected to complete one home a day.”

Stella Cornell of Bottisham remembers the day electricity arrived in her village: “I married in 1950 and moved from Swaffham Bulbeck to Lode, later living in a tiny cottage with only a black cooking range upon which we heated kettles of water. My baby’s napkin and bibs were boiled in a galvanised pail on the range. My mother washed my bed linen and towels as she had a brick copper and mangle, small items were dried and aired on a large fireguard surrounding the range. All cooking was done on the range, a Primus stove was a luxury. There were no baths, just a wash down in front of the cooking range.

“Oil lamps needed filling before dusk, a task performed on the back door step, and the glass globes had to be carefully washed and polished, the wicks kept trimmed. We used a bicycle lamp as a torch indoors & you needed a torch to walk about the village, as it was pitch dark, no street lights then.

“Everyone was on a waiting list to be switched on to electricity; eventually I appealed to our doctor, Dr Elliott of Burwell to help. His response was to write to the appropriate quarters requesting we be switched on as I had a very young baby. Miraculously the doctor’s letter did the trick and we were enjoying the luxury of electricity at last. The old flat irons which required heating on the range were promptly replaced with an electric iron that plugged into the light socket in the ceiling. We purchased a brown enamel electric kettle and a small Jackson Giant cooker sporting one hot plate and a small oven. We then bought a Creda electric wash boiler which also provided hot water which we ran from a tap into a galvanised bath which we hauled in from the shed each Friday. Bath over we carried it out together using the two handles to empty on to the garden. It was then returned to its nail in the shed. Although there was no heat, except from the range, we were in luxury land – and no power cuts”. And, Stella adds, few people had television in those days, but what they did have was a wireless &, though this needed a large accumulator battery requiring a regular recharge at 6d a time, it kept them in touch with the world.

Dennis Hall has written from Chatteris following my article on the late Maurice Kidd. “I was head of the King Edward Junior School, Chatteris, from 1948 to 1978 and got to know Maurice and his parents very well. On 18th October this year the King Edward Centre Building celebrated its centenary and Maurice was looking forward to the event so much. All the children from the present King Edward Junior School in Burnsfield Street came in their year groups and were ‘taught’ after the fashion of 1902. They were also dressed for the part and will long remember the ‘1902 classes’.”

Memories 20th November 2002, by Mike Petty

Paul Melton and Lorna Delanoy set out some 25 years ago to record the memories of some of Cambridgeshire's elderly folk. They built up a remarkable series of tape recordings and received a grant from the Queen's Silver Jubilee Trust so that the tapes could be heard at 'listening posts' by people visiting the Farmland Museum, then at Haddenham but now relocated to Denny Abbey. They also allowed the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library, Cambridge to have copies as part of their large collection of sound recordings, where they are available to readers.

Tape recordings are excellent ways of sharing memories of the past, but there is one big snag. Until you listen you have no real idea what they have to tell you. And an hour's recording takes an hour to hear. Now Lorna has organised a team of helpers to transcribe some of the words for a little booklet being sold in aid of the Farmland Museum, capturing both the tales and something of the way they were told.

It includes the memories of the late Con Cameron of Chatteris, probably the first lady taxi driver in the area, back in the 1920s. Con recalled some of the problems of early motoring: "We used to have to put side curtains up, well, it was ever so draughty. I used to be out all hours of the night. You had to have a rug round your knees cos it was so cold! No heating. And you used to have to let the water out at night if it was freezing because they used to get froze. There was no such thing as anti-freeze in those days. And jack it up to start it in the mornin'. And then as soon as you get the jack up you could start it up and crank it up to try and get it to start! You'd jack it up then it'd fall off the jack!

"My father would not buy any new tyres or tubes. And do you know, soon as there was a hot day all the patches used to lift off these blessed tubes. I remember going to Cambridge once, we were going to the Botanic Gardens, and I took a crowd there, in our open Ford it was, and someone walked by and, some man it was, said, "Look at your tyre!" I looked at the tyre and there's a great big bulge. We hadn't been going long through Cambridge and it went off bang! So I had to go to a garage at Downing Street and they come and towed me in. And I said, "What am I gonna do?" And he says, "You're gonna have to have a new tyre." I says, "Well, I haven't got any money to get a new tyre I got a young baby with its mother and about four kids," and they went in the Round Church in Cambridge, fed this baby, get out the heat because it was a hot day. And I was in this Downing Street pub and a young fella came up and said, "What's the trouble?" and I said, "I've got to get a new tyre and they don't seem to trust me", and I told him who I was and where I come from. I said I got to be back by 6 o'clock I got to meet the 6 o'clock train. He said, "Look", he said to the man, "I'll pay for that tyre", He was an Air Force fella from Duxford."

Nowadays there is a modern straw-burning power plant at Sutton – but this is nothing new, as Ewart Drake recalled:

"My grandfather built two factories at Sutton, one in the Brook and the other adjacent to the railway line at the station. This was the chaff factory. It started with threshing for farmers and often the farmers did not want the straw and farmers did not want to pay to have the threshing done, so my grandfather would take the straw. It was a great big place and they had conveyors and elevators there to take the chaff (chopped up straw) up to the top where it was mixed with hay and then steam was forced through the mixture to cook it. It used to have a special smell about it and was called 'nosey'. People could smell this ever so far off and could predict the weather by it. This would then be put into bags weighing about forty pounds each which were loaded onto the trucks in the railway siding and taken to London for feeding the horses in the pre-car days."

Esther Howe from Prickwillow recalled her daily chores: "I used to get up about half past six. My husband would get up just a bit before cos I used to like my cup of tea in bed, you see. But soon as I had that I had to get moving. So I used to get up at half past six. My husband and the milkman used to go out and milk and I'd be ready to separate (take cream off by passing milk through hand operated machine) at ten minutes to seven when they came in with the milk. We used to take the cream off. People used to come years ago and fetch a ha'peth of milk. A ha'peth of skimmed milk. Quite a can full cos you wouldn't do anything cept give it to the pigs. Whatever container they brought, you just filled. I had all the housework to do and course there was butter to make once a week. And chickens, I had about 400 chickens. They were free range. Every afternoon, wet or fine, eggs were collected and the egg man used to come round and collect them in a big lorry - a huge container lorry. The boxes they used to bring would hold thirty-six dozen. I'll tell you an ordinary day's work. We had what we called dockey at quarter past ten. And then the men stopped for oneses just for a cup of tea and a bite of cake or something. And then come in at four o'clock for a cooked meal. That was in an ordinary day's work when it wasn't harvest. But harvest there were these four meals to get. We went to bed earlier than what we do now. Yes, half past nine. If we thought it was ten o'clock, my dear, we was late!

Lorna hopes to produce other selections from their tapes; this one costs £2.50 from Lorna Delanoy, 1 Wilton Gardens, Mepal, CB6 2BP

Steve Foreman's picture of the Newnham Croft Institute football team has jogged memories for Mrs Lily Stollery of Elsworth who recognises her dad, Bert Gray - who also played in goal for the College Servants. Ronald Barnes from Cambridge, spotted his grandfather, the late William Barnes. He is on the left of the players, wearing a suit complete with watch chain. He held several offices in both the Institute and the Cambridge Bowls Association until his death in 1939. Previously he had been chief compositor at the Cambridge Daily News for nearly forty years

Eric Ives has written from Taunton in Somerset with a picture taken by the News back in 1932-33 showing a gaggle of children with a Guy outside number 39 Cam Road, Cambridge - now Elizabeth Way. He writes: "The little lane circled the Willows which has since been drained and is now a housing estate. Behind us is the bungalow, in those days the home of the Banham family who owned the boatbuilding company on the Cam. One of the lads is almost certainly a Barker whose family ran the Fleur de Lis pub just up the road, and another is Paddy Bull who died tragically young and lived next door to Mrs Nunns sweetshop. Another of our contemporaries was Ken Thorn who went on to some repute in the music industry, first with the Vic Lewis orchestra and later as a composer for the 'Superman' films". Eric himself is second from the left and would be delighted to hear from any of the lads shown - ring him on 01823 335917 [SCAN]

Mrs Marian Brown from Cherry Hinton has also been sorting through ancient papers to come across a cutting relating to a gas explosion at number 29 Parkside, Cambridge in July 1933. "The force of the explosion was terrific, as in addition to the damage to the house, fragments of furniture were found in Parker's Piece", the paper reported. The whole of the front of the house was badly damaged and the occupant, an elderly lady, severely injured. She had been seen moving about the house with a lighted candle just before the explosion. Marian - then Summerlin - lived next door with her mother and father and remembers that the two houses were then made into one, a six-set lodging house. She writes: "The property was owned by Peterhouse so they took their undergraduate students. We had about 22 rooms. The students had a bedroom and sitting room each, because in those days students were mostly money people. My father was a College Servant at Peterhouse from when he was 12 years old until he was over 70. I'm sure many of the college staff remember William, my father but I wonder

if many people remember how hard the college landladies worked many years ago and their dinners and parties they had in their rooms.” If this rings a bell with you please let me know.

And can anybody help Ruth Woodhouse from Old Harlow, Essex, who is also delving back into the old days. There is no point asking if anybody recognises her great-grandfather, David Daniel Parr, because the old picture she has shows a staff outing to Clayhithe in 1882! But can you help with information about the firm, named as R.F. Leach of City Road, Cambridge. The directories describe the firm as “art workmen in stained glasss, painters, writers, gilders, decorators and cabinet makers” him as a painter and decorator with a shop in St Mary’s Passage. [SCAN OF OUTING, DISPLAY ADVERT]

Don Unwin from Cambridge has just caught up with a pile of Cambridge Evening News passed on by his brother-in-law – only this time they’re relatively recent issues. Amongst them he spotted a picture of F.L. Unwin’s Joinery Works at Histon, and on it was his cousin, Frank Unwin the boss. Don writes: “When I got married in 1947 my Dad took me to see if he could help with finding a place to live. He had a building plot in Histon and in 1950 we were able to move in too a newly built house. After I had got my workshops fitted up I used to go and help him with engineering jobs, including jigs for the elevators. Frank was an ingenious man, working out special machines or gadgets to speed up or ease production. At one time he was worried by the new mass production joiners who could make thousands of doors or windows far more quickly than he was able to do. However it turned out well for him as in an order for the joinery for a large housing project the architect would include some components of a special type or size which were nothing but a nuisance to the mass producer. They subcontracted these to Frank who set about devising machines to produce these quickly and at the right price. The numbers were small for mass production but large enough to be worth while for Frank. One particular machine I remember was that for making staircases of any angle, length and tread size”

Memories 27th November 2002, by Mike Petty

Two of Cambridge’s main bridges are being repainted at present, both of which have seen major reconstruction work within the last few years.

Magdalene Bridge – the Great Bridge – has been a cause of controversy for hundreds of years, ever since the river was first bridged, probably by the Danes. Whatever the bridge looked like then it was in such disrepair in 1276 as to be impassable. In those days it was the duty of the Sheriff to keep it in good condition, but he preferred to keep the money and establish a ferry instead – from which he took more income. And just to be sure the ferry kept in business he ordered his prison keeper to remove any planks from the bridge by night. When the news of his activities got out there was a considerable hue and cry and Commissioners were appointed to keep the bridge in a good state of repair. But from time to time the crossing was interrupted; in 1594 great floods swept the bridge away, in 1608 it was “much decayed and perilous to all passengers” and in 1754 needed rebuilding.

At that time a young architect was making his reputation. James Essex is well-known in Cambridge for his college buildings but is probably most famous for the wooden ‘mathematical bridge’ at Queens’ built between 1749 and 1750. So it was Essex who in 1754 was commissioned to build the new Magdalene Bridge at a cost of over £2,300. This enormous sum saw the removal of the previous old wooden structure and the construction of a new stone bridge. But although the wooden bridge at Queens is a triumph, his Magdalene

Bridge was a disaster. It was criticised for being too narrow and by 1798 was ‘in decay and ruinous’. In 1813 it was closed whilst repairs were undertaken, but it was all no use and in 1822 the decision was taken to pull it down and erect a new bridge, this time of iron. In June 1823 Essex’s grand stone bridge was closed to traffic for the last time – carts would have to use Silver Street instead; people moaned about the inconvenience, demanded a temporary bridge & then complained that it was taking far longer than planned to pull down the stone bridge. But the new bridge was opened on time, and on budget. [PLEASE FIND PIC OF QUEENS BRIDGE FROM LIBRARY; SCAN OF STONE BRIDGE]

The cast-iron bridge was of an extremely revolutionary design for its time and included ornamental railings cast by the Finch foundry in Cambridge. Their strength was tested in 1929 when a motor car crashed through them and hung over the river. By then the whole bridge was carrying far more traffic than ever intended and soon planners were talking about widening the road on either side to make a new thoroughfare straight into the heart of the town. In 1953 Magdalene Bridge was restricted to 12 tons but by 1967 there was a two-inch dip in the centre and buses & lorries were banned and the Government announced plans to replace it by 1971. [SCAN OF IRON BRIDGE BEFORE REPAIR, SCAN OF TRAFFIC 1960S]

But at a public inquiry into the scheme supporters of the old bridge forced a rethink. In 1972 came news that the bridge was to be preserved and strengthened. Once more it was closed to traffic, once more there were calls for a temporary bridge – and this time it came, with a Bailey bridge erected alongside. When it reopened in 1982 the costs had risen from an original estimate of £50,000 to some £545,000. But for that Cambridge kept one of its architectural treasures. [SCAN OF BAILEY BRIDGE 1981 – NB ORIGINAL PIC IN NEWS LIBRARY]

Four years later in 1986 another of the city’s great iron bridges was found to be rusting away. It had been in September 1889 that operations began to build Victoria Bridge. The Engineers appointed were Messrs Webster of Liverpool and Waters of Cambridge, the contractor John Mackay of Hereford. The superstructure was to be of iron and steel, its main ribs wrought iron plate capable easily of taking the weight of two traction engines with a roadway of 26 feet - ample room for the two widest vehicles to pass with ease. It was to use local materials where possible, to employ a number of local men, be completed within 10 months and the cost, including the road across the common would be £10,000.

But the planned 10-month construction period became extended to 15 and it was 11th December 1890 before the great opening ceremony could be performed. The proceedings were scheduled to start at noon but council business delayed the departure of the official procession of 13 carriages from the Guildhall by half an hour. They proceeded to the start of the new road where a silk cord blocked their route. The Mayor and the Chairman of the Chesterton Urban District Council formally untied the bow, named ‘The Victoria Avenue’ and, to only feeble cheers from a few spectators, proceeded slowly towards the bridge.

Here they found hundreds of onlookers chilled by the weather and impatient at the delay, and another silken cord. The Chairman declared the bridge open, the Mayor named it and together they pulled at the rope from which dangled a bottle of champagne, intended to smash against the parapet in the traditional way. Sadly it was not to be - the bottle merely swung tamely and eventually had to be hurled by hand. The cheers that rang out were feeble in the extreme, the contingent of police had no disorder to contain except for a restive horse who contrived to break the shaft of his carriage. The official party walked across, then rode across and returned to the Guildhall, having duly declared the Victoria Bridge well and truly open. [SCAN OF OPENING VICTORIA BRIDGE]

They left behind a remarkable monument to forward thinking - a bridge designed before the age of the motor car that was to carry the weight of heavy lorries. By 1986 it was found to be rusting away and in need of urgent repairs which took as long to complete as the Victorians took to build it. [SCAN OF VICTORIA BRIDGE REPAIRS]

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Lynda Robinson has written from Coates, near Whittlesey about the Milton Road School May Queen ceremonies in the 1950s. She knows about what went on, because she was there and took part, and now she is continuing the ceremony at her village primary school. But there's one thing she can't quite recall – what was the title of the music that was played when the Queen and her courtiers made their procession. Lynda says it was the first classical music to really impress her. If you can remember it please let me know.

I have now learned more details about Colin Lunn, the tobacconist, in response to the enquiry from Terry Waters who found a piece of pottery on the bed of the river Ribble at Clitheroe marked "Colin Lunn & Son, Cigar Importers, 3 Bridge Street Cambridge". It seems there were shops in Oxford and Cambridge, the former business being owned by a brother and all the Lunn males had the middle name of Colin. The firm was established some time before 1899 as an old tobacco advertisement quotes the Caledonian Mixture as being "first produced in 1870". In the 1930s their Bridge Street shop near the corner of Jesus Lane was lost to the developers, another in Trinity Street was closed during the war due to limited supplies. The King's Parade branch was opened in 1899 by A.J. Littlechild, then aged 19, who, apart from war service, ran it until his death in 1949. In the 1950s the branch moved from number 15 to 20, finally closing in 1990, the last of the real University tobacconists [SCAN OF KINGS PARADE 1930S]

Ray Jude from Saffron Walden wonders whether anybody remembers the old Youth Hostel Association building at Witchford, they were old Nissen huts with a connecting corridor about a quarter of a mile long – the warden rode a motorcycle in it. Ray was on the management committee and would really like any memories of its former use when it was a hospital building in connection with the airfield. If you can help please drop me a line

David Meacock has contacted me to ask if anybody can confirm a visit to Cambridge by the American humorous writer, Mark Twain. David was reading W.H Barrett's "Tales from the Fens" and noticed Enid Porter's introduction in which she writes: "Mark Twain, a prince of story-tellers was staying in Cambridge after a nervous breakdown, & advised by friends to visit the Fens to complete his recuperation. He stayed at the Ship Inn at Brandon Creek where Mr Barrett, with other boys, was a recipient of the sweets which the generous stranger, in his ten-gallon hat, handed out to the local children who followed him everywhere he went. Many a Fen tale Mark Twain heard and relished during his stay. On one night he was entertained to supper at the inn followed by a long session of story-telling by a group of Fenmen specially chosen for their excellence in the art. At the conclusion of the festivities Twain showed his appreciation by giving his hosts a story of his own, a very 'tall' one, designed to cap all those he had heard that evening". David has contacted the Mark Twain Project at Berkeley and they "can neither confirm nor deny this story" although they certainly have their doubts about the "ten-gallon hat" that Twain reportedly wore. Cameron Hawke-Smith, at the Cambridge Folk Museum, has sent him the text of the story that Twain was supposed to have told but is rather dubious as to its authenticity. So can anybody shed extra light. If so let me know [SCAN OF SHIP INN, BRANDON CREEK, c1890]

Memories 4th December 2002, by Mike Petty

Charles Marr from Barrington has been reminiscing about a period of tremendous change down on the farm. But he has not been delving back into the 1800s but just the last few decades. His grandfather came down to Malton, Cambridgeshire from Yorkshire in 1900 and

the family have now farmed the area for four generations. In 1963 Charles' father bought Trinity Farm at Barrington and by 1978 they had about 300 acres of land, which was then a medium-sized holding, now they farm 430 acres and that counts as small. Until the 1970s they kept cattle and pigs as well as growing a range of crops – “many was the time that along with my father and brother we mucked out the cattle and pigs over Christmas”, he recalls. But then they decided to concentrate on the arable side, including oilseed rape to replace sugar beet on heavy land.

Yields improved due to better varieties, better control of grass weeds and the use of fungicides to combat disease. Fertiliser started to be delivered on pallets, instead of bags – “it was strange how everybody on the farm disappeared when a couple of 20 tonne lorries of fertiliser turned up!” But then carrying bags of corn had always been a problem, Charles recalls: “I’m not sure which was worst about the bags – the weight, or putting your hands up behind you to pull a bag onto your shoulders and finding that a cat had done a whoopsy on top and it had just gone down your collar”

Mechanisation was slowing increasing in importance: “Many a time I’ve seen crawlers used to tow tractors and trailers across rutted headland. We often used to start work in the middle of the night on frosty nights to be able to travel across the land – and as a consequence of the damage done to the fields in wet times I’ve also seen two crawlers connected by a chain needed to plough across a field looking like a battlefield”. As mechanisation improved so tractors gained cabs – though in the early days they weren’t sealed and so were noisy and hot. They also increased in size; when Charles came home from college in 1978 the largest tractor they had was 90 horse power, by the end of the 90’s it had nearly doubled to 170 hp.

But as mechanisation has increased so manpower has fallen. In the 1960s they employed about 10-12 men on 700 acres, by the end of the 1970s they had five men on 1,000 acres. In 1978 Charles left the land at Malton and was farming Trinity Farm – 330 acres with the help of one man, then shortly afterwards he was on his own. He estimates that by April 2000 there were only some seven people employed in agriculture in Barrington, with significant chunks of land within the parish that are farmed from away. This is a trend that he thinks will continue – “I already know several villages where very little of the land is farmed from within the village – large company farms with maybe one man per 1000 acres or more who come rushing in with large machines and rush out again a few days later.

“Maybe Barrington is not so far away from that scenario and who will take a tractor down to pull cars out of ditches on the green then, or run a snow plough over Haslingfield Hill and clear other roads out of the village when the council think that there is not enough snowfall to be worth coming out for, but the drifts are over a foot deep?”, he asks, adding: There are more people employed in computers in Barrington now than in farming. But Barrington’s sole farmer produces enough wheat to feed about 3,643 people a year. According to his calculations it cost somewhere between £70 - £85 to produce a tonne of wheat in 2000, and he was getting £60 a tonne for it. But that was in the good old days – prices have dropped a lot since then!

Charles Marr publishes a regular farming diary in Barrington parish newsletter and is happy to talk to groups; he can be contacted at Brock House, 19 Orwell Road, Barrington, phone Cambridge 870385. [SCAN OF FARM CART AT BARRINGTON CHURCH c1900], PLEASE FIND FARMING OR BARRINGTON PIX FROM LIBRARY FILES]

The Abington History Group have chosen early farming scenes as the basis for their 2003 calendar, with views ranging from James Dickerson, a maker of sheep hurdles in Little Abington in 1888 through to ploughing by tractor in the 1950s. It costs £3.50 including postage from Jennifer Hirsh, Low House, High Street, Lt Abington, CB1 6PG. They have also produced an illustrated history trail of Lt Abington, an essential guide to make the most of a

ramble round the village. [SCAN OF HURDLE MAKER, PLEASE CHOOSE 1960S-70S VILLAGE PIC FROM LIBRARY FILES]

Mrs Joy Reid from Godmanchester was looking at a picture she bought from Willingham sales some years ago and realised she had got even more of a bargain that she appreciated. For tucked away at the back of the frame she discovered a photograph of the 5th Company of the Cambridge Boys Brigade 1923-24. Does this ring a bell, or were you a member of the Brigade in more recent years with memories to share? [ALREADY SCANNED]

Mrs S. Cann from Cambridge has also come across a mystery photograph. It shows William Woolston, the father of Stanley Woolston the antique dealer, who came to Cambridge in the early 1880s. He was manager of the Singer Sewing Machine branch and had a shop in Sussex Street for a short while selling second-hand cycles and sewing machines. About 1907 he had a shop at number 14 Lensfield Road when he was selling antiques; his son took over about 1912, though William returned to work whilst Stanley was away in the war. But her problem is that she does not know where this particular snap was taken. It's very faded but it certainly seems to show knick-knacks in the window. I suspect it is Sussex Street since the steps and the bars on the basement windows look very much like those in this photograph of the street before redevelopment in the 1920s. But can anybody help? [SCANS ATTACHED]

Michael Knights from Cambridge has been able to solve a mystery that has been puzzling Lynda Robinson since her childhood – what was the music played at the Milton Road School May Queen ceremony during the 1950s. He remembers the processional music being Handel's "Berenice", but then adds: "I can remember Jack Frost being banished, then would enter a girl who would usually be a fourth-year, as the 'Spirit of May' who, along with chosen girls as flower fairies, would dance to Elgar's 'Chanson du matin'. We would take flowers on the morning for the school hall to be decorated in time for the afternoon May Festival. Each class in the Junior School would either do a short play or sing a song or dance. I can recall a Maypole rigged up in the hall for the class to dance round. Although it was nearly 50 years ago, when I hear those pieces of music I still think 'Milton Road May Day'!"

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As the firemen call off their planned strike it is worth remembering that various villages once had their own fire pumps back. One such was Hinxton where Sarah Stutter, tenant of the Manor Farm, left £100 to the parish in 1830 to buy a fire engine, which was used at a fire in 1882. In October 1921 a disastrous fire involving the whole of the summer's harvest broke out on the farm of Mr J. Coxall. It was supposed that a spark from a thrashing engine set fire to a stack. As the nearest water was about a quarter of a mile away the would-be-helpers were much handicapped. Fire Brigades from Duxford Aerodrome and Saffron Walden were called upon. These with the local firemen did their best but without avail, as the fire had such a strong hold. In addition to the many stacks, the drum, chaff cutter, straw pitcher etc were all demolished, as was also a tractor and straw stack in the neighbouring barn. Villagers remember that the Hinxton fire pump was operated by two men on either side and when it was needed John Page rushed to Hinxton Hall to get Mr Robinson's horse to pull the appliance to the scene. The pump was shared with Ickleton and was eventually sold off, though the engine house still stands near the church & is now used as a garage. Tony Botchie has sent me the technical specification for the 'Green Goddess' fire engine from a Home Office book of 1956. Did you drive them when they were the latest technology – drop me a line

Memories 11th December 2002 missing

Memories 18th December 2002, by Mike Petty

As Christmas approaches we are being exhorted to purchase this or that video to keep ourselves and our children amused during the long Festive afternoons when there is nothing on the television except an old James Bond movie or the latest compilation of musical hits.

But what about a video devoted to Road Safety?

In 1947 the Cambridge Accident Prevention Council produced a film pointing out the potential for accidents within the home and stressing the rights and wrongs of road usage. Not something to hold the attention one might think – but in fact it is gripping.

The film was scripted by Cambridge Chief Constable B.N. Bebbington and photographed by Mr W. King. It starred Nelson Litchfield, May Wells, Ruth Quick, Richard Wells and Bruce Bebbington as the Wright family. They live in a nice, detached house, in the Gilbert Road area of Cambridge. Each morning they rise in good time, father shaves, mother cooks the breakfast which they enjoy as a family, before they set off for their day. Son heads off in his Perse School uniform, father drives off in his little car and daughter waits on her bicycle for her friend from the nearby house.

By contrast to the Wrights, the Rongs are in a muddle; the milk-boy catches mother in her dressing gown, fag in mouth. The youngest daughter dashes round, bumping down stairs, disturbing her sister who is day-dreaming about her piano lesson as she makes her way to school in Parkside, arriving late to the annoyance of the other girls. Father leaves the washbasin in a filthy state – and a razor blade in the soap. Mother burns the bangers – and Ralph Brown, Gwen Pauley, Jean Rolfe, June Pettit and Peter Power obviously enjoyed their performances. But the actors are not the stars and nor are the details of home life at that time, the furniture, the cookers, the food on the table – things that just never usually get shown.

The stars are the ordinary people of Cambridge; for as the action unfolds and the camera follows the youngsters on their bicycles around Mitcham's Corner, Victoria Road and East Road there are numerous glimpses of everyday life, of milk floats and shop fronts. Mr Rong revs up his car in the garage, causing clouds of exhaust fumes, before backing across the road and tearing off to work at Shire Hall. Nor is his navigation much use for he seems to go along most of the central streets, past the policeman on point duty in Sidney Street, down Petty Cury and Trinity Street – two way traffic in those days. It all gives good practice with the video freeze-frame as you stop the tape and try to work out just where he is now!

Mrs Rong goes shopping for hats but is it in Eaden Lilley or Joshua Taylor, and surely it's Sainsbury's old shop that tempts Mrs Wright. Then when things go wrong – as inevitably they do – the action switches to Addenbrooke's Hospital – and did nurses really wear such elaborate caps?

The dialogue and musical score will not win any Oscars, but 'Wise and Otherwise' is a tremendous evocation of a Cambridge and a way of life that so many people will remember. And then it gets better, for a second feature, 'Horse Sense' does it all again, only this time in colour, with even more faces to spot as we search for an elusive horse that has wandered off from his Barton Road stables. There is a particularly interesting sequence of children attending a film at the Tivoli in Chesterton Road which gives ample scope for recognising faces. And of course there is the underlying message about road safety which was the reason for the films in the first place. "Wise and Otherwise" has been copied on to video by the East Anglian Film Archive, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ and sells for £10, plus £1 postage. It will keep gran, and auntie and the kids quiet for an hour at least and help the Archive fund its continuing work of preserving old films.

Erica Dimock captured something of the character of the area in 1963 when she ventured along Milton Road for one of her 'Down Your Street' articles. In the years immediately around the Second World War the road had been engulfed by new estates but people could remember when the houses stopped about half way along the road and you were then surrounded by open fields. They painted a picture of cornfields and allotments at the school corner, with a dusty track leading through them to a farmhouse in Gilbert Road. But by 1963 modern pavements had replaced rough country paths, buses, cars and lorries succeeded horses and traps.

On football days Milton Road and all roads off were lined with cars and in the summer months traffic making for Hunstanton streamed along it. There had been plans for a bridge over the railway track to prevent traffic from piling up when trains were due. This had never materialised but there was the subway which eased congestion, at least when it was not flooded after heavy rain.

In 1963 Mr S. Stokes was the crossing keeper; he described the track as fairly busy – it was after all the main Cambridge-Peterborough line. Over his 15 years of service he had seen the army camp just beyond the railway line disperse & watched an electric blanket factory go up and expand.

Amongst the firms in the area was Camlab Glass, laboratory furnishers and scientific glass blowers who had recently moved from Burleigh Street. Hammer Tyres stocked all makes and had contracts with haulage firms, whilst Stokes of Cambridge employed over 100 people maintaining army camps and airfields as well as supplying giant tractors to help farmers with heavy work such as draining and heavy cultivation.

Erica surveyed the pubs, the Golden Hind, built in 1937, its architecture modelled on outline of part of the Tollemache family seat at Hemlingham, the Milton Arms with its own chickens and vegetable garden and the Portland Arms alongside King and Harper's petrol station near the Cambridge City Football ground

She also turned her attention to the shops, many converted from old cottages, although one of the first, that of A.A. Francis had been replaced by a modern grocery and provision store of J. Farrow. Mr R.S. Vincent who ran a fruit, vegetable and grocery store, had gone to a private school for boys and girls run by Miss Lucas at no.42 Milton Road, whilst no.37 had once housed a maternity home. Milton Road School with its junior and infants departments then under the respective headships of Miss B.H. Pratt and Miss E. Attwood, welcomed a lot of children from overseas who went there whilst their parents were working at the University. Many of the children flocked to Cherry's sweet shop at the corner of Arbury Road where Miss Lucy Farren had served generations of kiddies. On and on Erica went mentioning shop after shop – Newell's, Rolfe the chemist, Newbon's dress shop, Smith's shoe repair shop, even a Co-operative Society supermarket. There was the Milton Road branch library and one of the latest additions to the streetscape, St Laurence's Roman Catholic Church.

All in all Milton Road residents had little to grumble about. It was an interesting road with wide pavements, two very convenient sets of shops, and an adequate bus service either into the city centre or for a trip to the countryside which was still quite close, despite all the building of the previous 20 years.

If the East Anglian Film Archive video doesn't keep you glued to your seats then a book by Lionel Webb just might – especially if you ever worked for Ciba-Geigy at Duxford. He has just produced a history covering the first 70 years of the firm that began as Aero Research and is now Vantico. It's a book about products and projects, such as work with Donald Campbell and his 'Bluebird' team in 1960 or that advertisement in 1982 when they stuck a Cortina to a

billboard. There are pictures of celebrities and of the families of the workforce – perhaps you spot yourself amongst this photograph of energetic girls in the firm's sports day in early 1960s. The book is being launched at a 'Pensioners Evening' at Duxford tonight, and if you'd like a copy then contact Lionel Webb on Cambridge 843964. [SCAN OF GIRLS RACE EARLY 1960S]

Mrs Joy Reid from Godmanchester was looking at a picture she bought from Willingham sales some years ago and realised she had got even more of a bargain than she appreciated. For tucked away at the back of the frame she discovered a photograph of the 5th Company of the Cambridge Boys Brigade 1923-24. Does this ring a bell, or were you a member of the Brigade in more recent years with memories to share? [ALREADY SCANNED]

Memories 25th December 2002 missing

Memories 2003 in one sequence

Memories 1st January 2003, by Mike Petty

Its just 25 years ago next Saturday that Newmarket was devastated; more than 100 homes were damaged, cars were overturned and the station signal box wrecked, when a tornado with winds equal to a hurricane force 10 cut a two-mile swathe through the town. Firemen, then in the middle of a strike, turned out to deal with the emergency, police reinforcements were drafted in from Bury St Edmunds, and the News sent a team of reporters to the disaster zone.

They came back with eyewitness accounts from the Crockford Park Estate with its smashed windows, flattened fences and slate-less roofs. At No.12 St John's Avenue 14-year-old Gary Blinston was indoors with his younger brother and sister: "My little brother said, 'The caravan is going over'. I looked out of the window and saw a tree blown into the air. My little sister locked the door and took cover", he recalled. Nearby Stewart Grainger, aged 15, was in bed when the window blew in; his bed cover was cut by glass but he escaped unhurt; he had a second lucky escape when he went into his parents' bedroom and was narrowly missed by the attic trapdoor which had blown in.

The Newmarket Bloodstock Agency was severely damaged, a 10 ft flint wall was destroyed and large plate-glass windows damaged. An executive meeting was in progress when, as Roger Booth recalled: "It got very dark. There was a funny noise and then the windows blew in. There was glass and bricks and plaster everywhere. We just dived for the floor and tried to cover our heads. It was like a bomb going off". A string of racehorses was just arriving when the storm struck; trainer Ronald Sheather was leading the first of the six animals: "I thought it was a bomb exploding in the station yard. There was a cloud of dust, bricks and bits of wood thrown around. But the horses were very good and we had no difficulty getting them into their stables". His wife and son were upstairs in their home at Paddock Drive when the storm hit: "There was thunder and lightning and the windows shook, then I saw the summer house which had been in the garden float past the window", Audrey Sheather said.

One end of a house in St John's Avenue was damaged to such an extent that the occupants were advised to move out – the roof was lifted off and then came back down again, with tiles falling through the ceiling and windows blown out by the wind. Ron Ranner from Clare Place said: "Fences were flying through the air and tiles were piling up outside. It was a most frightening experience and was really five minutes of sheer hell". Nearby Arthur Smith, a market trader, had a narrow escape when a pane of glass landed on top of the eiderdown just moments after he had got out of bed.

In Duchess Drive ten houses were badly damaged when the hurricane toppled trees lining the road, crushing a car parked in the driveway of no.69.

The centre of nearby Ashley also found itself in the tornado's track; Colin Smith who ran the general stores had his own home damaged and a tree crashed down on two of his vans, but, with his brother, he dashed around the village to see if he could help others. He found garden walls and chimneystacks wrecked, trees blown over and roofs virtually stripped. Electric cables were brought down and there were sparks everywhere. Engineers were drafted in to restore supplies, but sixty people were without power for up to eight hours.

But it was Newmarket station area that suffered most. The Coronation Hotel, which was just preparing to reopen after the Christmas break, was badly damaged and promptly closed again. The licensee, Mr Vin Waterfall said: "The back door blew open and I tried to pull it shut but the wind was too strong and all the windows blew out". At the Carrington coal depot two men tried to take shelter in a wooden hut; depot manager Basil Moss was talking on the phone when the wind started: "It was like a black wall. Bricks and tiles started flying past". Part of the hut collapsed, a window came in, cutting the face of Ronald Goldsmith, and heavy equipment in the yard was blown about. Mr Moss's car was turned around by the wind and all its windows broken.

Peter Greco was on duty at the signal box when the tornado struck. Virtually every pane of glass in the box was smashed as the wooden building was moved 18 inches on its base, and the clock stopped at 9.23 am. He was sent home suffering from shock – but not in his own car - his three-wheeler vehicle had been overturned and smashed against the wall of the signal box by the wind

Geoffrey Spencer, who now lives in Littleport, was the area inspector for British Railways at the time, and quickly put in arrangements to allow the trains to be kept running, with the points being worked manually. Next day a mechanical digger was brought in to reduce the rest of the wooden signal box to a heap of torn timber. Mr Spencer has kept a file of newspaper cuttings, one of which shows him outside the wrecked signal box with local MPs Francis Pym and Eldon Griffiths turned out to make their own assessment of the damage on a day that many in Newmarket will never forget.

If you remember it, please let me know.

[Cuttings & pictures from News files; there are also pictures of demolished wall at Ashley (neg R17810) and a power cable pole snapped off like a matchstick, (neg R17821)]

##

Mrs Margaret Mason of Cambridge has kindly sent me a fascinating mixture of items she has treasured for a number of years, including a photograph of the St Giles' cricket team taken on 28th August 1948 at the Trinity Hall ground. Most are named on the back of the photograph, apart from the player on the left of the back row, but the remainder are Peter Mason, Owen Hitchens, Fred Patman & Michael Rutman. The centre row comprises Cyril Hitchens, C.H.A. Edwards (captain), Gordon Lawrie and a gentleman whose surname I cannot make out Sydney D---. The front duo were Fred Buck and Jim Woolston. Can you fill the gaps. The items came in a paper back from Thrussell and Son, footwear specialists of Sidney Street, Cambridge – does this ring a bell. [SCAN OF CRICKETERS AND PAPER BAG]

The Addenbrooke's Hospital League of Nurses produce a quarterly magazine packed with news, views and reminiscences about hospitals, nurses and related items. The latest issue includes a snippet from Eva Kite (nee Noakes) remembering instructions from Sister Bowyer

in the 1950's: "See to the flowers and the visitors and throw out the dead ones". Margaret Davies (Grey) recalls a night report on the Bowtell Ward: "One male patient with a skin condition and rather confused wandered into a lady's room in the night. He was much better this morning". Pat Fromans (Fox) remembers: "Being served 'dinner' - stew, veg & potatoes in the morning after night duty. Ugh! We were supposed to be in by 10 pm, but where there's a will ... there was a way to climb in."

More substantial memories of work on the casualty ward in 1953 come from Christine McNamara (nee Douce) "The outside world rushes at you often in a way never experienced on a ward. Mostly, however, it was 'Town and Gown' coming in with fairly routine problems. At that time there were still American servicemen at bases around the area. They preferred to handle their own social and medical matters, but inevitably, there were circumstances when the proximity of our casualty facilities might offer the only chance of saving a life. Particularly unpleasant were the brutal knife attacks, not all racially motivated. I had already come cross some of the, to me, strange ways and notions of the more remote fenland folk on the wards, but more surprises were in store for me as I tended a badly burned young man one night. I learned later that it was customary for some to wrap up for the winter in larded brown paper or newsprint under combinations.

"At 5.00 am on January 31st 1953, I answered the telephone to be told by the Ambulance Service that the hospital was to stand by as a National State of Emergency had been declared, the sea had demolished defences all along the east coast and flooding was widespread. Three hundred square miles were flooded, over 300 lives were lost here and 1,700 in Holland in that North Sea storm surge. I was just twenty-one years old, alone a lot of the time, one never knew what might come in, but the ambulance men and police were marvellously supportive and you simply swung into action. Come the morning and report time, Sister Casualty had to be briefed and all had to be ship shape, including the huge brass knob on the outside of the entrance door. I had the feeling that, provided I cleaned that and buffed it up, anything else could hang!"

If you have memories of nurses in the days when Matron ruled then contact Pat Richards, editor of the nurses' newsletter on Cambridge 245788 or e-mail to perl1@cam.ac.uk, or share them with me at the News.

Memories 8th January 2003, by Mike Petty

Newmarket Road is not one of the most attractive areas of Cambridge – but without Newmarket Road Cambridge would have had no gas, no fire service, and no local newspaper – or at least so it was claimed back in 1963. But since then the gasworks have become a supermarket, the fire brigade has moved to Parkside, and the News has moved to Milton.

Forty years ago it was an area about to be transformed by wider roads, and there was talk about a new bridge across the river – the present Elizabeth Way. So the News sent its reporter, Erica Dimock to discover what was out there.

"Considered some years ago to accommodate some of the most squalid and unsightly houses in Cambridge, various efforts have been made to clear the local slums", she reported. "In other ways too Newmarket Road has been cleaned up. It is not so very long since patrolling policemen preferred to go in twos and threes, nor since local women were afraid to step outside their doorsteps after dark". Much of the trouble could be attributed to the excessive number of public houses, but many of them had been pulled down. It had several terraces of 19th-century cottages and a lot of small shops of considerable antiquity. The people living in the houses or running the shops were frequently members of families which had been on Newmarket Road for as long as they could remember and who never wanted to live elsewhere.

It was an area rich in history, with a Theatre – formerly the Barnwell Theatre Royal, then the Festival and by 1963 a scenery store. There was the Abbey Church, no longer in use, and the Abbey House – once thought to be one of the most haunted in the country, and the Abbey Stadium – all reminders of the great Barnwell Priory which had occupied the land right up to the Leper Chapel. The Hebron Pentecostal Church still held services throughout the week, but the old Methodist Chapel on the corner of Nelson Street had become Finbow's furniture removal firm, which had been established in Hooper Street 57 years earlier.

On the other side of Wellington Street John Brignell, the builders, had their Shakespeare Works – the name itself a reminder of the former Shakespeare Brewery, one of several of which The Star was the only one still working. In the early 1900s there had been 40 pubs on Newmarket Road; many had since closed, but the Burleigh Arms, Bird in the Hand, Corner House, Seven Stars, Dog and Pheasant and King George IV were amongst those still trading. A new one, The Racehorse, had opened in 1961 with a music group, the Jag Trio, attracting customers at the weekend. Trade was generally good anyway and there was a large pool of potential customers. Not far away was the Corona Works where some 60 men and women manufactured fizzy drinks whilst the great Pye Telecommunications works employed about 1,000 people and was the largest manufacturer of mobile radio-telephones in Europe. For those wishing to head off to foreign destinations, Derby Airways offered flights to the Channel Islands and Ostend from Marshall's Airport.

Two older properties attracted Erica's attention; one was the tollhouse, a rectangular building erected in 1828 to replace a much older structure, and itself extended. The other was the Papermills, an early 18th-century building with a mill attached which was once used to make paper. But Coldham's Brook, which provided the power for the mill, had been affected when the waterworks company extended their operations at Cherry Hinton, and the mill ceased.

Another industry was also then just a memory. Writing in 1977 Hilda Swann recalled the brickyards that had stretched along the road: "The sizeable lake along the edge of Coldham's Common, near Barnwell Bridge, was once a clay pit. Until about 1916 huts connected with the works were still visible at the bottom, sticking out of the water. There were four brickyards making hand-made bricks up to the 1930s. Watts and Co stood opposite Stanley Road & the Cambridge Brick Company was on the same side of the road. During the Second World War the pit was filled up by Mr Duce with old cars and the Coral Trading Estate stands on some of the site. The Stourbridge Brick Company was approached from Cheddar's Lane, on the opposite site of Newmarket Road. This brickyard faded out rather earlier than the other three. Near Barnwell Bridge stood Swann's Brickyard. The land extended to Garlic Row in one direction, Stourbridge Common formed another boundary and, years later, the pit was getting very close to the edge in one part. The other boundary was formed by the railway. All this land was bought by Cambridge Corporation, the pit was filled in with household rubbish and the buildings and house where we lived was bull-dozed down"

But the Gas Works were still there, down near the river so coal could be brought in by boat. In 1963 it was the largest contributor to the gas grid and covered an area of over 2,000 square miles. A new gas making plant which produced town gas from light petroleum distillate enriched with propane/butane and could also be used for the treatment of natural gas had been opened by the Mayor in 1961. With laboratories, garages, workshops and offices, there were about 340 employees who had their own bowling green and tennis court on the site.

Newmarket Road was also home to a Fire Station, on the corner of Coldham's Lane. It had been built in about 1943 to replace an earlier one in Gwydir Street and, together with the main fire station in St Andrew's Street, was shortly to move to Parkside. It had also housed an ambulance service, until they had moved to Ditton Walk in the 1950s.

Erica's survey goes on and on – Coopers who had built up their furniture business for three generations, having started with a horse and cart which toured villages loaded high with all sorts of odds and ends. Reynolds the Rock King had opened about 1882 and were still making their sweet and rock behind their shop, Watts and Sons timber importers and builders merchants and the Shipowners Refrigerated Cargo Research Association which did what its name suggests.

Now Caroline Biggs is busy collecting memories of the Abbey and East Barnwell area; for the last 18 months she has been interviewing local people and trawling through the old files of the News in an attempt to bring back the sense of community the area has lost. "It's fragmented by a major road, and people tend to be territorial about where they live. They do have a shared past and many of them aren't aware of this", she says. The results of her research, due out later this month, will hopefully encourage others to record their personal memories to share with future generations. As a spin-off to the project pupils at the newly-opened Abbey Meadows Primary School have been contributing to a booklet called 'Let Me Tell You About Where I Live', to be published by the school. [PICTURES FROM NEWS FILES; SCANS OF ADVERTS ETC.]

There is an Abbey Action newsletter which is packed with news and views about the area. For a copy, or to order 'Memories of Abbey', which should be out later this month, write to Abbey Action at the East Barnwell Community Centre, Newmarket Road, Cambridge CB5 8RS or ring Keith on Cambridge 517259

##

Michael Knights from Cambridge has responded to my request for memories of the Boys' Brigade; he writes: "I was a founder-member of the 3rd Cambridge Boys' Brigade, part of Arbury Road Baptist Church, when it started up in 1965 under the Captaincy of Mr Reg Gowman. The Girls' Brigade was established at the same time, so it was exciting days for the church. While all this was happening the existing church in Arbury Road was being added to by a beautiful new building to replace the original smaller church built in 1930, and the new church was opened in 1966.

"Both Boys and Girls brigades formally enrolled on Sunday, November 14th and marched to our enrolment at the Manor School, led by the 1st Melbourn Girls' Brigade Band. I served from 1965 to 1986 and fondly remember camps, displays, church parades and lots of friendship and fun by belonging to such a super organisation. In 1971 I completed Basic Training to become a Lieutenant and served 15 years as an officer, seeing many lads pass through the Company. I am still in the church, but 1997 saw the Boys' Brigade close. I was a guest at the last evening as I was at the first meeting in September 1965." [PICTURE FROM NEWS FILES]

Memories 15th January 2003, by Mike Petty

In January 1978 hundreds of bargain-hunters descended on Laurie and McConnal's store in Fitzroy Street for a once-in-a-lifetime sale. The shop had always provided bargains at that time of the year:

in 1950 it was coloured cotton sheets reduced from £2.18s.5d (£2.90) a pair down to just £2 that attracted customers, and as it was the first time shoppers could get sale bargains without having to exchange coupons they did great business. But Lauries was sure of a good trade over Christmas: "Parents who take their children to Laurie and McConnal will experience considerable difficulty in getting them out again. There are toys large and small, cheap and expensive, the sort of toys to keep, and the sort to give to the destructive child. They are also

making a special feature of wireless sets this year, and have a large variety on show” said the News at Christmas 1923.

Back in December 1902 the paper had reported: “At the spacious premises of Laurie and McConnal, Fitzroy Street, readers can secure anything they require for a seasonable gift. A special showroom is set apart for the display of cards, pictures, books, toys, games etc and they have a choice selection of mechanical toys which are quite a novelty in themselves. There is also a variety of artificial grasses and plants which it would be difficulty to tell from real; these would make very pretty decorations”

Laurie and McConnal had opened in 1883, quite near another enterprise which, like them, was to dominate the area for a century. For one of the other shops in Fitzroy Street was the Co-operative, formed by a committee which had included three shoemakers, a carpenter, odd-job man and some mechanics. They had set up there in 1871 after two years in City Road, taking care to watch every penny – even chopping up the packing cases in which goods were received and selling them as firewood. By hard work they prospered and opened branches in Mill Road and Victoria Road, a bakery in James Street and in 1900 moved to a new store in Burleigh Street.

It was that year that Laurie and McConnal had almost faced extinction when fire broke out at the rear of their premises. An employee noticed smoke coming from stacks of brooms, a bag of feathers, a stock of confetti and other material in the cellar, probably caused by a match dropped by a passer-by. Their staff set to work to extinguish the blaze and by dint of the application of water from a line of buckets and from a hose attached to the water tap, the fire was practically extinguished before the arrival of the fire brigade.

But three years later they were not so lucky; on Friday 13th February 1903 fire ripped through the store. Once more the fire fighters rushed to the scene but in those days they had no fire engine they could bring – just six hose reel carts stationed at various parts of the town. With no pumping equipment they relied entirely on the poor mains water pressure and quite expected the whole of Fitzroy Street to be devastated. They considered wiring to London for an engine to be sent up by special train, but this would have taken too long. In the event the street was saved, though the shop was just a mass of blackened ruins.

But Mr McConnal was not one to accept defeat. He moved some of the salvaged stock to the garden of the house in which he was lodging, opened a temporary shop in Fair Street, accepted an insurance settlement of £22,650 and set to work constructing a magnificent new building. As trade increased throughout the 1920s and 1930s the store gradually expanded further along the street, adding to the range of merchandise sold.

When a new bus station opened just across Christ’s Pieces, in Drummer Street, more and more buses brought more and more shoppers into Cambridge. In the town centre there were major new shops in Sidney Street – Marks and Spencer and Woolworth and a greatly-expanded Boots.

But those who preferred the less frenetic atmosphere of Fitzroy Street could relax as they shopped. For Lauries had a roof garden specialising in sixpenny ham teas and even a bandstand from which the Cambridge Town Band would play for the entertainment of Saturday shoppers. For a while the Police Band was engaged but their woodwind instruments could not be heard in the street below. It was an idea reprised in June 1975 when the Kite Community Action Group arranged for eight members of a local jazz group to revive the tradition, but by then there was precious little to sing about.

In 1950 a town planning report had recognised the need for more shopping provision, but left open the question as to whether the new shops should come in the Petty Cury area or in Fitzroy Street. The City Council preferred the central site for shopping but the University

favoured a regional shopping development alongside Lauries. Plan followed plan and as the arguments rumbled on so the Fitzroy-Burleigh area deteriorated. A survey in 1952 showed that 91% of the properties in the East Road area were worn out – they were over 100 years old and poorly constructed. As the slum houses were cleared the resident population who had originally supported the small-scale shops in the Fitzroy Street area was drifting away. Shopkeepers could not afford to modernise their premises, especially when they might soon be demolished if the long-talked-off redevelopment ever came to fruition, and the run-down shops attracted less customers. Then parking restrictions were introduced, adding pressure on the carpark at the back of Lauries, which never seemed big enough.

But Laurie and McConnal continued to emphasise their faith in the area by modernising their extensive frontage in 1965 and the Co-op increased its Burleigh Street floor area by 50%. But still the debate rumbled on. By 1970 a decision on the future of the Fitzroy-Burleigh area was no nearer than it had been in 1952. Even after the Lion Yard shopping centre had been built there was still talk of a second development in the 'Kite' area, which some supported and many opposed. Proposals and counter-proposals occupied hour after hour, month after month of debate until in October 1977 a solution seemed near.

But Laurie and McConnal could not wait and announced that they would close that December. The news shocked the city: "Filibustering in the council chamber has resulted in the loss of jobs for many people and the loss of a splendid business, Laurie & McConnal" claimed Coun Gough Goodman. Others saw things differently: "The news that Laurie and McConnal's department store is closing will have come as a surprise to most people", wrote the News' business correspondent, Nauntun Pugh. "But to anyone who regularly used the store it was only a question of time before they succumbed to the inevitable. Even at the height of the shopping day you could be the only potential customer in any one department. It had 50,000 square feet of selling space, spread over five floors to service, heat, decorate and keep full of merchandise and the passing trade had dropped off dramatically as so many houses have been knocked down and food shops have disappeared from the Kite area"

Whatever the reason the news of the closure devastated the staff throughout the store: "I think everyone is heartbroken", said Yvonne Cuff in charge of the fashion department, "It is a very sad thing for Cambridge"

Then in January 1978 the store reopened for the last time as the auctioneers moved in to sell off the fixtures and fittings. An oak-faced display stand sold for 50p, two mops and buckets raised £1.40, there were boxes of light bulbs and even a tin of toilet soap to be disposed of. Between 200-300 people came for one last look, most of them strangers, but a few of the old employees called in to pay their last respects as a giant of the Cambridge shopping scene passed into history.

##

Roydon Shelley from Bar Hill phoned me with his memories of the tornado that devastated Newmarket in January 1978. He was an engine driver on a diesel multiple unit two-carriage train travelling from Ipswich to Cambridge when he passed through the storm, The noise was tremendous and the wind so strong that it reduced the speed of the train by 20 mph.

Dr A. Juul from Copenhagen has also been in touch with an item of ancient railway interest which he discovered whilst reading the Memorials of the life of George Elwes Corrie, Master of Jesus College. The University had been worried by the arrival of the railway in Cambridge in 1845 and so the station had to be built far out in the surrounding fields. But six years later came a suggestion from the Great Eastern Railway Company that railway excursion trains should actually be allowed to stop at the station on a Sunday. This prompted Corrie, then Vice-Chancellor of the University to write: "Sir, I am very sorry to find that the Directors of

the Eastern Counties Railway have made arrangements for conveying foreigners and others to Cambridge on *Sundays*, at such fares as may be likely to tempt persons who, having no regard for Sunday themselves, would inflict their presence on this University on that day of rest. I should be obliged therefore, by your making it known to the Directors that such arrangements as those contemplated by them are as distasteful to the authorities of the University, as they must be offensive to Almighty God and to all right-minded Christians”.

Memories 23rd January 2003, by Mike Petty

My reprise of Erica Dimock’s article on Newmarket Road (Memories 8th January) has stimulated memories for several readers

Mrs Pauline Anderson from Cherry Hinton Road writes: “I read you article with interest as I lived there between 1926 and 1947 and know it well. I went to school at the old Brunswick School which was then in Auckland Road and moved up to the new school in about 1927/8. No school dinners then, so we had to go home, which was Garlic Row”.

The Brunswick School in Walnut Tree Avenue was the first Council School when it opened in 1905. But by 1922 the building was found to be subsiding and had to be pulled down. The girls were relocated to temporary premises at Paradise Street School and the boys to Fitzroy Street until the new buildings which Mrs Anderson remembers were opened. [SCAN OF CORNER OF WALNUT TREE AVENUE, 1929]

She continues: “The Leper Chapel used to be used as a Sunday School by the students of Westcott House and I remember a young lad being christened there by the Bishop of Ely. There was no font so they used a bowl of water instead. The Church of St Andrew the Less, (the Abbey church) was used regularly for services and I was in the choir, it is one of the few churches where the organ has to be ‘pumped’. It was registered for weddings again in November 1947, and I know that is right because I was married there and was the first on the register”.

Charles Hall, one of the churchwardens has written to say that the term ‘Abbey’ is wrong; it was not an Abbey or even a Priory church but was built by the Barnwell priory for the good people of the hamlet of Barnwell for their own services in the 12th century. It might stand on the site of a small wooden chapel built by a pious Saxon called Godesdone and dedicated to St Andrew the Apostle and the correct title is ‘the Church of St Andrew Barnwell, commonly known as the Abbey Church’. It is still in use, with a candle-lit carol service just before Christmas. [CHURCH PICTURE FROM NEWS FILES]

Back to Pauline Anderson: “Where Wellington Street is the buildings stand back off the road as far as East Road and that piece was known as Sun Street. There were always a lot of disabled men waiting to go into the gas works in the 1920s/30s. Apparently there were wounded in the 1914-18 war and the Gas Works employed them. As well as the brickworks, drinks and woodworks two other places come to mind – the Brush Factory near Coldham’s Lane and the Slaughterhouse near Cheddar’s Lane”. [SCAN OF GAS WORKS LORRIES]

Mr R.J. Course from Meldreth was particularly interested in the picture of Papermills House; he writes: “My great grandfather and his family were the last to run papermills as a going concern. They were obliged to give up as the water supply gave up. Prior to that they ran the mill at Great Wilbraham, but were forced to leave there for the same reason. On leaving Papermills they bought a farm and built a house at Meldreth. There was an Auxiliary Fire Service fire station in Newmarket Road during the war, and another one in the old Corporation Storeyard in Mill Road”

Betty Clarke from Haddenham knows the area well; she lived at 151 East Road until 1958, one of a line of terraced houses near the corner of Nelson Street. A couple of doors away was a Hot Pea Shop and beside that the entrance to a Slaughter House which ran along the back of their garden and had another entrance in Nelson Street. Betty has a snap of Nelson Street showing the Slaughter House on the right and the Baptist Mission on the left. Shortly afterwards her family moved out & the drunks got in and set them on fire. Betty has lent me a snap of the row of houses in their damaged state, the 'x' marks her old home. She moved to North Arbury but came back to Staffordshire Gardens, across the other side of East Road in late 1961. [SCAN OF NELSON STREET – WOMAN AND CHILD – AND EAST ROAD HOUSES AFTER THE FIRE]

This area of Cambridge is not one to attract the attention of University academics, but in 1911 Canon H.P. Stokes decided to investigate the old parish workhouses of Cambridge, where the aged poor had been accommodated before the building of the new Mill Road Workhouse in the 1830s. He discovered that the workhouse for the parish of St Andrew the Less was still standing, with curious figures and gargoyles on the outside walls and large rooms inside.

After Mill Road workhouse had been built it had been altered and used for the reception of about 46 girls and boys but then in October 1838 it had been offered for sale, together with an adjacent piece of ground formerly used as the parish gravel pit with a frontage towards Norfolk Street. It stood in what had been known as Workhouse Lane but in his day was 8 & 9 Staffordshire Gardens. Even more exciting for him was that the person who lived there actually remembered it as a workhouse: *The interesting house is now inhabited by a venerable and intelligent old lady, who carries her 94 years with much vivacity. She knew the place well in her childhood, and she laughingly remarks that she has come to die in 'the Workhouse'. She remembers Mr and Mrs Arnold, the former master and mistress of the institution, who used to allow her and a few children living in Covent Garden to play with the pauper boys and girls after they had finished 'their work'. She asserts that the building was erected 'for the purpose', and that it was larger than other workhouses (some of which were only altered cottages). She thinks that it was used 'for several parishes'. An old inmate of the Albert Almshouses remembers that services were at one time held in this Workhouse by various clergy; he himself often attended these gatherings.*

Dr Stokes took a photograph of the property, with his elderly informant at the gate; he does not name her but in 1904 the property was home to William Diaper, a labourer. [SCAN OF STAFFORDSHIRE GARDENS WORKHOUSE EXTERIOR]

One of the other workhouses surveyed by Stokes was that of St Clement's Parish which stood on Castle Street, backing on St Peter's Street. Somehow he managed to gain entrance and took a photograph of the interior of the building, showing a lady reading her newspaper beside the stove, a candle on the table behind her. It is a picture probably never published before. [SCAN OF WORKHOUSE INTERIOR]

##

The new video of the Cambridge Accident Prevention Council's films 'Wise and Otherwise' and 'Horse Sense' (Memories 18th December) has brought this letter from Mrs Joan Barron of Cambridge: "I was amazed to read your article – I knew all the people who took part in it. They all belonged to the Rodney Dramatic Club. My father Jack Baker used to take me down to the rehearsals at the newly-reopened 'Little Theatre' in 1946 after the army had left it. It was situated behind the New Spring pub on Chesterton Road, next to the Tivoli, and years later I acted in plays with them. I also remember the row of shops opposite King and Harper. When we were met from Milton Road School we would often go to Longstaffs for flowers and fruit and the farmhouse cheese which used to be on a bench outside on a bed of straw.

You could see all the different shapes of the cheese or butter pat.” Joan has ordered a copy of the film from the East Anglian Film Archive in Norwich and is looking forward to reviving more memories.

##

It has taken Ken Thorn a little longer to get in touch – but then he is now in West Hills, California. News has got out to him about a photograph of children with a Guy Fawkes taken in the Cam Road area in 1932. It was sent in by Eric Ives from Taunton and was featured in Memories on 20th November. Eric had remembered the names of several of the kids featured, including Ken Thorn who had gone on to some repute in the music industry, first with the Vic Lewis Orchestra and then as composer for the Superman films. Now a scan of the picture is winging its way by e-mail to the West Coast of the USA. [SCAN OF GUY]

Memories 29th January 2003, by Mike Petty

On the night of Saturday January 31st 1953 in darkness and without warning disaster hit the East Coast. A combination of high winds and high tides swept away sea defences from Kent to Lincolnshire; the sea broke through, bringing widespread death and devastation. In a few hours 32,000 people lost their homes and 307 were drowned with damage estimated at £40m.

At Hunstanton the sea smashed a 90-yard gap through the sea wall on the South Beach leaving a trail of destruction, sweeping away nearly all the holiday bungalows on the mile-long beach connecting Hunstanton with Heacham - typical of what was happening throughout the area.

At Wisbech a severe northerly 113-mile per hour gale lashed the River Nene to record height on the Saturday night tide and water poured over the banks into the riverside streets and houses. Part of King's Lynn was flooded to a considerable depth, and 15 people were drowned.

The headlines of Monday's News took up the story:

Canvey is Isle of Horror, 100 bodies found, 400-500 missing. Dead in streets, on rooftops and trees

To a Britain shocked by the disasters of the weekend came the news today that the bodies over 100 people had been found in the Canvey Island (Essex) floods and that between 400 and 500 more were unaccounted for. The dreadful magnitude of the tragedy is becoming only too clear to rescue workers who see bodies – some young children – floating in the waters and others lying lifeless on roof tops with water lapping at their feet, and still more victims entangled among braches of trees – flung there by the might waves which engulfed the land.

The News sent its staff reporter, Charles Rudy, to see for himself. This is his report

“An elderly couple rummaging through the splintered remains of their bungalow home ... a luxury American car afloat in a field ... a factory isolated and knee-deep in flood water ... that is what the seaside coast of Norfolk looks like today. As I flew over the Snettisham-

Heacham-Hunstanton coastal strip in a Rapide aircraft chartered from Marshalls, the scene was one vast fiasco of scattered matchwood.”

For the first few minutes of his flight the view had been just the usual black, flat, wet fenland, but then the great Denver Sluice passed beneath them

“Down there to the right of Denver Sluice the familiar black soil has vanished, acres of it. Workmen are toiling desperately to heal a 20-foot break in the side of the Ouse.” Soon those workmen would be joined by undergraduates, labouring to repair the damage caused when the high tide had spilled over the embankments for most of the 12 miles from Kings Lynn to Denver. The banks were breached in 13 places and 6266 acres were flooded.

“King’s Lynn lies straight ahead and so does the main railway line to Cambridge. But it lies awash at Watlington Junction. And flooded fields look like extravagant pools of water beside the station. A few minutes later: ‘There she is’. The observer points over the pilot’s shoulder, Shettisham, what’s left of it ... who’s the lucky guy with a converted railway carriage at the seaside?

“The sun smiles tragically on that devastated strip now left high and dry. The tide is out – and so is a part of a brown-timbered bungalow. It has been throttled and tossed and now it lies sadly on its side, a tattered curtain sighing in the wind. Two doors away the gale knocked and did not wait for a reply. The body of the building has gone and only the roof remains. The gust that snatched up the torso has dropped it again over a 30-yard stretch of field. This is something like a kiddies’ match-box toy-town ‘gone wrong’ after a vicious kick. There are folk down there climbing over the scanty foundation plants of their home. It is upside down and gutted to a skeleton status.

“We are flying now at 300 feet, and below us at Heacham two small boys look up and wave. Perhaps they are wondering if they could build a raft and float out to that Morris Ten bobbing up and down ... The larger buildings on the beachside seem strangely unscathed – but what is there left of that bungalow community? Very little but a gaunt and dismal graveyard of shattered woodwork. People are pulling at the planks of a converted railway carriage. It lies there with a broken back amidst a pile of wooden struts that look fit for chopping up. Another bungalow has survived the havoc but the front door has vanished. More cars ‘at sea’, more wooden litter, more and more wreckage ... and the sea laps daintily beside it all in great irony.”

News filtered in: one Cambridge lady, Marjorie Rappaport, had spend a night of terror in her holiday home, a converted boat at Heacham; she had to clamber on to the roof where she was joined by two Americans and their wives who had been duck shooting. She told the News: “That roof was the only thing above water – we were in the middle of a raging ocean. We tried to signal for help with two oil lamps and by firing guns, but the great waves and the noise drowned everything. Our bungalow was the only one which held together, yet it was washed a quarter of a mile from its original site. Every other residence around it was completely demolished and five people living almost next door lost their lives. When the tide started to go down we waded through and were met by rescue squads who took us to a rest centre”.

Harry Hagger and his wife had moved to Heacham from their home in Union Lane, Chesterton, 18 months before. He had been Commissionaire at the Rendezvous Cinema in Magrath Avenue, but this was more dramatic than any movie. He described his experiences on the night the sea came in: “It was a terrible. We felt a lot of bumping about and heard grating noises. When daylight came we found ourselves on high ground, safe and the bungalow all intact.”

All around the coast people were experiencing similar trauma; homes collapsed at Sea Palling, a thousand houses flooded at Great Yarmouth, three thousand were homeless at Harwich – the suffering was appalling, something had to be done.

The Women's Voluntary Service was in the front line; they already had stocks of clothing prepared for just such emergency but as soon as news of the disaster became known gifts of clothing began to pour in to their offices.

Cambridge was one of the principal distribution centres but so many lorries laden with parcels from Scotland, Wales and other parts of the country, converged on the city that they had to be diverted to avoid blocking the roads. Cambridge station sidings were filled with wagons containing relief material. The St Regis building in Montague road was already full by the first evening and old hangars at Madingley were taken over, trestle tables and racking borrowed and the unpacking and sorting started. The clothes were sorted into men's, women's, boy's, girl's and under-fours and all this needed an army of helpers. All the helpers had to be fed and at Madingley teams of WVS ladies cooking on Soyer boilers provided elevenses, a midday meal, tea and soup and sandwiches at night to the volunteers. They also fed the workers in other Cambridge depots as well, using insulated containers and tea-urns. In ten days 1,675 people were fed this way.

But still the gifts of clothing came in and in, with unpacked parcels reaching the high roof of the Madingley hangar. When all had finally been dealt with one remained stuck in the girders and had to be shot down with an air-gun as it could not be reached. The parcels were then distributed to where they were needed with many undergraduates driving lorries or even using their own cars for the purpose. Royal appreciation was expressed by the Queen Mother who watched undergraduates unloading the lorry loads of clothing before taking a beaker of tea - no sugar thank you - and moving on.

Other Cambridge people manned Food Flying Squads; they were the shock troops of the Ministry of Food's Emergency Feeding plans. Each squad consisted of four canteens, one food stores van, one camp stores, one water taker, one motor cycle and a utility van. They could cook and serve soup, stews, tea and sandwiches and required a team of 30 to 40 people. The Cambridge squad left at 5.30pm on the Sunday night, February 1st, for Kings Lynn to help with feeding the homeless where it worked for five days, by which time the United States Army had set up static kitchens. One of the party, Mrs Hunter-Rioch told how washing-up had to be done outside, at times in sleet and snow – but it had been worth it, and they had even been visited by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

Twenty-five years later, almost to the day, the gales were back and Hunstanton's 110-year old pier disappeared, most of it finishing up at Heacham. The tides were at least a foot higher than those which had devastated the area in 1953, but this time the coastal defences were better prepared beyond all recognition.

But for those whose holiday cottage beside the sea became a holiday cottage beneath the waves the memories of the great tide of 1953 will never go away.

Memories 5th February 2003, by Mike Petty

The snow that struck last week caused chaos as traffic skidded to a halt, roads clogged up – and the photographic files at the News were supplemented with more pictures of people manfully struggling in the blizzard conditions.

Memories this week is illustrated by a few of the pictures taken of earlier snowfalls around Cambridgeshire

Over the years journalists have reported the same story, time after time, month after month – but sometimes it can be hard to decide which date goes with which story as this selection may demonstrate. It is not comprehensive – can you supplement it with memories of your own?

1895, January- March

The great frost lasted from January to March unbroken except for very brief thaws. From January 18th to 25th there were snowstorms, floods & north-west gales; frosts of 15 to 20 degrees turned hundreds of acres of flooded land into skating rinks; for 2 months it was possible to skate from Cambridge to Grantchester or Ely. Three fields at Newnham were flooded & electric lights allowed skaters to flock there in the evenings; there were ice carnivals & skating races on river from Bottisham Lock to Ely

1900, February

The weather through the country continues to be very severe and in many districts traffic is almost at a standstill. In Huntingdonshire the drifts in many places were 6ft deep. The mail cart from Cambridge to **St Neots** got embedded in the snow and could not be moved. The contents had to be removed and carried some distance to another vehicle.

1908, April

Easter fell at the end of April, people planning a Spring break found the rooftops & ground carpeted with a couple of inches of snow with more large flakes falling. The fens lay covered to a depth of four inches whilst **Huntingdon** measured twelve inches and pronounced it the worst snow since the famous Easter storm of 1876. Traffic was disrupted although few actually went anywhere - the railways carried just 54 to Great Yarmouth, 75 to Huntingdon races and a scattering to Bury St Edmunds or Bishops Stortford. Everywhere trips to the country, or down the river were abandoned and those brave enough to venture into Cambridge itself did so with the certain knowledge that some wit would be sure to wish them Merry Christmas. Then at midday the sky cleared & the sun shone. Cambridge people were not to be fooled however & stayed in front of the fire – only to find the temperatures continuing to rise. At **Ely** a mini-boom of visitors climbed to the top of the Cathedral tower for a glimpse the snow-clad landscape. But it was to be May before the thaw came & the young folk of **Milton** had to be lifted over large snowdrifts before they could attend their village feast

1910, December

Cyclists complain that chipped flints put on roads to provide footholds for horses during snow destroy their cycle tyres

1916, February

Heavy snow, soldiers practice hand-grenade throwing using snowballs, on Parkers Piece

1927, December

Snow began Christmas day & led to most complete stoppage of road & rail traffic since the coming of motor car. Many of the main roads in the county were blocked with snowdrifts from six to ten feet. Trains, motor buses and cars were held up and travellers stranded. The

wheels of the mail vans were equipped with chains with the result that hold-ups were uncommon, though one van on the Histon – Milton road had to be dug out. A thatched cottage at **Melbourn** collapsed about seven o'clock in Sunday evening. The bedroom end of the house fell out, but, happily, Mrs Greig was in the bottom room and escaped injury. The Ortona motor buses had a terrible time in the blizzard. Two buses were stuck in snowdrifts out Newmarket way, one near **Teversham** corner, a **Willingham** bus on the Huntingdon Road near the Five Bells, a **Caxton** bus near **Toft** and a Saffron Walden bus near **Whittlesford** station, where they remained many hours. Another bus got nearly to **Sawston** before it got stuck and had to be dug out and the **Fulbourn** bus could only get as far as the Robin Hood, **Cherry Hinton**. Relief gangs were sent to the rescue of the stranded vehicles and they were being dug out and coming home one by one.

The snow was a major topic of conversation, even amongst senior Academics: With the extension of the Trans-Atlantic telephone service it was appropriate that the first "call" from Cambridge should be to one of the leading American universities. A room at Sidney Sussex College had been fitted up with plenty of receivers and the Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University and the President of Harvard exchanged greeting. Sir Ernest Rutherford then spoke to the President; he said: "We have snow on the ground in Cambridge. Have you also snow". "No I wish we had", was the reply.

1929

Hardest frost for 35 years; the Cam frozen properly for the first time since 1894 & the Lent races postponed

1947, February - March

Bus passengers stranded when their vehicle ran into a 5 ft drift on the **Harston-Fowlmere** road, walked waist-high through the snow to another bus. A "Clippie" accompanied them. The 7.40 Premier Travel coach from Royston to Cambridge was stuck in the drift for 3 1/2 [three and a half] hours. A snow-plough called in to its assistance was itself stuck about 300 yards away. Several roads in the district were completely blocked. The worst local road, classified by the A.A. as "very dangerous" was the Cambridge-Huntingdon thoroughfare where the snow had been wind driven into three and four foot drifts. *The heavy snow was later to melt quickly, causing extensive flooding in the fens*

1950, December

Cambridge, along with practically every other town and village, presented a traditional Christmas-card picture with freshly fallen snow decorating the trees and hedges. The roads, however, were not quite so picturesque and once the snow had hardened on them they became very treacherous. **Melbourn** hill was completely blocked by three lorries across the road. **Madingley** Hill was another treacherous point, with cars unable to climb it and there were long queues also in the **Girton** road because they could not get a sufficient hold on a rising road

Sir – I would like to convey a word of thanks to the bus conductoresses who carried on so well during the snow, frost and fog of recent days. Those of us who usually sit near the door realise how very cold and miserable they must often feel standing on the platform for so many hours – the draught is terrific. One would think that a scarf around the ears would be more protection than caps, but of course the rule re caps may be very rigid – B

1951, January

The first day of 1951 saw England upholding its best traditions of variety as far as weather is concerned. When the bells rang in the New Year there was one degree of frost, then the rain came, followed by frost, then came a blizzard and a thaw. Anyone walking in the streets looked like a snowman within five paces. Traffic was brought to a standstill in **Newmarket**. Roads were icy and some cyclists found it impossible in some places to ride their machines.

1952, April

Burrough Green was cut off by snow and has been without milk since Saturday. The driving wind which accompanied the snow have created huge drifts around the village. Speaking by phone from the Post Office Mrs Walsh said: "We are completely snowed up. They tell us we shall be lucky if the road is cleared by this evening". The heavy snow has piled up on the rooftops and percolated beneath the tiles, causing considerable discomfort. Tiles have been ripped off roofs and people have been forced to move their beds downstairs. Everyone was busy shovelling snow.

1962, January, December

Heavy snow blocks streets [Jan 1962]

Great blanket of snow, 24 degrees of frost [Dec 1962]

1963 January & February

The great freeze of 1963 was one of the worst ever. By early January, seven-foot deep snowdrifts blocked Cambridgeshire's roads, Cambridge's water mains had frozen and so had the river.

Cambridge itself was cut off for the first time in living memory, as were many villages. The city's police station became a hotel for people unable to get back to their rural homes. Bus services ground to a halt as diesel froze. Skaters turned out in their hundreds to explore the Backs and the commons. Others took their bicycles on to the river, secure in the knowledge that the ice was so thick it would easily bear their weight. The bitter conditions continued right through January and February and the Lent bumps had to be cancelled for only the second time in 136 years. Around Newmarket, the ground was covered in snow for an unbelievable 66 days. On the east coast, it was so cold the sea froze.

1969, February

Blizzard causes havoc, snow traps scores in Cambridge

1975, April

Snow ploughs and salting trucks were fighting the snow-ice blanket which dropped over Cambridgeshire. In one of the county's heaviest falls the snow settled to two-inch-thick carpets on the major roads as county council emergency highway crews worked in darkness to keep them clear. Some of the worst affected roads were in the **Haverhill** area. Weather experts are reporting further snow falls today.

1975, June

Snow falls in June, the first time it has been recorded in that month

1977, January

Heavy snow hit **Cambridge** as the worst weather for 14 years caused nationwide chaos and led to widescale disruption on the roads and railways. Weathermen say the snowfalls will be heavy and prolonged and warm winds could produce drifts. In many places there were snowfalls of more than one foot. Thousands of people were late for work as hard-packed snow, freezing fog and black ice made driving treacherous. And many trains were late or cancelled despite an all-night fight against the Arctic conditions by British Rail who called in their full cold weather emergency procedures.

1977, March

Motorists were caught on the hop today as snow spread across almost all of East Anglia. The A45 was blocked near Newmarket when a tanker crashed at the **Red Lodge** petrol pumps & an unladen tanker overturned near the **Four Went Ways**. The Chatteris to Ely road was almost blocked & at **Haddenham** a baker's van slithered across the road. Police say they have been inundated with reports of hold-ups and accidents. Villagers at **Hardwick** were still without electricity at lunchtime, 11 hours after power went off. Parts of **Papworth** and **Eltisley** are also without supplies.

1994, April

Snow causes road chaos

Trapped in the snow

But for all the tales of hardship and people trapped in their vehicles there is still nothing to beat the epic experiences of **Elizabeth Woodcock** who was lost in the snow for eight days and nights back in February **1799**

She had been shopping in Cambridge, pausing at the White Horse on Castle Street – now the County Folk Museum before setting off back to **Impington** just as dusk was falling. Snow was already falling and as she got near home she decided to take a short cut across a field. But her horse took fright at the snowflakes and she dismounted, intending to lead him. But the horse bolted, Elizabeth got disorientated and became lost and exhausted. She sat down under a hedge to rest - and got buried by the snow. Meanwhile the horse came home alone and her husband set out to search for her, without success. They searched the next day and the day after that. They thought she had been stolen by gypsies and would never be seen again - unless when the snow melted her body would be found murdered in a ditch. But then a shepherd noticed a handkerchief sticking out of a snowdrift - and heard Mrs Woodcock shouting at him. He dashed off and came back with men and shovels, together they dug her out. She had been trapped under snow eight days and nights, but was still sensible. They carried her home and called for the doctor. He put her to bed without delay & prescribed small quantities of weak broth – and no strong drink. But Elizabeth's plight attracted attention, people brought out prints and sketches, poems and rhymes all cashing in on her experiences and she had many visitors taking her stronger, more nourishing broth, and strong spirits. Her doctor persuaded her to take port wine and opium and she began to rally, but one by one her toes turned black and had to be snipped off. By April her general health had much improved, but the mutilated state in which she was left, without even a chance of being able to attend to the duties of her family was almost worse than death itself. Still the people came

to see her, still they brought her hard liquor, and still Mrs Woodcock enjoyed it. She died on July 24th 1799 a victim of snow, frostbite, and hard liquor
[SCAN OF ELIZABETH WOODCOCK TRAPPED IN THE SNOW]

Memories 12th February 2003, by Mike Petty

The recent collapse of an old property at Whittlesford [PLEASE DOUBLE-CHECK IT WAS WHITTLESFORD – WAS IT BESIDE THE POST OFFICE] attracted headline news – it is not something that happens every day. [PIC FROM NEWS FILES]

There was one such collapse at The Grip, Linton in about 1913, which was recorded by members of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, though they did not put the date on the back of the picture and I have not yet tracked down a cutting. But a comparison of the two pictures shows the importance of taking a pictorial record of places as they are now – one never knows when they might change. [SCANS OF HOUSE BEFORE AND AFTER COLLAPSE]

And then, just 75 years ago, there were two incidents within weeks of each other.

The last few days of December 1927 saw blizzard-like conditions; many of the main roads in the county were blocked with snowdrifts from six to ten feet deep. Trains, motor buses and cars were held up and travellers stranded. Perhaps because of the weight of the snow that caused a thatched cottage at Melbourn to collapse at about seven o'clock on a Sunday evening,. The bedroom end of the house fell out, but, happily, Mrs Greig, the occupier, was in the bottom room and escaped injury. She would not move however until the policeman came on Monday morning.

It was a story that would have worried anybody living in the old creaky, leaky-thatched-roof cottages which in those days were often in a very poor state of repair. But then less than three weeks later came news of another collapsed house:

“At day-break a four-roomed house at West Street Comberton suddenly collapsed while the occupants and their three small children were still in their beds. Both the upper and lower rooms at the north end, where they were sleeping, completely collapsed. One of the beds was precipitated partly into an adjoining yard and two of the ceiling joists fell heavily right between the two elder children sleeping in their beds. That they all escaped serious injury is a miracle. The greater part of the furniture was subsequently got out by willing helpers. Hundreds of people came and viewed the damage during Sunday.”

I summarised the report in my ‘Looking Back’ column and then a few days later I got a telephone call from Reg Course from Histon. Reg was one of the children sleeping in the bed when the Comberton cottage collapsed and he still treasures a cutting of the family’s plight that was published in the Cambridge Chronicle of 25th January 1928 - Reg is the curly-haired youngster on the left of picture four His father had thrown himself across the children to save them. The cottage stood next to a traction engine yard and it is thought that the vibrations may have weakened the house. [SCAN OF CAMBRIDGE CHRONICLE FEATURE]

The family moved to a cottage in Brookside, Toft– once more photographed by the Antiquarians. But they were still not able to live in safety for when the floods came the water rose up to the top step [SCAN OF BROOKSIDE, TOFT]

READERS WRITE

Recent articles on Cambridge shops have brought some interesting letters.

Jack Smalley has written from Six Mile Bottom: “As the Director of Laurie & McConnal who was left with the unenviable task of closing the store, your article brought back memories,

many happy, because there was some really good teamwork and camaraderie. But memories of the last days of the company were sad. Months of meetings and research took place to find ways of continuing, then some 200 redundancies had to be put into effect along with a major effort to find some new jobs for the staff. After the store was stripped bare I met prospective purchasers to show them round. They were miserable days.

“Seeing the photograph of the jazz band in the bandstand reminded me of amusing times. Shortly before that event I arranged for the Cottenham Brass Band to play in the bandstand which created much interest and publicity. Another light-hearted event was having Hughie Green, who was at that time the famous television presenter of ‘Opportunity Knocks’ to open our refurbished store. I met him in the University Arms and saw him into an open carriage before rushing back to the store to be there when he arrived. [SCAN OF HUGHIE GREEN PHOTO, PERHAPS NEWS PICTURE OF GREEN AT THE RE-OPENING – I WILL TRY AND TRACK ONE DOWN]

“Twenty-five years on it is always a pleasure to meet up with ex-Lauries people in the street and shops of Cambridge and Newmarket and also old customers who, without fail, bemoan the demise of the once-great store”

Reg Wood, who has moved from Saffron Walden to Bedford, receives his News by post, first thing every morning and reads it over breakfast. His hands are a bit arthritic and his eyesight’s not what it was when he first started taking the paper in October 1933 (making him probably our longest reader), but his memory is as clear as ever. He remembers the very earliest days of Woolworth’s in Cambridge: “My mother used to go to Cambridge on Saturdays. This particular Saturday she came home and told us about the new shop, Woolworth, where things were only 3d. and 6d; nothing over 6d, but things like stockings, socks and gloves were 6d each one. I remember she bought me my first pair of braces that day for sixpence.

I remember the shop well in those days, just one floor, dark brown painted counters with assistants in black dresses with accessories of red and fawn, and those on the sweet counters wore white dresses. It was always packed and when one went to Cambridge a visit to Woolworth’s was a must.

In the summer of 1927 I was staying with my mother’s cousin in Nelson Street when they had a special sale of rush bedside mats about 36x27 inches at 6d each (only one per customer). I went down with my cousin and bought one for my bedside. The range of goods was amazing. Full tea and dinner sets at 6d per piece, veg dishes at 6d and their lids 6d. Handsaws 6d, saw handles 6d. Ladies perfumes were the same price as were gramophone records, song books or sheet music”

Another letter has come from a comparative youngster, Henry Button, who didn’t begin shopping in the Cambridge Woolworth’s until 1931! He tells me that the first Woolworth store in England had opened in Liverpool in 1909, having been based on a chain of five and ten-cent stores established by Franklin Winfield Woolworth in the United States. Henry patronised various of the shops in Sidney Street, but was not really the sort of customer they wanted. In October 1937 he bought himself an overcoat from A.G. Almond, tailors and gown makers on the corner of Green Street. It cost him £3 5s. – and he is still wearing it over 60 years later!

Dr Ann Silver from Cambridge found her memories jogged by a picture of relief parcels for the 1953 flood victims being stored in hangars at Madingley Road – for she was helping there between April and June that year. She writes: “Your photograph gives a good idea of the scale of the task but it can’t convey the *smell*. On hearing of the disaster people instantly pulled out all the stops to send help. Their gifts were not confined to clothes but included toys,

household goods and food. Sitting in a parcel till June hadn't done much for the generous supplies of cheese, ham, kippers etc sent off in February. There was also the unmistakable pong of socks that had been peeled off the donor's feet for immediate dispatch! [SCAN OF MADINGLEY HANGAR – SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT FROM LAST ONE USED]

It was an older article that caught the eye of John Matthews. He is secretary of St Andrew's Street Baptist Church in Cambridge and the story he spotted was another of my 'Looking Back' pieces, this one about the impending rebuilding of the church in February 1903. He has photographs of the old chapel and of the stone-laying ceremony for the new, the present building, which will be celebrating its centenary next year. A new chapter in the history of the church will open with the induction of a new Senior Minister, the Rev David Morris on the 17th May. The origin of worship on the site had dated back to 1721 when a group of dissenters met in a converted stable at the Stone Yard in Hog Hill (now Downing Place). More recently they have revived the name for their Stone Yard Centre which includes a coffee shop opened each weekday. It's named Livingstone's after the African explorer who would have seen the old chapel on his visit to Cambridge in 1857. He had come to address a meeting in the Senate House and found a packed audience anxious to view the man who had crossed Africa from coast to coast. They saw a plainly-dressed man of moderate height, his face tanned deep brown through long exposure to the sun and wind and furrowed by deep lines which spoke of the anxiety and hardships endured. His voice had lost its fluency, due to the fact that he had spoken African languages for the past sixteen years. At the end of his address the walls of the Senate House echoed with deafening cheers. Next night he received a similar ovation, this time in the Guildhall. Then he was off on his journeys again leaving Cambridge people to follow the story of his further journeys, and Henry Morton Stanley's search for him. Peter Snelson has written a brief life of David Livingstone, 'From Blantyre to Chitambo', published by Christian Heritage from the Round Church Vestry in Bridge Street, Cambridge. [SCAN OF DAVID LIVINGSTONE TAKEN IN CAMBRIDGE 1857]

Memories 19th February 2002, by Mike Petty

George Dethridge from Bar Hill has sent me some of his reminiscences. His family came to Cambridge during the London blitz after their house in the East End had been damaged by a bomb. Their first home was a small end terrace house in Clement Place, close to the Round Church, with a Morrison air-raid shelter in the front room, taking up much-needed space. Then in 1941 came a new sister; now there were nine of them with mum and dad and they needed somewhere bigger.

George recalls: "We moved to Gwydir Street, off Mill Road, an end terrace house with a back yard with three bedrooms, an outside toilet and tin bath hanging on the side wall. Not forgetting that there were now nine in the family the three bedrooms were not really big enough but it was home and it was the best that could be done at that time. Mum and dad slept with my young sister in their bedroom and my two other sisters had the other bedroom, so that meant us four brothers had to share the third bedroom. With one double bed this meant that we had to sleep top and toe. We slept like this for many years to come.

"Downstairs was the front room with a fireplace and one gas lamp for lighting; this room was known as best room and only used on high days and holidays such as Christmas. The next room was the dining and cooking room with a cast-iron black hearth and a fire was always on the go to supply hot water. In the next and final room was the scullery with a brick boiler heated by wooden blocks for washing the clothes. Near the window was a deep sink with just a cold tap for the whole house.

“That was the inside of our home and the backyard was about four yards square, not a lot of space. In the yard was the toilet but no toilet rolls, just pieces of old newspaper squares that dad had cut up and hung on a piece of string. At the back of the house was a large warehouse storing magnesium, for incendiary bombs. This in itself caused problems with rats and other vermin so we had a cat to help to control this aspect of our daily lives. The garden was for growing vegetables, but as my parents did not have a garden they had to buy most of their food from the local shop in the street and maybe scrounge from whoever had some to spare. Many friends’ parents kept chickens and those who had bigger gardens kept pigs and ducks, so if there were any scraps of food left over it was taken to the house with the pigs

“As there was no electric in the house our wireless was powered by an accumulator battery which had to be recharged every so often. This meant taking it to a shop in Newmarket Road, carrying it either in a cycle basket or walking with a baby’s pushchair, as they were very heavy. Coal merchants delivered coal for the fire but on some occasions when we had run low we would cycle to the Gas Works on Newmarket Road and collect a bag of coke, then try to balance it on the cycle frame to get it home. If it was wintertime and the house was very cold and damp dad would give us a hot brick wrapped in brown paper to take to bed as we did not own any hot water bottles

“Saturdays was our family bath night, the tin bath would be put in front of the fire. Dad would be in charge of this operation, and he would keep topping up the bath with hot water from a kettle off the fire. Our sisters always went first, we boys were too dirty so we would be waiting our turn. As soon as the girls were done we would then get into the bath and try to get clean. There was always a scum around the bath as by now it had five or six of us in the same water. After the bathing of us all we would sit in front of the fire to dry out and mum would then go through our hair on our heads to check for hair lice (fleas or nits). Dad would empty the tin bath with a saucepan; this took some time to complete and was the worst job of bath night. Mind you we always had Donald Peers singing on the wireless and his opening tune was “In a shady nook by a babbling brook” and we listened with a cup of warm drink, so that’s how Saturday nights bathing would end, this happened week in and week out.

“Another thing we all had to do, as a family was to go to the Auckland Road every so often to have a bath in some sort of disinfectant. This entailed attending the baths, undressing and a large woman in a white overall would usher us into a cubical in which there was a large bath full of horribly smelling white fluid. The female attendant would watch over us a make sure that we got into the bath and that our whole bodies were submerged and that we ducked our heads under the contents, making sure we were well and truly covered top to tail. I believe we had to spend ten minutes in the bath we were then allowed to get out, dry ourselves and go off home. I was told that the baths were to get rid of all types of lice and to prevent scabies. One thing for sure it was horrible and not recommended.

“My eldest sister was 16 & had now married a GI and moved to the USA, so it came that eight of us moved from Gwydir Street to a new home in Kings Hedges Road. The house itself was much bigger although it still only had three bedrooms, but it had a bathroom, for us a luxury, the toilet undercover outside, and a hot water system from the open coal fire. The house looked like a two story pre-fab house made of sheets of asbestos. I can remember our first bath night in the new house. As usual it was a Saturday; we had a fire all day and with the fire we should have had hot water. We got into the bathroom, undressed as mum ran the bath for us all and guess what! The water was stone cold and poor mum had to put up with us moaning about the cold water, but needless to say we still had to have a bath and get on with it. The hot water system never worked in all the years we lived in this house. So dad had to purchase a gas boiler to heat the water and then it had to be carried up the stairs in buckets.

“In the late forties and early fifties Kings Hedges Road was very country-like as two thirds was open fields all the way across to Arbury Road. At the end of the road was a very large

wooded area, which went all the way to Impington. But the real pleasure of the woods was a massive store of army tanks that were parked in an old army camp on the edge of Cambridge with the entrance on Milton Road. This camp backed on to the wooded area so we would scale the fence and climb onto the tanks to play but keeping an eye out for guards, as we were trespassing. It was an adventure to explore and if we were seen the guards would shout at us and we ran like rabbits back into the woods. There was a rail siding into the camp where all sorts of goods would be delivered and moved out but it was also where the dead American servicemen's bodies would be prepared for return to the USA for burial, sad times for many families."

In 1963, twenty years after George's family moved away, News columnist Erica Dimock surveyed Gwydir Street for her 'Down Your Street' feature. The terraced houses looked much the same as they had since they were built in the 1860s, but the atmosphere of the street had changed. It was becoming 'the Soho of Cambridge' as young families moved away to be replaced with people from Italy, Jamaica, Poland, Yugoslavia and a variety of other countries. One man who knew the street well was Harry Pateman, a magistrate. He had lived in the same house for 70 years and could remember when they had their own chemist's shop amongst the facilities on offer. The number of shops had declined but still included three grocery stores: Ernest Mills had been trading for 14 years, S.F. Cockell had moved there in the mid 1950s, and C. Harpur's shop had changed hands only recently. One newcomer was Sadie Segal who had brought her second-hand clothing shop from Norfolk Street, having been trading for 23 years, ever since she moved down from London during the war. But trade was not what it used to be, since people could now obtain almost anything on credit.

Shoes would always be needed, and would always need mending. The British Shoe Corporation had its repair works in Upper Gwydir Street where some 1300 pairs were repaired each week, as they had since 1914. But now things were changing and craftsmanship was being eliminated by new processes, stitching having been replaced by sticking.

Beer was an important part of the life of the street. Dale's Brewery dominated the area near Mill Road. It had been founded in the 1890s, when there were no fewer than 22 breweries in Cambridge. But by 1963 it was being used as a distribution depot by Whitbread and its landmark seven-foot high cup, a reminder of the gold cup won for the best beer at the Brewers' International Exhibition in 1911, had been removed for safety reasons. Of the five public houses that had once traded, two were closed by 1963; the former Prince of Wales had been owned for a while by Peter Cook of Footlights and 'Beyond the Fringe' frame and was then a lodging house, the Gwydir Arms was a private house. The Brewer's Arms had a good darts team, but the Alexandra Arms had lost its once-famous skittles club and at the Dew Drop inn the licensee, Leslie Peck, was lamenting the recent closure of the Embassy Ballroom in Mill Road, that had considerably reduced his custom. The Beaconsfield Conservative Club had itself formerly hosted dances in its imposing hall, then being used as a furniture warehouse, but both city and university judo clubs continued to meet in upper rooms.

It is hard to associate urban Gwydir Street with exotic snakes, lizards or spiders, but they were a regular hazard for H.W. Barnes, director of Whitehead's wholesale fruit and vegetable warehouse. They had hanging space for 900 stems of bananas some containing creepy crawlies, a quite impressive sight, & something like seven tons were received and despatched each week. Although oranges and South African apples were still very popular there was an increasing demand for more unusual fruit and continental produce.

But perhaps the most important building in the street was the Bath House with its nine baths for men, nine for women. It had been established in 1927 at a time when few houses had bathrooms of their own. By 1963 it was open from Tuesday to Saturday each week, charging a shilling a person, for which you got a hot bath, towel and piece of soap – with a supplement for scented bath cubes – and was used by 300 men and 100 women each week. But as housing

improved so fewer people had need of its facilities, by 1975 it was losing £7,000 a year and its boilers – second hand when installed – were on their last legs. The baths closed in 1977.

Did you use the Gwydir Street baths, or do you have other memories of bath night. Write to Mike Petty

Memories, 26th February 2003, by Mike Petty

Last week's article on Gwydir Street has stimulate several readers to send in their own Memories of bathing in public – or at least in the Public Baths.

Ben Benstead from Victoria Road thinks he was the first paying customer at the Public Baths. "I was born in Gwydir Street in 1910. In 1927 I was a young apprentice working for The Electrical Wiring & Repair Company of Corn Exchange Street, Cambridge. Those of us living in the immediate vicinity had watched the building-work with great interest - this was the first public bathhouse that we knew of in Cambridge and news of its opening was eventually published in the Cambridge Daily News (the newspaper which my parents had read since before I was born).

"The opening day arrived and after work at 5.30pm another apprentice, Doug Smith, and I cycled to the baths. Unbeknown to us, there had been a problem with the heating boiler during the day and the baths were not yet in operation although several people were still sitting patiently in the Waiting Room.

"Doug and I joined them and in the next half-hour or so other people arrived: some ran out of patience and left until finally only about five of us remained. An attendant came in and told us that although there was no guarantee that the water would be hot, we could - if we wanted - have a lukewarm bath. Doug and I were the only two to agree to this offer. We paid 4d and received a tablet of soap and a small towel. A second towel was available for a further charge of 1d. (Just as well as the towel was less than 3ft long and 18 inches wide!).

"I was directed into a small cubicle with a stone/concrete floor. There was a slatted wooden bench and a couple of hooks on which to hang my clothes. The bath was already filled with water. (There were no taps, just a fill-pipe over the end of the bath). Lukewarm? -Forget it! My first real bath was in stone-cold water! Even so, I guess that Doug Smith and I were the first two paying customers in the Gwydir Street Baths.

"I used the baths over the next six years until I married and moved away. You waited in the Waiting Room until you were called to pay your money and receive soap and towel before going to the cubicle where your filled bath awaited. If you wanted more water you called out to the attendant 'More hot in number six!' and received the reply 'Water coming!' to give you a chance to move your feet away from the fill-pipe.

"Sometimes the Waiting Room got very crowded. There was a workhouse nearby at 81a Mill Road (which later became the Cambridge Maternity Hospital) and many of the local tramps used the Waiting Room in the baths until the workhouse opened its doors in the early evening. The attendant found great difficulty in discouraging the tramps and the genuine customers had to contend with the 'temporary visitors' smoking all sorts of cigarette dog-ends they had accumulated. It got very smoky in that Waiting Room!"

Tony Challis from Great Shelford was another who regularly patronised the baths: "As a young lad in the late 40's I was a keen racing cyclist and would generally go training straight from work. Most of our work was pretty dirty and many times I would visit the Baths in Gwydir Street. After paying the 1/- we would be shown into a bath cubicle. The attendant

would turn on the hot taps from outside and, when the allowed amount had been delivered, would call out "cold water going in!". This phase of the operation was tricky. The temperature of the water had to be gauged just right. Too much cold and it was a tepid bath; not enough cold and you either had to wait or get scalded! After the attendant had been told to turn off the cold water there was nothing more to be said. No more water, hot or cold, was allowed. The soap provided, about two inches square and very thin, gave little lather and had no smell. The towel was, from memory, a starched piece of material which had poor drying properties. I must say that I don't remember being offered scented bath cubes or that there was a women's end (wish I had known). By today's standard it was all rather primitive, but it did the job and seemed to be well used".

Tony was apprenticed to George Lister and Sons of Abbey Road. He recalls: "Besides working in the Blacksmith and Machine shops we would work at many firms around the City. My mentor was Bill Rouse who seemed to be mostly employed in the breweries, Tolly on Newmarket road, Panton St. and, of course Dales. I recall one of our jobs was to refurbish the name 'Dale's Brewery' on the tower at the top of the building, steel letters some 12" high which were bolted on all four sides around the Gold Cup. The job must have been carried out in the winter because I remember it being cold and very foggy and we couldn't see the ground at all. The letters there now are probably the same ones. Not only did we climb to the top of 'Dales' we also descended to the very bottom, as one of our visits was to fit new leather washers to the pumps at the foot of the well that was just inside the entrance".

Eileen Devonport (nee Nightingale) lived at number 69 Gwydir Street from 1962-1972 in a house that had formerly been a shop; there was no bathroom and the loo was outside. She recalls: "There was no back entrance so when the coalman came he had to carry the sacks of coal right through the house to the back coal room. More than once I locked myself out and had to go round my neighbours and climb over the cemetery wall, which ran along the bottom of the gardens, and climb back over again into my own garden. I remember Mr. Mills and Mr. Cockell's grocery shops, and sometimes if I needed quite a lot of shopping I would leave a list with Mr. Cockell who would bring it down to me. Although it was the sixties I didn't have a washing machine or a fridge, so in the summer the back windowsill was used to keep milk etc cool, and the washing was done by hand. Our rent was £2 [TWO POUNDS] a week in 1962 and rose to £4 [FOUR POUNDS] a week in 1972. Both my children were born whilst at Gwydir Street and they often talk about how they had a bath in a tin bath in front of the fire. I remember having to boil umpteen kettles and saucepans of water to fill it. But once a week I would take them to the Baths where a Mrs Canham, who also lived in Gwydir Street, used to hand out the towels and soap, and I can remember having to call out 'its too hot' or 'its too cold'."

But Eileen would like help in recalling one aspect of life off Mill Road: "Before moving to Gwydir Street my husband and I lived in George IV Street, and I remember buying fresh baked bread and cakes at weekends from premises which resembled a stable yard. Can anyone else remember and tell me more. I think they were brothers, they were either milkmen or butchers, but only baked at the weekends."

Mrs B. Cullum from Cambridge also remembers Gwydir Street "I was born at no.138 more than sixty years ago and remember all you wrote about. When I remember the baths it was 6d for a bath with a towel and soap and a lot of people with no bathrooms used it. The other thing I remember is the old shop of Mr Hoppits who sold everything you needed, and the milkman Mr Biggs who delivered milk with a horse and cart. We used to feed the horse so it took twice as long to bring the milk to us. I also remember Dale's clock, it was also the backway to the Kinema and us kids used to try and get to the picture house without paying – but we were always caught!"

One of her near neighbours was Dorothy Allen. She was born at number 44 in 1932 and remembers the Street Party held at the end of the war; she can see her father on the picture I reproduced though not herself or her mother. But she remembers there was a fancy dress competition; she went along dressed as the girl from the Mackintoshes Toffee tin and won third prize in her category. She also remembers Mr Biggs and Mr & Mrs Russell who were landlords of the Alexandra Arms which was her father's 'local'. Her dad used to go on an annual outing from the pub to Ascot in a taxi and that was the highlight of his year. Dorothy Allen is now Mrs Dorothy Mott – and hers is a surname associated with Cambridge photography in the 1920s and 1930s. [LIBRARY PIX INCLUDING KINEMA, WORKHOUSE & BATHHOUSE]

Ted Mott's name features in no directory of Cambridgeshire photographers yet hundreds of his negatives are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection. They cover a period stretching from 1917 to 1939 with the majority taken in the 1920s. Mott was less concerned with central Cambridge than the Newnham and Chesterton areas and although he did carry his camera to Fulbourn, Harston, Histon and Quy most of his shots were taken around the Shelfords, Stapleford and Trumpington. Some show accidents to motor cars or steam lorries, others fairground scenes with smartly dressed ladies sedately sitting on the prancing animals of a mechanical ride. Others captured scenes of tragedy as those of the great fire which destroyed Grantchester Mill in 1928 and attracted the greatest crowds of onlookers that village had ever seen. Thousands of sightseers, many from the most distant parts of the country, travelled to witness the ruins of the 13th century watermill. Ted Mott arrived during the height of the blaze and captured several views of the scene some of which he subsequently issued as postcards [GRANTCHESTER MILL FIRE]

Last week George Dethridge mentioned the open fields that used to stretch between Milton Road and Histon Road. Now Kathleen Moden, from Ely has lent me a photograph of two houses that stood on land occupied by the present Gilbert Road, Cambridge; they were known as Hall Farm Cottages, Histon Road and behind them were fields used by the Royal Artillery horses during the First World War. [SCAN OF COTTAGES]

The name Moden is one that will be always associated in my mind with cartoon postcards. Harry Moden was a quiet office worker who became buyer & stores manager for the Cambridge Scientific Instrument Company. He was a shrewd observer of the Cambridge scene who translated his observations into cartoon drawings that he issued as postcards & sold to the 'Cambridge Chronicle' newspaper between 1903 & 1914. When his health began to fail he cut back on his cartooning though he brought his pens out again to record the celebration of peace in 1918. He died aged 79 in 1960. Many of his drawings were produced at his home in Humberstone Road where as a young man he viewed with especial interest the activities of Undergraduates, with a series of cards depicting courting activities rudely interrupted by the arrival of the University proctor and his bulldogs. [SCAN OF CARTOON GRAD 1]

But now Margaret Rollinson of Girton has rediscovered two similar original cartoons that were collected by her father-in-law, Bennett Rollinson, a Cambridge policeman. They were found tucked away at the back of his garage in Priory Road several years ago. They seem very familiar but are not signed; can anybody shed any light on them please? [SCAN OF CARTOON GRAD 2]

THESE LAST TWO STORIES CAN BE HELD OVER IF NECESSARY

Joan Kerr (nee Bailey) from Bidford on Avon, Warwickshire, has discovered an old photograph of the Cambridge and Paul Instrument Works in Chesterton Road, where her late father Donald Bailey used to work. The firm was a combination of the Cambridge Instrument

Company and another founded by Robert Paul, a London instrument maker. They came together in 1919 and their service engineers progressed from travelling by public transport to motorcycle and sidecar and eventually a motor van. This could be seen in Petty Cury each morning where they collected a block of ice from MacFisheries ice works for use in calibrating thermometers. In 1924 the name of the company was shortened and 'Paul' dropped, so Mrs Kerr's photograph must date from that five-year period. [SCAN OF CAMBRIDGE AND PAUL PICTURE]

Another Cambridge company, Pye TVT, has been the subject of a detailed history by Richard Ellis. It covers the birth of the firm during the early years of television in the pre World War II days, through the developments of colour television and the introduction of digital technology. In these days when the erection of mobile television transmitting aerials are causing protest who now recalls the massive 180-foot high transmitting tower at the St Andrew's Road site from which the company would transmit test pictures. When in 1951 the debate on the establishment of a commercial television service was started Mr C.O. Stanley decided that Pye should put on a mock commercial TV demonstration to radio and televisions dealers. A studio was rigged up in one of the factory buildings and the guests assembled in the Board Room, some 200 yards away. To make it more authentic some famous personalities were to take part, including Richard (Dicky) Murdoch and Annette Mills of Muffin the Mule fame. The dealers enjoyed the show, but other TV viewers complained that although they got good pictures, they could not hear the sound. But the signal was not coming from the transmission tower at all, for the company had laid cables from the studio, along the back of the houses in Cam Road and across the road to the Boardroom. The signals residents received were caused by spurious radiation from the connecting cables. The book is full of technical details of Orthicon Cameras, Sound Mixers and the outside broadcast vans which were exported to many countries, together with some insights into the last-minute hitches in far-flung places which dogged the engineers who were sent to take the name of Pye of Cambridge around the world. "The Pye TVT story" (ISBN 1-89340-17-X) is available Richard Ellis at 114 Dixon Drive, Chelford, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 9BX for £14.50 including postage [PIC FROM LIBRARY FILES]

Memories 5th March 2003 by Mike Petty

There are three holes at Three Holes, between Upwell and Welney – and that's about it. There's no church, no graveyard – just a weed-infested ditch that was once a mighty river and a bridge over a fenland dyke where the Popham's Eau meets the Sixteen Foot and becomes the Middle Level Drain. Plus a garage, some houses and a few farms down Gooseberry Lane and Mumberries Drove and a village hall.

There used to be a corn mill, a drainage mill, some pubs, a shop, a post office, a coal merchant and a knacker's yard. They've all gone, as has the Methodist Chapel and the Women's Institute – for there are few women in Three Holes, with only 81 households on the electoral roll. The landscape is flat and featureless; there are few trees – but there is an Acorn Club. It was founded in 1996 as an independent group for women. It arranges meetings in the village hall that was built in 1952 in time for the Coronation, and decided to mark the Millennium with a series of talks and displays on local history.

Local people spoke of the ancient history; how the Danes travelled down that weedy ditch when it was the great Old Croft River, how Hereward the Wake organised opposition to William the Conqueror and how 540 years later Sir John Popham forced through a new drainage channel to make himself "cursed of all the poor of that part of England". Then in 1609 it was decreed that a bridge "of good and sufficient brick be there placed with three arches each 8 foote broad with three sufficient doors to shut in time of necessity" and Three Holes was named. Somebody else spoke of the later drainage, the digging of the Middle Level Drain, and the installation of the wind pumps, diesel pumps and electric pumps needed to

keep the rich agricultural land free from water. Fruit growing became one of the main industries, others turned to dairy cows; shops and pubs grew up, even an Eastern Counties bus garage. Residents turned out to listen to the talks, notes were made and somebody said there ought to be a book compiled.

Last Saturday afternoon the Village Hall was packed. From all around the droves people flocked in their dozens; the car park was filled, vehicles stretching back along the fenland roads. Once more there were displays of photographs and people were scanning faces to see who they recognised. Some who lived on the site of a long-dismantled windmill chatted to others who remembered it 80 years ago. There were tales of discoveries of mummified cats found under floorboards – perhaps to ward off evil spirits. It was a true Three Holes event; tables sagged under the weight of home-cooked cakes and produce, prepared by the Acorn Club ladies, television cameras scanned the multitudes, reporters sought their memories.

The occasion was the launch of the very first history of the village; a history compiled by the people who live in Three Holes and illustrated by pictures of themselves and their families. It arrived literally hot off the press, having been received from the printers only the night before; a history of a Cambridgeshire community supported by the British Lotteries Commission and published in Australia. Its a history that will probably never find it's way into Cambridge bookshops for the first print-run will be snapped up by local people and passed on to their children, a souvenir of a day that will live in the memory of those privileged to be there. But if you missed it and would like a copy of the 64-page book then contact Mrs Audrey Carnson at Whitesides, Main Road, Three Holes, Wisbech, PE 14 9JS whose daughter, Anne Jackson undertook all the compilation and putting it together from her home in Australia. And if you can add more to their story e-mail Anne at aejay@optusnet.com.au [SCAN OF VILLAGE SIGN, DRAINAGE MILL ON SIXTEEN FOOT, UPWELL CHURCH AND UPWELL VIEW]

Three Holes has no cinema, but Sawston had two, as Bryan Howe has discovered. It got its first when Henry Spicer, Managing Director of the village papermills moved there in 1926. He became active in community life, founding an infant welfare centre, providing a sports ground and converting an old Congregational Chapel building into its first cinema, adding an extension to make a projection room where silent films were shown, accompanied by a local pianist, Fred Samuel

But films in those days were notoriously inflammable and the building had too much woodwork for safety. When Henry Morris, the County Chief Education Officer was looking for somewhere to build a new form of Village College, Spicer provided eight acres of land and some finance, with the understanding that the new College Hall would be used for showing films. But what sort of film was to be shown? Morris did not want his college to be used for commercial gain and trashy films, but Spicer realised that Sawston people wanted something other than cultural fare. The two men fell out; Spicer gave up on the combined idea and built his own cinema between the college and the main road. Now there were two cinemas with fine projection rooms, but the College could not afford to equip theirs, though a film club was run using a 16 mm projector and showing films that Morris considered appropriate.

Spicer's cinema was a 400-seat affair, with a commissionaire attired in smart uniform. It was open from Thursday to Saturdays with moderate prices and cushioned seats; but its takings were hardly sufficient to pay the wages of the seven staff and the hire of films.

However there was another side to the film industry, for as well as paper Spicers were pioneering the development of a new form of non-flammable colour film, Dufaycolor, invented by a Frenchman. Cinema was a booming industry on both sides of the Atlantic and the development of high quality colour film was an exciting enterprise with the American

Technicolor system as a main rival. In 1930 a party from the Royal Society, led by Lord Rutherford, toured the Sawston factory and were shown a film of their visit that very afternoon. But other directors at Spicers did not share Henry's enthusiasm for this side of their business and failed to keep up with the developments of their competitors. Dufaycolor worked well in amateur cameras but there were technical problems when it came to duplicating films for commercial purposes and the colours could not be kept sharp. After Henry Spicer's death in 1944 Dufaycolor, acknowledged to be the 'most truthful and artistic in its effects' passed into history. His cinema however survives and is now used by the Village College for showing films.

Bryan Howe has published his research into "The Dufaycolor Story or the time when Sawston almost got into the movies", but would welcome further information. Contact him at 16 Henry Morris Road, Sawston CB2 4JW if you can add to his knowledge, or would like a copy of his book (£7 including postage). [SCAN OF SAWSTON STREET, PIX FROM LIBRARY]

Another Cambridge company involved with colour images, Pye TVT, has been the subject of a detailed history by Richard Ellis. It covers the birth of the firm during the early years of television in the pre World War II days, through the developments of colour television and the introduction of digital technology. In these days when the erection of mobile television transmitting aerials are causing protest who now recalls the massive 180-foot high transmitting tower at the St Andrew's Road site from which the company would transmit test pictures. When in 1951 the debate on the establishment of a commercial television service was started Mr C.O. Stanley decided that Pye should put on a mock commercial TV demonstration to radio and televisions dealers. A studio was rigged up in one of the factory buildings and the guests assembled in the Board Room, some 200 yards away. To make it more authentic some famous personalities were to take part, including Richard (Dicky) Murdoch and Annette Mills of Muffin the Mule fame. The dealers enjoyed the show, but other TV viewers complained that although they got good pictures, they could not hear the sound. But the signal was not coming from the transmission tower at all, for the company had laid cables from the studio, along the back of the houses in Cam Road and across the road to the Boardroom. The signals residents received were caused by spurious radiation from the connecting cables. The book is full of technical details of Orthicon Cameras, Sound Mixers and the outside broadcast vans which were exported to many countries, together with some insights into the last-minute hitches in far-flung places which dogged the engineers who were sent to take the name of Pye of Cambridge around the world. "The Pye TVT story" (ISBN 1-89340-17-X) is available Richard Ellis at 114 Dixon Drive, Chelford, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 9BX for £14.50 including postage [PIC FROM LIBRARY FILES]

Memories of an even earlier Cambridge company have been revived by Joan Kerr (nee Bailey) from Bidford on Avon, Warwickshire, who has discovered an old photograph of the Cambridge and Paul Instrument Works in Chesterton Road, where her late father Donald Bailey used to work. The firm was a combination of the Cambridge Instrument Company and another founded by Robert Paul, a London instrument maker. They came together in 1919 and their service engineers progressed from travelling by public transport to motorcycle and sidecar and eventually a motor van. This could be seen in Petty Cury each morning where they collected a block of ice from MacFisheries ice works for use in calibrating thermometers. In 1924 the name of the company was shortened and 'Paul' dropped, so Mrs Kerr's photograph must date from that five-year period. [SCAN OF CAMBRIDGE AND PAUL PICTURE]

More Gwydir Street memories have come in from Mick White-Robinson who e-mails to say that he lived at number 15 in the 1950s; it was at one time a butcher's shop and he's been told it used to house circus animals when they came to Cambridge; he also knows who was responsible for the hole in the Dale's Brewery Clock. Terry Barnes from Bar Hill saw his

father, H.W. (Bunny) Barnes amongst the bananas with Cyril Perry. He writes: "My father started worked with E. Pordage and Co in the stables in Union Road when he left school at the age of 12 years, sweeping the yard; and he stayed with the Company until he retired at 65, apart from six years war service. There were very few people in the fruit and vegetable trade who knew him as W.H. Barnes, but ask anybody who Bunny was and everyone knew who you were talking about" [REPRISE BANANA PICTURE FROM 18TH]

Sarah Fabian-Baddiel has sent me a snap of form 3A of Chesterton Girls School, Gilbert Road, Cambridge about 50 years ago; she's amongst them and would like to contact any of her old school pals. If you see yourself please e-mail Sarah at golfiana4@aol.com or write to me and I'll forward your letter. [SCAN OF SCHOOL GROUP]

Memories 12th March 2003, by Mike Petty

Last week the News headlines were of the need for additional power lines if Cambridge was not to run out of electricity. Nowadays pylons are part of the landscape but they began to invade the countryside in 1926 following the establishment by act of parliament of 1925 of the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Electricity Company. They based their operations at St Neots near the main projected power house at Lt Barford but initially took electricity from companies based in London, Bedford and Cambridge.

For a start they supplied power to 13 towns and villages from Lt Paxton to Ely as well as to Sawston paper mills and Cambridge cement works. The expanding network of cables reached Cambridge in 1927 and one of the terminals were installed in a field adjoining the Observatory on Madingley Road. By 1929 there were 100 miles of overhead line and 45 miles of underground cable with plans for many other connections - a line between Whittlesey & March, another from March to Ely with connections to Chatteris, Ramsey & Littleport amongst others. Soon an additional 19 villages were connected and when the National Grid came into being the company became one of the first to take power from that source.

In 1934 the Cambridgeshire Regional Planning report summarised the situation with high-power transmission lines bringing current from the grid substation at St Neots to transforming stations at Histon, Fulbourn, Sawston and Shepreth from which lines ran out to different villages. But, the report added: "In the village centres it is satisfactory that the low-power cables are laid underground, so that no detriment is caused to the amenities of the village". Even today parish councils agitate to have power lines put underground to reduce the untidy mass of overhead wires disfiguring the streetscape

Power cables can be a danger to birds. This was an issue raised at a County Council meeting in January 1924 when councillors were talking about adding the lark to a list of birds to be protected - a large number of them were caught every winter, and they were getting scarce. Councillor Jackson said there was no doubt the larks which sang in the summer did little harm, but there was another kind of lark that came over in huge migratory flocks and did a great deal of damage. The greatest enemies of the birds were telegraph wires and snowstorms, he claimed. Out in the countryside many overhead power lines are now decorated with reflective plaques to make the wires more visible to swans.

But the presence of other overhead lines has often proved controversial. In Cambridge the Electric Telegraph Company had established offices in Market Hill by 1857 but councillors opposed the erection of overhead telegraph lines across Christ's Pieces in 1898. The lines were also proving a nuisance to the fire brigade. That September they complained they were delayed in responding to a fire in East Road because the telegraph wires were so low that it

was impossible to run their fire escape along without catching them and they'd got entangled in Burleigh Street.

Telephone, with its wires arrived in Cambridge in the 1890s. The National Telephone Company established an exchange in an upper room on the corner of Market Hill and Market Street to deal with local calls with another exchange for trunk calls in a room adjoining the Telegraph office in the Post Office in Post Office Terrace. In 1912 the National Telephone Company were taken over by the Post Office and a combined exchange was opened in Alexandra Street, off Petty Cury – a building swept away during the Lion Yard redevelopment. By 1927 Cambridge was connected to America by telephone wires when the first Transatlantic telephone call was made from Cambridge to Harvard.

The hard work involved in installing telephone lines was been recalled by Ernie Gill in his marvellous unpublished memoirs of life 'From muck-spreader to Mayor', a copy of which is preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection. In it he describes his part in erecting new wires between Cambridge and Norwich in 1919, sweating with pick and shovel throughout a long working day then cycling home at night.

In 1936 the linesmen had other problems in trying to connect their cables through to Sandringham where the King's life was moving peacefully to its close. Journalists flocked to the Norfolk estate and chose as their base the Feathers Hotel at Dersingham, its one telephone together with the one outside kiosk their only means of communicating the news to the Empire. Engineers immediately set about providing the extra lines needed. Heavy snow had blocked all roads, the AA advising that no driver, however skilful, could force a heavily loaded wagon through the surrounding drifts. Undaunted the Post Office made it. Round the clock they struggled to string cables along hedgerows, loop them over cottage roofs or tie them to trees or electric light poles. Soon there were thirteen telephones to be shared amongst the ninety reporters. The technicians watched as the body of their King left Sandringham on a gun carriage without pomp or pageantry. By the time they returned to their digs the story had travelled around the world.

But it was not telegraph lines, telephone lines but tramlines that caused the biggest controversy in Cambridge. In 1880 tramlines were laid linking the railway station with the Market Hill, along Regent and St Andrew's Streets and down to a depot on East Road. Along them ran single & double-decker tramcars pulled by horses. But soon competition came in, with horse buses fighting for passengers along the same routes. Other road users complained of difficulties in crossing and recrossing the tramlines & people expressed concern about the welfare of the horses. Then in 1898 came proposals to sell the horse trams to the British Electric Traction Company who were successfully operating trams in other towns. Their electric trams would be quicker, have better brakes and be warm in winter. But members of the University objected – for one thing there would be additional tramlines along the 'Backs' - but the main problem would be the unsightly overhead power cables that would have to be installed along the streets. The scheme foundered but was revived in 1904. Again it came to nothing for there was a new mode of transport around the corner – the motor bus.

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News of the death of Adam Faith will spark memories for all those who queued outside the Regal Cinema in Cambridge during the early 1960s when he was part of the mass of pop stars who visited the city.

In those days he attracted crowds and mixed reviews. In October 1960 when he appeared at the Regal the student newspaper *Varsity* was unimpressed: "the show was deplorably uninteresting but the audience gave a magnificent performance", and the *News* too

commented on the screaming and stamping teenagers whose enthusiasm amazed the incredulous and slightly-dazed parents who had also turned out.

Adam Faith returned in March 1961 along with the John Barry Seven, to be followed by the Shadows in May. In October that year Billy Fury was on stage at the Regal together with Eden Kane, Karl Denver, The Allisons, The Viscounts, Joe Brown, Tommy Bruce, Peter Jay and the Jaywalkers and Georgie Fame and the Blue Flames; prices were 5/6, 7/- and 8/6. But the crowds were in for a disappointment for Billy Fury had bronchitis and a throat infection and only did three numbers, including 'Halfway to Paradise'. Next day he collapsed and Eden Kane phoned for an ambulance from the University Arms Hotel to take him to Addenbrooke's Hospital

In 1962 Adam was back together with Cliff Richard & Phil Everley – but were you there and do you have memories to share

Memories, 19th March 2003, by Mike Petty

The Cambridgeshire fens are thought by many to be flat, black, fertile and dull and most artists concentrate on the huge skies, endless drains and featureless horizons. Now a new touring exhibition sees things differently, for it looks at the landscape through the eyes of some of those who live and work in the area. Although Ernie Gray, whose experiences have been chronicled on television, is depicted as sitting in an armchair in the middle of a black field, for the most part the environment is secondary to the faces. But the artists in the exhibition of Ouse Portraits have also interviewed their subjects and the paintings only part of the story.

Sid Merry, the Ely eel catcher recalls how he started using old wicker eel-traps made beside the river at Babylon while Arthur Paske lived as a lad at Lark Bank and for him a trip to Prickwillow was a treat: "When we became teenagers we ventured up into the village a bit more. We came up on our bikes in the evenings, there was an old galvanised shop at the end of the village run by a crippled bloke by the name of John Leggat and that seemed to be our sort of youth club. He sold crisps and Corona and it became our main meeting place. Sometimes on the way home we might meet the village policeman and he would ask us what we were up to. It might be only eight o'clock but he thought that was time we were getting off home and when he told us it was time to go home we went home as fast as we could". [SCAN OF PORTRAITS OF ERNIE GRAY AND SID MERRY – I DID ASK FOR PHOTOS TO BE TAKEN OF THE PAINTINGS WHEN THE ELY EDITION COVERED THE EXHIBITION LAST WEEK]

Ray Cross was born at Shippea Hill and recalls: "My working life began when I was about eleven years old. In the harvest time during the school holidays, when the corn was cut and ready to be carted from the fields to the stacks, the foreman came and asked me if I would like to work for him, driving the horses from shock to shock. The corn, after it was cut, was put into sheaves, then six or eight sheaves stood together to let the air through to dry. After church bells had rung on them twice, along came the men with horse and cart, one man would load and the other man would pitch up to him. My job would be to lead the horse from shock to shock until we were fully loaded. This was a job from 7.30 am to 7.00 pm apart from 'docky' and dinner time" [HARVEST PIC FROM NEWS LIBRARY]

Jenny Petengell from Aldreth has lived in the fens for 75 years: "When I first went to school we had to walk across the fields to Earith. Then my father arranged for the school bus to pick us up, but we still had to walk a mile each way. I left school at fourteen. You could either go into service or do land work. My first job was in service in the village, night and morning for twelve shillings and six pence a week. Aldreth then had a shop and two or three pubs: We

would go to the pub in the evening and someone would play the piano accordion. The school house was like a community centre: dances and whist drives" [SCAN OF ALDRETH IN THE 1930S]

Other subjects have a much different perspective on the fens: "It's a lovely land but it can get a bit soggy", "The worst thing is the wind, it always seems to be windy" and, from an American serviceman: "I wish it was more hilly – but I like to look at the fields".

The Ouse Portraits exhibition is showing at Witchford village college until 10th April, after which it moves on to Wisbech, Littleport library and Prickwillow drainage engine museum.

Readers from around the world have responded to recent 'Memories' articles

Doris Lindevig (nee Tully) has written from Sidney, America, with her memories of Woolworths. The shop means a lot to her for it was there she met her G.I. husband on 3rd December 1944. Doris explains: "I was in the W.R.N.S. and had been sent to a convalescent home in Cambridge. On that particular day I was on my way to my parent's house in George Street but stopped in Woolworth's and this where my friend and I met two G.I.'s. I never did get to my parent's home that day! We were married in April 1945 and I sailed to America on the Queen Mary in the following March. We had a very happy marriage – 3 children – until my husband was killed in an accident in 1964". Doris has since married again and still lives in the States, but every time she visits Cambridge she pops into Woollies and her memory is refreshed. [SIDNEY STREET SHOWING WOOLWORTH – A PICTURE TAKEN DURING THE WAR WHEN DORIS MET HER MAN]

George Street, off Chesterton Road, is not to be confused with George IV Street near Queen Street, off Coronation Street, Hills Road. This was home to Terry Barnes, who now lives in Bar Hill. It is an area he calls 'Royalty Square'. Terry writes to solve a mystery that has been troubling Eileen Devonport who once lived in George IV Street, and remembered buying fresh baked bread and cakes at weekends from premises which resembled a stable yard. She it was run by brothers, either milkmen or butchers, who only baked at the weekends. Terry recalls that there had once been a bakery at no.8 George Street, he knows because that was the house he used to live in during the war: "I can remember playing in the old bakery part of the building and having a model of a Lancaster bomber on the floor – that is until our pet rabbit and cat got in and in the frantic chase smashed it up". That bakery had long closed by then but there was another: "I wonder if she is referring to Quelch Bakery in Union Road. There were two brothers there with their parents, Doug and his brother Ken. Doug was in the butchery trade whilst Ken drove for Esso or Shell petroleum out of Royston". Does anybody else have memories of 'Royalty Square' [PICS FROM NEWS FILES]

All of this was sparked by an article on Gwydir Street, and memories are still coming in. Eileen Fenwick worked at the Baths for 27 years, keeping the taps Brasso'd and everything clean and tidy. When she started it was wartime and she recalls the little evacuees who were brought in, one crying for his mummy. Later she met a wide range of Cambridge folk, including one who brought her own bucket – which she wore on her head! Rita Young (nee Page) and her sister were born above her dad's butcher's shop at number 15 Gwydir Street when they lived until the late 1940s. Her dad had a slaughterhouse at the back of the premises bordering on to Mill Road Cemetery and on market days cattle were driven in through the archway.

One of her near neighbours from those long-ago days is still living in the area. Margaret Cream moved to Upper Gwydir Street with her husband in 1940. They had a front, 'best' room, a living room with a cooking range and a toilet built into the end of the kitchen – but with the door outside. She remembers a large iron mangle with wooden rollers that her husband pushed round by the church to Gas Lane where the scrap dealer gave him fourpence

for it. When her husband was demobbed they replaced the old tin bath with a proper bath fitted in the kitchen, with a table top and a coke boiler to heat the water. It was here she brought up her three daughters. She can remember all the local shops – Townsend's and Wards' cycles, Renbro's wireless shop, Frosts general outfitters & Freemans the furniture store who also supplied flooring. Her father-in-law worked there for many years, looking after the horses and driving the pantechicon to London. Milk, bread, coal and soft drinks were all delivered to the door and Mr Odell came twice a week with his horse and cart carrying fruit and vegetables. In fact there was little need to go out of the area for all necessities, not like today, she laments.

Margaret grew up in Trumpington and has vivid memories of the fire at Grantchester Mill in 1928: "the fire was on a Tuesday evening, Girl Guide night. We met over the stables at a Colonel Bainbridge's house; our captain, daughter of Grantchester's vicar, was not allowed to cycle past the mill and had to go the long way round, via Newnham. Next day Mr Robinson our headmaster took us to see the damaged remains and after a long talk we had to write a poem about what had happened and what we had seen." Such a scene of devastation would linger in her memory forever. [SCAN OF GRANTCHESTER MILL BEFORE THE FIRE]

Joan Howlett also has memories of disaster. She has written a wonderful, long letter, from her home near Stoke on Trent: "I was born in January 1923 at 12 Vicarage Terrace and had two brothers. It was a lovely place to live. We too had a bath night on Saturday in my mum's washing tub, being filled by my dad from water boiled on the gas stove. We left the Terrace in April 1940 when my parents took the tenancy of a public house, 'The Ship' in Princes Street off Coronation Street (near Terry Barnes' family). Little did we know of the terrible disaster which was to come for that wonderful street. The bomb that fell during the night of 19-20th June 1940 killed ten people, all of whom I loved and grew up with. Nobody except those who experienced the aftermath could possibly know the devastation felt by everyone. Body parts of the people whose house got the direct hit were still being found days after. My dearest Aunt, Mrs Watson, was a blessing to anybody who survived and I loved that lady dearly to her dying day. It was that kind of street. I put 10 poppies in my window every Remembrance Day for those lovely people." Joan continued to live with her parents after she married her husband, Ken but in 1957 they took over the 'City Arms' in Sturton Street where they stayed for five years. Later they took another pub, the 'Anchor' at Bottisham before moving back to Cambridge where they had a paper shop at the foot of Mill Road Bridge between 1964 and 1968. Since then move has followed move and they're now up in Staffordshire. Last October Joan and Ken celebrated their Diamond Wedding anniversary with a surprise party at the Gonville Hotel, with a copy of the *News* book 'Memory Lane, Cambridge' as one of the presents. They get piles of newspaper cuttings sent up to them to keep in touch with what's happening here in Cambridge and if anybody remembers them and would like to write to me I'll forward your letters. [SCAN OF MILL ROAD SHOPS IN THE 1960S, JOAN AND KEN'S DIAMOND WEDDING WITH THE 'MEMORIES' BOOK]

More readers have come forward who remember Chesterton Girls School 50 years ago; they include one of the former teachers, Miss Fromant, who is now 90 years old and living in a residential care home in Cambridge.

Memories 26th March 2003, by Mike Petty

PICTURES ON DISK AND IN ENVELOPE WITH CHRIS ELLIOTT

The headlines this week have been dominated by war and protests against war; schoolchildren have been demonstrating in front of Cambridge Guildhall, marchers carrying banners have filed through streets. A week or two ago it was Cambridge University students demonstrating outside the Senate House, this time against – well against what?

Protest against war is nothing new; “No More War” demonstrations were staged throughout the 1920s with a Peacemakers Pilgrimage in 1926 and peace demonstrations on Parker’s Piece. In 1933 undergraduates organised an anti-war exhibition with a call for the abolition of bombing from the air following a meeting called by the League of Nations. But war came and Cambridge like many other places learned the meaning of aerial bombing, as *Memories* readers have recalled.

Once that war was done preparations continued in event of another. Fighting flared between protestors and supporters of the Suez campaign in 1956 after 600 undergraduates packed a Union Society meeting called by the University Labour Party. Supporters of Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden booed and catcalled through speeches by Kenneth Younger and Anthony Wedgwood Benn who was brought to a temporary halt when roll after roll of toilet paper was hurled through a window. It got so noisy that the audience at the A.D.C. Theatre, next door, could not hear the performance on the stage. But comparative peace was restored by the arrival of the University Proctors. In 1966 there were protests over the war in Vietnam with 200 people demonstrating against the Labour Government support for American policies chanting “Johnson out. Wilson out. Peace In”. Peter Cadogan, national organiser for the Committee of 100, told a rally on Christ’s Pieces that the Prime Minister was wrong to support American policies: “Any man who supports the war in Vietnam must go. And Harold Wilson is just such a man”.

In 1951 the arrival of American atomic weapons in bases in East Anglia had brought opposition from a Cambridge Scientists Anti-war Group who described it as “a disaster” that would make us a target. More protest followed the establishment of a Thor nuclear missile base at Mepal which became the centre for CND marches in 1958. The tension came to a head in 1962 during the Cuba missile crisis, which saw the largest demonstration people could remember being banned from Cambridge Market Hill. The marchers made their way to Parker’s Piece where 500 people were involved in scuffles. The Mepal base closed in 1963 but ‘Ban the Bomb’ protests continued and reached a peak with the announcement that Cruise missiles were to be based at Molesworth in the ‘80s.

The 1960s and 70s were active periods of protest marches on other topics including the Ian Smith regime in Rhodesia and a Right-Wing military dictatorship in Greece which led to a rally outside the Garden House Hotel where a local travel agent was promoting Greek holidays. Police invoked the Riot Act as undergraduates surged forward pinning constables against shattered plate-glass windows and six undergraduates received prison sentences. There were demonstrations against Oswald Mosley (1960), Harold Wilson (1967), Enoch Powell (1968) and Reginald Maudlin who as Home Secretary became involved in a protest over the expulsion of ‘Red’ Rudi Dutschke who had come to Cambridge for the treatment of a bullet wound in 1968. The strike-torn 70’s saw numerous protests against Government legalisation with Trades Union Congress and National Front demonstrations; but there were also protests against the powers of University proctors.

Other rallies have been arranged on a diverse range of topics such as the need for more cycleways, the blocking of city centre streets to buses, proposed new bridges and roads, the closure of village schools and libraries and on and on.

For protest is not the unique preserve of the present generation; each was important in its day and some may have resulted in significant changes; but all exercised the freedom of speech that some other peoples do not enjoy. Did you take part in any of them, and if so what do you recall about the day you demonstrated? [SCANS OF DEMONSTRATIONS; PICS FROM LIBRARY FILES]

This week marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Queen Mary, an event that was marked by a message of heartfelt sympathy by the Mayor of Cambridge, Ald. S.T. Bull. But one man more than most had occasion to mourn her passing.

January 29th 1934 started as just an ordinary day for Percy Titmous. By the time it was over he was world famous, In the words of the New York Herald Tribune he had become a "motorized knight", a Launcelot who'd rescued his Queen from dire distress.

Queen Mary was a regular visitor to Cambridge, in fact her honeymoon train had paused here briefly when en route to Sandringham in 1893. In 1918 she visited Papworth Hospital and the Cambridge military hospital in Burrell's Walk with King George V. Three years later they returned to inspect the National Institute of Agricultural Botany where crowds glimpsed a tall Imperial lady inside the smoothly running Royal car,

It was the car that betrayed what was to have been a secret visit in 1932 to the Fitzwilliam Museum. The Royal car had again been spotted in January 1934 parked outside the Cambridge Tapestry Works in Thompson's Lane and then in St Andrew's Street whilst her Majesty chose numerous tiny ivory objects for her famous Dolls House from Woolston's antiques shop.

Three weeks later she was due to return. The police were alerted that the Royal car had left and were keeping the route clear so that the Daimler should have an unimpeded run. In fact it was nothing of the sort. Three times the limousine broke down through overheating, finally coming to rest outside the Slap Up public house at Waterbeach.

It was here that Percy found them. His wife suggested he turn round to see if they needed assistance, but how do you approach a Queen. Percy paused some way off and waited for a sign. Soon the Lady in Waiting approached to explain the predicament and ask whether the Queen might hitch a lift to Cambridge in their little car.

The constables charged with keeping the road free from traffic tried several times to intercept the Titmous vehicle, only to jump aside when they recognised the passenger. Even Cambridge crowds normally used to anything were stunned they saw the Queen arrive in such a car. Queen Mary did her shopping, took tea at the Copper Kettle, and continued her journey to Exning and Sandringham in a replacement Royal limousine

Percy Titmous himself tried to slip away unobserved, but somebody had taken his car number and a call to the Council offices soon elicited his name. The news spread quickly and soon pressmen, news agencies and even film companies were hot on his trail.

The American newspapers were full of the story: "Queen Mary Thumbs Ride as Auto Quits" ran one headline which went on to describe how "townspeople stared in amazement from the sidewalks".

The Queen herself seemed unperturbed by the incident; her visits to Antiques shops continued unabated, as did her motoring adventures. In May 1939 her car was involved in an accident; on another occasion she got lost in the lanes around Six Mile Bottom causing her escort considerable anxiety and in August 1948 the Royal limo again broke down again at Lt Thetford Corner

History was not allowed to repeat itself however and this time she continued her journey in a police car.

Queen Mary was a great favourite with the people of Cambridge and her death in 1953 was keenly felt. Amongst those present at the funeral service in St George's chapel, Windsor, was

Stanley Woolston, proprietor of the Antique shop she visited in a subject's car. [SCAN OF QUEEN MARY IN CAR, PIX FROM NEWS FILES]

Caroline Biggs is seeking more information about the fishing competitions organised by Percy Anderson who has been teaching angling for Cambridge City Council Children's Team for over 40 years. He himself was a world class fisherman & also played football for Cambridge United in the 1950s.

Caroline writes:

The Albion Fishing Club was formed in 1905. Mr John Hawkins-Cartwright, a local barber, was its president for many years. With his wife Hilda he did a lot to encourage junior angling in Cambridge. They were instrumental in organising the junior matches and their annual angling competitions became popular with children and parents alike. At a time when there was little entertainment, fishing was a popular pastime for many local children. The Albion competitions were well supported and children eagerly awaited the opportunity for a trip to either St Ives or Ely for a day's fishing.

Percy Anderson was born in Green End Road, Cambridge, the second of six children born to Renee and her decorator husband, George. Times were hard and it was often difficult to make ends meet, but despite this the area had a great community feel and people were happy. They had to make their own entertainment, and living so close to the river Cam it was inevitable that Percy and his brothers, like many other local children, would try their hand at fishing

When five years old he and his brother Lacy would walk from Green End Road to fish in the River Cam. "It was our entertainment", explained Percy. At that time the City Council used to cut the weed on the river and stack it on the bank & young Percy and his brothers used to poke around in it in search of elvers (baby eels). When he was seven, someone cut him a rod from a piece of willow while the hook was a bent pin and the line, catgut. His mother used to give them bits of dough to use as bait. It was simple but effective equipment that allowed them to enjoy endless hours on the riverbank.

Percy was 8 years old when he took part in his first Albion angling competition. Not many people could afford to have a holiday at that time so both children and parents eagerly awaited the annual children's angling competition. He join the merry thong on Parker's Piece where they were led by the Salvation Army band to the train station and off to fish in the Ouse at St Ives. This was where he caught his first prize fish – an eel. When still a relatively new angler Percy met top Cambridge Fish Preservation Society angler Bob Parr who was to give him some valuable coaching, and provide a turning point in Percy's fishing career. Percy was a quick learner and his natural skill shone through as he started winning competitions & fished for his country on seven occasions. He also became the English National Champion & enjoyed European Championship success in 1977. Locally his team the Pimpnells, are still remembered with awe, as they were to win 39 winter league events on the Cam. The team was made up of Percy, Lacy and George, Bob Hurst, Johnny Hutchinson and the late Frank Morgan. It is the only time in history (unless anyone knows different) that three brothers have won three gold's in a NFA Championship.

When Albion's recreation for children tailed off after the war, and there were no big children's angling competitions, Percy decided to do more for local children. From the 1960s onwards he started organising competitions for children. Since then many hundreds of local children have once again enjoyed the excitement and anticipation of a great days angling.

Percy met his wife, Pat in 1960 and they were married three years later. They had two children and lived along Newmarket Road, where Percy had a fishing tackle shop. But the tackle shop was not just a place where people went to buy equipment. With his vast knowledge and enthusiasm Percy was always on hand to give beginners tips. Local children regularly visited the shop and soon Percy found himself teaching youngsters how to fish. Some of the children didn't have much money to spend on equipment, but Percy, remembering how his mother used to improvise, showed children how to do the same. Pat and Percy soon became well know for their generous hospitality and countless youngsters benefited from the kindness shown by Pat and the patience of Percy as he taught them fishing techniques.

In 1962 Percy was approached by the City Council Children's Team (then called the Arts and Entertainment department) to teach fishing in the summer holidays. This was a job that he was to undertake for the next 40 years, teaching thousands of local children many of whom are still involved in the fishing world. It is a job that until more recently Percy has undertaken without payment. He highlights the fact that for years all the people who helped with the courses, those acting as stewards, giving talks and demonstrations and generally helping, also did so without payment, often giving up a days pay or holiday to do so.

However, Percy has also achieved significant recognition in six other sports. He played professional football with West Bromwich Albion and Cambridge United & represented the County in indoor and outdoor bowls, table tennis, snooker and pool.

Memories 2nd April 2003 by Mike Petty

ROY SHARP was born on April Fool's Day 1923 - but his grandmother thought it was just a joke and wouldn't believe it. He was not a handsome baby. One day his mother took him in a pram into Cambridge and left him outside Sainsbury's while she did her shopping. Then she hopped on a bus back to Mill Road, leaving him behind. He was still there when she remembered and came back - nobody else had wanted him.

The family moved to No 4 Coronation Street, a row of seven terraced houses off St Eligius Street, in Cambridge's New Town. Next door lived an elderly lady, Mrs Bates and beside her was Margaret Cox, a girl two years older than Roy. Mr and Mrs Francis were at No 5; he was a barber with a shop in Lensfield Road and their son, Clarence, nicknamed Sunny Jim, was a bit of a dandy who wore a monocle.

Mrs Conder at No 6, Mrs and Mrs Hinds at No 7 and an elderly couple at No 1, whose names elude him, completed their small community. At the end of the passage which ran along the back of the gardens was a gate which led to a large house occupied by a lady who painted in water colours - again the name slips his memory. Perhaps you can help.

Roy does remember attending St Barnabas Church of England Infants School, which meant crossing the busy Hills Road. His father arranged for the owner of a hardware shop on the corner of Russell Street to take him safely across the road. Each child took their own mug or cup, with a piece of coloured wool or ribbon on the handle, into which the teacher ladled cows' milk from a churn. (At home, like many others, they had Bull's milk.) Some children took sandwiches to eat with their milk; he recalls: "My mother would make up a pack of egg sandwiches which were wrapped in tissue paper. All the packages were placed on a table in

the classroom when we arrived at school. One morning one of the girls whom I did not like wanted to leave the room. The toilets in those days were outside the building. A few minutes later she came back and told the teacher there was no toilet paper in the lavatory. So the teacher tore off some of the tissue paper which was wrapped around my sandwiches and gave it to her. I was horrified and when my sandwiches were handed to me at break time, I promptly dumped them into the waste paper basket. But the teacher saw me do so and fished them out and made me eat them."

Roy was an observant lad. On his way to school he would watch the billposter man sticking up a fresh poster, noting how the large ones came in segments and how, by using his long paste-brush, the man would position them and match up the pieces so they did not reveal the joins or overlap each other. Roy had his own hoarding on the garden fence and would ask a shopkeeper for the previous week's theatre poster that had been displayed in the window. This he would cut into two or three pieces and stick them on the fence, as he had seen the professional do.

In 1933 a series of special talks for children was given in Wellington Street by a well-known evangelist, Mr R Hudson Pope of the Children's Special Service Mission and Scripture Union where there would be models, stories, chorus singing and free gifts for everybody. Roy went along and was hooked. Four years later he was invited by the new vicar of St Paul's Church, Rev Gerald Gregson, to accompany him on a tour of the CSSM seaside holiday missions.

Then in 1939, as war loomed, he was asked to spend three weeks with the Caravan Mission to Village Children which aimed to take the gospel into the countryside, using a caravan, tent and a country missionary, then F T Varney. He recalls: "I joined him on the final day of his campaign in Caxton. The closing meeting filled the 'big-top' with about 200 villagers, both children and adults who, in view of the international situation, were very worried and turning to God.

"The next day was moving day; a local contractor came with his lorry to transport the tents, seating and prop. A shire horse was hired and attached to the caravan and Mrs Varney and I slowly wended out way to the next venue, Gamlingay, a small village with 18 public houses. Our first task was to erect our living and sleeping tents in the field, and then erect the 'big top'. I then had to visit every house in the village, leaving leaflets and inviting the children and their parents to the meetings planned for the following two weeks.

"Our first meeting was on August 20 and we had quite a good attendance. But then a few days later Hitler's troops invaded Poland and that same day evacuee children from London arrived in the village. 'Cor, look!' a little boy exclaimed on seeing our camp, 'a circus!'

During the night it started to rain and we had to leave our beds to loosen all the guy ropes because if they shrank they could pull out the stakes and cause the tents to collapse. The next day, Saturday September 2, Mr and Mrs Varney took their children home to Stapleford, leaving me in charge of the camp for the night. More evacuees arrived and next night we listened to Mr Chamberlain's broadcast in which he announced we were at war with Germany. Shortly afterwards the air raid siren sounded and the family we were listening with put on their gas masks and squatted under the dining room table. The all-clear sounded shortly afterwards.

"The next morning, just after breakfast, the village air raid warden came storming into our camp and demanded we took down our tents immediately. From the air, he said, it would look like a military encampment and would be bombed. We lowered the 'big top' and living tents and arranged for their storage for the duration of the war."

Does anybody remember these missions, or have photographs?

Roy Sharp moved away from Cambridge, joined the Royal Air Force, and had a range of jobs, including travel journalist and editor of his own newspaper, *The Esher and Leatherhead Courier*. Now he has published his autobiography, *Never a Dull Moment* (Serendipity, £12.50) which in its opening pages captures much of the detail of Cambridge in the pre-war days.

THE Cambridgeshire Family History Society fair at Impington last Saturday saw hundreds of people journey from various parts of the country to listen to lectures or browse through stands full of old postcards. Many scanned the latest microfiche - and more and more parish registers or files of census data are now being produced on these postcard-sized bits of film. But the problem is that you cannot actually read what's on them unless you have a microfiche reader, and this is a piece of equipment few people possess.

Nowadays many people have computers and there are masses of CD-Roms reproducing old county directories - though how do you know what you're getting? Unlike books, you cannot browse the contents. Whereas some contain a mass of additional material, such as old photographs, others have just copies of the pages, and some only part of them.

Which is why most people prefer the old-fashioned medium of printed paper and societies from around Cambridgeshire and beyond were exhibiting their wares. Some groups, such as the Fenland Family History Society, were selling pamphlets of no great literary merit, mainly lists of names - but names of people who had been incarcerated in Wisbech Prison between 1870 and 1878. It also lists the crimes -stealing, deception, garrotting, wounding - all of which serve to add a spark of excitement when seen at such a distance, though who would want to boast of an ancestor condemned as an "incorrigible rogue"?

The booklet is available from Wisbech and Fenland Museum, Museum Square, Wisbech or contact the society at www.cambridgeshire/history.com/societies/ffhs

Other family and local history societies, such as Histon, Littleport and Cottenham, have produced a mass of booklets and pamphlets, much of high quality. Many of them will never find their way on to the shelves of Cambridge bookshops, but they have an appeal far wider than their own parish.

SOHAM Community History Museum has issued a small booklet on the firm of C J Fyson which was founded in Paddock Street in 1848 to produce hundreds of the small windmills needed to pump water from the drains up into the fenland rivers. There was a high demand for replacement and renewals of such vital machines and there was enough work for both themselves and the other Soham millwright business of Hunt' Brothers.

Fysons went on to produce threshing machines, and had its own foundry for making iron castings. In turn this developed into agricultural implements and mobile conveyors used to load large ships. But most glamour attaches to the steam traction engines that the firm also developed to meet the unique conditions of the fenland farmer, being lighter and better suited to fen roads.

Many of the parts were brought in from other companies, including Dodmans of King's Lynn and Burrells at Thetford and by 1924 the company had manufactured 17 traction engines, of which most were to their own design. Some were sold, others hired out for threshing work, but for those children who attended the Baptist Church in Clay Street it was the Sunday School treat which was the greatest day of the year.

For they would enjoy a five-mile trip around the village in a wagon pulled by a Fyson engine owned by the Superintendent, Richard Fyson himself. At the end of the trip there would be a special feast in a barn opposite the Recreation Ground gates when the water from the engine boiler would be used to supply the hot water for making the tea.

The majority of Fyson's traction engines were scrapped in the early 1950s when more modern farming methods were introduced and it's thought that none of the engines now survive - unless you know better.

Contact the Soham Community History Museum at PO Box 21, The Pavilion, Soham, CB7 5PL or see its website www.soham.org.uk

Memories 9th April 2003, by Mike Petty

Mitcham's Corner is one of the most famous names in Cambridge – but where exactly is it, and why is it so called.

Andrew Brett has lived in Cambridge all his life, as has his family before him, but, he told me: “Recently, I visited my old home neighbourhood of West Chesterton and posed the question to (often quite startled) passers-by: ‘Where is Mitcham's Corner?’ The answers I received were: ‘It's the roundabout!’; ‘The Portland Arms is on Mitcham's Corner!’; ‘It was over there - a shop where Staples is now!’ Only two people out of the twenty I asked gave me the answer I was looking for”

Andrew's researches show that in 1909 Charles Mitcham established a draper's shop at the corner of Victoria Avenue and Chesterton Road on land which was previously his father's garden and butcher's shop. The new business was highly successful, and other premises in Victoria Avenue, including a cigarette shop & a hairdressers became part of Charles Mitcham's empire with a men's wear department established on the other side of the Avenue. By the end of the 1920s, a large sign proclaiming 'Mitcham's Corner' had been erected above the shop, and Andrew has tracked down an early photograph announcing their Summer sale bargains.

Charles Mitcham sold his business to Dupont Brothers of London in 1944, but the shop continued to trade as Mitcham's. It attracted customers from far and wide, especially at Christmas time, as the *News* for November 1947 reported: “Cambridge is well used to welcoming Very Important Persons but none is so sure of a vociferous reception from the youngsters as Father Christmas. He was received with traditional acclaim on Saturday when, in the presence of hundreds of youngsters, he arrived at Mitcham's Corner, Chesterton Road. On arrival he proceeded to deliver the goods in the traditional way, leaving his ‘reindeer coach’, climbing up a ladder outside the shop and disappearing down a big chimney. A crowd of children saw him in Nurseryland, surrounded by his friends, the Three Little Pigs, Big Bad Wolf, Pluto, Micky and Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck and others. He will remain in residence until Christmas Eve”

Nor was it just the children who were rewarded by special events. In January 1948 austerity Cambridge was treated to a special fashion show: “An unusual kind of mannequin parade for a fashion house was staged by Mitcham's last night when they held their annual social in the Oak Room of the Dorothy Cafe, Cambridge. The hushed, expectant, awe-struck atmosphere of the genuine fashion parade was replaced by hilarious mirth as male members of the staff, suitably made up, and looking the last word in grace and charm ‘modelled’ the very latest styles for the junior miss, schoolgirl, young matron and matron. Even

lingerie was shown in the form of a glamorous housecoat. A delightful demonstration of the Rumba was given by Miss Valerie Redfern who departed from the sublime to the ridiculous to give a demonstration reminiscent of a well-known music hall act, of an Egyptian Sand Dance”

The shop celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1959 and was thriving in 1963, as Erica Dimock reported: “Originally a little draper’s shop specialising in fabrics, it has increased its scope of business to include carpets, china and hardware, and its particularly popular for its expert loose covering of three-piece suites” – at a price of £2.11s.6d for an easy chair

In the autumn of 1977 the shop was taken over by London Scottish, a Manchester-based Insurance and Investment group but a few months later the staff were devastated to learn that it was to close. The buyer, Mrs Janet Plumb who started work there in 1946 was shocked; “Not very much has changed over the years. Mitcham’s has stayed very much the same. It will be a pity to see the shop go. I am sure the people who miss it most will be the customers”. The assistant manager, Miss Ruby Holland, who’d been with the store for nearly 30 years said: “This is a very happy shop, offering a large range of goods with a personal service that is difficult to find these days”, while Manager Stuart Hamilton summed it up: “It was a unique sort of store; we know the customers and we know what they want and even who some are. One little lady comes in every day for wool, and even shows us what she makes. It is very sad to see it all go”

When people heard the news they could hardly believe it. Mrs Page of Kimberley Road told the ‘News’: “There was nothing in town like Mitcham’s, that sells anything any good”. Andrew Brett recalls: “My grandmother, Grace Hinchcliffe, was born in Corona Road in 1910. She always spoke fondly of Mitcham’s and her eldest daughter, Christine, worked there for some time after leaving school. Grace’s cousin, Muriel Wiles, lived in Springfield Terrace for over sixty years. Shortly before her death in 1987, Muriel gave me an armchair which had been in my family for years. The original cushions had long since perished and Muriel had replaced them - covering the new ones with material bought from Mitcham’s in the 1950s. ‘They sold lovely material - made to last!’ she told me at the time. The material endures to this day!”

Now the shop has gone and the premises are occupied by the Two Seasons sports shop. And, Andrew says, a brief inspection indicates that the entrance doors and some patterned glass window panels probably date back to the Mitcham’s era.

But the name remains for during the Great War a revolution occurred outside Mr Mitcham’s shop. Each morning, to the amusement of residents, a wooden structure with posts was dumped in the road at the junction of Chesterton Road and Victoria Avenue; each evening it was removed. The traffic island had arrived. As more and more motorists used the junction so it became busier. In 1932 came what was known at the time as the ‘Milton Road merry-go-round’, soon becoming known as Mitcham’s roundabout. The new experiment in traffic control worked well and another roundabout was opened at the other end of Victoria Avenue, Four Lamps.

From being a name synonymous with fashion “Mitcham’s” became associated with traffic jams and a nightmare for learner drivers. Year after year more and more traffic descended on the corner. In 1962 planners introduced a new experiment, sending traffic along Milton Road and down Chesterton Hall Crescent to Chesterton Road. This led to protests and was soon dropped. Five years later they came up with a major redesign which saw the widening of Croft Holme Lane (from Chesterton Road to Victoria Road) and a new road leaving a terrace of houses encircled by traffic.

By now “Mitcham’s” had become associated with a major traffic junction rather than a draper’s shop, as Andrew has discovered. But he suggests: “2009 will mark the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Mitcham's shop. Whilst the name lives on, it does seem a little sad that it is now only applied to the one-way system. Perhaps the local Council might consider putting up a commemorative plaque near the shop to remind us that Mitcham's Corner and what some refer to as 'Cambridge's answer to Spaghetti Junction' were not always one and the same thing?” [SCANS AND PIX FROM LIBRARY]

##

Can anybody help Joan Law from Hereford. She recently spent a week in Milton trying to find anybody who knew where Botany House, Cambridge Road, Milton is or was. Her husband, Estyn Law was born there in July 1939 but the family only stayed for a short time. Despite asking almost everybody she met, nobody could help her. Do you have any clues please? [SCAN]

##

Jo Edkins has had a query through the Cambridge Online City website (www.colc.co.uk) about the whereabouts of former Cambridge Gas Company W.W.1 War memorial in Newmarket Road. He’s heard about this somewhere but can't remember where. Do you know anything about it? If so contact Jo at colc@cambridge.gov.uk or drop me a line

Laurie Thomas from Bar Hill contacted me to say he saw a picture of himself skipping on Parker’s Piece in the picture taken by R.H. Brindley for the Cambridge Antiquarian Society photographic survey on 26th March 1937 (News 2nd April). He was almost 16 at the time and was working at a bicycle shop. He recalls that Burleigh Street was so busy on Friday nights in those days that you could almost walk on people’s heads. Laurie also recognises the lad facing the camera as Eric Cutting. [SCAN]

Memories 16th April 2003, by Mike Petty

When people reminisce about shops it is the Mitchams, Lauries, Joshua Taylor and Eaden Lilleys that come to mind. But just 25 years ago, in April 1978, Ruth Sealy turned her attention to another, more modern phenomenon – the freezer centres

East Anglia had just come out above the average a nationwide survey with some 43.1 per cent of homes owning a freezer & Cambridge had seen a growth in the number of such specialist centres. In a rural region such as Cambridgeshire it presented a saving on frequent trips to distant shops as well as storage for gluts of home-grown vegetables, she reported.

But it was not just the freezer centres that stocked frozen food: By then most supermarkets had sections, small or large, devoted to freezer owners, with the Co-op leading the way and Tesco’s dramatically expanding its frozen food sections, whilst some butchers, such as Dewhurst’s also had large freezer centres.

Ruth set out to see what was on offer. She stuck to five specialist centres all within easy reach of the city centre (although parking facilities varied) to see what sort of selection they carry

and at what price. As a quick comparison she also took a look at the Beehive freezer food counter and at a small butcher and grocer, D. Traylen of Newmarket Road.

“Freezer centres must be among the most boring shops in existence. Everything is hidden away inside heavy-lidded freezers, hardly anything but the bulk-buy dry goods they also sell (large ‘caterers’ tins of coffee, marmalade etc) are on display. They consist of rows of clinically white boxes dominated by signs telling you where to find what and advertising ‘offers’. Some are better signed than others. At Bejam, Bridge Street, near the Round Church corner, you have to open the lids to read the majority of prices – which seemed a bit daft!” she reported

Prices were usually listed above the goods, but at Sainsbury’s, Coldham’s Lane, “I found I sometimes had to drag the packet out to find a price label and there was only a rough guide to where things are – ‘pork’ or ‘beef’ – which involves needless opening and shutting in pursuit of pork chops or rump steaks”

Peekay, in a warehouse-type store in a yard near the railway off Hills Road, had see-through lids on its freezers which seemed to make things easier. They were a private and locally-owned operation which had been going on since 1966. “I wondered if it had been hit by the emergence of so many competitors, but the manager said that as they are small they can be more flexible. Like the other centres they also sell freezers and run a 24-hour engineer service”. They had Northray peas at 69p for 5lb, 36 Birds Eye cod fish fingers at £1.68, 5lb of chicken portions for £2.21 and strawberries at 88p for 2lb.

Socold in Mill Road had half a New Zealand lamb at 52p per pound, although this was beaten by Traylen’s at 50p, with lambs’ livers at 49p and steak and kidney at 62p. Mince steak was cheap at 59p a pound, whilst ordinary mince was 49p. Bejam had peas at £1.79 for 10lb, whole baby carrots at 44p for 2lb, sweetcorn at 2lb for 57p and beef roasting joints at £1.05

The Beehive matched most of these prices with topside beef joints at £1.02, but also had Walls golden vanilla ice cream on offer at the low price of £1.03 for four litres.

Ruth also found that Sainsbury’s had half shoulder of New Zealand lamb at 49p per pound & chips at 55p for 5lb but their strawberries were expensive at 56p per pound. One section of the freezer row at Fine Fare in Fitzroy Street was devoted to bulk buying with half or a quarter pig at 51p per pound, New Zealand lamb at 56p, hindquarter beef at 79p & turkeys at 47p per pound. But Traylen’s had steak and kidney at 58p per pound and mixed vegetables at 37p for 2lb, which seemed cheaper than elsewhere. [PICS FROM LIBRARY FILES]

##

Andrew Brett writes to correct a small error in the Mitcham's Corner article; his researches show that their main menswear shop was at 9, Victoria Avenue from around 1915 - on the same side of the road as Mitcham’s other premises. A small offshoot of this opened c.1934 at 24c Chesterton Road but was only there briefly, being replaced by a cafe by 1948.

##

Alastair Gerald from Aldreth writes to share his memories of meeting royalty: “Reading about Percy’s Royal Surprise (Memories 26th March) reminded me of the surprise I had when I was a pupil at the King’s School, Ely. It would be about 1932 when I was walking down the Gallery towards the Cathedral when a car pulled up with a flag on the bonnet and the driver asked me if I could show him where the Porta Gates were. I said yes, so he said ‘hop on’ – I think they were called running boards in those days – I was thrilled riding on a royal car! We stopped in the college grounds and I suppose it was a lady-in-waiting asked me if I could find

the Dean as the Princess Royal wanted to meet him. I raced down the college to his garden, rang the bell and walked with him to where they were waiting. He turned to me and thanked me, saying 'you're an angel'. I was flabbergasted!" [SCAN OF ELY PORTA]

##

Village life was not always quiet and peaceable, as Elizabeth Luck and Mary Symonds have been demonstrating. They have been plodding through old issues of the Cambridge Chronicle between 1784 and 1912 and have come up with some most interesting snippets of parish news relating to Horningsea and Clayhithe. For example in July 1819 when a Samuel Beales was accused of assaulting a woman, giving her a black eye and kicking her. But, it was explained: the women who worked for Mr Wheeler as osier peelers had their annual frolic that day and their master was so liberal that not one 'lady' of the party was sober. They began to fight amongst themselves, pulling off caps, and pulling hair until a pitched battle ensued. Samuel's wife was one of those involved in the melee and he decided it was time for her to come home, but Alice Green set about him for breaking up the fun. He did not retaliate, but his wife did, taking advantage of her husband's intervention to black her adversary's eye. [SCAN OF HORNINGSEA]

The opening of coprolite works in the village brought additional workers in each morning, many from Waterbeach. But first they had to cross the Cam. In March 1872 the usual crowd of men was waiting to cross just before 7 o'clock in the morning. There were eight men packed on the small ferry boat when another man jumped on board and his weight caused the boat to capsize, throwing the men into the water. James Beasley, who worked as engineer for the Conservators of the River Cam saw several men floating in the river and launched his boat to rescue them. He pulled out two, but one of them had been in the water for ten minutes by then. He took the man to the stable and the doctor rubbed his chest with salt and brandy, but to no avail and the 38-year-old worker was pronounced dead.

This added to pressure for a proper bridge at Clayhithe. A meeting had been called back in October 1870 when there had been talk of petitioning Parliament for an Act to enable the construction of three bridges, one at Essex's Ferry, Chesterton, the second across Midsummer Common at Cambridge and the third at Clayhithe. But they decided to press ahead with the latter first as it was needed so badly. There had been various incidents when threshing machines or loaded farm carts got stuck while being ferried across. They got their Act, people came forward to take shares in the new Clayhithe Bridge Company, and the bridge opened on 7th October 1875, charging a toll for all who crossed. They also invested in the adjoining hotel, improving the grounds and making it one of the prettiest places in the county. A new dancing saloon was created and the field alongside made suitable for enjoyment. By 1876 Alfred Mason was choosing it as a suitable venue to give his 50 labourers a celebration feast on the occasion of his marriage. In 1938 the tolls were removed after the County Council bought the bridge; they erected a new bridge the following year. Copies of the 'Horningsea and Clayhithe Chronicle' cost £6.50 plus postage from Miss P. Symonds, 34 Station Road, Fulbourn CB1 5ES [SCAN OF ERECTING BRIDGE; SCAN OF BRIDGE HOTEL]

Other tolls were payable at various places in the county, including the Somersham Road at Chatteris, as Joan Robinson recalled in 1992: "I remember an uncle and aunt of mine used to go to Bedford quite often from Chatteris and they come to the Somersham Toll when it was 6d. It was 6d each way if you were not local and didn't live in Chatteris. The people that had the Toll, they were brother and sister Dyson, and he was very keen on his six pen'orth you know! He used to sit up and wait for uncle - the rogue - to go back in the evening, and uncle would deliberately stay as late as he could, you know, so he wouldn't have to pay anything, because half the time he used to leave the gate open. He was very keen and I remember one Sunday they came, and I went out to them and there on the running board (they had running boards, didn't they, for cars all those years ago), and there on the running board was the 6d

and they must have passed it out of the window and Dyson missed it, and it had dropped on the running board - so he didn't get that one!" More of Joan's recollections are included in "We're the characters now": an oral history of Chatteris which can be borrowed from libraries. [SCAN OF CHATTERIS TOLL GATE 1926; SCAN OF TOLL BEING PAID AT BURWELL TOLL GATE 1905]

There are pictures of the payment of tolls at a tollgate at Burwell but do you remember paying tolls to travel in days gone by – and there any tolls on roads or rivers near Cambridgeshire?

Memories 23rd April 2003, by Mike Petty

More and more people it seems are looking to forsake the bustle of the town for the tranquillity of the countryside. Television programmes seek out quaint country cottages for stressed city dwellers anxious to experience the quiet life for themselves – a world where things are like it used to be. But even though cottages may not have changed from the outside the way of life lived in them has. Homes where large families were common now accommodate just one or two people.

And village life was not always quiet and peaceable, as Elizabeth Luck and Mary Symonds have been demonstrating. They have been plodding through old issues of the Cambridge Chronicle between 1784 and 1912 and have come up with some most interesting snippets of parish news relating to Horningsea and Clayhithe. For example in July 1819 when a Samuel Beales was accused of assaulting a woman, giving her a black eye and kicking her. But, it was explained: the women who worked for Mr Wheeler as osier peelers had their annual frolic that day and their master was so liberal that not one 'lady' of the party was sober. They began to fight amongst themselves, pulling off caps, and pulling hair until a pitched battle ensued. Samuel's wife was one of those involved in the melee and he decided it was time for her to come home, but Alice Green set about him for breaking up the fun. He did not retaliate, but his wife did, taking advantage of her husband's intervention to black her adversary's eye. [SCAN OF HORNINGSEA INCLUDING COTTAGE WITH LARGE FAMILY OUTSIDE – THE HOUSE LARGELY UNCHANGED TODAY].

The opening of a major industry in the form of coprolite works transformed the community and brought dozens of additional workers in each morning, many from Waterbeach. But first they had to cross the Cam. In March 1872 the usual crowd of men was waiting to cross just before 7 o'clock in the morning. There were eight men packed on the small ferry boat when another man jumped on board and his weight caused the boat to capsize, throwing the men into the water. James Beasley, who worked as engineer for the Conservators of the River Cam saw several men floating in the river and launched his boat to rescue them. He pulled out two, but one of them had been in the water for ten minutes by then. He took the man to the stable and the doctor rubbed his chest with salt and brandy, but to no avail and the 38-year-old worker was pronounced dead.

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bought the bridge; they erected a new bridge the following year. Copies of the 'Horningsea and Clayhithe Chronicle' cost £6.50 plus postage from Miss P. Symonds, 34 Station Road, Fulbourn CB1 5ES [SCAN OF ERECTING BRIDGE; SCAN OF BRIDGE HOTEL]

Elsewhere some ferries have been replaced by bridges, as at Twentypence on the road between Wilburton and Cottenham, whilst others, as at Overcote have disappeared and modern travellers now face long journeys as a result, costing far more than the few pence charged by the ferryman. [TWENTYPENCE FERRY AND BRIDGE, OVERCOTE FERRY]

Other tolls were payable at various places in the county, including the Somersham Road at Chatteris, as Joan Robinson recalled in 1992: "I remember an uncle and aunt of mine used to go to Bedford quite often from Chatteris and they come to the Somersham Toll when it was 6d. It was 6d each way if you were not local and didn't live in Chatteris. The people that had the Toll, they were brother and sister Dyson, and he was very keen on his six pen'orth you know! He used to sit up and wait for uncle - the rogue - to go back in the evening, and uncle would deliberately stay as late as he could, you know, so he wouldn't have to pay anything, because half the time he used to leave the gate open. He was very keen and I remember one Sunday they came, and I went out to them and there on the running board (they had running boards, didn't they, for cars all those years ago), and there on the running board was the 6d and they must have passed it out of the window and Dyson missed it, and it had dropped on the running board - so he didn't get that one!" More of Joan's recollections are included in "We're the characters now": an oral history of Chatteris which can be borrowed from libraries. [SCAN OF CHATTERIS TOLL GATE 1926; SCAN OF TOLL BEING PAID AT BURWELL TOLL GATE 1905]

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From around the world readers have been responding to 'Memories' articles

June & Tony Wilson have e-mailed from Canada, having just received a copies of Memories for 19th February sent by their friend Joan Berry who lives in Gwydir Street, Cambridge. June was born at the Gwydir Arms where her grandmother, Amelia Newman, was the landlady, back in 1931. She lived there with her parents, Cecil and Dorothy Brown for about three years. In 1950 June was working as a telephonist at the Post Office in St Andrew's Street which is where she met her husband, Tony, an engineer. They married and moved into two rooms in York Street but had to find larger premises when their daughter Lesley came along and moved back to Gwydir Street. Then five years later it was off to Canada.

All that is fresh in their memory; but what they can't remember is what was showing at the Regal Cinema on the night of their first 'date' on Friday 10th March 1950. I have checked the back issues of the News to see what was on. It was 'Your Witness' starring Robert Montgomery, Patricia Wayne & Leslie Banks with 'The Man in Black' with Betty Ann Davies, Sidney James and Hazel Penwarden as the supporting film [SCAN OF ADVERT]

##

The Memories article for 19th March has found its way out to Nita Elsley in South Australia; she writes: The article 'Picturing life in the fens' fascinated me, as I lived in Cambridge until I came to Australia in 1951. I worked at the Co-op in Mill Road and remember old Bowie Odell who used to sweep out chimneys, he was brother to the Odell who used to sell veggies". Nita has asked about copies of my 'Memory Lane, Cambridge' book, which are now getting hard to find - but of course the new one 'Vanishing Cambridgeshire' is available from the News as well as bookshops

##

Angeline van Sambeek lives in Holland; her husband is Dennis Clifford Mayes whose family speak about a tapestry made around 1935 for King George V that was designed by his uncle Clifford Barber. The family has no documentation about the tapestry but have been told that I featured it some years ago. The Cambridge Tapestry Company built up a great reputation for the quality of their repair work to valuable old tapestries and for the production of “period” panels from premises Cambridge Quayside. They employed some 80 girls working in the tapestry section, while another 80 did needlepoint. Tapestries used to be brought in from around the world to be repaired, having been cut about where they had been fixed on walls. Some needed great research to piece them together again. In 1934 Lord Fairhaven commissioned a completely modern design for Anglesey Abbey, near Lode. It was to depict the Abbey as seen from the air, with a view of the surrounding countryside, including the Jockey Club at Newmarket, St Ives, Ely & the Cambridge University Library. Various visitors used to tour the works including Queen Mary who arrived in 1934 and commented on the beauty of the Fairhaven tapestry. Next year personal friends of King George V and Queen Mary commissioned the firm to design and weave a tapestry of Windsor Castle for presentation to Their Majesties as a Jubilee gift. Although the King did not live to see the completed panel, the preliminary drawings were submitted to him and he commanded it should hang in the Guard’s Chamber at the Castle. Queen Mary visited again in 1936 to see the work in progress, and to count every window in the tapestry to make sure they were all in place. The Cambridge Tapestry Works closed in 1941. There is a snap showing the Windsor tapestry with the artist – who might be Angeline’s long-forgotten relation [SCAN]

Memories 30th April 2003, by Mike Petty

Tomorrow is May Day, but will you be celebrating or is this just one more tradition that has been lost.

The obituaries for May Day customs have been written many times over the years; as the News lamented in May 1897: “May Day is the name of a holiday that calls up all sorts of pretty rustic associations. In Cambridge the first day of the merry month is a most unromantic reality. A few small children straggle about the streets with more or less pretentious garlands and a Jack-in-the-Green may occasionally be caught sight of, but beyond this May Day in Cambridge is a memory of the past”.

But at a recent meeting at Cambridge Motor Boat Club people were recalling May Day celebrations at Stapleford and ‘Memories’ correspondents have reminisced about how schools used to choose a May Queen and her attendants or dance around the Maypole. [SCANS OF MAY QUEENS AT MELBOURN PLACE SCHOOL 1942 AND MILTON ROAD SCHOOL 1952]

However other celebrations do seem to have disappeared. At Rampton in 1988 they kept alive the tradition of May Day collecting when girls in long dresses and wearing flower garlands followed their May Queen in the May Ladies procession. It was thought to be the only survivor of the ancient customs that once flourished in Cambridgeshire.

The traditional plant associated with May Day was hawthorn, with its May blossom. In 1910 at Over young men gathered bunches of May and pushed them through the open windows of village girls, reciting:

Arise, arise my pretty fair maid
And take your May branch in
For in the morn it may be gone
And you will say I brought you none

At Great Gransden lads would get up early and leave a hawthorn branch at the door of their favourite lass returning the following evening to the houses where they had left the branches. One of them, called the May Lord, wore a shirt decorated with ribbon over his ordinary clothes, another was dressed in girls' clothes and was known as the May Lady, while the rest also wore ribbons in their hats. They sang a May song and collected money for a feast. In Waterbeach the young men left other plants; a branch of blackthorn, a branch of elder or a bunch of nettles signified their displeasure of loose women or nags whilst the favoured few found a branch of whitethorn planted by their cottage door.

At Stetchworth in the 1920s an old elm tree at the junction of Church Lane and Main Street was decorated on May Day and formed the centre for May games and festivities.

May 1st was a day associated with sweeps, the day when the boys who had to climb inside chimneys to clean them out had a holiday. At Whittlesford part of the Mayday celebrations was the reciting of a rhyme which started

First and second and third of May
Are chimney sweeps' dancing days

Until the start of the 1900s chimney sweeps wearing top hats took an important part in the May Day festivities. At Melbourn a procession of dancers was led by 'Jack in the Green', the local sweep, who walked through the village in a framework of tree boughs, with bells on his legs.

But one of the county's most popular traditions was May Dolling, which continued in some villages until the late 1930s. Village girls dressed up their best dolls and covered them with cloth. They asked villagers if they would like to see the May Ladies and the dolls would be uncovered for a small gift of money or sweets. Mabel Demaine recalled how at Haddenham "On May 1st the girls went Mayladying, carrying dolls; they knocked on the doors and greeted everyone with 'Please can you spare a copper for a Maylady'. My mother would not allow me to go Mayladying. She said it was only a form of begging, but how I envied the other girls who were able to take part, especially when they told me of their financial results. This collecting was supposed to end at midday and so the little girls often stayed away from school in the morning, going from door to door". Its thought that this was last carried out at Swaffham Prior about 1960, though by then the collecting of money had been forbidden.

Other villages had a more elaborate ceremony. At Toft an old lady recalled how two hoops were bent over and a doll placed inside. The cage and doll were covered with a white cloth. A rope was stretched over the road from one tree to another and the hoops suspended on it. Then on May morning girls gathered at the spot and as anyone passed the rope was lowered and a request made for money for showing the doll.

The double hoops were also used at Whittlesford, but there they were garlanded with flowers and carried around the village by girls aged up to 12 or 13 years old. At Hildersham about 1918, it was reported that the doll was formed from 'Mrs Jordan's wire skirt frame covered and dressed as a doll with Miss Goodwin's ribbons'.

Half a century earlier a writer described other celebrations in the villages around Huntingdon: "The May garland is composed of tulips, anemones, cowslips, kingcups, lilacs, laburnum, meadow-orchids, wallflowers, primroses and as many roses as possible. These are made into a huge pyramidal garland from the front of which a gaily-dressed doll called Madame Flora stares vacantly. From the base hang ribbons, silk handkerchiefs and other gay fabric. [SCAN OF DOLL IN A HOOP AT CAMBRIDGE 1904]

"On May Day morning the May Queen is chosen by her schoolfellows. She wears a white frock, gloves and veil, with a crown of flowers. The garland is carried by two maids of

honour and with other male and female attendants she tours the village and before some of the houses the company sing and collect money to pay for the Coronation Banquet, usually held in the schoolroom.

“After this a rope is drawn from chimney to chimney or tree to tree and the garland suspended from the rope. The children throw balls backwards and forwards over the rope. Games and sport are played and are concluded with a dance to flute or violin”

On May Day 1976 the centre of Cambridge was filled with the biggest celebration for years when 300 schoolchildren joined in a traditional gathering around maypoles on Parker’s Piece and other localities. They were accompanied by Morris dancers from Cambridge, Thaxted and Wicken, sword dancers, folk dancers and dance bands. Jack-in-the-green was there, together with Lord Sweep in full morning dress, and his ‘wife’ “Lady Sweep”, together with their ragged “children”, banging noisily on dustbin lids. The dolls in their hoops were there, together with a Morris fertility cake baked by seven maidens. And whilst all this was going on a University degree procession of graduates in full academic dress was escorted by police through a maypole dance in Petty Cury.

At Burrough Green it was said that the statutes a boy and girl on the old school came to life and danced on the village green. Their footsteps were sometimes spotted in the dew. But not everybody was merry on May Day morning, for in the fens it was believed that if you went out too early you would see the ghosts of all those who had been drowned that year in the fen dykes.

The News photographers have been out and about over the years to record the celebrations – do you see anybody you recognise

I HAVE SELECTED PICTURES WHICH ARE IN A PLASTIC BAG IN THE ‘MAY DAY’ PHOTO FILE IN THE NEWS LIBRARY.
THEY SHOW TRACEY WING, BRUNSWICK SCHOOL MAY QUEEN, 1980;
OAKINGTON MAY QUEEN AND ATTENDANTS ON A TRAILER, 1986,
GEORGINA HARPER, EATON SOCON MAY QUEEN – CHECK DATE
THE MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS ON PARKERS PIECE 1976

##

Mrs Una Grainger, (nee Beeton) has written from Lt Wilbraham following Roy Sharp’s memories of the Caravan Mission to Village Children. She remembers Mr & Mrs Varney who ran the Mission & has a photograph of many of the village children that attended. Most have now passed away but she can name virtually all of them, including Ron Frost, Bill Frankin, Ethel Middleditch & Eileen, June, Joy and Brenda Dawson. Una is behind the ‘N’ of the Mission banner but she can’t recall the name of the lad just in front of her [SCAN OF MISSION PIC]

Did you respond to a request in the News for people who had spent their childhood in an orphanage or workhouse to share their memories with a lady in Lancashire who was compiling a book. If so you may be interested to hear that ‘Silent Tears’ is now available from the author, Mrs J.M. Shanksy of 27 Birch Avenue, Penwortham, Preston, Lancs, PR1 0PB for £7.50 including postage.

Memories, 7th May 2003, by Mike Petty

Last week’s photos in the ‘News’ of pickpockets in action is not the first time law-breakers have found themselves caught by the camera

Ralph Warboys from Oakington was snapped law-breaking by the Cambridge Independent Press back in September 1934, but any hope that his misdemeanour might be by now forgotten was dispelled when he was perusing the 'Cambridgeshire Explorer' CD-Rom of the 1904 Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire and found the picture included amongst the 1600-odd others. But Ralph is not ashamed of what he did, as he explains:

"Mains water did not come to Oakington until 1938 and not every house was connected to the mains until after the War. At our end of the village a ground water supply was not available, as the subsoil is clay for a great depth. Two pumps, one at Croft Lane and another at the junction of High Street and Water Lane were supplied with water from a well on Manor Farm.

"When I lived at 71 Longstanton Road water would be fetched from the Croft Lane pump for drinking purposes, my father cycling to the pump with a pail on each handlebar of his bicycle. We used rainwater collected in tanks for normal washing purposes or to supply livestock. But when this was exhausted my brother or I would be sent to the pump with a water barrow and would fill it with water from the pump, my father cycling down 10 minutes or so later to pull it back as we were not strong enough.

"It will be noticed that this pump has two spouts. By turning off the tap on the bottom spout, water would come out of the top spout and by means of a suitable trough, could fill a farm water cart. A trick we boys would play on unsuspecting town cousins would be to turn off the tap on the bottom spout and get them to look up the spout while we pumped with the handle and they would suddenly be deluged with water coming out of the top spout!

"In 1934 a drought caused other water supplies to run short and the Parish Council, fearing their would not be enough for human needs, put a notice on the pump stating it was to be used for domestic purposes only. But my father could not stand by and see his livestock to suffer and continued to use the water. This attracted the attention of other residents, and the matter got into the press with a letter written – supposedly by the pump itself."

Part of this read: 'My nearby neighbour is a humble thatched cottage, occupied by a peaceful, thrifty couple, the smallest of our hard-working smallholders. A passing cloud has darkened the lintel of their doorway, for behold, a jealous vigilant eye detected this small man in the act of drawing a pail of water to mitigate the cry of his thirsty pig while his neighbours, the large holders, allowed their swine and cattle to fare sumptuously every day. The might and majesty of the law was invoked and the mobilisation of the County Police Force threatened'.

But no police came and Ralph's father continued to keep his animals alive, as did fellow villager, Len Missen, now in his nineties who is seen filling his water barrow, with Ralph waiting his turn in the foreground [SCAN OF OAKINGTON PUM SHOWING RALPH WARBOYS (FOREGROUND) & LEN MISSON; SCAN OF NEWSPAPER ARTICLE FROM SEPTEMBER 1934]

##

Mitcham's Corner is in the news once more following the proposals for major resurfacing which will close the busy junction for some time at the end of May.

Don Unwin from Cambridge remembers the original layout; he writes:

"As I lived in Magrath Avenue I went to Milton Road School and I well remember the Island being built complete with the under-ground public lavatories. In those days the low volume of traffic enabled a visit to be made without loss of life! On the corner of Chesterton Road and Victoria Road was a water stand pipe and I used to watch the horse drawn water carts

filling up in readiness for sprinkling the road to lay the dust. Also recalled (just) was the police station on the corner of Milton Road and Chesterton Road later replaced by a police box. Was it later replaced by one of those blue police call boxes with a flashing lamp on top like the one that used to stand in Sidney Street?”, Don asks. The police station which stood at the end of the terrace of houses was demolished in January 1930; it and its replacement are shown in photographs taken by Ted Mott. [SCAN OF MITCHAMS CORNER POLICE STATION AND THE POLICE BOX THAT REPLACED IT IN 1930; SCAN OF A POLICE CALL BOX IN SIDNEY STREET, 1973]

Don continues: “My Mum who did a lot of dressmaking used to shop frequently at Mitcham's for all sorts of materials and haberdashery. After I married my wife also used to patronise the shop for the same sort of things. During the 1960s I was building a long case clock with a music train to play a tune at each hour. For this I needed a particular type of domestic pin so I went along to Mitcham's armed with a micrometer and a magnet. The lady assistant seemed a little surprised when I asked to test the pins to see if they were magnetic, as it was essential that I had steel not brass pins. Having picked out the steel ones they were measured with the micrometer as I needed those close to 0.03" in diameter. The assistant was very patient, helpful, interested to know what I wanted them for and found me a box of 200”.

##

John Scruby from Milton has been hard at work tracking down ‘Botany House’, following Mrs Law’s request for help in locating the home in Milton where her husband was evacuated. After talking to various long-term residents he has tracked it down to no.71 Cambridge Road and even sent her some modern snaps.

If you have other queries about Cambridgeshire’s past then do write in – there’s an awful lot of people in the region who have a tremendous amount of knowledge they’re happy to share.

##

Mrs Ann Campbell from Cambridge is interested in any pictures of St Paul’s School in Coronation Street, Cambridge before it was turned into flats. I have one taken in November 1975, do you have others? [SCAN OF ST PAULS SCHOOL]

##

Clifford Savidge from Cambridge was interested to see the views of the Twentypence Ferry and bridge in ‘Memories’ of 23rd April; he recognised them immediately for he was born in the little cottage on the riverbank. His grandfather had the pub built and used to ferry people across. Both are now just memories. He can also update me on the Gas Company War Memorial which has just been replaced on the site at the entrance to the new Tesco’s. Jo Maddison from Bar Hill has sent me a photograph of the memorial in its original situation outside the Gas Works where he worked. [SCAN OF MR MADDISON’S PHOTO OF GAS WORKS WAR MEMORIAL]

##

Last week’s Memories of May Day have brought an instant response from Helen Coppen of Burrough Green who tells me that the tradition continues at their school with flowers, dancing, crowning the May Queen and a number of May characters including the green man, the chimney sweep, a whistler to sweep away the winter spirit and a jester. It ends with a procession around the village by the children giving out flowers.

Mrs Hazel Howe from Fulbourn saw her sister, Peggy Tabor, amongst the children at the Central Girls' School, Melbourn Place in 1942. Peggy was the Daffodil Queen and was dressed in yellow and green with a crown made of cowslips. "Being a little younger than my sister and as this was quite a special day for our family, I was allowed to go along with my parents and watch. The maypole dance still sticks in my memory", she adds. But, she wonders, where did they find the material for make such pretty dresses during the dark days of the Second World War

Finding material for costumes is one thing, making them is something else. And when you have costumes, a script, actors and a stage then you have a performance. And what a performance it can be to put it all together. In 1951 some ex-pupils of the Cambridgeshire High School for Boys, now the Hills Road College, formed an all-male revue group called the Pied Pipers. Their first productions were entitled 'Over the Hills' and 'The Gogs Go Gay' – which you could say in those days. But then they moved on to more elaborate productions in grander venues such as the ADC Theatre and the Arts. They acquired a name – the Pied Pipers Musical Theatre Club – and have been entertaining audiences ever since. Now Rex Freeman, who has been involved with the group since its formation, has produced a history which includes not only every performance, but names every performer, be it in front of house, in the orchestra, or backstage. So if you were a juggler in Carousel in 1982, Marley's Ghost in the 1966 production of A Christmas Carol, set designer for Sweeney Todd or a bit player in Barnum then you're in the book. And if you'd rather people did not know then you'd best get down to David's Bookshop in St Edward's Passage and buy-up the entire print run at £5 a copy, or contact Rex freeman on Cambridge 504821 [SCAN OF PART OF ALPHABETICAL LIST OF CAST AND CREW, SCAN OF PERFORMANCES]

Memories, 14th May 2003, by Mike Petty

Jane Becker has e-mailed me from Toronto, Canada. She writes: "I was very interested to read your article from the end of February about Mill Road Maternity Hospital, Cambridge. I have lived in Toronto for the past thirty years but grew up in Willingham. I understand that the Maternity Hospital opened in December 1948 or January 1949. I was born there on 3rd January 1949 and am wondering whether I may have been the first to be born there!"

It seems not.

The hospital was built in 1838 as a workhouse, an institution for the aged, the poor and the homeless and was administered by the Guardians of the Poor of the Cambridge Union. They had the job of undertaking a massive reform of the poor law system, amalgamating various parish workhouses into one new Union. It was a process that evoked much hostility and many protests before Mill Road Union opened with 250 places for 'prostitutes, spinning girls, vulgar youths, unruly vagabonds and rogues'.

Between 1838 and 1906 it evolved into an institution which places less emphasis on correction and custody and more on rehabilitation and care. By the turn of the century it was known as the Poor Law Infirmary with a largely elderly population who were both sick and destitute.

In 1906 a Voluntary Association for Maternity and Child Welfare was set up with a milk kitchen in Newmarket Road and a few destitute mothers who had given birth were cared for among the geriatrics at the Mill Road Workhouse, as it had then become known. This was its first connection with maternity services of any kind. It continued as a Poor Law Infirmary and Workhouse until 1930 when responsibility passed to the County Council and it became the County Municipal Infirmary.

It catered for the infirm, the able-bodied but homeless and had a nursery for children up to the age of five. Some huts at the back were for the tuberculosis patients, with a handful of beds for mothers in childbirth 'needful of confinement'.

The Public Health Act of 1936 firmly consolidated Mill Road in its hospital role and all workhouse activities ceased; the county council decided to develop the maternity side and established 20 beds for this purpose. Within three years the number of births had rocketed from 93 to 300. But not all the babies left to go home with their mothers, as one nurse recalled: "All the girls that had 'done wrong; had babies out of marriage, had to have the baby on ward 7 which was then adopted and then they were found a job in service. So you never saw your baby. The mothers were put in ladies' houses as maids. After having the baby they'd work in the laundry or the kitchen or on the wards until they were found a place in service". And not all the babies survived: "Years ago if you had a still born baby there were no funerals for them, so it was put in a bag and the carpenter from the hospital would make a box and it was put on the wall between the hospital and the cemetery. If there was a funeral that day they'd notify them and the box was put in with whoever was being buried that day".

Progress as a maternity hospital was interrupted in 1939 by the coming of war and it was transformed into an 'A1 Hospital' under the government's Emergency Medical Scheme. All the patients were moved out to other hospitals to make way for the expected influx of wounded, bombing casualties and patients from East Coast hospitals who would be in danger from coastal invasion. At this time a 'temporary' theatre and X-ray block was set up in two wooden huts.

Some of the first war-wounded were soldiers from the Dunkirk beaches, still clutching rifles and ammunition belts, but then came a steady stream of casualties from the fighter and bomber bases. Civilians, including expectant mothers, were still catered for, but spent their month before delivery in hastily improved accommodation at Cheshunt College in Bateman Street. In 1944 births at the hospital topped 1,000 for the first time.

When the war ended the county council decided to turn the hospital into a maternity unit only, with all the specialist facilities such as premature baby unit, midwives and support staff. Plans were drawn up in 1946 for 150 beds but were shelved, as the 1948 National Health Service appeared imminent. When this did not have the feared upheaval the county council went ahead with their plans until on July 5th, 1948 it became officially known as 'The Maternity Hospital, Mill Road'

When Jane was born there it had 91 beds and a premature baby unit of six cots. But it still had a 24-bed female geriatric ward attached and it was not until 1965 that the geriatric patients were transferred to Chesterton Hospital. In 1961 the hospital's board of governors succeeded in getting the Ministry of Health to agree to a proposal to resite the Maternity Hospital, which was by now overcrowded, to the New Addenbrooke's Hospital. But delay succeeded delay.

Conditions in the hospital were difficult for mothers and midwives as the 1960s moved into the 1970, as the News reported:

An expectant mother entered Mill Road in one of two ways: through an archway of plastic urine bottles or under a boiler-house chimney stack. The urine-bottle archway lead her into the ante-natal clinic which she might have to attend many times before being admitted to actually have her baby. In the ante-natal clinic she would jostle for space with dozens of other mothers and give her personal details within earshot of whoever happened to be next to her. She might have to squeeze past other patients in the narrow corridors to take her urine sample to the little window. The corridors were bad enough for people of normal size to pass each other, but pregnancy made it almost impossible.

In the examination room she would be reluctant to answer the consultant's questions except in a whisper because her replies could be heard in the cubicle next door – separated only by a curtain. The atmosphere could be stifling, because apart from her there might be the consultant, a nurse and several trainee doctors crammed into the room. In the changing cubicles she had to stand facing one way because her enlarged size did not allow her to turn around in the space available. To be weighed she had to stand in the corner along with all the others by the nurses' office and try to keep out of the way of people moving to and fro.

It snowed-in s on patients in the X-ray department and the operating theatre had to be creosoted – it was still the wooden war-time shed. There was only one lavatory for a dozen pregnant women on the ward, one bath alongside the bed-pan sluices. Lucky mothers might get a bed in one of the pink and peeling wards that had been condemned as below standard a decade before, perhaps just three feet from a bed with an abortion patient in it, no-one could be choosy.

But the hospital had the most modern equipment, it enjoyed the lowest peri-natal mortality rate in the country and attracted patients from all over East Anglia. In 1979 they delivered nearly 4,000 babies, many of whom would never have made it elsewhere – about twice as many as hospitals elsewhere.

In 1980 conditions at the hospital were debated in the House of Commons and it was announced that rebuilding would start within the decade, and with luck be completed by 1991. The prospect of another ten years of such primitive conditions were horrendous and a benefactor, David Robinson intervened to offer finance to allow a new hospital, the Rosie to be established by 1983. Mill Road Maternity hospital closed its doors and was refurbished as Ditchburn Place, a model sheltered housing scheme with facilities far removed from workhouse dormitories or labour wards.

Do you have memories of Mill Road Hospital; write to Mike Petty

Memories 21st May 2003, by Mike Petty

Think of the Old Vicarage, Grantchester and two names come immediately to mind. One of that of a millionaire author, currently residing elsewhere; the other is that of a poet who, although commemorated on the village war memorial, was never more than a lodger and whose final resting place is far away.

But there is a third name, one who has left a more permanent reminder of his time at the house, but who has been largely forgotten. Now Samuel Page Widnall has been brought back into the spotlight through the publication of a new book by another Grantchester resident, Lady Christine Jennings.

Long before Grantchester's Orchard had honey for tea the village was famous to horticulturists; for it was here that Samuel's father, also Samuel, had established a nursery specialising in dahlias. By 1830 he could offer over 160 varieties of double dahlias, which he claimed were 'not surpassed by any other collection in the kingdom' and his friendship with the curator of the University Botanic Garden ensured samples of the newest discoveries could be shared.

As the business expanded, with more and more greenhouses, so his fame increased and more and more visitors flocked to Grantchester. As he became more prosperous Samuel senior found outlets for his generosity, giving an annual treat for village schoolchildren, with tea and plum cake, bread and butter, consumed in a pasture opposite his nursery – the present Orchard Tea Garden.

Samuel Page Widnall grew up in Grantchester; he got to know its buildings, the cottages, the church and the Vicarage which was too small, damp and inconvenient for somebody as important as the Vicar who, like others before preferred to live elsewhere. So the church built a New Vicarage and Samuel took the old one off their hands and turned it into a family home for himself and his new bride. He repaired and improved the building, developed the gardens and built a 'Castle' – or at least a ruin of one, made of clay bricks, with carved heads and a crenellated tower. [SCAN OF NEWS PICTURE OF THE FOLLY TAKEN IN MAY 1965]

Christine Jennings charts the story of life and times in the Old Vicarage as Widnall decided, like others after him, to turn his hand to writing. He wrote 'The Miller's Daughter', seeking inspiration from the mill just along the river. He had no problem finding a publisher, for he printed and illustrated it himself. Subsequently he produced an African adventure novel, illustrated with impressions of flying dragons.

But Widnall also turned his attention to the area around his home; he wrote and published his reminiscences of Trumpington, a gossiping stroll around Cambridge and a History of Grantchester itself. For this he needed no imaginary images as he had actual photographs that he had taken himself, which he printed and stuck into each copy of the book. [SCAN OF WIDNALL PICTURE OF GRANTCHESTER CHURCH]

Samuel Page Widnall was one of the county's pioneer amateur photographers, rejoicing in its paraphernalia of camera, lens, tripod, and chemicals for fixing and varnishing the glass plates. He needed a studio to process his negatives and his ruined castle folly proved ideal.

Throughout the 1850s and 1860s Samuel snapped his family and friends, took his camera on holiday to Wales, wandered out to Haslingfield and into Grantchester, producing some of the earliest photographs of any Cambridgeshire village. But much of what he photographed remains unknown; a gothic folly beside a river is subject to damp and to flooding and while Widnall knew the significance of each glass negative to others they were just so much junk.

After his death the old Vicarage once more drifted into decay. In 1908 it was let furnished to a couple who took a lodger, Rupert Brooke. He found it "a deserted, lonely, dank, ruined, overgrown, gloomy, lovely house ... it is a fit place to write my kind of poetry in". Hidden under a shroud of ivy in the garden was a decaying, romantic folly.

After the Great War the Vicarage was put up for sale and the 'Ruined Castle' was indeed a ruin, part had collapsed and the upper floors were unsafe. George Rogers, a local lad, took the opportunity to explore; squeezing inside the Castle he recalled: "In a small room we found hundreds of photographic plates that were of little interest to us". When the new owners finally got round to investigating they found just pieces of old broken glass. The gardener however had known the importance of glass plate negatives: if you washed off the blackness you could get plain pieces of glass that were ideal for repairing greenhouses, or making cold frames. So he had removed a number of them to his garden shed, where they were discovered some sixty years later. Several of these pictures are now published for the first time in the book. 'Widnall: a capital contriver' by Christine Jennings is published by Folly Press of Swavesey at £20. ISBN 0-9544818-0-1

Another pile of photographic curiosities was discovered some 20 years ago in the basement of Botolph House, Cambridge headquarters of the Workers' Educational Association. There were boxes and boxes of glass lantern slides, the forerunner of the colour transparency, many of them of scenes abroad. Detective work established they had been taken by Percy Salmon. The son of a Cambridge policeman he had started photography as a hobby as a lad of 12 and in 1891 won the Cambridge Camera club cup for the best set of five photographs taken in and around the town.

Percy achieved many other awards including a Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society in 1898 who elected him an Honorary Member fifty years later. By then he had retired to live in Melbourn where his interest in photography continued with many lectures illustrated by his lantern slides, and his journalist skills were exercised as village correspondent for the "Cambridge Independent Press".

Percy Salmon died in August 1959 but in November last year Mr M.J. Coles of Oakington was sorting through a pile of material and discovered a notebook. It had been compiled by Percy and it recorded not only his photographic outings but a mass of miscellaneous information about activities in and around Melbourn between 1932 and 1954. The retirement of Fred Winter from the bakery in May 1948, the erection of a telephone kiosk at the Elm Tree in October 1934 and Mrs Hitch's chimney fire in June 1929 all find a mention. But there was also an amount of genealogical information which has proved especially valuable to another 'Memories' correspondent, Stephen Martin from Harrow.

Stephen had contacted me in November 2001 to say he had discovered a pile of other material compiled by Salmon, copies of which he has now sent. They include a series of articles published in the Cambridgeshire Weekly News in which Salmon describes how on May 6th 1898 he was in Jerusalem, bribing his way into the Mosque of Omar with his camera and making more than 50 exposures. Some of these may be amongst those glass lantern slides which are now in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Lion Yard Library, Cambridge. [SCAN OF SALMON PHOTO OF FRUIT CART AT MELBOURN]

Now another reader is seeking assistance in tracking down some information on old photographers. Linda Gooch has e-mailed with some copies of photographs that belong to her mother, Mrs Eileen Mansfield. Two show anonymous groups of men but the third is more interesting. It seems to show some workers in the Lensfield Road area of Cambridge, with Hobson's Conduit in the background. They were taken by a photographer named T. Whiffin, who I have come across before. Can anybody add any information about the scene or the man who photographed it. [SCAN OF PICTURE OF WORKMEN BY T. WHIFFIN]

By co-incidence this morning's post has brought a letter from Catherine Moubrary, who discovered a collection of Kidd and Baker photographs that I featured in Memories last summer. She is continuing her research into that firm and has tracked down one of two more of the pictures they took, but could still do with more information. [WHAT'S FOR TEA - SCAN OF SPECTATORS AT MAY RACES BY KIDD AND BAKER]

Pictures do not have to be that old to be interesting. Ivan Wallman from Impington has sent me a snap of the Trinity Foot public house at the Swavesey turn as decorated for the Coronation celebrations of 1953. This was one way people celebrated, others organised or participated in sports or other activities. Do you have any snaps that I could feature in a future Memories, and what do you remember of that wet June day? Please send them to me at the News. [SCAN OF THE TRINITY FOOT PUBLIC HOUSE DECORATED FOR THE CORONATION, 1953]

Memories 28th May 2003

Fifty years ago this week preparations were being put in place for a most exciting event: the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

It had been a terrible start to the year, surely this would transform it

There'd been the trauma of the East Coast floods when a severe northerly 113 mile per hour gale had caused high tides that had devastated Kings Lynn and Hunstanton where the sea smashed a 90-yard gap through the sea wall on the South Beach leaving a trail of destruction.

It had swept away nearly all the holiday bungalows on the mile-long beach connecting Hunstanton with Heacham – leaving dozens of dead in its wake. A Cambridge woman had spent a night of terror in her holiday home - a converted boat at Heacham. She'd had to clamber on to the roof & spent five hours in the middle of a roaring ocean until tide finally went down she waded to safety. An appeal for assistance to for those made homeless had seen Cambridge in the forefront of sorting, sifting and sending masses of clothing from hangars at Madingley, and receiving a visit from the Queen Elizabeth, the new Queen's mother.

Another Royal mother had died. Queen Mary had been a frequent visitor to Stanley Woolstons antique shop in Cambridge where she collected items for her dolls house and was much loved in the City. She had been with her husband when he opened the University Library in 1934. [SCAN OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY 1934] Now that library was being visited by the first head of a Communist state to visit Britain. The most stringent measures were put in place when Tito, newly elected President of Yugoslavia, toured the building. His visit had been marred by dramatic events at Duxford airfield. Along with much of the top brass of the Royal Air Force he had witnessed an air display during which a formation of meteor jets swept past him, each pilot giving the "eyes left" salute to the President, who saluted back. But seconds later two of the jets had touched and crashed to the ground in flames. The distinguished party witnessed the tragedy and walked back to their cars when there was a sudden triple bang and whine above the low cloud - a Hawker Hunter had smashed the sound barrier.

The county had other Royal visitors. Prince Akihito, the Crown Prince of Japan had paid a short private visit to the University Library where he was shown the Japanese collection of 30,000 volumes, one of the best collections outside Japan, while King Hussain of Jordan had toured the colleges after visiting Pest Control of Bourn, where he'd inspected a specially designed sprayer fitted to a dummy camel, one answer to the locust problem his country was experiencing.

Other research was underway at the Cavendish Laboratory, though what this 'DNA' was that Crick and Watson were celebrating was beyond most Cambridge people. They were more concerned about the removal of six zebra crossings, because the council could not afford the cost of fitting them with the flashing lights that were now compulsory. The globes had been declared 'undergraduate proof' when first installed – a claim quickly proved false

In 1953 change was in the air and an old tradition was being abandoned with the formal announcement that the Mortar boards were no longer to be compulsory undergraduate wear - they cost a £1 & were neither beautiful nor useful. They had been an encumbrance, to be pushed hurriedly into a man's pocket once the cardboard stiffening removed. In fact the custom had been dead for some time and could not now be resurrected. [SCAN OF STUDENT WEARING MORTAR BOARD]

Also destined for the scrap heap were the old Assize courts on Castle Hill Cambridge, the former headquarters of county government. They were old and decrepit and riddled with dry rot. The County Council wanted to demolish them and rebuild on the site, but they looked picturesque with their figures standing high on the roof looking over the town and the City Council were objecting. [SCAN OF ASSIZE COURTS] But they too had a structure they wanted to demolish – the Market Hill fountain. It would cost over £2,000 to repair the canopy with its figures but it too was crumbling. Although it was to prove the centrepiece for coronation decorations it would disappear shortly afterwards as both were removed. [SCAN OF MARKET HILL FOUNTAIN]

But by late May flags were fluttering in the breeze, decorations in traditional colours lined the streets, and there were special shop window displays, giving Cambridge the Coronation look. The city centre was a scene of gaiety and colour, heralding the approach of the great event. In

roads radiating from the centre, decorations to shops and other buildings were being arranged, but the majority of householders were preferring to wait a little longer. The cost of decorations was an important consideration for many and consequently the emphasis was on effect rather than on elaboration [SCAN OF DECORATIONS ON CAMBRIDGE MARKET HILL]

Cambridge shops reported that many of the Coronation souvenirs were selling quite well with pottery mugs and beakers (from 1s.11d to 4s.) one of the best sellers. Framed photographs and statuettes of the Queen were proving popular, as were key rings with a tiny replica of the Coronation chair on its chain. It was anticipated there would be a revival of interest in Coronation souvenirs long after it was over. People would suddenly realise that a great historical event had taken place and they had not got a memento of it & rush to buy before it is too late.

Some souvenirs would be gone by then, including the Coronation sausages created by Derek Traylen of Newmarket Road. He had been painting his shop front blue, with a white and red fascia when his wife commented on the pleasing effect. "Pity we can't apply this colour scheme to the something else" she said and Mr Traylen looked hard at the strings of sausages. "Why not the sausages. We could dip the skins in vegetable dye and have a special Coronation line". He advertised them in the CDN and received a phone call from a journalist in Glasgow. Then came other enquiries from Manchester, the 'Daily Mirror' and 'Empire News' while the 'Meat Traders Journal' came out with a cartoon. Customers were delighted, but somewhat apprehensive with regard to the blue sausages.

But for those who were actually going to be at Westminster Abbey preparation was essential. Vogue's of St Andrew's Street had sold a dress to be worn in Westminster Abbey on Coronation Day by a Cambridge resident. It was an afternoon dress of pure silk, priced at 65 guineas. "We are absolutely thrilled, it is a great honour", said Mr M. Harris, the proprietor. They had also sold three evening gowns to be worn at Coronation balls in London connected with the Court.

Throughout the county, as around the Kingdom, preparations were being put in place. They were even planning to celebrate at Ely – well they had too after the earlier fuss. For Ely council had not proclaimed the Queen's accession on 8th February 1952 and its citizens had protested feeling the breach of traditional to be a slur on the status and history of the city of Ely. So the High Sheriff had made a special visit to read it on 15 March, by which time the proceedings had made the national news and Gaumont British sent cameramen to record ceremony. This time there would be a cathedral service, a procession and tableaux with a band concert dance until 2 am, a torchlight procession and fireworks - and children would be given a souvenir book "Elizabeth our Queen" written by Richard Dimpleby

So all was nearly ready for the great event on June 2nd. All that was needed was good weather – and the sun would shine, wouldn't it?

Do you have memories of the Coronation? Write to Mike Petty at the News

Readers write

William Heffer e-mails from Cambridge with another chapter in the story of the Old Vicarage, Grantchester: "In 1976 I was called in by the then owner, Peter (Dudley) Ward who was about to move out of the Old Vicarage. I was shown, and ended up buying, a large quantity of items, boxes of steelyards, brass candlesticks, armour parts and much more, which had been bought by Peter from the clearance of an antique shop in Peas Hill many years before. I believe the shop was run by a Mr Turpin (I remember Lady Hinsley telling me tales of the amazing things she found there). They were all still in the boxes in which he had

removed them, rusting and mouldering, but, needless to say they all sold well in 1976! The building at that time was very derelict and not in use”

Colin Cook from Upper Tything in Worcestershire writes:

“I am a native of Cambridge although I have not lived there for many years. I was a pupil at the Cambridgeshire High School in the days of the formidable A B Mayne and, as a young man, a teacher at Romsey School as was my mother in the earlier years of the twentieth century. I still have a fairly close connection with Cambridge & a friend is kind enough to send me clippings from the News. Your piece in the newspaper of April 9th brought back many memories of Mitcham's store. My mother shopped there often and, as a boy living in Haig Road and later Gilbert Road, I went with her. In those days it seemed to me to be a vast emporium which sold a wide range of goods. I was surprised that you did not mention the wonderfully alliterative notice which was painted on Mitcham's wall and which was clearly visible to passers by. It quite simply stated 'Famed For Fadeless Fabrics'. It remained visible for many years after the shop ceased trading, I can certainly remember it in the nineteen fifties and sixties.”

One man who would remember the sign is A.G. Lawrence from Cambridge who has lent me a picture of a Mitcham's staff outing to Clacton in the 1950s, showing himself, Mr Flack & Mr Williams with the ladies. [SCAN OF STAFF OUTING (85.01)]

Mary Fuller from Haverhill has discovered an even earlier photograph; it shows Sainsbury's shop in Sidney Street, Cambridge on the opening day in 1925. [SCAN OF SAINSBURY PHOTO]

Memories 4th June 2003, by Mike Petty

Roy Stamp has e-mailed to seek your assistance. He writes: “We were at a party with some friends and, because of our ages, we were talking over old times and where we used to lived and a question came up that we could not answer: Why is Fen Ditton always referred to as the treacle mines?

I really don't have a clue, but have made a search for what readers have said about treacle in the past. George Dethridge from Bar Hill recalled:

“I attended the St Matthew's Infants School near York Street, which was very close to our home, so we all walked to and from school as just about every child did. I came home for lunch (we called it dinner time) and maybe had soup or jam sandwiches, or whatever mother had got me, usually something substantial to keep me going. Later schools started to supply dinner to pupils so we would then stay at school until going home time. Guess this pleased mum as we would not be under her feet and she would have more time to do her chores about the home. We always went to school with a breakfast inside our tummy it was usually porridge covered in Golden Syrup (treacle) or sugar, topped with milk and again if you were lucky it would a new bottle of milk on the table with the cream at the top. If you were first down for breakfast you got the cream and that would cause resentment amongst the rest of the family because the milk left was rather like cloudy water.”

The late Beatrice Stevens recorded something similar in her Feast of Memories of Stretham: “During the war years poverty and scarcity went hand in hand, at least, for ordinary people. We heard of men who ‘had done well’ out of the war, but for most families it was getting

along as well as possible with what was available. Mothers of large families- and most of the families in our village were large - were used to making do with little money, and with their own flour and fresh fruit in the summer they made enormous puddings which often provided the whole dinner. They were served at the beginning of the meal, and if meat and vegetables were cooked these would be for “topping up.”

In our house we always had a substantial pudding. It might have a fresh fruit filling, rhubarb in April, followed by gooseberries in mid-May. Then came strawberries, (a luxury these), currants, red, white and black, and raspberries. Next came various varieties of plums, and apples, last of all, and these we had all through the winter. “An apple a day keeps the doctor away,” Father used to quote, and if this is true, we should never have seen the doctor. Apples were stored all over the house; boxes in the pantry and apples spread under the beds upstairs. We ate them raw and stewed, but best of all were the apple puddings, not made in a basin, but in a cloth, as round and almost as big as a football, dinner for seven or eight people. Ask any of our older villagers, and they will tell you of long jam rolls, spotted Dicks, a “nothing” pudding eaten with treacle, and, maybe, an onion roll, with scraps of bacon in it for extra flavour.

But there are other uses for treacle in some notes for dealing with plague in the fens in 1636 which, given the present concern over Sars, seems to have some modern resonance. Then the authorities were charged with viewing the dead bodies, burning bedding and hanging dogs.

The rules laid down: “If any die in any part of the town where doubt or suspicion may arise to be the plague, the body of that person not to be buried until it be viewed to the end that it is by the plague. Order may be taken to restrain the rest of the family from going abroad, and a cross to be set on the door. No person known to die of the plague shall be buried in the day time but either in the morning before sunrise or in the evening after sunset when most people are in their houses and at rest. And if none will carry them to the Church, then a horse and a sleigh to be provided for that purpose and the same to remain where the infected was buried last”

Anybody inflicted with the plague and unable to care for themselves were to be speedily conveyed into some out part of the town where few people visited. But those who could be left at home were to be supported by a collection which would go to the salaries and wages of people who would attend and wait upon them. If any inhabitants refused to pay his goods were to be distrained

If any market town was attacked then bakers butchers and other tradesmen of other places not infected, were to travel to the outskirts of the town to bring provisions . The some ‘trusty honest man’ would be appointed by the Minister to bring the food and place it in some convenient place where it could be reached the infected persons

The reference to treacle occurs in the section: “Mercers shall provide and have in readiness London treacle and Methridate (astringent narcotic) of the best and such other materials for medicine as is set down in the book as a direction for this time of visitation, and the same to sell for reasonable profit.

That year, 1636, King Charles I wrote to the Mayor of Cambridge and the Vice Chancellor of the University ordering them to forbid the holding of Midsummer Fair to ‘avoid the mischief from the contagion then raging in London’, which might be spread by those attending. He went on to order that the goods of Londoners or others be sold within the town or three miles of the same, which is just about Fen Ditton

Playford’s Soham Magazine for 1848 also mentions treacle in connection with a cure for fever: “As agues are so prevalent here, the most frugal and ready remedy, you will be

surprised to hear, is the snuff of the candle. Strange as it may appear, it is now frequently used with great success. You may mix it with a little honey, treacle, or some other sweet that may disguise it, and you need not tell your patient what it is. Bark and snake root, mixed in beer or wine, is another remedy; but the most certain cure is the quinine, bark, which now most druggists know how to make up in proper quantities. It is, however, a very dear medicine. Cayenne pepper, or a large quantity of ginger taken in warm beer or spirits, often stops it at first.” [SCAN OF INSIDE LAURIE HAYNE’S SHOP NORFOLK STREET CAMBRIDGE 1920S – TREACLE WAS AMONGST THE ITEMS STOCKED; SCAN OF A FEN FUNERAL 1913 – IN THOSE DAYS PEOPLE WERE TAKEN FROM QUEEN ADELAIDE TO ELY FOR BURIAL, APPLE PICKERS IN 1920S] [PHOTOS OF FEN DITTON – WERE THERE REALLY TREACLE MINES?]

So is this a clue as to the Fen Ditton treacle mines story? Can anybody put Roy out of his misery?

As the weather turns warm so many people will be making their way to the seaside for a paddle. But in June 1940 thousands of men were taking to the sea, not for pleasure but for their very survival. One of them was Eric Morley, later organiser of the Miss World competitions. He was amongst those left on the beach to protect the evacuation of long lines of soldiers wading out to distant small boats and ships. But when his turn came he got off without getting his feet wet – all thanks to men like William Nightingale of Trevone Place, Cambridge, who was then a lance-corporal in the 250th Field Company, Royal Engineers. He recalls: “On 31st May 1940 I was evacuated from Bray Dunes, Dunkirk. Myself and two or three sappers towed all the three-ton trucks we could find into a row on the sand, reaching out into the sea, covering the tops of the trucks with planks etc to form a base on which men could walk. Many took advantage of this so-called ‘pier’ allowing them to walk into the sea to their rescue boats without getting their feet wet.” Eric Morley wrote to him: “Thank you for building the causeway. I have always wanted to thank whoever it was who saved me from wading through water”

Unsurprisingly there were few British photographers standing around on the beach to take photographs of the lorry-jetty, though the Imperial War Museum does have one taken by the Germans. But for the snap and Bill’s memories this might be a side of the war that was forgotten. [SCAN OF GERMAN PHOTOGRAPH OF THE CAUSEWAY, SCAN OF CUTTING OF ROYAL ENGINEERS ON PARKER’S PIECE SEP 1939]]

Another wartime incident nearer home has been revealed for the first time by Vera Layton (then Ellingham) from Ely. As a girl she lived with her family in the old Cross Keys, an isolated former pub beside the Great Ouse River, north of Ely. One morning, about 10.30 she was disturbed from her washing by the arrival of a group of soldiers on exercise, who needed to cross the river to make their way back to their camp near Thetford. The sergeant asked whether they might borrow the family’s flat-bottomed boat to row his men across. The first contingent arrived on the opposite bank, near Clayway farm, and the boat was rowed back. This time however disaster struck, as too many soldiers clambered aboard and the boat capsized, leaving men struggling desperately in the water. Other men jumped in to rescue their colleagues but found themselves in difficulties in their heavy boots and uniform. Despite all their efforts four of the soldiers drowned, two married and two single men. Their bodies were carried along the bank to Queen Adelaide – an incident recalled by Roy Lee who was amongst the children in the village school that were kept inside until the waiting ambulances had conveyed the men away. Life went on as normal for Vera and her family, the upturned boat was brought back by a tug driver who recognised it, and it continued to be used for crossing the river. But the next time Vera went swimming she could hear the screams of the drowning men so vividly that she shot out her leg and cut her foot on some hidden obstruction.

The date of the incident is not yet known, it may have been March 1942, although in May that year there was an invasion exercise envisaging enemy forces approaching Cambridge in which Military and Home Guard troops were taking place. People were warned to expect 'unusual sounds' with 'bombing' and planes. The following week the paper carried news of the death of a young soldier from an anti-aircraft unit who had drowned in the Cam, despite members of a University boat crew diving in to try and save him.[PHOTO OF ADELAIDE?]

Can anybody help

Still on a wartime theme, I have received an e-mail from Annette Mill who is seeking any photographs of a street party held in Ross Street, Cambridge in 1945. I have tracked down one VE-Day picture; does anybody have others? [SCAN OF ROSS STREET PARTY 1945]

Another reader, Mrs M.J. Christopher from Wymondham, in Norfolk is seeking information on an artist named H.E. Tidmarsh. She has a first study for a large drawing of Ely Cathedral that he made in 1900 that she bought at Vernon Cross' sale when he closed down his museum at the Tea Shop in Fore Hill, Ely in 1964 [SCAN OF VERNON CROSS IN HIS MUSEUM AT ELY 1964]

Bob Raines from Cherry Hinton has been racking his brains to remember the name of the Grantchester pub now called the Rupert Brooke. It was the Rose and Crown. Do you have memories of it? PERHAPS MORE WORDS – SEE PRINT-OUT – SCAN OF ROSE AND CROWN IN 1960S & PICS FROM LIBRARY]

Memories 11th June 2003

The horrific news from Germany of an incident in which a young girl was carried off by a hot-air balloon has brought into prominence some of the dangers associated with such innocuous-seeming conveyances.

In 1965 Cambridge experienced just such a fright, though one that had a less traumatic outcome.

It was in October that light-sleepers were awoken by strange noises in the night. Some of the sounds could be traced to the Regal Cinema where the Rolling Stones rocked and P.J. Proby shocked - his act was pronounced "too smutty" and was banned. At Cherry Hinton the blame could be laid at the door of the Irish - the Clancey Brothers who were topping the bill at the first Cambridge Folk Festival. Meanwhile Mill Road was learning to live with the rattle and clatter of a new phenomenon - Ten Pin Bowling. But some of the world's greatest brains were startled at an unearthly noise right outside their bedroom windows.

Searchlights were brought in to scan the sky - in just the same way that in Reach during the Great War one old lady had taken her candle to investigate the ghastly, ghostly shape of Zeppelins said to hover just above the trees. Elsewhere through the centuries others have run towards or away from other strange sights. Near Soham in 1785 an old man and a boy had witnessed an apparition that descended from the heavens into the field in which they were working. The lad fled, his companion stood his ground - too scared to move; then seeing the shape appearing motionless he approached it – "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, what are you, speak and tell me". Eventually finding it motionless he had carried it into the village, doubtless boasting how he had overcome the monster from the skies.

Then in October 1913 it was the turn of locals near Sutton to become agitated: "Much excitement prevailed in the village when it became known that an airship had come down in the fens, not very far distant, and cyclists were soon speeding to the spot from all directions.

Many were under the impression that it was one of our army airships, but it proved to be the Bovril advertising airship which left Hendon last Friday and has since been touring the country. First Pilot R.F. Dagnell was in charge assisted by Second Pilot S. Heath. Mr Sole's Tubbs' Farm is not exactly a nice place for an airship to be housed, so that when Mr A. Drake suggested it should be brought nearer Sutton those in charge readily fell in with the idea of moving it. A gang of Messrs Drake & Son's men, who had been employed near by, therefore shouldered the car and proceeded towards the village. This was rendered easier as the envelope still contained sufficient gas to give it buoyancy and thus helped them over ditches and other obstacles. When they reached the high road a crowd soon gathered and it looked a curious procession that proceeded to Bury Lane where our aerial visitor was to spend the night, Mr E. Lowe staying on guard". Many people visited the scene before the airship was packed up and sent by rail to Hendon. Peter Hamence from Sutton has preserved a postcard of the scene [SCAN ON DISK]

Cambridge had seen military airships during army manoeuvres in 1912 but as daylight broke on 27th October 1965 modern academics scattered in fear of what was overhead. A steel cable rose into the air and on the end a wartime barrage balloon was hovering. It had broken away from R.A.F. Cardington carrying its weather instruments with it and dragged its wire rope thirty miles across country before becoming hooked on scaffolding at St Johns College. Magdalene College was evacuated whilst this one was winched to the ground, the firemen carefully avoiding protrusions that might pierce the hydrogen-filled canopy and cause an explosion [PHOTOS WITH CHRIS]

It all passed peacefully but one speculates on the nineteen-sixties headlines had the balloon as it descended been found to be carrying Mr Green and his aeronautical pony – a sight that attracted Cambridge spectators in May 1829 [SCAN ON DISK]

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Flying horses may be one thing, treacle mines are something different, but various readers have responded to the story of those at Fen Ditton. Malcolm Busby, a ranger at Milton County Park has his doubts, but he says: "Being at Huntingdonshire lad we all said that Sapley near Huntingdon had treacle mines, but I never heard a good reason, though I reckon it had to be a way of getting kids to eat it, or else something daft like the saying about it being a bit black over Will's mothers"

Mick Hanks from Milton has no doubt: he writes: "The treacle mines were in the old Maltings, down Ditton Walk, in Fen Ditton parish [PHOTO OF DITTON WALK]. Ditton dockyards are in Horningsea, barges used to dock there years ago. I used to live in Howard Road and was told this many times by Fen Ditton residents"

Dan Jackson has another version he heard more than 20 years ago which he believes is the genuine one. "Fen Ditton treacle mines were first discovered towards the end of the First World War, I was told by a village woman who sadly is now dead. During the war, sugar was scarce and most families had to sweeten up with treacle. It came in large square tins which were difficult to dispose of when there was not a regular rubbish collection - the dustmen were all at the Front. There is a lane in Fen Ditton, Field Lane but now generally known as Filly Lane. It was then grassy with lots of big trees and bushes but now is cultivated right up to the bridleway. Mabel, the Ditton girl who told me the story, said the young people used to call the lane "Feel-me-leg Lane" but not when parents were in earshot. On the left of the lane are old coprolite workings, now completely covered over with brambles but in the First World War, it was used as a rubbish tip and by far the most common rubbish dumped there was treacle tins.[SCAN OF FEN DITTON IN 1920S]

“During the Bumps Races on the Cam, bright young students graced the ale houses with their presence and, after the war, the locals hatched a scheme to have a laugh at their expense. They would talk, in the students' hearing about the old village treacle mines. The idea was to arouse the curiosity of the students and eventually to offer to take them there. There was often a beer or a tanner at stake. But it was a much greater achievement just to convince the bright young lads that the treacle mines did exist - if only for a minute or two”

Peter O'Dell has e-mailed from Bar Hill about the Cambridge Coronation celebrations: “You mention the competition for the best decorated private house run by the city council saying it was won by Mrs. M. O'Dell of Staffordshire Street. Mrs. O'Dell was my grandmother and I lived with her in Staffordshire Street for a while towards the end of the war and just after it finished. I thought you might be interested in a photo of the house in Staffordshire Street decorated, I think, to celebrate the homecoming of my uncles, Bernard and Horace, from the Far East at the end of the war. The people in the photo are all Mr and Mrs.O'Dell's family (children and grandchildren) who are my uncles, aunts and cousins; there were quite a lot of us”. Peter has also enclosed a copy of the invitation to a Coronation Party at the Abbey Hall. He did attend but doesn't remember much about it. Were you there too? [THESE ITEMS WERE E-MAILED FROM PETRO ON 4TH JUNE 20:38]

Jim Mansfield, of Histon asks where the Black Swan hotel was in Cambridge. He has a miniature water jug which on one side advertises White Horse whisky. On the other side is engraved “Black Swan Hotel, Cambridge, Christmas 1905. Good Luck”. The water jug is just the size for holding a splash - recommended by connoisseurs to improve the texture of any good scotch.

The Black Swan was at no.8 Guildhall Street and is still there, but no longer as a pub. It was converted in 1924 to become Fisher House, the chaplaincy to Roman Catholic undergraduates and escaped redevelopment for Lion Yard. The landlord in 1904 was Alfred Belatti [SCAN OF GUILDHALL STREET IN 1937 WITH THE FORMER BLACK SWAN ON THE RIGHT]

Memories 18th June 2003, by Mike Petty

The news that the courts have recognised ‘Gulf War Syndrome’ highlights some of the after-effects suffered by those who fought in the deserts and in hostile climates. The troops underwent unpleasant, frightening experience while for their families it was a nightmare for four long months. But how does all this compare with the experiences of World War II veterans?

Cambridge resident George Arthur O'Dell, now 81 years old, served in the British Army in the Indian subcontinent from 1942 to 1945. He spent almost four long years in Burma and in what later became Pakistan and India. Presently he is the Chairman of the regional Burma Star Association.

George was 20 years old when he was posted to India. He had married only three months earlier so it was a particularly painful separation from his young bride. Mrs Beryl O'Dell was naturally apprehensive about George's overseas posting but gritted her teeth and had to “take it in your stride”

Sailing from Liverpool in January 1942, George reached Bombay via Durban, South Africa. After a short spell in Poona to get acclimatised, he embarked on a gruelling 12-day train journey toward Calcutta.

From Manipur, India's easternmost state bordering Burma, the troops went into Burma to

defeat the Japanese. George served in the artillery in the Burma campaign which has been acknowledged as the longest and most ferocious campaign of World War II. [SCAN OF JAPANESE PRISONERS ON THE BURMA FRONT (NOT GEORGE)]

After Burma, George travelled to Lahore and Rawalpindi around December 1944. As a trainee pilot he was sent to Fatehjang, a place he describes as “out in the wilds, just an airstrip, that's all”. His final station was Secunderabad, near Hyderabad in India before going to Doolali near Bombay for the sea journey back home. By this time, the troops had had enough. No wonder “going doolali” means going mad!

“The only time we were not on duty was when we slept,” recalls George. “Thinking about it now, I wonder how the hell we managed out there.” But he has absolutely no regrets. He is thankful to the army for the experience and the self-discipline (he joined at the age of 17). It was tough but “we were young and silly”

On August 31, 1945, Beryl O'Dell, who was at the time working in an army shoe factory in Kettering, was startled to hear the public announcement: “Would a Mrs O'Dell come to the office”. When she got to the office she recalls: “George was standing there!” It had been almost four years of separation.

George and Beryl have been together ever since. George, who was born in Cambridge, and Beryl became school sweethearts and married just before George left for the subcontinent. They have lived happily in the same house in Ramsden Square, Cambridge since 1947. [WARTIME PHOTO OF GEORGE AND BERYL]

George finds it somewhat incomprehensible that British troops today spend only four months in Iraq and receive post-war counselling on their return. He was in the Indian subcontinent for almost four years. “We just did our duty,” he says. George and many of his surviving comrades of The Burma Star Association will be holding their annual service and parade in Barkway, Royston, on June 29, 2003. [POSSIBLE PICTURE OF EARLIER BURMA STAR PARADE IN NEWS LIBRARY]

But what George suffered had been experienced by other old soldiers.

Dorothy Constable from Cambridge recalls that her father had served in the Great War and that in February 1941, when the time neared for him to be called up again, the nightmares of the trenches returned to haunt him. She recalls seeing her dad very smart in his postman's uniform, with brightly polished shoes, and they exchanged a cheery greeting. Minutes later came the crack of two revolver shots and her mother's scream – “Bob's shot himself”; then came the ambulance and long weeks of intensive nursing at Addenbrooke's Hospital followed by more years at Fulbourn Hospital.

She recalls: “It must have affected us children, not forgetting our lovely mum, always there when we came home from school. How she coped I will never know. Women, thousands of them deserve a medal. They was no child allowance but luckily the vegetables growing in the garden and allotments and chickens laying eggs saved the day. We got free milk and malt at school, it should have been a teaspoonful but nobody noticed when I used to have a tablespoon of malt. When father went into hospital I had to collect relief money once a week. I walked from Coldham's Lane to Ditton Lane to collect it from the insurance man, £2-something a week. My mother was very upset and as I was in my last year at St Philip's Junior School I was allowed to be at home with her. I had to do all the shopping. Things were not the same anymore. Money was very short, no school uniform, no gym shoes and vests. Everything in those days you suffered in silence.”

##

If you enjoy getting out and about and exploring Cambridgeshire's history then there are a couple of events for your diary. Next Sunday, 22nd June you can discover the Garden of Eden and the rest of the hidden history of the streets around the Grafton Centre in Cambridge. But beware, in Victorian times the area was home to from one to two hundred prostitutes, about 100 convicted thieves and 200 other persons of questionable character who lived by dishonesty. It might be best to go in a group and Alan Brigham, Cambridge historian, will be offering 90-minute guided walks departing from the Grafton Centre Information Point at 11 and two o'clock. The tours are free and you can just turn up but to guarantee a place phone Cambridge 316201. [SCAN OF FITZROY ST 1961 & GOLD ST C1910]

Then on Sunday 29th June Horningsea is celebrating 1766 and all that! Why 1766? Lindsay Davies

explains: "Our new priest, Reverend Michael Bowers suggested we cleared out the vestry in the Church at the beginning of the year and in doing so we came across an altar cloth embroidered in 1766 at the bottom of a trunk. Since then we have all been researching 1766 in Horningsea, Cambridge, London and the rest of the world! We have been able to draw on the Church records –there were four weddings but rather more than one funeral that year as many of the babies born that year also died. Older children were paid 4d for collecting weasels, hedgehogs and polecats. We have identified the houses in the Village in 1766 – there were about 38 houses (140 now) but the population was 293 (compared to about 310 now!). We have maps and photographs, extracts from diaries and drawings to illustrate the exhibition and have challenged village children to bring models of hedgehogs and polecats to the exhibition!"

Its all in aid of the church which in 1779 was 'in a deplorable, nasty and shattered condition and except the parish lays out an 100 or 2 pounds in repairing it, will soon fall down'. The north-east corner of the chancel wall was 'already dilapidated' and the eastern gable cross was 'very near tumbling down'. It still needs help to ensure it survives and you can see for yourself as during the afternoon there will be various groups coming to the Church to play or sing music from the 1760's. So go along – if possible dressed for the occasion - and join in [SCAN OF CHURCHYARD AND FAMILY BESIDE WALL]

##

Mrs Madge Taylor from Teversham has written following the picture of Fen Ditton that I featured in Memories on 4th June. With her husband she kept the Blue Lion public on the cross-roads from brand new for 26 years but its story went back much further. The old pub had been acquired by Jonathan Fison back in 1886 and it was then kept for 25 years by Willoughby Sargent, a carpenter who brewed his own ale and drew water from the well. Much money was earned in the village at that time by coprolite digging and the pub opened at six in the morning and did a good trade at that early hour. [POSSIBLE PICTURE OF OLD BLUE LION PUB IN LIBRARY FILES]

Quy local historian, Peggy Day, has another theory on the treacle mines debate; she recalls reading that 'treacle mines' referred to coprolite digging where the diggers encountered a particularly sticky patch. Does this ring a bell with anybody else

Francis Hookham has been pursuing his family history and had discovered a photograph. It shows a group of people on a boat trip – perhaps to Horningsea - including Sidney and Nellie Leech and Elsie Ayres. But he has little idea what it was all about. Can anybody help? [SCAN OF PART OF BOAT GROUP WITH NAMES]

Memories, 25th June 2003, by Mike Petty

Church clocks can be a source of controversy, with frequent stories of residents of new houses complaining that they are disturbed by the constant clanging throughout the night. Others find that the peaceful pealing of the quarter-hours make a long sleepless night more bearable

But who gives a thought to those whose job it is to keep clock ticking, day and night. Last week Tony Brothie recalled some of his experiences with Cambridge's most prominent clock, that of the Catholic Church on Hills Road.

It is now more than 60 years since, with many able-bodied parishioners involved in war work or away from Cambridge on military service, younger members of the parish had to undertake duties previously the responsibility of their elders. So it was that Canon Marshall approached Tony, then a strong healthy lad of seventeen, awaiting call-up for military service and just starting his career in the Fire Service. The canon needed a replacement winder for the church clock. The clock and its chimes required manual winding every day. Tony accepted this duty, as he recalls

"I was briefly shown how to wind up the huge weights which operated the chimes and the clock itself. The problem was that the chimes lasted only twenty-four hours before they had to be rewound. If the chimes ran down, the bells just did not ring until I started to rewind the weights. Then the bells started to catch up on each quarter of an hour that had been missed. Not only did the citizens of Cambridge complain about the missing chimes, they went berserk when on one occasion there was a continuous ringing of bells (the national warning that the Germans had landed). Most people took to their shelters. There was a clamp to stop the problem occurring but I had forgotten to apply this, which resulted in the clergy and three policemen climbing up the tower. I had visions of spending the duration of the war in the cells, but got away with a telling-off."

Nor was this his only brush with war-time security: "The fact that there were no lights in the tower caused another incident when I used a torch to wind the mechanism. Someone must have thought that 'those Catholics' were signalling to the enemy, because I was investigated by some men in long, black mackintosh-type coats - MI5 no doubt. After this I had to do the job in the dark or during daylight."

But there was another incident that caused considerable alarm to one member of the congregation: "Because of security and fire precautions, it was necessary to have a central point for the keeping of the various keys of the church and the rectory. I had to collect the keys from Canon Marshall's study and return them after use. Well, one day I left the keys in the door in the porch and proceeded to the tower. Someone saw the keys, locked the door and returned them to the canon. When I came back down the spiral staircase I was locked in. What happened next was to give a very devout lady parishioner a nasty shock. At first-floor level in the tower is the bell-ringers' chamber which is open to the interior of the church and I stood there hoping that someone would come to my aid. I called down to her just as she had blessed herself with holy water and the result was dramatic. 'Excuse me, could you tell someone that I am locked in', I said. She looked up to heaven but in my direction, blessed herself and disappeared. I escaped by climbing down a broken bell-rope" [PICTURE OF CATHOLIC CHURCH FROM NEWS FILES SHOWING CLOCK]

The Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs is the most tangible presence of the Catholic faith in Cambridge, but by no means the only one, as a new book launched last week makes clear. Nicholas Rogers and Christopher Jackson have spent several years co-ordinating research and encouraging other long-standing members of the congregation to set down their memories; the result is a 400-page history, 'Catholics in Cambridge', published by Gracewing at £20. It shows how Cambridge's earlier Catholic church moved to Huntingdonshire! It was designed by Augustus Pugin, more famous for his work on the Houses of Parliament, in the

1840s, but was redundant after the present church opened in 1890. By 1902 it was in a ruinous condition and was taken down stone by stone, before being transported for fourteen miles and re-erected, practically without alteration at St Ives. [SCAN OF THE PUGIN CHURCH WHICH WAS MOVED TO ST IVES]

Another foundation to have moved was a convent of Carmelite nuns which opened on Chesterton Road, Cambridge in November 1923, on the site of the present St Regis flats. But the position proved too noisy and the nuns moved to a house at Waterbeach in a procession of cars, taking their altar with them. There was a brief period of three weeks during which friends and relatives could visit without the need for veils and grills and members of the public, both Catholic and non-Catholic took the opportunity to inspect the new community. On the day of Inclosure there were about a thousand people, although it was a working day afternoon. Cars and busloads of people came from Cambridge and 'the greater part of the men, women and children of Waterbeach must have come in, though there is not a Catholic amongst them', as the Bishop of Northampton attended by 50 clergy performed the ceremony. The community of nuns continued at Waterbeach for 50 years before amalgamating with another group at Chichester. [POSSIBLE PICTURE OF THE WATERBEACH CONVENT IN NEWS FILES]

But there was another Catholic chapel in Waterbeach, a hut built amidst the hangars on the airfield established almost next door which opened in January 1941. One man who knows Waterbeach airfield intimately is Bob Giddings who lives in a line of cottages at the entrance to the earliest Catholic presence in the village, Denny Abbey. As a lad Bob watched the wartime military activity and in 1951 had his own special playthings – the remains of wrecked aircraft that were being cannibalised for spare parts. He has snaps of them amongst his collection of old postcards. [SCAN OF BOB GIDDINGS AT PLAY IN A WRECKED HURRICANE]

Waterbeach is one village that has retained its railway station, many others have disappeared. Now Ruth Ivimey-Cook is trying to rediscover something of life on the old line from Cambridge to St Ives. She has spoken to Ruth Cross was the crossing keeper at Mow Fen a bit over a mile from the local village, reached by a quiet lane. Ruth lived with her husband Terry, a porter at Swavesey Station, in a house by the crossing. In common with three other such crossing-houses in the area, it was made of wood and was without mains services. Their water was delivered weekly by the railway, as Terry recalled: "We didn't have any mains water. So there were three or four platelayers -they would bring the trolley from Swavesey with a large tank on it filled with water and then they would stop outside our house. And these three or four men used to more or less chain this water through our gate and into our water tank. They used to do that every Monday."

There was no electricity so the cooking stove and the fridge that the railway supplied used Calor gas, and so did the gas lights on the walls. The fridge kept milk from the local farm cool. The cows on the farm were walked from fields at Over, a couple of miles away, for the milking season. Every morning they were milked in the fields. As Ruth recalls: "That was the highlight of the day because we didn't have many people go over the crossing. ... They used to bring the milking parlour down there on wheels, towed by the tractor and put that in the field and milk the cows in the field." Having to get a herd of cattle over a crossing was not peculiar to Mow Fen. Ruth remembers another crossing where the cows "were very skittish and if you didn't be very careful they used to tear up the line and jump fences and ditches ... but they were very select over our crossing because they were milking cows."

Ruth has a photo of the Mow Fen crossing house but would appreciate other similar pictures or reminiscences of other people on this line or the one from St Ives to March or Ramsey in the days when there was time to tend the station gardens – as at Histon in 1964. You can e-mail her at Ruth.Ivimey-Cook@ivimey.org or write to me and I'll pass the letter on. [SCAN

OF MOW FEN CROSSING HOUSE, SCAN OF THE STATION GARDEN AT HISTON IN 1964] The search is also on for any old pictures of Isleham station, if possible from the late 1800s. If you can help please let me know.

Another old line, that of the Grunty Fen Express that shuttled between Ely and St Ives was recalled by Eric Drake, a fenboy from Sutton. It was a train he took each day to Soham Grammar School. He remembered the Station Master at Haddenham: “He was an important gentleman with navy brass-buttoned suit and braided military-style peaked cap. He met every train and blew the whistle whilst standing on the platform. This allowed the train guard to wave his flag to signal to the driver. Goods trains travelled the line and Haddenham took away trucks loaded with bricks and cheese”. Eric’s memories are included in a new booklet of stories from tapes held by the Farmland Museum at Denny Abbey; entitled ‘Bog Oak Country’ it costs just £2. [SCAN OF HADDENHAM STATION c1900 BUT DO YOU HAVE A SIMILAR PICTURE OF ISLEHAM?]

#

Geoffrey Peel from Pampisford writes with his unusual recollections of Coronation Day. “When I awoke soon after dawn on Coronation morning the first things I saw through the haze were Big Ben and the rooftops of London. I had spent a rather uncomfortable night dozing in an ancient leather armchair in a dusty penthouse on the roof of the Ministry of Housing, overlooking Parliament Square.

“I was a member of the team of Pye engineers who were about to send colour television pictures of the procession to various locations in London, including the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children.

“We had set up the specially designed transmitting equipment on the roof the previous day, and in order to be certain of a timely start in the morning we had to spend the night there. We had security passes and had been told that no one could stay in the building overnight without one. However on going down in search of a bathroom it seemed that every office door was being cautiously opened as civil servants, secretaries and tea-ladies emerged on similar errands.

It is a fact of history that the transmissions were successful but I remember little of the procession; we were all too busy. My most abiding memories are of the sea of rubbish left in the streets after the crowds had gone, and of walking from Great Ormond Street to Whitehall one morning a day or two earlier, carrying a twelve feet long scaffold pole, on which the mount the transmitting aerial I had designed for the occasion. I would not like to attempt the journey today

Memories 2nd July 2003, by Mike Petty

James Robinson has e-mailed to ask to see a picture of Cook’s Fish Bar between 186 and 187 East Road where he spent many happy hours during the early 1970s. I have tracked down one photograph that was taken by the News in June 1989; does anybody have others? [SCAN/PHOTO OF EAST ROAD – THE SHOP IS EXTREME RIGHT, DO NOT CROP].

Fish and chip shops have been an important part of the Cambridgeshire scene for many years.

Writing in June 1974 Edgar Blincoe recalled how things had changed since he went into service at Cambridge University: “When I first went to the University all the undergraduates came up in lounge suits and bowler hats. Now you see them going down the street eating fish

and chips". But when did you last see a Cambridge University student eating chips in the streets?

Perhaps it's something to do with the cost. When the News made a survey in June 1975 sky-high potato prices were forcing some chippies to consider closing. Mr Jack Holliday of the Quality Fish Shop in Mill Road explained the problem: "Either we put up our prices and lose customers, or we shut for a while. None of us want to sell chips at 14p a portion" If he increased his price for a portion of chips from 8p to 12p or alternatively halved the size of the portion the public would cringe.

By February 1976 there was nobody in Cambridge selling chips for less than 12p a bag and four shops had a minimum price of 15p. The most extreme difference in value were between the Quality Fish Shop in Mill Road at 7oz for 12p compared to only 5 ozs for the same price at Mike and Julie's in Wulfstan Way and D.G. Munns in Old Chesterton. Once more it was high potato prices that were being blamed, so in August 1977, when potato prices had dropped again, the News sent a reporter to do the rounds. He found that none of the shops had passed on a reduction to customers. The reason was that cod was twice the price of 18 months ago and the fryer was having to subsidise his fish price from chip sales. The best value was at D.G. Munns in Old Chesterton where chip prices were unchanged at 12p a portion and an extra 3p brought an extra half portion – three ounces of chips.

But no matter what the price there was another problem, as a Newmarket reader reported in February 1953 when he complained about the way in which fish fryers wrapped up fish and chips. "It seems to be an accepted rule that the bag must always be an inch too short. If you buy 6d worth of chips they will give you a bag which holds 4d worth. This is not a chance accident but a system which is rigidly adhered to with the result that at least some of the chips will be imbibed with the printers' ink of the newspaper in which it was wrapped." [PHOTO OF PEOPLE EATING CHIPS FROM NEWSPAPER 1960S]

But did you eat the fish in the shop, or in the street – this was the question that saw an Ely fishmonger in court in August 1903. Police Inspector Burton gave evidence that he was in Broad Street at 11.15pm when he saw John Duffy behind the counter in his fish shop serve two customers with fish which they started to eat. One of the customers came out, saw him watching and duck back into the shop. He then heard Duffy shout 'You can't eat that fish here: you'll get me into trouble'. He had reason to be concerned, for refreshment houses were supposed to be closed after 10 pm – but was his fish shop a 'refreshment house'. It had no forms, knives or forks or anything else, and those in the shop stood against the counter and ate the fish with their fingers. The magistrates found the case proved and fined him nine shillings. But Duffy was happy to pay – "This is another cheap advertisement for me", he told them with a laugh.

I have a picture of Mr O.T. Cross who ran one of the fish and chip shops at Littleport back in the 1960s, but do you have other snaps or memories. [SCAN OF O.T. CROSS, LITTLEPORT FISH AND CHIP SHOP 1965]

##

Were you married at St James' church, Lode? If so Julie Sale would love to see your wedding photos. The church celebrates it's 150th Anniversary this year and on Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th July it will stage a Flower Festival and an exhibition of the founding of the church, its records and history. They hope to have as many photos of weddings that have taken place at the church. In addition there will be an exhibition of Lode village life through photos, bygones and crafts at the Broughton Hall with home-made cakes and teas at the Social Club.

Many people bemoan the loss of the village 'characters' – people like the five 'Fen Tigers' from Lode who were featured in the News in April 1965. Mrs Hephzibar Watts was at 97, a year older than Billy Harvey, whilst Mrs Elizabeth Pettit was 95 and Maud Flack and Herbert 'Phippin' Cornwell mere striplings of 93 and 90 years.

Mrs Watts knew the secret of their longevity: "I think the oldest people in Cambridgeshire live in Lode. It is a quiet cul-de-sac with very little development, just right for a peaceful life. I think it's the Fen air that keeps us healthy", she believed. It might also have something to do with the beer, for Billy Harvey took the opportunity to revive his memories in the bar of the 'Cow and Hare' over a glass of beer. "I've not had a beer for a long time – but it was not all that time ago that some of us could manage 20 pints of beer – and walk home", he said.

If you have more memories or photos of Lode you can contribute to their exhibition please contact Julie Sale on 01223 811222 or Lee Robertson on 811351. [SCAN OF LODE STATION C1900, SCAN OF HIGH STREET C1900, PHOTO OF THE FEN TIGERS SHOWING LEFT-RIGHT MRS WATTS, MR HARVEY, MRS FLACK, MR CORNWELL AND MRS PETTIT]

##

Bob Giddings' photograph of himself playing in a wrecked plane (Memories 25th June) has brought an e-mail from Gordon Riley, author of 'Spitfire Survivors Round the World' - for it was a very special Hawker Hurricane.

Bob's plane, Z3687, was one of four Hurricanes at Waterbeach in 1951, two of which are still around. One of them, LF363, was maintained in airworthy condition by the Station Flight and the other three were used to provide spares to keep it going. Today it is still flying from RAF Coningsby as one of the two Hurricanes maintained by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, though it was almost completely rebuilt following a catastrophic crash at RAF Wittering a few years ago.

The other survivor of the four is today preserved at RAF Manston, Kent. It too contains parts donated by Z3687 - it having been assembled by taking the best bits of the three non-flyable Hurricanes and then parked outside for 30 years at RAF Bentley Priory, Stanmore, Middlesex before being totally restored some 10 years ago and put under cover.

Gordon says Bob's photo of Z3687 is interesting because it shows the unique high-gloss white colour scheme applied when it was flown between 1946-48 at the RAE Farnborough and fitted with special laminar flow wings built by Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft of Coventry. As the wings are missing in the photo he assumes that following the end of the tests the fuselage & engine were transferred to Waterbeach in an effort to provide parts to keep LF363 airworthy.

He continues: "It is a pity that the RAF chose '363 to keep going rather than Z3687, which had a much more interesting wartime history. It was one of a batch of 50 delivered in April-May 1941 to No.1 (F) Squadron. On the night of 11-12th May 1941 it was flown by Sgt Josef Dygryn, a Czech, when he shot down no less than three German aircraft, one Heinkel 111 over London at 00:35, another near Gatwick at 01:50 and a Junkers Ju88 near Biggin Hill at 03:25". [SCAN OF BOB GIDDINGS IN THE PLANE OR REPRIS PICTURE FROM LAST WEEK]

##

Mrs B. Hall from Girton has also been having a sort-out and she's found a picture of a rally organised by the "50 Car Club" in 1951. It was taken at a stop at the Four Went Ways Café after a night-time treasure hunt. Her brother Harry Driver was a member of the club and worked at the time for Pest Control of Hauxton [SCAN OF CAR RALLY]

Roger Gascoigne of Arbury Road, Cambridge is more interested in scooters, especially the Vespas and Lambrettas of the period from 1962-1966 when Mods made trips to the seaside and attracted big headlines. He tells me there's a great reassurance of interest in those days and asks whether anybody has photographs of such gatherings, or indeed of the usual meetings at the Mill. I've tracked down one taken at the Mill Pool about 1965 which shows Lambretta registration no. CJE 6C – was it yours? [PICTURE FROM NEWS FILES]

Others preferred motorbikes in those days and, like Roger, still enjoy riding them as a substitute for the family car. One such group of enthusiasts are the Cambridge members of the Norton Owners' Club who may be able to provide details of the machine pictured outside Burtons shop in September 1963. [SCAN OF NORTON MOTORBIKE ON MARKET HILL]

##

Francis Hookham has been pursuing his family history and had discovered a photograph. It shows a group of people on a boat trip – perhaps to Horningsea - including Sidney and Nellie Leech and Elsie Ayres. But he has little idea what it was all about. Can anybody help? [SCAN OF PART OF BOAT GROUP WITH NAMES]

Memories 9th July 2003, by Mike Petty

Some stories just seem to come around and around at this time of the year. In the News of 4th July 2003 [ELY EDITION PAGE 19 – COPY; PIC REF 112145 – ARE THERE OTHERS] an article headed 'Church pays for grant' reflected the difficulties being faced by the congregation of All Saints Church in Croydon where repairs are needed to the church roof.

Yet the same difficulties were being faced in July 1932 as the Cambridge Chronicle reported: *Croydon church in the eyes of the 20th century visitor is remarkable for several features, but above all because it has never suffered destructive restoration. The visitor cannot fail to notice that the main walls of the church have been pushed outwards, that the new buttress has pulled the old buttress off the tower, and that the south wall of the nave with its arcade leans outward to a serious extent, while the walls of the tower are cracked at the centre of each side from the ground upwards. Probably there is no church in the diocese in more perilous condition. Thus stands this little church – to the antiquarian, a monument to Croydon's more spacious days; to the parish and its priest, a source of perpetual anxiety.*

But an appeal then had its effect, as on 9th July 1937 the Cambridge Independent Press could report that the south transept had been practically rebuilt, the tower, which had cracked, had been 'grouted' and strengthened, the inside base of the tower almost rebuilt and the chancel roof renewed. But the church still needed restoration of the north side of the nave, the repair of the plaster of the interior and the rebuilding of the porch. It was photographed by Louis Cobbett as part of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society's Photographic Record in 1927 [SCAN OF CROYDON CHURCH 1927]

The Antiquarians also found their way to Croydon Wilds, a 17th-century moated house with a brick tower in the middle, which was later demolished in the 1950s. It featured in an advertisement in the Cambridge Independent Press in July 1897: *Croydon Wilds, aptly so called, is one of the most remote parts of England. Its few inhabitants are housed in a couple of roomy cottages and it was to one of these cottages that a representative of the 'Cambridge*

Independent Press' penetrated, and had a talk with the most respected and intelligent of the inhabitants, Mr Smith, who has lived there for thirty-four years. His daughter, as the reporter passed through the cottage garden, stood bright and blooming beneath the lintel. But she had not always been so fit: "I was weakly and unwell since childhood ... a doctor said I was in a consumption and I should never get better ... I went into the Hospital in Cambridge, but I had given myself up". Then came the miracle cure: "I happened to read of 'Dr Williams Pink Pills for Pale People' ... I had taken nearly one box when I began to feel better. Now I can walk easily, am strong and well, and quite able to get through my work without the slightest fatigue". [SCAN OF CROYDON WILDS 1928]

##

July 1978 saw a host of celebrities in Cambridge; stars of television, stage and the music world were on Jesus Green for the televising of a 'Star Games' contest. Top names such as Dickie Henderson, singer Joe Brown, Rolf Harris, Colin Baker, Kenny Lynch, Rula Lenska and Dave Dee were taking part to help raise money for the Variety Club of Great Britain Children's Charities.

But it was not all plain sailing; broadcaster Cliff Michelmore suffered a calf muscle injury & singer-songwriter Jackie Trent injured her leg – probably, the News commented – the stars were more used to flexing their artistic muscles rather than their lily-white limbs.

Grey skies kept away many spectators, with only a few hundred autograph hunters braving the damp conditions – though when the skies cleared more onlookers arrived, to the relief of Thames Television who were filming the 70 stars taking part in swimming, rowing, target golf and tug-o-war amongst other activities. It all resulted in more than £4,000 in sponsorship money – which 25 years ago was quite a sum.

The News photographs were there to record it – but were you, and if so do you remember anything about it [PHOTOS 1957.78]

##

Readers have responded to various recent 'Memories' features

Michael Bentinck, author of the books on wartime, writes from Chatteris about the Cambridge Catholic Church clock

"The other week in your Memories pages, you featured an article on the clock at the Catholic Church Hills Road. This brought happy memories back to me of my days as an apprentice Heating Fitter Welder, for the firm of T. Simons & Son's whose works used to be at 160 Histon Road, Cambridge - I believe this site now has an old peoples' care home built on it, called Simons House. [HISTON ROAD PIC FROM LIBRARY FILES?]

The senior fitter that I was apprentice to back in those wonderful days of the mid 1960's always liked to stop off in a cafe for a full English Breakfast each morning. As we left the yard at 6 a.m. each morning, I was always glad of this, for as you can imagine, as a young teenager it was always a great effort to get out of bed each morning at 5 a.m. and then to cycle the five miles to the yard to join the men for our days work.

The work we did was very hard manual work and was mainly installing heating systems in Hospitals and schools, all over East Anglia. Some of the pipe work we had to install and weld in these boiler houses was of 12-inch diameter and really took some lifting. As you can imagine on very cold winters mornings none of us really wanted to leave the cafe to climb into the back of an old works van which often left us arriving late on site.

The site foreman, or clerk of the works, would often say: 'Well what time do you call this then, wherever have you been to be this late again'. Our senior fitter would quickly reply: 'Don't you dare have a go at us for being late for we have all been up half the night working on the heating system around the clock tower on the Catholic Church back in Cambridge'. He would explain that this was such vital work as the good people of Cambridgeshire all relied on this great clock and the heating system around the clock just had to keep going to prevent the clock hands from freezing. He always got away with it and thankfully we never got reprimanded for being late. To this day I don't believe the Catholic Church has any heating for the clock!"

##

Colin Brett e-mails from Bar Hill:

"What a blast from the past seeing the Norton motorcycle outside Burton's on Market Hill. I am not sure who the owner was, but it was probably one of a group who used to meet up there most evenings. The model was probably a "650cc Norton Dominator" although it could be a Norton Atlas, but I think they were produced later in the 60's.

"We even formed a small unofficial rival club to the famous '59 Club of North London. At the time we thought the name to be pretty cool and original "the '66 club", with hindsight perhaps it wasn't?

"It was about this time that the local police acquired a Daimler Dart and this would check us out most evenings with a drive by. One of the drivers, Sgt. John Free, was a good friend to quite a few of us, as he organised the youth club in Harston and had the dubious job of trying to keep us all under control. A really good bloke, sadly he died a few years ago after moving to Scotland.

"A few of the lads that were on bikes at that time ventured into motor cycle racing with varied success, Paul Wright, Ivan Hackman, Phil Prest and Ben Taylor (sorry if I've forgotten anyone). Paul and Ben both road sidecar outfits and Paul could have gone on to world championship status, but I think lack of backing saw him drop out. Ivan Hackman had a bad accident in the Manx GP on the Isle of Man and I believe gave up after that. The Mods and Rockers thing wasn't a problem in Cambridge as most of us were mates anyway"

##

Chip shop memories have come from a number of readers

Mark Rix from Ditton Lane, Cambridge writes:

In Wednesday's column, you showed Cooks chip shop, which brings back fond memories. I am now 36 years old. My mum ran a B & B in Warkworth Street when I was between the ages of 11 and 16 and every day my friends and I used to finish school and go swimming at Parkside pool nearly every day. Some nights when we came out we used to go to Cooks chip shop on East Road, and if we didn't have any money left he would always give us a bag of fritters which always tasted delicious. Later on, when I was 14, I got a job there in the basement as a chip maker which meant pouring potatoes into a machine which peeled them, then into another machine which cut them, then into barrels of water ready for use. They were the only chips in town that were crinkle cut and famous for it. [WARKWORTH STREET PICTURE FROM LIBRARY FILES?]

Growing up in the kite area, I saw a lot of changes at the end of my garden. There was a burnt out pub, which was re-opened as the Free Press and was made the only non-smoking pub. The Elm Tree Pub a few doors up, later had a fire and I remember thinking that John Cooks store opposite was on fire as well. But it turned out that their cellars were connected and the shop just got smoked out. [SCAN OF FREE PRESS DURING REDEVELOPMENT OF AREA IN 1960S]

There used to be an indoor market on East Road where Chillies is now, where I bought my first watch - a new invention, L C D display Casio."

Barbara Rooney from Chesterton writes:

"I have vivid memories of our chip shop in Milton Road, Cambridge. I think it was called 'Webleys' or 'Whiteleys', now its called The Viking. All the kids from the Avenue went there for our two pen'oth of chips and, if we were lucky, fritters on the top. They were never put into newspaper, but into pointed bags which went soggy at the bottom from all the vinegar we put on them! [MILTON ROAD PICTURE FROM LIBRARY FILES?]

Because of the blackout during the war, the front of the building was made of wood with a door you went through before going into the shop quickly, so as not to show any light. Many times I recall going to the shop for my mother at lunch time, when a man would come in with loads of trays to be filled with fish and chips for a local factory. It seemed to me he always went to the front of the queue, which I thought most unfair.

As we didn't have many sweets in those days we really enjoyed our chips, and they don't seem to have done us any harm. We still go to the shop for our fish and chips, its much the same as all those years ago, still giving excellent value for money"

Memories 16th July 2003, by Mike Petty

Last week's announcement of the widening of parts of the M11 will increase the capacity of a road that was the subject of a long-running debate before it opened in 1980.

Back in the 1970s Cambridge was grappling with traffic problems and various new schemes were being aired. A new Elizabeth Bridge opened in 1971 but there was also talk of an western relief road across Lammas Land parallel to Fen Causeway, an Eastern Relief Road, a new West Road project and a Railway Route – something similar to the present Guided bus scheme. All of these were put on hold with the announcement in 1970 of a Cambridge Western bypass, followed a year later by news of another bypass to the North. Then came the wrangling and argument and an inquiry in 1972 that went on for 72 days, making it the longest and most involved ever held to that date. Even when the scheme was approved there were more years of delay and debate before work started.

Flying News photographers looked down as heavy machinery descended on farmer's fields and the new road crept slowly across the landscape. The new Northern bypass opened first in December 1978, the Western – by then the M11 - in 1980. [PHOTO OF TRUMPINGTON/HAUXTON JUNCTION OF M11 UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN 1978 ON CHRIS' DESK]

Immediately calm descended on Castle Hill and by 1981 the number of heavy lorries in Cambridge was down by 60% as traffic that had previously thundered through the city now travelled around it. Drivers making their way North from London could not expect a far easier journey than the previously plod up the A10. Provided of course they had maps up-to-date enough to show the new road.

An indication of the way Cambridgeshire's roads have changed can be gained by visiting one of Cambridge's landmarks, the University Library, whose tower dominates the area across the Backs of the Colleges.

For centuries the library has built up a collection of maps of the world and beyond that are available to researchers, but at present in the Library's new display area – open to everybody without formality – there is a magnificent display of maps of Cambridgeshire dating back to the 1570s [WHICH CONTINUES UNTIL – SEE PRINT OUT]

Amongst them is one of the original road maps, drawn by John Ogilby in the 1670s. These take the form of a strip map, similar to the Route Planners now produced by motoring organisations or delivered digitally to the dashboard. They show how dramatically the roads have changed since the days of the horse-drawn carriages.

Then the preferred route from London to Cambridge would take you not along the long slow drag of the main A10 road towards Royston but via the present the more undulating B1388, through Barley. Ogilby's maps give notes on what to expect; beyond **Fowlmere** you should ignore the turnings to **Sheperheath** and **Thryplow** and continue across a stream to **Newton**. Then the road continued over arable land and across a common on both sides to **Hawkston**, then, leaving the Mill on the right-hand side, past a hawthorn tree and across an open way on each side to **Trumpington**. Then it was yet more pasture to **Cambridg** itself [SCAN OF PART OF OGILBY MAP, SCAN OF COTTAGES ON LONDON ROAD, NEWTON 1930 WITH STEAM ROLLER, HAUXTON STREET 1936, PRINT OF STAGE COACH NEARING CAMBRIDGE FROM TRUMPINGTON]

The spelling of the place names is different, and one would perhaps question navigating by hawthorn trees, but are the modern computer-produced maps any better.

A few weeks ago I was invited to speak to a group who meet at Ramsey and the ever-efficient organisers sent me an RAC Route Planner to guide me from my door in Stretham to the venue in Stocking Fen Road, Ramsey. The route seemed clear with arrows pointing straight on or indicating bends and turns; it informed me how the B1040 Fenton Road would become the B1040 Mill Green and then the B1040 High Street before it became the B1040 Ramsey Road ... and on and on. Had there been a tree it would probably have mentioned it. It helpfully told me the distance would be 20.1 miles and that it would probably take 36 minutes to make the trip.

There were just two things that made me question the map. It named the start and finish places wrongly! According to the print-out I was starting not from Ely Road, Stretham but from Ely Road, ELY and when I finally turned right off the B1040 Great Whyte I would be in Stocking Fen Road, HUNTINGDON – not Ramsey! [SCAN OF ROUTE PLANNER WRONGLY NAMING STOCKING FEN ROAD RAMSEY AS STOCKING FEN ROAD HUNTINGDON] [SCAN OF MODERN ROUTE PLANNER ROUTE] [PHOTOS OF RAMSEY AND HUNTINGDON]

Readers write:

Max Jackson from Cambridge has written following a recent Memories mention of the Cambridge Mods who would meet in the evenings outside the Victoria Cinema on Market Hill. He recalls: "Those evenings were filled with fun and laughter and pride in our clothes and scooters which would line up outside the cinema, the multi headlamps gleaming in the street lights with the parkas neatly folded on the seats.

“Further along the street towards Burtons the motorcycles lined up, Matchless, Nortons and BSA. There was never any trouble between us. I remember the Daimler Dart cruising the streets only to come to an untimely end outside of one of the discos. A motorcycle I remember called a Vincent Black Prince was awesome. I attempted to kick start it one evening and was thrown halfway across the street. When I think back to the characters of that time I have to smile and be proud enough to say ‘I was there and I remember it’. I still keep in touch with some of the old mods, Buster Richards, Colin Southall, Sid Cosen and all who made the memories I have so wonderful”

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Rhona Norman e-mails: “Your article on Mill Road Maternity Hospital a few weeks ago brought vivid memories of my experience there. It was during the bitter winter of 1963 having been admitted to the hospital my husband was quickly ushered away. Husbands were not allowed in those days! In the delivery room following the birth of our son I waited for some time whilst a bed was prepared for me upstairs in the ward. Two men dressed in three quarter length brown coats came in and scooped up the four corners of the sheet I was lying on and carried me in a bag fashion up the flight of stairs to the ward!

“Also I remember that during the antenatal visits all expectant mums lined up in a crocodile fashion to have blood taken. The girl directly in front of me passed out after observing the procedure in front of her. Those were the days!!” [MILL ROAD HOSPITAL FROM NEWS FILES]

#

Mrs Madge Taylor from Teversham has written following the picture of Fen Ditton that I featured in Memories on 4th June. She and her husband kept the Blue Lion public on the cross-roads from brand new for 26 years but its story went back much further. The old pub had been acquired by Jonathan Fison back in 1886 and it was then kept for 25 years by Willoughby Sargent, a carpenter who brewed his own ale and drew water from the well. Much money was earned in the village at that time by coprolite digging and the pub opened at six in the morning and did a good trade at that early hour, she tells me.

#

Mrs Christine Newman from Cambridge spotted a snippet in my ‘Looking Back’ column recently that related to the ‘Passive Resisters’ Movement in 1903. This was prompted by a change in the Education Act that introduced the teaching of the Prayer Book and the Catechism in schools. Many nonconformists objected to something they considered anathema to their religion and protested by refusing to pay a portion of their education rates. As the process dragged on eventually the Council sent in the Bailiffs. Mrs Newman explains: “My grandfather was a passive resistor. They had a chair just inside the door called the ‘Passive Resisters Chair’ and so when the bailiffs came to take some furniture to cover the debt, they always took this chair. Then the resisters went to the sale of their goods and brought the chair back for the money they owed. My aunt told me that nobody but the owner of the chair ever bid for it”.

Memories, 23rd July 2003, by Mike Petty

I WILL BE AWAY FROM SUNDAY TO WEDNESDAY EVENING

Cambridgeshire's communities are constantly changing, only some seem to change more than others. One such is Trumpington, which was once a village but was absorbed into greater Cambridge in 1934.

But as a new book produced by the Trumpington Local History Group shows, not all change has been detrimental. There are now far more trees than there were fifty years ago, the standard of living has improved and there are few houses now without bathrooms and interior sanitation, gas or electricity – unless they have been cut-off for non-payment of bills. And there is less real poverty than previously. People are now more likely to spend the evening watching soap operas on television than doing other people's dirty laundry - as Mrs Matthews opted to do rather than 'go on the Parish' after her husband died. [SCAN OF WASH DAY]

However it is not all gain; many residents regret the increase in through traffic, with its lights and signals, noise and fumes. They forget that when cows walked down the High Street each morning to graze in Trumpington Park they invariably left some tangible evidence of their passing, just as some dogs do today. [SCAN OF COWS AT MANOR FARM, 1930S – NOW BEVERLEY WAY; SCAN OF TED MOTT PICTURE OF HIGH STREET IN 1920S]

In 'Trumpington Past and Present' (Sutton publishing, £11.99) Shirley Brown and her team have brought together a wealth of old images, from engravings to postcards and photographs. Many were taken by Ted Mott of Shelford Road, hundreds of whose pre-war glass negatives are preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection. Before him Percy Robinson, the village schoolmaster from 1908, had entertained packed audiences with his lantern lectures, which were in turn reprinted in the Cambridge newspapers. In November 1995 Percy's pictures were reshown to another packed meeting, providing the impetus for the formation of the Trumpington Local History Group

It's one of those books you just keep looking through, comparing the old and the nearly-new, discovering the reason for things – why did 'Whitelock's Yard' drop the 'e' and become 'Whitlocks' when it was rebuilt in 1968. Was it that the name was thought disrespectful to the elderly people who lived there at the time? Now the bedsits provide homes for some of the Filipino nurses recruited by Addenbrooke's Hospital to aid their staffing problems.

Trumpington has a rich mixture of houses, some small, some very grand but perhaps their oldest house was built in the mid 1930s, having been discovered in Cambridge when the demolition men moved in.

Pre-war Cambridge councillors were anxious for a new Guildhall, to match the grand new edifice constructed by the County on Castle Hill, and cope with their expanding boundaries. They had tried before, even getting grandiose plans drawn up in 1898 before they were thrown out by ratepayers incensed by the mess they had made of the new sewers – but that is another story.

By 1935 it was really going ahead. Despite a last-minute proposal to build their new headquarters on the corner of Parkside and East Road – much more sensible it was claimed, because of the increasing traffic that would make it difficult to get to meetings in the town centre – the plans were approved. The old Guildhall would be replaced by a new Guildhall to be constructed in stages.

Demolition men moved in to remove the nondescript range of buildings on the west side of Peas Hill. They included an old butcher's shop where once they killed their beasts and washed the blood in a stone tank in the back yard, more recently converted into a bookshop. Above was living accommodation above that had been home to generations of tradesmen and their families. It really was not much of a place. [SCAN OF PEAS HILL SHOWING

BUILDINGS DEMOLISHED FOR GUILDHALL; SAME SCENE AFTER GUILDHALL BUILT, 1938]

But as they started to pull it down a remarkable history was revealed. There were timbers had once been part of a ship that had sailed the North Sea in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. Then the ship had been broken up and the wood passed into the hands of an old builder who shaped them into the upper storey of a house, numbering each timber to show where it fitted. But he did not erect them. Instead they were brought down the Ouse and Cam for sale at Stourbridge Fair. There they had been bought, transported to Peas Hill and assembled – or so it was conjectured.

When complete it had a high pitched roof and overhanging upper storeys and was panelled within and plastered without. It was a fine, fashionable half-timbered dwelling. But fashions changed. But why pull down an old house when it could be modernised inside and out. So the lower section was brought forward to disguise the fact that the rooms above had jutted out, the old timbers hidden behind plaster and red tiles nailed to the front, disguised to look like bricks with imitation pointing in black paint. It was now a modern, up-to-date house.

Soon people forgot what the old place had looked like. More improvements were made inside: a fireplace with Dutch tiles painted in floral designs, some fine Queen Anne woodwork, sliding windows with bottle glass lights. Layers of paint were applied to ancient oak, panelling was gradually covered with wallpaper, the first being a hand-blocked design of the late eighteenth century printed on waste sheets of a Bible.

All this was revealed as work progressed, but it was no longer demolition, it was a careful dismantling with the ancient timbers carefully taken apart and laid aside ready for a new home elsewhere. Reginald Lambeth, who supervised the demolition of the other houses along that side of Peas Hill, produced a drawing showing the buildings in Tudor times before these too were removed. [SCAN OF REGINALD LAMBETH'S DRAWING OF THE PEAS HILL HOUSE FROM CDN April 1935]

So where did the timbers go? According to the Trumpington history some found their way to Long Road, to a home first owned by Councillor E. Savill Peck, an antiquarian and photographer well aware of the need to conserve Cambridge's past, even if it meant taking it piece by piece to Trumpington for safe keeping. [SCAN OF LONG ROAD HOUSE BUILT WITH OLD TIMBERS]

But the book reveals how history has repeated itself. In Trumpington by 1974 all the buildings between the Green Man and the village hall had been demolished, except one. The house in High Street stood neglected and forlorn while developers fought over the land around it. Eventually someone bought the timber frame, which was all that remained. The timbers were numbered carefully and taken for reconstruction at an unknown destination. If you know where then let me know. [SCAN OF TIMBER-FRAMED HOUSE BEING DEMOLISHED AT TRUMPINGTON 1974]

EXTRA STORIES IF NEEDED; NEGATIVES AND PHOTO WERE LEFT WITH CHRIS ON TUESDAY

With the world and his wife apparently entranced with the latest hairstyles of famous football players I wonder if anybody can identify these members of the Cambridge United squad preparing for the new season in the tough Second Division in July 1978. And who were the hairstylists? Just to give a clue the names, in alphabetical order, were Lindsay Smith, Gordon Sweetzer and Graham Watson. [FOOTBALLERS - NEG 2168.78.8] [LEFT TO RIGHT SMITH, WATSON AND SWEETZER]

#

Another person whose head was in the News back in July 1978 was Councillor John Powley who was then spearheading the plans to transform the Kite area of Cambridge into the Grafton Centre. Some of those opposing the scheme commissioned a local artist to draw an outsized portrait of Coun Powley which was then electrically wired up and served as a dartboard at a 'Save the Kite' fete.. Anyone hitting the 'brain cell' rang a bell. During the afternoon more than one Labour councillors was seen surreptitiously to aim a dart at the target. If the style of the portrait seems familiar it may be because it was drawn by Peter Fluck, who later went on to become part of the award-winning 'Spitting Images' team and to turn his caricature skills to even more famous politicians. [KITE CAMPAIGNERS CHARLES AND JEANNE RUBIN WITH CARTOON POSTER OF COUN POWLEY, JULY 1978 - NEG 2048.78.32]

Another Head in the news 25 years ago was Gordon Chambers who was saying a fond farewell to the 25 pupils at Hemingford Abbots School. It was not just the end of a term, but the end of an era for the 138-year-old thatched school was being closed down as an economy measure. It was not all gloom, for the school swimming pool would be given a new lease of life – it was to be dismantled and taken to the Wheatfields school at St Ives. Did you attend the school – and do you recognise anybody? [TEACHERS AND CHILDREN ON LAST DAY AT HEMINGFORD ABBOTS SCHOOL – PRINT FROM NEWS FILES]

Memories 30th July 2003, by Mike Petty

Did you do your courting at the Turk's Head in Trinity Street, Cambridge. If so this is a week of nostalgia for it is just 25 years ago that it closed its doors for the last time. No more of those gammon steaks, chicken in a basket or schooners of sherry from the barrel. No more drinks in the Stable bar so packed with undergraduates that by the time you'd got your larger and limes you might find your date had attracted other admirers.

The Turks Head catered for all kinds of people for all kinds of reasons. In October 1976 a bridal party attracted more than usual attention after the Vicar of Thaxted "married" two female couples in a 'double wedding'. The women had their union blessed in the parish church by the vicar, who was president of the Gay Christians, an organisation for homosexual men and women, before the couples and their friends celebrated with drinks at the Turk's Head Stable Bar. Then the guests went on for more drinks at the Gay Scaramouche Club in Cambridge.

Berni had opened its Turk's Head in 1962 as a restaurant where a range of inexpensive meals could be had across a wide price band and survived a series of fires. Before that the building had housed Matthew's Restaurant and Café boasting a palm court atmosphere and wicker chairs. In October 1927 they had added an extra attraction as the News reported: *The fascinating experience of lunching in Cambridge in the atmosphere of our Elizabethan forefathers is made possible by the opening of new rooms at Messrs Matthew's Café in Trinity Street. They have acquired the two upper storeys of the building & turned rooms which were formerly part of a lodging house into a charming medieval retreat. The original beams and window frames remain as well as some beautiful old carvings and the rooms have been furnished in the style of the period, pains having been taken to secure faithful reproductions even down to lamps and pewter pots*

It became a regular meeting place for farmers attending sales at the Corn Exchange and, on a different level provided dinners for the University Beefsteak & True Blue Clubs. The

members were mostly titled undergraduates who had to prove their prowess in an initiation ceremony involving the drinking of a bumper of claret straight off.

Delving even further back the building had been home to the Turk's Head coffee house which attracted earlier generations of students. As Roger North commented in the 1660s: "It is become the custom after chapel to repair to coffee houses, where hours are spent in talking; and less profitable reading of newspapers of which swarms are continually supplied from London. And the scholars are so greedy after news (which is none of their business), that they neglect all for it; and it is become very rare for any of them to go directly to his chambers, after prayers, without doing his suit at the coffee-house; which is a vast loss of time grown out of a pure novelty; for who can apply close to a subject with his head full of the din of a coffee-house?"

But in between all the eating and drinking the building had been home to a bank founded by Ebenezer Foster, a miller. He started his banking by simply issuing receipts to farmers who would exchange them amongst themselves instead of cash, trusting the Foster name as a guarantee that the bill would be honoured. The bank began trading in Bridge Street but in 1836 moved to the Turks Head Coffee House where security was provided by three junior staff who were obliged to sleep in the bank, one in front of the strong room with his sword by his side. The bank prospered and by 1890 the premises were too small and the decision was taken to move. The London architect Waterhouse was employed to design the new buildings and authorised to spare no expense. In November 1893 the new bank opened with a flourish, its 100-foot high clock tower dominating the town centre from its position opposite the entrance to Petty Cury. Ten years later it amalgamated with Capital and Counties Bank and in 1919 was absorbed into Lloyds.

The closure of the Berni Inn in 1978 was attributed in part to the opening in Rose Crescent of a somewhat more up-market sister establishment decorated in a Dickensian theme and there were plans too to turn the Plough and Harrow public house in Madingley Road into another Berni restaurant.

So what was to happen to the old building in Trinity Street? At the time there were proposals for a number of restaurants, one in the cellar offering international cuisine, another on the first floor specialising in English food and a Pasta Kitchen right at the top. Then it was announced that the main ground floor was to be taken over by Laura Ashley, one of the fastest rising fashion and fabric businesses in the world. Now they have expanded into the upper areas with modern shopfittings disguising the ancient structure still so apparent from outside.
[SCANS OF FOSTER'S BANK – SKETCH – 1880S, PHOTO OF MATTHEWS CAFÉ 1937, SCAN OF TURKS HEAD STABLE BAR 1963, OTHER PHOTOS FROM LIBRARY]

##

Jack Diver from Histon has been having a clearance and has come across a group of photographs of an event which seems to have been almost forgotten. At the time it was obviously important for hundreds of people stopped work and lined either side of a road through a factory – a factory where smoking was banned, as large notices testify. Then a small motor car – registration number CVE 539 - drove past, with a figure in uniform in the front passenger seat. It was followed by a limousine. Then it was all over and the crowds surged forward.

So what was going on? Jack says it was the Queen, who had flown back to Oakington airfield after a visit and was then driven through Chiver's factory to Histon station to take the Royal Train to London. But he can't quite remember when. The Centenary issue of 'Contact', the news-sheet of the Chivers-Hartley pensioners association confirms that the Queen with the

Duke of Edinburgh did indeed drive through on their way from Cambridge to Histon station and were greeted by employees along the route, and gives the date as 20th October 1954. Mystery solved – or is it? For the Photographic Memories of Histon and Impington book says the date was 1955.

So I turned to that source of all Royal Cambridge information, Marion Colthorpe's book of that title.

She confirms the date as 20th October 1955, one of the most important in the history of the Corporation of Cambridge for it was the first time that a reigning Sovereign was to visit a Cambridge Mayor in the Guildhall. The weather did not appreciate the importance of the occasion as rain poured down steadily all day. Despite this crowds gathered early at Cambridge station to witness her arrival and lined the route to the city centre. All the Market stalls in front of the Guildhall had been cleared away and a dense crowd and a Guard of Honour had taken their place. But what should the City present as a souvenir to a woman who has everything? How about an electrocardiograph for monitoring the hearts of the Royal horses. After a speech from the Queen the Royal couple moved out onto the Guildhall balcony overlooking the Market Place. This was the moment the vast crowd had been waiting for, and the cheering was deafening.

But there was more to follow. The Royal couple drove through the rain to Newnham College, where they inspected an undergraduate's room. Then on to Trinity College, where trumpeters on the top of the Great Gate sounded a fanfare, and the College Choir sang madrigals from the Minstrels' Gallery during the lunch for 275 guests in the dining hall. But the main event of the day was the opening of the new School of Veterinary Medicine in Madingley Road. The day's final visit was to Girton College, where among those introduced to the Queen were members of the recently founded New Hall, the third of the Cambridge women's Colleges. Then it was time to leave for Histon Station and the London train – but as Jack's pictures show there was another reception – that of the Chivers staff as the Queen drove through their factory. [TWO SCANS – THE CAR AND THE CROWD, SCAN OF HISTON STATION]

##

While old Chivers employees have their magnifying glasses out can anybody shed light on this photograph of the maintenance unit, possibly during the First World War, which Bob Giddings from Chittering has lent me [SCAN]

Readers write:

Geoffrey Reed the hairdresser has e-mailed to say that the three footballers being 'permed' in 1978 (last week's Memories) were being styled by Karen, Beverley and Sarah who worked in the Hobson Street salon of Reeds Hair

Mrs A. Wick from Histon has sent more snaps of the Mow Fen Crossing near Swavesey. She lived in the cottage for several years with her Aunt and uncle, Mr Mrs Frank Prior. Frank was a porter at Swavesey station and her aunt the crossing keeper. In those days they had an Aga stove to do the cooking on and used oil lamps for lighting. Life became more exciting when the line flooded – the water can be seen in the background of her photos. [SCAN]

NOT NOW USING THE PICTURE OF ST PAUL'S SCHOOL

Memories 6th August 2003, by Mike Petty

From time to time the News reports the latest archaeological discoveries as a new and unexpected aspect of Cambridge history is revealed. But is there another one on the way: Peter Robinson from Clare College writes:

“The article in last Tuesday's Evening News about the excavation of the corner by the Catholic church to relay a gas main reminded me of a local historical question that has been nagging at the back of my mind for several years.

“When I was a student, some 25 years ago, someone told me that there was a complete Victorian public convenience buried under Hyde Park Corner in Cambridge. The story was that the entrances had to be blocked and paved over to make room for the slip roads in the corners when the junction was enlarged. The hut on the corner of Parker's Piece was then put up to provide alternative toilets.

“Is there any truth at all in this story? I have mentioned it to a number of people over the years and nobody else has heard it, including a friend who was training as a City "Blue Badge" guide. Is it just an urban myth or a hoax for which I fell? Of course, if by any chance it is true, it would be wonderful to take the opportunity to open it up for guided tours when then gas work is being undertaken...”

There were certainly underground lavatories at Hyde Park Corner. They were being discussed in February in 1899 and had been constructed by October 1902 when the News reported how the manager of the Cambridge Tramways Company had been summoned for damaging, injuring and spoiling the public convenience situated at Hyde Park Corner by scribbling on the woodwork with a pencil, thereby doing damage to the amount of 2s. After looking round to see if the custodian, Mr Thompson, was there he had scribbled “Thompson, old pig” on the woodwork.

The toilets were constructed beneath an ornate shelter that stood on an island at the junction of Lensfield Road and Hills Road / Regent Street. But what is its story. It was probably constructed in connection with the horse-drawn trams – a sort of light rail transport system – which had been opened in 1880. The shelter was there by 1899 and is depicted on a postcard of the Catholic Church taken in the early 1900s. It is marked on the OS map of 1927 and shown on a photograph of an Ortona bus taken in the 1930s. But when did it come down. [SCAN OF SHELTER BESIDE CHURCH c1900, BUS AND SHELTER 1930S]

Other underground loos to be erected at the same time were those on the Market Hill, that still serve the market traders. These have had a dramatic history, having been ransacked by undergraduates during construction in 1900 to provide fuel for a bonfire to celebrate the Relief of Ladysmith in the Boer War. Later they were the scene of incredible discoveries when, in the excitement of the excavations of the tomb of Tutankhamen in Egypt a number of undergraduates in exotic dress brought up pot after pot from the ‘tomb’ of ‘Toot-and-Come-In’. That was in 1924 but could there be other treasures to be found in the lost Victorian loos beneath Lensfield Road?

##

And while on the subject of street antiquities, what is the story behind the dates inscribed on the wall of a house at the corner of Fair Street and Maids Causeway. There are a series of dates and the letters HTP. Some people think they mark the height of various floods, others that – more likely – they indicate the parish boundaries of Holy Trinity Church and record the dates these were surveyed. [PHOTO FROM NEWS FILE OF THE INSCRIPTIONS] In the old days it was customary for children to accompany their elders on such surveys and then

beaten at strategic points to ensure the location remained fixed in their minds. Enid Porter recorded one such incident:

“An old lady living in the Castle End district of Cambridge who died in 1960, aged nearly 90, said in

1950 that she could just remember what was, she thought, probably the last beating of the bounds of St Giles' parish which she was taken, as a small child, to watch. She recalled that the Vicar, Canon Slater, and the churchwardens had to go through the house occupied by a butcher, locally known as 'Porky' Evans, in Evans' Passage which used to lead from Castle Street to St Peter's Street. To enter the house so as correctly to mark the parish boundary, the Vicar and the rest of the procession had to climb through a ground-floor window.” [SCAN OF EVANS PASSAGE]

Readers write:

A recent Memories article about a house in Trumpington built from pieces of ancient timber salvaged from a house on Peas Hill has sparked an interesting letter from Alan Fakes of Willingham.

He writes: “You may be interested to know that I remember working on the house erected in Trumpington Long Rd, Cambridge for Mr Peck. I was a young man at the time, which I think would have been approx 1937. I carried out the leadwork to the support of the antique weathervane in the middle of the main ridge of the roof, which incorporates a lead pineapple, all still in situ. I also did some copper roofing to a flat roof at the rear, or it may have been the back, of the house. I remember that it was very cold winter weather at the time. We were told at the time that the timbers of this house were ones being re-assembled from a house which had been demolished on Peas Hill, Cambridge”

But it was not just this building that Alan worked on: “I also remember, as a young apprentice, working on the building of the Shire Hall on Castle Hill, Cambridge. Also on the previous demolition of the old prison on the site, the bricks from which were salvaged to build the new Shire Hall. Being young I took a macabre interest in the Execution shed, and Gallows, the Condemned cell, padded cell etc. I also carried out the copper roofwork to the tower of St George's Church in Chesterton, which I notice has now developed a fine green patina, which makes it visible from all around.” [SCAN OF GAOL]

Margaret Cream from Cambridge also had her memories jogged by the Trumpington article and in particular by the mention of Ted Mott, the photographer. Margaret lived next door to Mott and his sister on the Shelford Road until she was ten years old, before moving to near another 'character', Kitty Willers and her parents. She continues: “My husband worked for Mr Bull, dairyman who used the yard next to the 'Coach and Horses' and his cows were taken to and from the meadows between the railway bridge and the mill. The family who did the washing were the Poulterers and they lived in Whitlock's Yard. [REPRISE PICTURE?] They pegged washing on lines on the recreation ground, where the shops are now. A Mrs Matthews lived on the High Street opposite the 'Tally Ho'; she made very good coffee and village children would go to her back door to buy it for only a few coppers.” Margaret also tells me that the picture of the old gentleman on the cover of the 'Trumpington Past and Present' book – taken by Ted Mott – was her grandfather [SCAN OF COVER ATTACHED]

#

My mention of the Turks Head restaurant has also prompted letters and e-mails. Reg Stokes writes: “We started our courting at the Turk's head on February 29th 1968 with a meal of chicken and chips and then went on to the Victoria Cinema to see 'Up the Junction'. You

certainly stirred up the memories – the lady in question has been my wife for the last thirty-three years!” [REPRISE PHOTO?]

Trevor Cowell from Cherry Hinton works for Kershaw Mechanical Services and in the 1960s they were making and fitting extract canopies and air conditioning in many of the Berni inn chain of restaurants. They used to ‘borrow’ a menu to tick-off where they’d been and has sent a specimen from September 1964 to jog memories of what was on offer, and the prices charged. [MENU]

M.J. Pearce from Sawston writes: “At the time of the closure of the Turk’s Head my older brother was the Managing Director of Berni Inns. He left Sawston Village College when he was 14 years old and started work as an apprentice chef at Trinity College in 1937. Later he had a number of senior jobs in catering and at the time of the closure, working for Berni, he came to negotiate a new lease of the property with Trinity College who were the owners. The agent for the college was a gentleman named Pemberton of the Trumpington family. They could not conclude an agreement so the lease was not renewed and the Turk’s head closed. My brother told me afterwards if the agent realised he was negotiating with an apprentice chef from the kitchens of Trinity College”

Rodney Dale from Haddenham can add further details to the Royal progression through Chivers factory in 1955 (Memories last week): “The Queen drove from Oakington to Histon via Park Lane (Histon!) and down Station Road presumably to Chivers. Station Road had been resurfaced for the occasion. We stood at the gate and said 'Hurrah!' It must have been 1955, because I was in Germany doing National Service in 1954”

Memories 13th August 2003 by Mike Petty

The changes in refuse collection and the introduction of wheelie-bins in South Cambridgeshire have brought the question of rubbish back into the news columns and letter pages. But similar issues have been reported time and again over the centuries

Back in 1575, the time of the first Queen Elizabeth, an agreement was made between the Town and University for the correction of common nuisances. Part of this saw arrangements for the streets in front of colleges, churches, houses of students, the market place and other central areas to be cleansed and swept twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays with all other lanes cleaned once a week at least. The muck and filth was to be carried to common dunghills – and no other place on pain of a fine of £1. But householders could spread their own muck on their own grounds, or in other men’s fields, providing they got permission of the owner.

It also appointed two or more common carters to collect all muck, mire and filth laying in heaps within the precincts of the town and to prevent people taking advantage it limited the amount of horse or cow dung that could be collected. But as some people had more muck than others the agreement allowed for the extra to be removed at an additional charge which they could negotiate with the collectors.

Despite centuries of practice at getting such operations right the papers have been full of complaints; in May 1897 a correspondent to the News, signing himself “Shopkeeper” complained:

Will you allow me a small space to refer to the arrangements for sweeping and cleaning Fitzroy Street? After one gets one's place thoroughly cleaned and dusted, ready for business, we have three men commence sweeping the street and it is impossible sometimes to see across the road for dust. After this is done and the cart takes the rubbish away the water cart makes

its appearance about two hours later. Considering that Fitzroy Street is one of the busiest streets of Cambridge I think these things could be altered to the benefit of the tradespeople of the street

But this was in addition to the everyday – or once-a-week - refuse collection which has prompted various complaints and in March 1901 saw a Cambridge lady taken to court:

Miss W— of Regent Street, Cambridge was summoned for causing an obstruction by leaving some refuse tins in the street. P.C. Cole said he saw the tins outside her premises at 10.11 pm and they were still there at one o'clock the next morning. She said she placed the rubbish outside overnight because the scavenger came so early in the morning – 6.35am - before she was up. The Chief Constable said something had to be done to stop the practice of putting pails of rubbish out overnight. The defendant was cautioned and dismissed.

Some thought that the dustmen themselves were the problem; as the CDN reported in January 1952

After Monday wash day it's Tuesday bucket-and-shovel day for the women of the Cambridge's Queen Street, or Dustmen's Folly as it has been re-named by the residents. Tuesday is the day when the dustcart calls to empty the conglomeration of tin cans, ashes, kitchen waste and other refuse. Every Tuesday morning as regularly as clockwork 20 housewives place 20 dustbins on the pavements for the dustmen to empty. Promptly at mid-day the dust-cart hoves in sight and the contents are emptied into the cart with a liberal application for the road as well. And 20 housewives wait for the metallic clang that is the signal for them to go into action with brushes, buckets and shovels to clear up the mess the dustmen leave behind – for the street is in a worse state than it was before they called. And so seldom is a street cleaner to be seen that to the majority of the residents he is a legendary figure, though Mrs Fry who runs a little general stores does claim to have seen the Abominable Dustman

Others claimed that better-off residents got a better service: thus in 1913 it was alleged that in the De Freville area the binmen collected rubbish from the back of the house, but in poorer areas people needed to take it to the front.

Both rich and poor were asked to be selective in what they put out; in April 1923 an official urged:

I am asked to point out to the public the danger of getting rid of their war relics by placing them amongst their refuse. Thoughtlessness of this kind might have serious consequences for the men working at the Corporation destructor. No less than eight live cartridges were found in one load recently, and fortunately they were discovered before they reached the destructor. People should think twice before depositing explosives amongst their rubbish, and in this way endangering the lives of those who removed and destroy it.

But no matter when it was collected, or where it was collected from, one issue was what the rubbish should be deposited in.

In 1911 Cambridge councillors proposed a new byelaw that refuse should be placed in galvanised receptacles, but some felt that the cost was too high and that these would be abused - tenants might use them for wheelbarrows, coal scuttles or to give babies baths in.

By April 1948 the issue of dustbins was again being aired in the letters page:

Sir, I am interested in the letter of H.O. Fleming on the collection of refuse. The only way to have the old dustbin removed is to see the dustmen personally and make a suitable arrangement with them. I have had to do this myself and have found them very civil and helpful. The dustmen are highly selective and seem to go through the bins carefully, taking out anything they do not fancy and strewing it about. They also batter the bin out of shape very quickly and in may case leave it some distance away from where it is placed outside my premises. - R.Partington, Maids Causeway, Cambridge

But a dustman's lot was not a happy one, as one explained in September 1947

Sir - A dustman's wage is £3.16s.0d a week, irrespective of loads or journeys. I wonder if your readers would like to try this job for a while. They would then find out the discomforts which are a dustman's lot. He mustn't mind when lifting a bin if water and filth trickle down his neck through a hole; he mustn't mind if somebody puts some acid in a bin which when emptied sprays on one's clothes and burns holes in them (these are not replaced). One pair of overalls a year is the limit. Each motor is given a district and that has to be cleared, and if the dust and smell should make him feel ill he must just carry on. With all this we are expected to sort all the paper from the dirt. If all householders kept it separate it would be different. Critics should try on a windy day, emptying a bin that has been crammed full. It is impossible to do it without some dropping but if the loaders stop to pick it up every time, the driver would be in the next street - A Dustman

About 50 years ago *News* reporter Philip Osborne took a look at the situation in Cambridge. He found:

There are 33 dustmen working in Cambridge together with nine drivers for nine lorries and a foreman at the Mill Road depot to act as a peace-maker between his men and the owners of dented dustbins.

Bill Oliver, who is 52 in November, has been a dustman since 1928, the year before the mechanised transport came in. He is a big jolly dustman who speaks of the trials of a dustman's life: "The dustman is always in the wrong. Suppose a dog knocks the lid of a dustbin and the wind takes it some way down the street. The dustman picks it up and because he's in a hurry, puts it on the first bin he sees without one. Some party will be sure to complain 'The men have taken my dustbin lid'

"I had one party in Garden Walk. She had a lot of rose cuttings in her bin. I left my scuttle in her garden while I went outside to shove her cuttings in the lorry. I wasn't supposed to, we're supposed to leave garden rubbish. Then she complained about me leaving my filthy scuttle in her garden"

There are the 'wide boys' with their own lorries who collect waste paper a street or two ahead of the dustmen and leave litter on the ground so people say 'Look what the dustmen have done'

It seems the poorer the district, the more rubbish there is. The Rock Estate is light work compared with Romsey Town. George Gray, the foreman, says "You hardly every go to a working-class house and find the bin half full. There is usually a full bin and a bit at the side"

But in all districts are to be found the forbidden garden rubbish, the brick rubble, the hot cinders, sump oil and liquids that make an untippable mush of the refuse; rubbish stamped on and jumped on to get more in (and make it impossible to get out again); and often, instead of proper bins, rusting tins, & boxes of oil drums with jagged edges.

Now all this is to change and all will be peace and tranquillity – or will it? The opinions quoted are from the news of the past, what betting they are not repeated in the News of the next few months?

Memories 20th August 2003, by Mike Petty

We live in a world of constant change; things that have been part of our lives and landscape for as long as we can remember suddenly disappear and we find it difficult to remember just what they looked like.

This is not a new phenomenon; in August 1903 – 100 years ago – William Beales Redfarn wrote to the Cambridge Daily News:

“Sir – I believe a great number of antiquarians will learn with regret that one of our most ancient links with the past has just disappeared. The Falcon Inn Yard in Petty Cury has always been one of the sights of Cambridge but now like so many of its kind it has been removed to make way for modern improvements. So quietly has the old Falcon taken flight that I fear our local photographers have not secured pictures of the old buildings and its destruction has escaped even the lynx-eyed representatives of the Press”.

Redfarn was a politician, Mayor of Cambridge four times, leader of the Conservative party, chairman of this, leader of that, and Director of the New Theatre in St Andrew’s Street. But he is best remembered today as an illustrator. Born in Cambridge in 1840 William had studied for some years with J.F. Herring, the famous animal painter, who then lived at Fulbourn. But it was in 1875 that he started to record the ancient and interesting buildings of his home town before they were lost forever in the demolition and restoration that was then the rage. The engravings were issued in monthly parts but then brought together into a volume entitled "Old Cambridge" which was published in 1876.

One of these featured the Falcon Yard. In the accompanying text Redfarn described its lofty gables, the yard which had almost entirely escaped modernisation and was a fine specimen of a timber building, its galleries, low arched doors, wide oak staircases and the large banqueting chambers which by then had long been divided into tenements.

But another Cambridge illustrator was less concerned about the change – indeed it might boost his income. Robert Farren, who published a number of books of engravings, responded:

“Sir – the alarm about the old Falcon Inn, Petty Cury, being demolished unrecorded seems to me unnecessary. Certainly within the last 40 years I have sent out almost as many drawings of it, to say nothing of the etchings. It, with the old Wrestlers Inn, has been a small gold mine to me. One noticeable thing I might mention: it was the last inn to hang out a flag as a sign that the recruiting sergeant was at home”.

The Cambridge Daily News was quick to comment on the demolition:

“Our attention has been drawn to the fact that another link with the fascinating past of Cambridge is being severed by the almost entire demolition of the one-time famous ‘Falcon Inn’. Historical spots and places, interesting, even sacred, though they may be, have at times to give way to the requirements of modern times. The old Falcon Inn is one of these.

“Many years ago the front of the building, with its fine old gables facing Petty Cury, disappeared and about eight years ago the buildings on the left side of the Falcon Yard were demolished to make way for business extensions. Now the rooms on the right side are in process of demolition in order that extra accommodation for the Lion Hotel may be afforded. The back part possessing a small specimen of the open gallery which was an architectural feature of the Falcon remains and still gives a faint idea of what the ancient inn was like. For many years the Falcon has ceased to fulfil the functions of an inn. Modernites forsook it. Its glory is entirely in the past”.

Indeed in 1850 a journalist had reported on his visit to the Falcon Yard which had become the most disgraceful slum in Cambridge. About 300 people lived in the Yard and “there are two privies for the use of the whole of the inhabitants, but as they are at a distance of fifty yards from some portion of the premises those of the inhabitants who have back windows to their rooms are in the habit of throwing all their refuse out of the windows on to a large dung heap in the Red Lion Yard, the reeking steam from which is constantly penetrating the room”

One woman described the single room in which she had lived for 34 years, the bed “as big as an old pocket handkerchief” had to accommodate her husband and daughter as well. Another bedded down in a room with no light whatsoever, a candle revealing a black hole in which a pile of clothes on the floor served for bedding.

The stately galleries so loved by antiquarians had been divided into apartments let at rent varying from 1/4 [ONE SHILLING AND FOUR PENCE] to 2/- [TWO SHILLINGS] per week and although several were remarkably clean “the majority are as wretched as it is possible to conceive”. By 1885 they had been condemned by the Medical Officer of Health and the poor forced to find other lodgings.

The redevelopment that followed was itself ripped down for the present Lion Yard shopping precinct, with its multi-storey car park, courts and roof-top public garden that will soon be redeveloped once more. Perhaps in the future somebody will lament “Do you remember the Old Lion Yard Car Park”.

Now in 2003 comes news that developers are moving in on another of Cambridge’s much-loved ancient buildings, the White Horse Inn on Castle Street. Part of the inn yard, which once echoed to the sound of horses, is to become a construction site. This creaky old building, with its narrow staircases, low beams, ancient fireplaces and secret room is packed with antiquities; old paintings hang on the walls, heavy old furniture, pots, pans and domestic knick-knacks from bygone days abound, for it is home to the Cambridge and County Folk Museum.

But this time the changes are to be welcomed. For when the builders finally leave next summer there will be a new extension slotted in to the rear with better facilities, a meeting room, a lift, loos and more space to display the wonderful range of material the museum has rescued and cared for since it opened in 1936. The Inn Yard itself will once more become the focal point and main entrance to the site with panels interpreting the history of this area of Cambridge. The old White Horse Inn building will have been taken back to the way it was a century ago. The creaky steps & ancient timbers will still be there but the fabric itself will be allowed to tell its own story, as well as being a home to bygones.

There is still time for us all to have one last visit before work commences on 1st October and the Museum shuts its doors until next summer. To climb those rickety stairs, admire the great hearth around which travellers rested, the pots and pans, old vacuum cleaners, half-pint milk bottles, fenland tools, dulcimers and the rest. To revive our memories of the past and ensure that in years to come we can say, “Do you remember the old Folk Museum?” [SCAN OF

MUSEUM IN 1937, HEARTH OF WHITE HORSE INN STILL SURVIVES, HEARTH OF THE FALCON DURING DEMOLITION, PIX FROM LIBRARY FILES]

Memories 27th August 2003, by Mike Petty

Joy Fuller of Westmere Farm Upware seeks your help:

“In the autumn of 1995, a new Cock-Up Bridge was built over Wicken Lode near Upware, to replace the old bridge which was in a very sad state of repair. Following representations from local people it was agreed that the new bridge should be a replica of the original. Even though only pedestrian public rights were recorded over the bridge, the new bridge was built to be suitable for use by horse drawn vehicles [SCAN OF THE OLD COCK-UP BRIDGE WICKEN SHOWING SLATS FOR HORSES]

“But why is the bridge called a Cock-Up Bridge? Like the 'cock horse' going to Banbury Cross, a cock horse is a trace horse - as would be used for towing or 'haling' boats on the Lodes, or hitched in front of a shaft horse to give an extra pull along the fen droves. Bill Coppin, formerly of Upware, can remember working with a 'cock' horse, helping to pull carts along the Swaffham Prior fen droves and crossing the River Cam by chain ferry at the 'No Hurry'.” [SCAN OF JUNCTION OF BURWELL AND REACH LODE SHOWING BARGE c1900]

Charles Lucas, a Burwell doctor, recalled in 1930 when there were other Cock-up bridges & there were built like a drawbridge

“The construction was as follows: a floor, ten feet in length, attached at one side to a hinge, spanned the stream. On the hinge side were two upright planks about fifteen or sixteen feet long and an oblong frame twice the length of the floor and suspended between the two planks, so that half the frame projected over the floor, the other half over the bank. Two heavy weights suspended on chains which ran down part of the frame projecting over the floor and, hanging down at the end of the frame, were hooked on to the floor. In the centre of the back part of the frame a chain was attached: when this chain was pulled down, it raised the floor from a horizontal to a vertical position, so that there was a free course for boats to pass with masts up. These bridges were very prominent features in the district and could be seen for many miles around. From the mode of lifting up the floor the Fenmen called them 'Cock-up' bridges.” If you can help further please contact Joy on 01353 720288 [SCAN OF ANOTHER COCKUP BRIDGE AT BURWELL WITH CHILDREN DIVING, SCAN OF MODEL OF OLD COCK-UP BRIDGE]

Dr Lucas knew the area well and could comment on the changes:

“At the Priory Farm, near a cock-up bridge in 1849, a gatepost was put down on into the solid earth a distance of eight or ten feet and a gate was hung on it, just clearing the ground. At the present time the gatepost is still in existence and a gate is hung on it, but the ground all round has so wasted and disappeared that a horse and cart can be driven with ease under it, showing distinctly the difference of level then and now”.

The soil continues to erode and motorists driving from Swaffham Prior or Reach through to Upware will find their cars tossed from side to side on the lumpy road. But it was worse in Lucas' time:

“My first memorable drive into the heart of Swaffham Fen will demonstrate the alteration in the level. The conveyance was a Stanhope gig with very high splaying wheels to negotiate the deep ruts and throw the dirt away. In those days it was always more or less an adventure, because one would be lucky if one got home without a broken spring or shaft or without being

pitched into a ditch. The start was from Barton Bridge Reach. The drove was forty feet wide, the track in the centre was the most desirable, the two side tracks being impossibly rough, and the ruts were from fourteen to eighteen inches deep in soft black earth. The wheel tracks were most uneven; one wheel would be down and the other up; and when the horse gave a plunge forward, it took a lot of practice to keep a firm seat. It was only possible to go at a walking pace. After proceeding thus for about three miles we came to the main drain, and here we went down a steep incline to the bridge and then up again on the other side. If it had not been for the apron I should have been pitched into the drain. At the present time there is quite a three- or four-foot rise to get over the bridge

“About a mile farther on we came to the Cam bank; as we sat in the gig we were on a level with the towing path, and the number of horse-drawn lighters was a surprise. Turning to the left on the road by the Cam bank we went to Upware. Just before we got to the Swaffham engine (which had not long been erected) we passed the foundation of the old water-mill which used to scoop the water out of the Fen. Looking over the right side the expanse of land towards Reach was on a level with the river-bank, which is now like a wall six or seven feet high above the road - clear evidence of the sinking of the land.” [SCAN OF UPWARE PUMPING ENGINE c1930]

Briscoe Snelson knew the area in the inter-war years; he was an enthusiastic photographer and his lantern-slide views are preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection. They capture the beauty and tranquillity of the area – and there is the problem. For at a public inquiry at the Gardiner Memorial Hall, Burwell on Tuesday 9th September inspectors will consider whether Harrison’s Drove and the route along Wicken Lode should be designated a byway. In an age when horses and carriages have been overtaken by four-wheel-drive motors the decision is an important one for the future enjoyment of the area. [SCAN OF SNELSON VIEW TOWARDS UPWARE – SHOWING STORM CLOUDS GATHERING]

Another area of tranquillity concerns Ann Sanderson who e-mails to say that St Bede's school, Birdwood Road, Cherry Hinton, have been doing a local heritage project, researching a small site in Cherry Hinton called 'Giants Grave' or 'Springhead' or 'Robin Hood dip'. This is the Spring site opposite the Robin Hood pub at the junction of Cherry Hinton Road and High Street. Over the past year, they’ve researched its history, done surveys, metal detecting, archaeology, botanical studies, theodolite measurements etc etc, and visited the Records Office, Cambridgeshire Collection, local library, and University Department of Aerial Photography. Now they have a wealth of information, which the students are presenting to the local historical society and have a grant to cover the cost of printing an information leaflet and manufacture of a permanent site board.

But there are still some things missing. In all their enquiries they’ve had no response from local residents with memories of the site – the sort of things that don’t get written down. Nor can they confirm a rumour that the original Robin Hood pub burnt down in the middle of the last century, though they know from Greene King that the present building was opened in 1960. Finally, they know the site was relandscaped between 1951 and 1972. I believe this probably took place in March 1969 for I included a picture in my book ‘Memory Lane, Cambridge’. The News reported: "A new water park at Cherry Hinton: When the City Council Parks Department began to make a thorough clear-out of the old sping opposite the Robin Hood public house, they realised it had an island in the centre. Plans for the newly-cleared area include the planting of willow trees, spring bulbs and bog plants in wetter areas. The spring is the source of the brook which flows through Cherry Hinton and across to Brooks Road. For some time it has been home of weeds, rubbish and bicycle frames". [SCAN OF SPRING SITE 1969, SCAN OF ROBIN HOOD PUB 1953]

Ann is the parent helper and co-ordinator for the student project and would welcome any information. If you can help e-mail her - ann@foxton.freemove.co.uk, or phone Cambridge 870799

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The Hyde Park underground toilets continue to attract letters

Anthony Battle Evans e-mails: "Your item about the public convenience at Hyde Park Corner reminds me that my grandmother always complained that it was intended for men only and that ladies were seriously inconvenienced." Rodney Dale from Haddenham says that he and hundreds of others who went to the Perse School when it was at Gonville Place, will testify to the entombed public lavatory under the road between the Catholic Church and The Oak Public House. Mrs Grace Atkinson writes: "I am now 85 years old, but I certainly remember the loo at Hyde Park Corner. As a child I caught the bus there to go into town for my parents. It was painted green with a roof on it, so I waited in the dry. Then in 1940 I moved to Bedford where my late husband was in the army and I drove the Eastern National Buses there. When five years later my husband was invalided out of the army we returned to Cambridge and I applied for release, but oh no! I was transferred to Eastern Counties buses and drove in Cambridge. Thinking back to those years in the late 40's I am sure I still picked up and put down at that loo on Hyde Park Corner

Margaret Cream from Gwydir St Cambridge also remembers the Hyde Park loos, though she never went down them. She points out that it was toffee – not coffee – that so attracted the children to Mrs Matthew's house opposite the Tally Ho in Trumpington High Street (Memories 6th August). She adds: "The only coffee most folk had in those days would be 'Camp', a dark liquid in a square bottle. Not many children would be allowed it. I often made a cup for the A.A. man on 'point duty' at the crossroads on the Shelford and Hauxton junction. I knew all the A.A. men, friends of my dad.

That opens two new areas for memories – coffee is now an everyday part of our daily lives, but what do you recall of your first taste of it; and what reminiscences do you have of the A.A. man, his yellow motorbike and the roadside telephone boxes? [SCAN OF AA MAN AT TRUMPINGTON 1920s]

Memories 3rd September 2003, by Mike Petty

John Jennings e-mails to say that his eagle-eyed brother-in-law John Cooper has spotted something odd about one of the pictures I featured in my Memories article on 30th July. Jack Diver who discovered the original photograph believed it showed a visit by the Queen to Chivers' factory at Histon in 1955, and Eleanor Whitehead and her team of historians agreed with him, including a similar picture in their excellent book 'Photographic Memories of Histon and Impington'

But John noticed that the small car registration number CVE 539 leading the limousine past cheering crowds of Chivers workers appears to have headlight filters fitted. These were used during the blackout in the Second World War to reduce the danger of vehicles being bombed by enemy aircraft – but they would have been removed by 1955. [SCAN OF CARS AT CHIVERS]

Comparison with another picture of such filters on cars parked on Cambridge Market Hill about 1943 confirms that John is probably right. [SCAN OF CAR ON MARKET HILL SHOWING HEADLIGHT FILTERS]

So if it was not a visit by the Queen what was going on? In 1949 Chivers issued a booklet entitled "Another Chapter" detailing their contribution to the war effort in which they mention two visits of 'important personages' to the Histon factory. One was the Duke of Gloucester who showed great interest in the preparation of Mashed Potato Powder and Blackcurrant Puree. The other was Lord Woolton, Minister of Food. He spent a whole day at the factories at Histon and Huntingdon to express appreciation for the contribution being made by the farms and factories to the appeal for increased food production. He visited each department and addressed the staff over the broadcasting system. So was it one of these in the limousine? Can anybody help to put the record right?

Dr Alf Peacock, formerly director of the York Educational Settlement, was born in Histon and recalled his memories of the war-time years in the village in an essay published in the late 1970s. His parents worked for Chivers – but not in the factory:

"My father and mother were both agricultural workers - agricultural labourers they were called in those rather more forthright days. My father came from a large family and worked for well over 50 years for Chivers and Sons, the famous jam manufacturers. I have a presentation gold watch recording this long and 'loyal' service. On the eve of the Second World War my father got 'thirty bob', which with deductions meant a take-home wage of 29s. 4d (£1.47). He gave my mother 29s. and undoubtedly spent the remainder on Digger Shag tobacco - he rolled his own foul fags and used to say that his craving for tobacco could not be satisfied by even the ferocious Woodbine. Mother also went to work - in the fields for most of the year and, if she was lucky, in the winter in Chivers' 'potato shed', where she and her mates graded the vegetables for marketing. Wages here were low, but better than nothing.

"We lived at number 8, Orchard Road, Histon in a 'non parlour' house. Orchard Road, then, was a council estate, and we were the first tenants. Prior to that we had lived in a little 'one up and one down' white washed, wattle and daub cottage opposite the Sally Army hut in Impington Lane. You got to the top floor of our cottage by a ladder - and next door to our abode was a big walnut tree. One night there was a gale, and next morning our cottage roof was bare and the walnut tree was thatched. Maybe this was the reason why our house was then condemned, an administrative decision which undoubtedly helped us get a house in Casey's Court as Orchard Road was sometimes known. My parents had to indicate whether they wanted 'parlour' or 'non parlour' and my mother continually regretted - when things got better - that she did not have the front room which undoubtedly would never have been used except at Christmas and on 'Feast Sunday'.

"In Orchard Road, and in the village as a whole, there were a large number of people who were employed at the jam factory. If you worked there you had a shorter working week, certainly better conditions than did farm workers, but most important of all you earned an extra pound or so a week. This extra quid enabled you to do much more than we could (and live in a parlour type) and I remember many many explanations about why we did not have holidays when others did, or why my friend could go and see Bertram Mills' Circus in Cambridge and I could not. 'They get more money than us', my mother would explain, 'their dad is at the factory and earns a pound a week more than yours'. Funny thing I always accepted this, never, ever, felt any resentment and accepted the fact that we were second class citizens.

"Why did people like my parents not leave the land and work in the factory? The answer to that is easy. They were not allowed to. My mother desperately wanted to become a 'factory hand', but she could not change. Maybe during the war she was not allowed to, it was impossible, as there were official restrictions on doing so. So what could my parents do to get a little more money? They could take other jobs- and that is what they did. Father, an expert gravedigger, and his wife, looked after Impington church. She cleaned the place, he cleaned

the church yard, lit the fires, pumped the organ, rang the bells and locked up. [SCAN OF IMPINGTON CHURCH]

“I do not know how much time my mother put in at the church but my father worked there for several evenings a week, a long time on Saturdays, and all day on Sundays. For this the pair of them got the princely sum of five shillings (25p) a week. Eventually they had to ask for assistance from the state. The means test ‘came round’ and they were refused help. Why? Well they were told it was because they had ‘two incomes’. Get this. People at ‘the factory’ getting £2 10s [TWO POUNDS TEN SHILLINGS] (£2.50) a week could qualify for help, these two working on the land, then in the evenings, then on Saturdays and Sundays and still getting 15 shillings (75p) less than the factory hands did not. It all seemed dreadfully unfair and made my father bitterly resentful. I am sorry to have to record that he took it out on the one representative of authority that he could get at - the vicar - by causing thick coke fumes to permeate the church”

“You keep a quiet” was included in ‘Essays in York History’ edited by Alf Peacock in 1997.
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Mary Flinders from Eltisley sends a photo of the staff of Chivers’ Saw Mills at Histon, in November 1917. She writes: “Both my grandmothers worked at Chivers. Violet Medlock and Edith Wilkin were friends and Violet’s son, Frederick, and Edith’s daughter, Jean, married each other. Violet is the third from the left in the back row and Edith is the first on the right, sitting in the front row” [SCAN]

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News that the blockbuster musical “Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story” is to come to the Cambridge Corn Exchange from 8th to 13th September has coincided with the discovery of a fuzzy photograph thought to show the real Buddy Holly on Cambridge’s Magdalene Bridge. But did he perform here or did anybody see the real Buddy Holly in concert. [SCAN OF PICTURE OF BUDDY HOLLY ON MAGDALENE BRIDGE RECEIVED FROM NEWS]

Recent Memories articles have prompted replies.

On the initials on the wall in Fair Street, John Newnham, Chairman of the Society of Cambridge Tourist Guides e-mails: “There is no mystery to the inscriptions on the wall of the house at the corner of Fair Street and Maids Causeway. They mark the parish boundaries of Holy Trinity. Similar marks are to be seen on the west side of Trinity Library marking All Saints Parish and St Mary’s Parish.” Heather Richardson of Cambridge confirms the initials as being those of Holy Trinity; she believes the bounds were beaten again in the late 1980’s or early 90’s when she was churchwarden there. [PHOTO OF THE INSCRIPTIONS]

Anthony Battle Evans e-mails: “Your item about the beating of the bounds of St Giles parish mentioned that the vicar and the churchwardens had to go through the house occupied by the butcher Porky Evans in Evans Passage. Evans Passage is named after the pork butcher’s shop at its entrance. The shop was owned by William Battle in the eighteenth century and the passage was called Battle’s Passage. In 1793 Elizabeth Battle married John Evans and their son Zachariah took over the shop and the name then changed to Evans Passage. Zachariah called one of his sons William Battle Evans and the name Battle has been a forename of four later generations, though unhappily it was never carried by the line which ended with Porky Evans.” [SCAN OF EVANS PASSAGE]

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Daphne Trinder (nee Warren) from Soham has sent the bill for her wedding reception that was held at Matthews Restaurant – predecessor of the Turks Head – in September 1961. The

total bill for catering for 42 guests, including sherry, sparkling wine, hire of glasses, room and flowers came to all of £30.14.0

Memories 10th September 2003 by Mike Petty

On 8th September 2003 security was intense around Cambridge's University Arms Hotel for a meeting of senior NATO generals. Uniformed police were on patrol together with numerous gentlemen in dark suits and sunglasses muttering into their communicators. Inside uniformed delegates discussed matters of military moment. Later they adjourned for dinner to Trinity College where they were joined by Minister of Defence Geoff Hoon [PLEASE CHECK HIS TITLE AND SPELLING OF HIS NAME]. Such gatherings are nothing new to Trinity – but I wonder if Monday night's delegates appreciated how they were following in the footsteps of other distinguished military leaders. [OLD PHOTO OF UNIFORMED PORTER AT UNIVERSITY ARMS HOTEL – IS THERE A MODERN PICTURE OF THE UNIFORMED DELEGATES]

For at Trinity College in September 1907 other military men were making plans for the deployment of thousands of British troops. Soon 130,000 enemy soldiers would land at Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft and head inland. Cambridge took it all very placidly – watched the officers start off in their motor cars, and chatted to the men in the bar of the Lion Hotel. For this was just a paper exercise with Sir John French and his cronies returning nightly to the peace of that College.

Within a year the troops were real as 150 horsemen passed through Cambridge. One squadron of cavalry spent the night on Grantchester Meadows, another by the side the Witchford Road at Ely & yet more in Withersfield Road, Haverhill. A country policeman found eight soldiers in full uniform with hats and spurs, their horses tethered by their side, lying dead to the world, fast asleep. Meanwhile the invading Irish Hussars fought inland from Colchester. Again Cambridge did not panic – it was just a military exercise.

In September 1910 the German army swarmed ashore at Kings Lynn and conquered Lincoln. The King issued a proclamation imposing military control throughout Cambridgeshire as the invaders swept south. This time Cambridge fell and a fierce battle raged from Helions Bumpstead to Kelshall, fiercest around Elmdon where British trenches were more than once captured by the Magdeburg battalions only to be hurled out again by the Coldstream Guards. By noon the magnificent palace at Audley End was in flames and desperate fighting was taking place in the streets of Saffron Walden. The timely arrival of General Packington's force from Potton proved decisive; despite a final cavalry charge the Germans were slaughtered, swept out of existence by a terrible cross fire. By nightfall there was no unwounded German south of Whittlesford, except as a prisoner. The Battle of Royston was hailed as a great victory in the Daily Mail of September 10th 1910. But this too was a fictional war, recounted in a novel, 'The Battle of Royston', by William Le Queux that had been published to point out the likely impact of such a real invasion, a story that so impressed Field Marshall Lord Roberts that he added a Foreword. [PERHAPS FIND A PICTURE OF AUDLEY END FROM LIBRARY?]

Two years later in September 1912 the soldiers were real. There were scenes of great activity, of route marches and cavalry charges, airships and artillery as an invading army - led by Sir Douglas Haig - advanced across the ground around Newmarket, Royston and Linton. Though the men and munitions were real it was, once more just an exercise directed by Sir John French from his base at Trinity College. But there were guards with bayonets fixed at the gateway when the King came to encourage his soldiers, of both sides

Then in September 1914 the troops on the Cambridge commons told their own tale, as real soldiers gathered for a real war that would test all the practices of the previous decade. As that war progressed Trinity, like many other Colleges, turned its front courts over to officer cadets and its rear cloisters for an open-air hospital for wounded casualties of the fighting planned within its walls

Who knows what history will learn of the Cambridge discussions of September 2003.

[SCAN OF TRINITY COLLEGE SEPT 1912 SHOWING ARMED SENTRY AND KING'S CAR; SCAN OF SOLDIERS AT ST IVES AND KING SALUTING SOLDIERS NEAR WHITTLESFORD; SCAN OF SOLDIERS ON JESUS GREEN 1914 ATTACHED; THERE IS ALSO A PICTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY ARMS HOTEL IN 1920S]

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Was it Buddy Holly on Cambridge's Magdalene Bridge I asked, and did you ever see him perform?

"The photo doesn't look too much like Buddy Holly to be", says Emma Martin from Lt Downham, "but my judgement may be clouded by the 45 years that have passed since I saw him. Buddy only ever made one tour of the UK and I was lucky enough to be taken to see his show in 1958 at the Davis Theatre (or was it the Grand) in Croydon, Surrey. I was 11 at the time and my lifelong remembrance is of 'Raining in My Heart' and watching a member of the Crickets playing the tubular bells. One of the few '78s that I still have is 'Oh Boy' and 'That'll Be the Day' on Coral records. Shame I don't have a record player that will play '78s any more"

Other readers are certain it was him. Philip Brooks e-mails: "Yes it is a photograph of Buddy Holly and the Crickets taken from a home movie possibly filmed by Norman Petty, Buddy Holly's manager or Vivien Petty, his wife. It was shown on the BBC Arena Programme to mark the 25th anniversary of Buddy's death. The group were sightseeing in Cambridge on Sunday March 16th 1958 while on their way to Leicester after performing in Ipswich the previous night".

Sid French from Witchford has a copy of a 1986 video made by Sir Paul McCartney which shows the colour film whilst Peter Feast from Cambridge identifies two of the Crickets as Jerry Allison and Joe B. Maudlin together with Buddy's road manager Wally. He adds: "I was never one to bunk-off school but if I had known they were in town I may well have gone sick or something. I don't know if the tourist office ever mentions to visitors that Buddy Holly and The Crickets once stood on that bridge, but I think it would be nice if the council mounted a plaque on the site".

If you should happen to catch a glance of somebody like Buddy on the bridge in the next day or two it might not be a ghost. For the blockbuster musical "Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story" is showing at the Cambridge Corn Exchange this week [PHOTOS OF BUDDY HOLLY, REUSE PICTURE FROM LAST WEEK]

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Memories, 17th September 2003, by Mike Petty

Browse through any family album and you're almost sure to come across a faded snap of an old school group, the young faces staring wonderingly at the camera. But who were they, and what did the world have in store for them? Last night Over villagers celebrated the publication of a book that answers some of those questions.

There were two schools in Over in 1904, a National 'Church' school and a British 'Council' school, which was mainly for non-conformists, and feelings ran high when a popular schoolmaster was dismissed by the vicar. But who needed education when the youngsters would find jobs in farming, horticulture or the expanding fruit and flower growing businesses. Entertainment would be found at the church, chapel or in the eight public houses. [SCAN OF OVER SCHOOL GROUP 1904]

A decade later the village gained new residents, outsiders - foreign refugees from Belgians forced out of their country by advancing German troops. Many of the boys pictured in the school photographs took the opportunity to see the world – or at least mud of France and Flanders. Nearly 140 Over men served in that First World War, fifteen were killed, others wounded or gassed.

Yet when the survivors returned they found not peace and plenty but influenza, unemployment and hardship as the Depression Years drove many off the land to seek work in the cities. For those who stayed within the village there were improvements, council houses 'fit for heroes', piped water, even electricity. There was a Jubilee and a Coronation to celebrate and another war was looming.

The Second World War saw nearly 100 men depart for active service and about the same number of new strangers arrive – this time evacuees from Islington who found life in the fens flat and boring, despite the number of planes, from both sides, filling the skies. As rationing was introduced so farming became once more important, fen fields were ploughed for the first time and fen droves concreted.

The end of the war saw the men return, once more to a life of shortage and hardship. Again agriculture came under pressure, this time from a Labour Government's land nationalisation plans and from the fenman's oldest enemy, the 1947 floods. It was the same in village after village.

All of this was reported, week by week, in local papers. Now John Symonds from Waterlooville, Hants has plodded through the back issues the Cambridge Independent Press, transcribing the reports penned by the village correspondents, to compile a massive 540-page volume that records the hopes and fears, tragedies and triumphs of this small Cambridgeshire community from 1900 to 1950.

All life is there, for newspapers invariably report the sadness as well as joy, the accidents and crimes that brought distress to victim and perpetrator's family. If your ancestors ever lived in or near the area, even if they played cricket against the village team, then they may be named. There is no name index so such mentions have to be sought for, page by page.

But as well as snippets there are larger articles such as the memories of Jack Cook that literally throw light a subject not normally recorded, one that affected communities everywhere.

"Until 1909 the village streets in wintertime were in darkness, except for large oil lamps at the Churches, and one on Wayman's gatepost opposite the building yard. Then the Parish Council installed the first street lamps. Fifty-four lamps it was. They paid £30 for the season. But they found out that with a man finding the oil, trimming and cleaning and one thing and another, it couldn't be done under a pound a Lamp. My father put in for the job at £50 a year.

"We had to make a special kind of barrow on pneumatic wheels to take our gear round the town, in order to wash and clean all the glass chimneys and cages on the spot. There were few things like suitable mops ready made in the shops. We slotted sponges into sticks. A dry one was run through first, and then a wet one followed by a polisher to leave the glasses really

clean. Then every burner had to be scoured out, the wick trimmed and set at exact level and the cage dusted out. Every lamp was left as bright as a house lamp.

“Starting at 8.30 or 9 a.m., it took two of us until three in the afternoon. That routine was followed for three days of one week, and two days the next, and so on alternately. Then we had to go round at night to light up, and yet again for the third time to put the lamps out. It was almost exactly a four-mile trip round the town each time.

“There was a variation in the lighting and dousing of the lamps, according to the phases of the Moon. No lamps were lit for six nights before the full of the moon, nor for two days after. On other days, times of lighting and dousing varied according to the times of moonrise.

“We used the best White Rose Oil which was fivepence farthing a gallon,. Matches were a penny farthing a dozen boxes - they were re-headed brimstone matches struck on sandpaper or scratched steel.

“Generally, I did the lighting and extinguishing of the lamps. Usually I left the ladder at home and shinned up and down the lampposts as it might be tree-climbing. But this was not possible on wet and windy nights.

“On a very stormy night, we might be called out several times on receiving complaints that lamps were blown out. The lamp at Berry House in Chapel Lane corner was the worst offender. The cross draughts there would either blow the lamp out, or, first cause it to smoke, and presently catch fire to the soot so formed. We would have to turn out and have to take the lamp home, thoroughly scour, clean, dry and trim it, and return again to the same spot, mount the lamp and light it.

“Even the right use of matches required study. On bad nights we would carry three boxes of matches. You could not just carry them in a coat pocket, take a box out in the rain, and strike it. We had to dry our fingers continually, and draw out one match at a time with the utmost care.

“At one time, I tried to surmount this difficulty by constructing a home made lighter using petrol. The lighter worked perfectly well. Unfortunately, flame rises upwards and it was impossible to point it down on the trimmed wick. Turning the wick up to catch the flame was out of the question. as when the wick was trimmed during the day it had to be set to exactly the right permanent level at which it would give a satisfactory flame after warming up. So, back to matches again.

“For dousing the lamps at night we could not just turn the wick down to blow it out, and trust to luck for turning it up to exactly the right level again. So we made a gadget like a tin trumpet, as the lamps had centre draught, all that was needed was to point the trumpet to the base of the lamp, and puff. If you miss-timed the puff, you might cause the flame to rise and smoke the chimney, which in turn added another cleaning job to your round.

“In the larger houses before 1914 there may have been as many as twenty Standard, Table, Swinging, Wall-Bracket, and hand lamps. All these had to be cleaned, brass-work polished, wicks trimmed, reservoirs filled, chimneys washed with chimney brush in soapy water, every morning for two-thirds of the year, as an odd chore at the beginning of the household day.”

“Into the Twentieth Century: a Chronicle of the Village of Over 1900-1950” compiled by John Symonds is available from Ann Shepperson, 148 Boxworth End, Swavesey – 01954 230313 -for £10 plus postage. Supplies are very limited, so be quick to phone for a copy.

SCANS ON DISK SHOWING LAMPS AT LT DOWNHAM AND PEAS HILL
CAMBRIDGE

AND OF OVER; ALSO PHOTOS, ONE OF WHICH SHOWS ONE OF THE OLD LAMP
POSTS AND THE OTHER A STREET LIGHT IN 1969

Memories 24th September 2003, by Mike Petty

When I was a lad I biked off with my mum and nan to the orchards just along the road. There I built castles with the wooden fruit boxes whilst they picked the apples and plums until it was time for dockey. But other generations of children worked, not played. [SCAN OF BOY – NOT ME – PICKING FRUIT, SCAN OF FRUIT PICKERS WITH BASKETS]

Laurie Arnold, born 1925, recalled: “I started work in the orchards as soon as I could walk. The younger children would pick the bottom branches, my mother and father would do the ladder work. The baskets would have a hook attached that you’d hook on to the branch”. The “Holly Leaves” magazine in for 1900 featured a youngster in the harvest field with the caption: “The small girl, surely no more than five, knows how to prepare a long band to tie up the loose wheat into sheaves. No doubt some children were forced to work, but the majority were only too anxious to help – and when all are working any task becomes more fun than play”. [SCAN OF ANOTHER HOLLY LEAVES PICTURE, INCLUDE CAPTION]

It was not fun but a necessity to feed the family, as a Government inquiry into the child labour gang system in 1862 found. An unsigned letter from a working man in Coates explained: “There is about 200 children of both sexes and all ages goes in the gangs to work from 6 years up to about 14 or 16 years. The youngest gets about 5d per day and the oldest about 7d ... where there is large families these poor children is often the only part of the family that gets work; their poor earnings is all there is for to live on; indeed half the work is done by the children in these fens and those that sees them go in a morning think they are like so many slaves and the drivers is not much better”

Even when education became compulsory school harvest holidays were there so youngsters could help on the land. In 1952 Cambridgeshire Conservative and Horticultural Society asked the County Council whether arrangements could be made for schoolchildren to assist in the potato harvest. There was a shortage of labour and food was more essential than education in the case of boys between 14 and 15. The previous year they’d been allowed a week’s holiday, but a fortnight would be better. The County MP said: “I don’t think it does any harm to children that they should lend a hand in gathering the potato or any other harvest. A very great deal of good is done by allowing children, under the proper circumstances, to deal with things like that”. They’d like to see the summer holidays staggered with three weeks at potato lifting time and three weeks at harvest time. Similar alterations in the long school holidays are again in contemplation but for other reasons.

Today times have changed & few people bike out to work in the fields; instead white vans transport gangs to harvest the crops. Now giant factories on wheels crawl across the fields and provide seats for those who pack the lettuces that will appear on supermarket shelves. [SCAN OF CELERY PICKING AT PRICKWILLOW 1974, LETTUCE PACKING ON MACHINE 1991]

But however mechanised agriculture becomes it still needs labour and is hard physical work that few local people are prepared to undertake. The answer is to import workers from outside the area. In September 1953 the News reported an appeal for people to accommodate foreigners: “Sir – for six years German students have been visiting Britain to help with the harvest. One who stayed near Cambridge wrote: ‘This week in an English family is what I value most of all ... and the friendly reception I got’. Next week about 800 students from

universities all over Germany will be coming to help farmers harvest potato and sugar beet crops. If you can help offer hospitality please contact the German Student Harvest Scheme”.

In 1968 a holiday camp at Friday Bridge near Wisbech was offering board and lodging for just £6 a week – even less for women. They would supply packed lunches, sheets, blankets and pillows, but guests had to bring their own wellington boots and thick gloves, if they came during June or July. They expected between 400 and 500 visitors during the peak harvest season who would recover their costs by piece-work in the fields, picking strawberries, gooseberries or raspberries and later plums, apples, beans and potatoes. [SCAN OF FRIDAY BRIDGE AGRICULTURAL HOLIDAY CAMP 1950S SCAN OF GOOSEBERRY PICKING NEAR WISBECH 1940S]]

It was part an agricultural revolution that had started in Victorian times when farmers had had laid down hundreds of acres of raspberries, strawberries & currants. At the peak season there was far more work than local pickers could handle - 30 to 50 tons of fruit a day employing up to 1,300 people. The answer was to import them, many from the East End of London.

By 1925 it was usual for men, women and children of all ages to come for a month at a time. They lived in ‘bunks’ - a name which covered various types of accommodation such as tin huts, old stables or converted railway carriages. But unlike at Friday Bridge in 1968 where discotheques and television, billiards and table tennis were the norm, in the 1920s there were no such distractions. It was not the farmer’s duty to provide amusements for his workers and the only entertainment was in public houses. Mothers brought their children but there was nobody to look after them in the fields, and the working conditions produced a host of minor ailments such a sceptic finger - to leave it untended would be dangerous, to go to Wisbech to the doctor would mean a day off work.

A remedy for these problems came from an unexpected source – Cambridge University. The Cambridge Fruiting Campaign was launched around 1910 to supply the recreational, canteen, medical treatment and day nursery needed. Out came undergraduates and academics - Dr Swainson from Sidney Sussex college to organise the canteen and play the organ, T.C.C.M. Moor of Trinity to give medical aid and lantern lectures whilst G.H. Hewitt from Fitzwilliam Hall would give recitations and J.W.Fisher from Trinity would teach boxing. Nor was it just the physical needs of the labourers that concerned them for the students took the opportunity to preach the gospel to the poor Londoners who they believed had been neglected by the churches in their industrial homes.

Today many of those working in the fields to harvest the crops come not from East London but from Eastern Europe, their working and living conditions have been highlighted by the recent Government report. Perhaps there is scope once more for Cambridge University undergraduates to join them, though given the hardships experienced by modern students it may be as fellow-workers rather than missionaries!

Do you have memories of work in the orchards or fields – write to Mike Petty
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In one of those amazing co-incidences two letters arrived in my tray at the News on the same day. One was from Diane Oswald of 22a Mantell Street, Seatoun, Wellington, New Zealand. She is trying to contact any members of her grandfather’s family, Arthur Charles Wedd who went to Melbourne, Australia on the steamship Lusitania in 1878. His parents were Joseph

and Jane Wedd, born in Duxford in the 1830s. It is not a common surname, but the second letter was from another Wedd.

Dennis Wedd from Stapleford remembers the AA Box at Trumpington that I featured in Memories on 27th August. He writes: "I lived with my parents and sister just over the railway bridge which can be seen in the distance. I walked this way from 1927 with my friends on our way to Trumpington Village School. In those days there was so little traffic, we often whipped a top on the road, a thing almost impossible today. The AA box which stood at the junction of Shelford and Hauxton Road, on the point of a triangular island was moved to the back of the island when the roadway was realigned just before the war. Eventually it was moved again to its present site at the side of Hauxton Road. Mr Pipe and Mr Murray with others regularly manned the box, we would stop and chat with them as we passed. The photograph was taken one Wednesday as the van, that can be seen laden with pots and pans was a regular visitor, and was called the Wednesday Man for obvious reasons. I think it was owned by Brown's Petroleum who had a depot in the York Street - Catharine Street area." [SCAN OF AA BOX, TRUMPINGTON 1920S]

Some time ago I featured Andrew Brett's appeal for information on the history of Mitcham's shop on the corner of Chesterton Road and then, in one of those marvellous co-incidences, I met the last of the Mitcham family who came to a presentation about my 'Vanishing Cambridgeshire' book. Now Andrew has got her writing down her memories and is seeking other people who remember the shop as staff or customers. If you have any memories you would like to share as a staff member or customer please contact him on 01223 293713 or e-mail: mitchams.corner@talk21.com - Andrew would be very pleased to hear from you.

Memories 1st October 2003 by Mike Petty

Proposals to convert the Malting House in Barton Road into student accommodation have raised the profile of one of the more interesting houses in this area of Cambridge. It stands on one of the busiest corners yet overlooks a typical rural scene – a backwater of the Cam bordered by a meadow where cattle graze.

In October 1961 Gillian Maltby was given an opportunity to visit the building and described her impressions in the CDN;

It was originally a malthouse, the malting itself being reached by a half-landing between the ground and first floors. It was converted for habitation in 1902 when the Corporation demolished the front of the house to widen the road, the bricks for the new façade came from other old houses being taken down at that time. Two of the three outhouses were taken down but the family wanted the remaining one converted into a room and, despite the architect's protest that it was impossible, this is what they did. The ground floor rooms were flagged with stones and once used as storage space, because its proximity to the river meant that floods were frequent.

In 1912 what remained of the original 'malting' was converted by the removal of part of the upper floor into a small hall with two galleries. A stage was added and in this room countless musical evenings had been held since the early part of the century; here Albert Schweitzer gave a lecture on Bach and since 1955 it had provided a base for rehearsals by the Schools Holiday Orchestra.

The 30 foot long lounge had a large bay window overlooking the river and in other rooms the malthouse beams were exposed, whilst the rooms on the second floor were equally attractive. In 1961 the house, which had formerly formed one domicile, now housed six domestic units.

The thick walls helped make the house cool on hot days, whilst a large gas heater ensured it was warm in winter.

But one aspect of the house's history was overlooked: for here for a few years was held one of Cambridge's experimental schools, the Malting House School

Various readers have come forward with information on the AA patrol man pictured on the corner of Shelford Road, Trumpington.

Judy Whybrow e-mails to say that Frank was her godfather, Mr Frank Pipe, a great character well known through his job and dearly loved by his family. He died at the age of 96 just a few days ago, the notice of his death appearing in the same issue of the News as my Memories article. Enid Newell from Trumpington tells me her husband Stanley remembered when Frank rode an ordinary pedal cycle on his AA round. Living in Pampisford he would cycle to Sawston, and on to Trumpington where he would stand outside the AA box and salute members as they passed. He would then cycle on to Royston before heading back via Trumpington to his home. Stanley made him a fitting for his cycle to take his speedometer and clock and also used to do repairs for him. By co-incidence it is just 50 years today that the News reported a new look for the Automobile Association patrolman. They had fitted a new shield to their motor cycles to help protect them from the winter rain and coal. A plastic apron completed the outfit; hanging from the shield it prevented the wind finding its way around the rider's body and legs. [SCAN OF NEWS ARTICLE FROM 1ST OCT 1953]

Such patrolmen might be able to respond to a query raised by Patrick Mills of Cambridge. In a recent 'Looking Back' article I featured an extract from the News' motoring correspondent back in 1953 in which he reviewed the new Standard Eight:

After a road test by courtesy of Messrs King and Harper I was able to form definite ideas about the new Standard Eight. It has been built at a price of £481 to compete with the Austin A30, Morris Minor and Ford Anglia and has been stripped of every luxury and driver's pet toy. On the standard model there are no wheel discs, the minimum of chrome plating, only one windscreen wiper and no door pockets. Optional extras are air conditioning, radio, oil bath air cleaner and roof rack. Acceleration to 50 mph takes 25 seconds and top speed is 62 mph. It corners well and the brakes are good; I pulled up from a steady 35 mph in only a foot or so more than 30 feet. Petrol consumption is about 45 mpg for the normal touring owner.

It was the bit about air conditioning that caught Frank's eye. He writes: "I believe that genuine air conditioning has only been available in the most expensive British cars for about 25 years and in the cheaper models for perhaps 10. Is it possible that 'air conditioning' in 1953 meant there were vents in the dashboard and perhaps a heater". Did you have one, or have you a picture of this particular model?

Yvonne Hull from Willingham had her memory jogged by a picture of cottages opposite Over church (Memories September 17th). Her parents lived in one of the cottages all their married life, all Yvonne's family were born there, including her eldest son in 1940. Yet more memories of the village are recorded by Eileen Webster and Jean Nelson in the latest volume of their chronicle of the Bicheno family, relating the experiences of numerous members of the clan. One of the most remarkable was the Rev James Bicheno, 1752-1831 who attended services at the dissenting congregation at Stone Yard in Cambridge – now St Andrew's Street Baptist Chapel - and was one of 16 people baptised at Whittlesford mill in 1769. But next year he was banished from church membership, probably for an involvement with a young woman, and went to London to seek his fortune. But he was persuaded instead to see a new life in a new world and boarded a boat for Virginia, North America. On arrival he was sold as

a slave but, being an educated man, became tutor to the children of the family. It was two years before he managed to make contact with his family back in Over and the Rev Robert Robinson and members of the Baptist congregation sent money to buy his freedom and repatriation. Even when safely back in Britain his involvement with the sea was not over and a few years later he was shipwrecked on rock off the Isle of Wight. "Bicheno: a family from Over" is available from Eileen Webster, 1 Longstanton Road, Over CB4 5PP for £17.50, including postage.

However a headstone to William Norman, his wife and son in the dissenter's cemetery just down the road at Cottenham marks a much more serious incident. Now Francis Garrett has unearthed a letter dated 28th November 1859 which tells the tale. "No doubt you remember Ann Norman of the Red Lion and her husband going to Australia. Her husband was drowned there, and she was coming home with her two children in the ship called the Royal Charter, which was bound for Liverpool when she was wrecked on the Irish coast with 500 passengers on board, and only 30 yards from shore, but only a few escaped a watery grave. Amongst the lost we are sorry to say is Mrs Norman and her two children, but her body has been found and her brother John is gone after it. Therefore many of the people in Cottenham are enveloped in mourning."

It was a very sombre parish indeed, as the letter continues: "Mortality is very high in Cottenham, people are dying on every hand. Amongst them are London Watts and Francis Watts, and Mrs Luke Pratt and old Mrs Thomas Pratt, and Joseph Carrier jr. and William Hard Graves and old Mrs Pringle and Charles Fromant and John Pearson the crier died in his chair this afternoon, and many more, but these have died very lately, some of these have died of fever, for it is very bad in Cottenham."

One person who is investigating such inscriptions is Ann Rees from Histon Road, Cambridge who has been researching the story of the Histon Road cemetery. She has plodded through the registers at the County Record Office but is particularly seeking a picture of the cemetery chapel that used to stand there but seems to have disappeared without a photograph. If you can help please contact her on Cambridge 361259

Memories 8th October 2003, by Mike Petty

The start of a new Academic term at Cambridge University sees the annual arrival of hundreds of new undergraduates, men and women, each excited at the prospect of their great adventure into University education. The streets have been choked with vehicles deliver their bags and baggage, and although this year additional restrictions have added to the problems, this is nothing new as the News reported in October 1953:

Along Sidney Street a young man in a yellow polo-neck sweater trundles a handcart bearing a tin trunk, two leather bags, a violin case, a worn armchair, and a gaily-painted bird-cage. His un-oiled hair slips sideways towards his ears as he pauses at the junction of St John's Street to allow a busload of office workers to hurry by. Gently rumbling towards Magdalene and the furnished rooms of Chesterton Road comes, by courtesy of British Railways, a mechanical horse towing twenty-two identical cabin trunks. From somewhere in Lensfield Road a research student has procured a pony and cart which heads towards Trumpington Road, the pony contemplating, like Aristotle, his place in society, the student reminding himself to find out what is on in the cinemas. [SCAN OF CARTOON SKETCH OF UNDERGRAD 1957]

But what should the undergraduate have packed to wear in this most fashion-conscious of ages? Again they can turn to the News – this time of October 1928:

The advent of the Michaelmas Term finds hundreds of “Freshers” faced with the problem of choosing a suitable wardrobe for University life. Grey flannel “bags” have come to be universally associated with the ‘Varsity man and he would be well advised to include two or three pairs in his outfit. Plus-fours however are nowadays almost as popular as the ‘bags’ for, besides being extremely comfortable to wear, they are particularly adapted to an undergraduate’s activities. It is advisable to choose a really good tweed mixture of a fairly bright pattern, at the same time avoiding anything too conspicuous or “loud”. The success of a plus-four suit depends on the skill of the cutter and for this reason it is just as well to have plus-fours made at one of the excellent Cambridge tailors who know exactly the requirements of their customers.

Lounge suits to wear on more formal occasions, such as calling on tutors, dining in hall, or attending chapel, should also be included in a Fresher’s outfit, and here the pattern and style much be left to the discretion of the individual. But the first-year man would do well to remember that outward appearances count for a great deal, and he should avoid creating a hostile impression by appearing in any extravagant fashion. A dinner-jacket suit is sufficient for practically all occasions during term time for which the undergraduate may have to wear evening dress. “Tails” are rarely seen at Cambridge except at the end of the summer term or May Week.

Hats, like overcoats, are not worn by undergraduates to any great extent during term, but caps and soft felt hats may be worn without fear of unfavourable comment. One could just conjecture the fate of any rash soul who appeared in the streets wearing a “bowler”. Top hats are worn by dons and college porters

The long woollen scarves, so much worn by undergraduates are very useful for keeping out the cold & one or two sweaters are essential to the undergraduate who contemplates taking any form of athletic exercise. These are usually trimmed with school or college colours. But overcoats are not popular, except for travelling purposes or when watching some sporting event.

For this reason the necessity for adequate underclothing cannot be over-emphasised, and those public school boys who have been foolish enough to take to silken fripperies will be wise to exchange them for the woollen underwear which gives an even warmth throughout the rigours of a winter. [SCAN OF UNDERGRADUATES COLLECTING ON RAG DAY 1928].

And what of the life to which the undergraduate can aspire?

In 1969 Miss Louisa Hall recalled undergraduate life 60 years earlier at number 20 Trinity Street where her father had converted two houses into one boarding establishment.

“Nine sets of rooms were provided for nine Trinity undergraduates. Each suite consisted of a sitting room and a bedroom, and each was accorded full service. Nine laden coal scuttles were hauled up to nine rooms each day. Nine baths were run each morning and nine gentlemen were called at predetermined times. Nine suits of clothes, carefully cleaned & pressed the day before were placed at the ready, anything other than suits was seldom worn. Sometimes when hunting was the chosen activity of the day, hunting pinks and boots boned to a gleam were put out in the morning.

“Nine fires would be lit & nine breakfasts served in each man’s own room. A typical breakfast menu would include fish, fruit or a popular mixed grill featuring devilled kidneys. In the kitchen a large wickerwork basket housed each man’s silver cutlery and a large wardrobe contained individual sets of linen brought up from home at the beginning of term while the large cellar contained nine racks for each mans stock of wine or the occasional maturing pheasant.

“Lunch was often served in house but cooked in the college kitchen. An enormous menu was available for undergraduates to choose from. There were no portions, if a man wanted chicken he got the whole chicken and it was his to do with as he wished. If he wanted to eat the entire thing hot he could, but if he wanted to sample it and then keep the remainder cold he could do so. Turtle soup, fish, snipe or saddle of lamb would involve the porters in separate journeys and an average of 18 to 20 such meals left the college kitchens each day. Later tea was served just after four o’clock and crumpets and muffins, still hot from Matthews bakery were consumed in front of blazing fire”. [SCAN OF STUDENTS DINING 1900, SCAN OF STUDENTS DINING IN CHURCHILL COLLEGE 1964]

Perhaps – just perhaps - the new generation of undergraduates may find things have changed somewhat! But do you have memories of your first days at Cambridge – be it at the University of the West Road – Cambridge, or the University of the East Road – Anglia

[SCANS OF UNDERGRADS BURNING BOOK 1961, UNDERGAD PROTESTORS AND PROCTOR, CEN ARTICLE ABOUT CHANGING STUDENT FASHIONS, FIRST GIRL AT TRINITY COLLEGE 1972]

Readers write:

Val Fishpool e-mails from Shepreth: “In Memories on 1st October you featured a picture of a horse-drawn wagon taking Victoria Plums to Chivers factory in 1948. The driver was my uncle, Gordon (John) Boughen. He and his father, William (Bill) worked for Chivers as horse keepers, working daily with the percherons, also preparing them for agricultural shows during the summer, where Chivers won many prizes. During the cooler months, William walked round the Fens with the stallion to visit the mares but Uncle John was better equipped with a Landrover and small horsebox, my Grandmother thought the stallion would kick the back out, he knew where he was going! Gordon's wife, Ada looked after the poultry, then worked in the Factory (as did most of my family). On Sundays when I went for tea with them, I would first go and feed the chickens, then watch while the horses and foals were fed. Gordon and Ada lived in a tied house until they both retired, Gordon then being very successful with exhibiting Chrysanthemums. Sadly they are no longer with us.” [SCAN OF THE PICTURE FROM LAST WEEK]

Other readers have recalled a man intimately connected with the Malting House at Newnham. Ludovic Stewart, long-time county music adviser, was born in the house to an academic family. His father Hugh Fraser Stewart was Dean of Trinity College and President of the Cambridge University Musical Society, his mother Jessie, who had taken a first-class degree at Newnham College in 1901, was active in the English Folk Dancing Society. Ludovic attended Eton and taught at Harrow before returning to Cambridge in 1946 to take up the music adviser’s post. He was responsible for the development of the Schools Holiday Orchestra, open to everybody who liked to make music, which by 1973 was attracting 400 kids. But the home was open to more than children and provided hospitality to many distinguished composers as well as forming a meeting place for Quakers on Sunday and a kindergarten during the week. Ludovic Stewart, who died in February 1999, seems to have inspired all that met him, be they child or teacher and more memories of him and his musical legacy would be welcome. [PHOTO OF STEWART CONDUCTING ORCHESTRA IN 1973]

Memories 15th October 2003, by Mike Petty

What can be more typically English than the quaint thatched cottages that stare at us from countless books and old postcards. But what were they like to live in?

In the Dry Drayton Millennium History “Gallows Piece to Bee Garden”, John Hacker and Sid Martin recalled: *Old thatched cottages were small, damp cold and dark. Many large families had only one room upstairs and one room downstairs. Two bedrooms were a luxury and should there be two ground floor rooms, the chances were that one of them would be the best or front room, containing a few precious and treasured pieces of furniture. It was out of bounds for the family except for weddings, funerals and christenings, all of which happened much more frequently than they do today. One often had to step down into the kitchen-living room, but even then the low beams were a hazard. In the poorest homes the ceilings were frequently only the undersides of the floor beams above, and I remember some with sacking nailed to the joists to check the dust from filtering through from the room above. The rooms were usually dark with only one poky little window hidden behind curtains so that the family lived in semi-darkness. Doors and windows did not always fit; draughts were accepted as a part of life, but the worst cracks were stuffed with paper or rag. Brick and tile floors were uneven and worn, stairs were not a routine fitment; sometimes there was simply a ladder up the hatch and even this might be external.*

A Cambridgeshire Regional Planning Report produced in 1934 stressed that people needed decent homes where water ran from a tap, and not down the wall. But it also emphasised the importance of preserving old cottages: “It is of great consequence to the future that the old cottages and farm buildings still surviving should be protected and maintained. In many villages the decay of the old cottages is noticeable and many are far gone in a state of disrepair, but demolition should not be considered until the possibilities of restoration and adaptation have been explored”

One organisation that took up the challenge was the Cambridge Preservation Society who in 1938 started work on a line of cottages, Sheepshead Row which dominate the approach to Melbourn from the north. The old properties were fully reconditioned and brought up to a reasonable standard of comfort and convenience. The interiors were put in first class order and redecorated throughout; several staircases were replaced. Each was supplied with a ventilated foodstore and new cooking range where necessary. Outside wash-houses were rebuilt and the coppers put into working order. Then the whole row was thatched.

The Preservationists analysed the building: the centre section appeared to have been an old farmhouse of perhaps the sixteenth century, built round a great central chimney. It had for many years been divided into two cottages, but was now been restored as one dwelling. It is probable that the rest of the cottages were originally constructed out of the old barns and out-buildings.

“There can be no doubt that such schemes of reconditioning are a great help towards the solution of the housing problems in villages. With the sympathetic aid of the Rural District Council cottages can be reconditioned and let at rents within the means not only of the agricultural labourer in work, but of widows & old-age pensioners” the Cambridge Preservation Society claimed in their Annual Report for 1939.

But it did not quite work out as hoped; financial problems during the run-up to the Second World War meant that not all the cottages could be brought up to the sanitary conditions of the day. By 1953 when the cottages won first prize in the village's Coronation decorated houses competition, they were home to several families. Ruby and Percy Harrup lived in the first, at 27 High Street; then came Audrey and Walter Gouldthorp, Mr Jacklin and family at 23, with Miss Florence Woodcock at 19, Lilian and Ronald Smith with their daughters at 15 and Daisy and Alfred Negus at the end. Quite who was at number 21 is uncertain and 17 may have been empty. Some people had lived there continually for many years, others were newer tenants soon to move on as bigger and better council housing became available. By 1963 many of the cottages were considered not suitable for habitation and as families moved out they were left empty.

The Cambridge Preservation Society could no longer afford the required renovation costs and Peter King of Bourn Hall took on responsibility for their upkeep and preservation. But the sums did not add up – it would cost far more to upgrade the property than any rent would bring in. He maintained the essential structure and fought to prevent their demolition and replacement by a modern housing development.

Now once more the builders have moved into Sheepshead Row, thatchers have been at work ensuring the roof is sound, old timbers have been treated, walls replastered and, almost unnoticed, central heating, showers, baths and all the accoutrements of 21st century life have been incorporated. There's even a bike shed & a state-of-the-art washing line area so that the communal landscaped lawns at the back can be enjoyed without having to duck under dirty socks.

Such renovation is not unusual, many villages have large thatched properties, once home to a number of families and their children, which are now providing a spacious lifestyle for one or two people. But this is not what architect has done here. You still squeeze up narrow staircases, ducking under the sloping ceilings as people have done for generations. And although some of the six homes that now share the one long thatched roof are spacious, others provide almost the one-up – one-down layout that John Hacker and Sid Martin recall, though without the draughts or sacking.

Work continues on the conversion but already the homes are being marketed. Before they fill with a new generation of cottagers Liz Kendrick would like to hear from previous residents of the Sheepshead Row so that she can piece more of its story together to add to the impressive record she has already built. Write to her c/o Tyrell's Hall, Fowlmere Road, Shepreth, SG8 6QS or e-mail d.kendrick@btconnect.com.

And if you have your memories of country-cottage life, then write to me, too.

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Readers write: Ted Tyndall from Somersham responds to my mention of a road test of the Standard Eight car in 1953.

“I can speak from personal experience here. As a youngster, my dad's friend had one of these cars bought new just after the 1953 Motor Show. Even then, it seemed a poor thing, with no

interior door trim, hubcaps, or even worse, no opening boot lid. It was not quiet either, like travelling in a tin can, the doors shut with a "clang". Later, way back in the summer of 1969 when my wife and I moved to Huntingdonshire, I owned a Standard "Eight" and my wife had the very similar, but larger engined "Ten". Travelling back down the A10 at weekends to visit our parents, the "Eight" was certainly "flat out" at about 58 to 60 mph. It was reliable though, and pleasant to drive apart from the long whippy gearshift lever. Our cars were some of the last of these models produced, built 1957 and 1959 and by that time were quite "de-luxe" compared to the original cars, having gained an opening boot lid, full interior trim and even a heater. Several of these cars still exist locally, our "Ten", 199 PNO was sold in about 1979 to a garage at Ramsey Forty Foot. It may still exist, as even at that time they were becoming collectable. He has included an advertisement from 1953 that may jog further memories [SCAN]

Another collectable is concerning Barbara Maurice from Sawston who is trying to find a home for an oak child's cot dating back to the 1950s; it seems a shame to dump it, but she's tried car boot sales without finding any takers, perhaps because of the safety aspect. The cot and horsehair mattress is in very good condition and deserves to be appreciated or displayed somewhere. Phone her on 01223 834822 if you have a use for it.

The Rev. A. Northrop, Deacon of Our Lady's Church, Cambridge recalls that many years ago his mother used to attend an imposing Methodist Church on Hills Road and asks whether there is a photograph of it. I have located one, do you have more, or have memories of this building, which has now disappeared. [SCAN OF HILLS ROAD METHODIST CHURCH C1910 – PERHAPS DIFFERENT PRINT FROM NEWS FILES]

I am less able to assist another reader, Ann Rees from Cambridge who is researching the story of the Histon Road cemetery. She has plodded through the registers at the County Record Office but is particularly seeking information about the cemetery chapel that used to stand there but seems to have disappeared without a photograph. If you can help please write to me. [PERHAPS PIC OF LODGE – NOT CHAPEL – FROM NEWS FILES]

POSSIBLE RESERVE STORY

By contrast Don Mann of Barrington has send me a picture that may jog the memories of older readers. It shows the 12th Cambridge cub pack about 80 years ago and was taken outside the pack meeting room by the river near the foot of what is now the Fort St George footbridge. The houses in the back are at the top of Aylstone Road. Don recalls the building as being very decrepit and made entirely of wood; it spanned a dock for small boats which could be seen through cracks in the floor of the room where they held their meetings. Most of the boys were at Milton Road School at the time but now Don can only remember a few names. They include from the back Tony Sanderson, whose father was a waterman and patrolled the river in a small motor boat; in the middle are Denis Heath whose father was manager of Eaden Lilley's household goods department & Mr Swallow the cub master, centre. Don is in the front line along with Percy Maltby and his twin brother Fred, Sidney 'Snick' Elsdon who distinguished himself with a professorship at Oxford, Charlie Toates, Arthur Pedley and a lad named Porter [SCAN OF GROUP]

Memories 22nd October 2003, by Mike Petty

Last Thursday's front page of the News broke the story of a proposed massive new township that planning experts say could be needed in the area around Sawston within the next 30 years.

No precise location has been pinpointed, but already people are expressing their concern about the impact of some 6,000 new houses and the loss of cherished landscapes. An adviser for the Council for the Protection of Rural England warns: "It may seem light years away, but the danger is that once an area has been identified for growth, an increase in job predictions can bring these developments forward. If these villages are to be saved we need to take action now."

Future issues of the News will doubtless chart the progress of these plans, just as they have done in the past.

For if you turn up the files of the News for 23rd October 1953 – just 50 years ago - you will find a very similar story. Sawston Parish Councillors had been told of the problems of house shortages in the capital. All London housing land would be used up within four years and they needed to disperse 311,000 people. There were already overspill houses being built at Huntingdon, St Neots and Haverhill and what was needed now was at least one additional new town together with a substantial increase of a number of villages that, like Sawston, already had a nucleus of industries.

The people to be settled on them would be a cross-section of the community and their employment would be arranged in various light industries that would be established. There was certain to be further industrial development in Sawston anyway over the next 20 years and it would be better if the development could be orderly.

Councillors were sceptical: Why pick on Sawston? The London County Council had a housing problem but so had Cambridgeshire.

But this, they were told, was a national problem; no part of England could withdraw from the task of arresting the growth of Greater London and helping to house its excess population. The proposals would be bound to cause some dislocation in village life but if the national interest demanded the growth of Sawston it was the duty of the Parish Council to press for the development of amenities

A week or so later more details emerged – the possibility of a "Morris Oxford Factory" at Sawston as part of the industrial developments that would accompany the expansion of the village from 2,000 people up to a town of 7,500.

But when the matter came before South Cambridgeshire Rural District Council in mid November 1953 planners were back-peddalling: "Too many people were getting too excited over Sawston", the Chairman claimed. There were no plans to turn the village into an overspill town, the London County Council had not even decided they wanted to go there and the whole matter had been greatly confused by a speech by London's Lord Mayor.

Of course Sawston would expand – the Rural District Council had already built over 200 council houses since the war and others were in course of construction. That was probably a record and would provide homes for more local people. But as for coping with London's needs – that was something for the future to decide the planners agree, 50 years ago.

[SCANS OF TWO HEADLINES FROM 1953; FEATURE FRONT PAGE OF CEN LAST THURSDAY, 16 OCT SCAN OF SAWSTON 1960S OR PIX FROM LIBRARY]

Another area that has seen expansion within the last 50 years has been the Abbey and East Barnwell district of Cambridge, an area scarcely glimpsed by visitors, or indeed many other residents. It is no area of great architectural beauty, but provides services, employment and homes to people proud of their community.

Now both old and new, young and old residents have contributed to a new booklet "Memories of Abbey and East Barnwell". In it Mrs J. Adams remembers back 50 years: "When I was married and lived in Ditton Walk we would collect wild flowers, cornflowers, dog daisies, buttercups, daisies and little yellow flowers we called 'Tom Thumb'. Sometimes there were bee-orchids, petty grasses, feathers, stones and leaves, in fact we would have a box-full in the pram when we came back. There were also many skylarks, which sadly seem to have disappeared now. It was quiet, no traffic; we hated it when all the houses and shops were built. I can remember walking from my mother's house to the Church, and it was just fields, the railway line, cows and horses. Next to Proctors was a farm; now it's the Nursery School, work units and Wadloes Road with many more houses". [SCAN OF CHILDREN TRAIN SPOTTING AT BARNWELL JUNCTION STATION 1964 – PREFER LIBRARY PIX OF DITTON LANE]

Jean Secker & family recall: "In Ditton Walk-there was Posgate's shop, a butcher, a green grocer and a hairdresser in a hut There was a barber who used to enjoying talking and would often get carried away cutting hair too short as he talked. There was a fish and chip shop in a hut. The Corona factory was a busy factory. They made soft drinks. The bottles had little china tops that you had to push down. It closed about 30 years ago. The library that was in the Air Raid Warden's hut was tiny. It was in Ditton Fields on the green - now the recreation ground. Mrs Lilly Harris started it so that the children had books to read. The library then moved to the Barnwell Road site, where the new shops had recently been opened." [SCAN OF CHILDREN LOOKING IN THE WINDOW OF THE LIBRARY ON BARNWELL ROAD, 1958]

Others recall that: "Barnwell Road was a dead-end, but its line continued into an unkempt wilderness as the 'Ring Road', a track marked by some overgrown kerbstones and piles of builder's materials. It just petered out somewhere beyond Rayson Way, and only a footpath and cycle track connected through to Coldham's Lane". [SCAN OF BARNWELL ROAD PETERING OUT INTO A FOOTPATH]

Children from the new Abbey Meadows Primary School have also contributed their impressions of the area: "I like my road because my Grandma only lives two doors away. There are lots of cats in my area and they make a lot of noise when I am asleep". "Most streets are a bit run down, but mine isn't", "I hate my area because there are some naughty people who do around smashing things. But I also like it because all my friends live just around the corner and I can see them after school"

But life has never been all rosy as the Seckers recall: "The groups of children who visited Coldham's Common were very tribal and territorial. I don't ever recall real trouble between the groups, but you made sure you stuck with your own lot and kept out of the way of some of the other gangs. Kids from the Whitehill estate were different to those from the Peverell Estate – and if you went too far across the common then you needed to be very careful you didn't meet 'than lot from Coldham's Lane or Ross Street' ..."

But on Friday evening from 7.30 to 8.30 pm 'that lot from Coldham's Lane' may be mixing with the residents of Ditton Fields and the Whitehill Estate at the Holy Cross Church on Newmarket Road where the booklet will be launched. If you have memories to share they would be delighted to hear from you – contact Keith Jordan at Abbey Action on Cambridge 517259.

Now the future of the Abbey area is once more in the melting pot, with speculation that Marshall's Airport might be relocated, proving room for more lots homes and more people – as it has already done once before. Young Tom O'Connor has an alternative vision: "It might be different in the future, because it will definitely be different because it will have fewer houses because some will be knocked down because no one will live in them because they are

old or ruined. Some people may think that the houses are spooky and haunted. Some houses have holes in the walls and cracks in the ceiling with bad water-pipes”.

But Declan Kenney sees a future he will influence: “I predict there will be more houses in the community because I would like to be an architect when I am older. When I am older I want to design new buildings for people to enjoy and live in plus some new shops. I really want to design play areas for little kids and parks for the adults. I want some nice houses and cottages on parts of land. Well we will see what happens in the future. Goodbye”.

“Memories of Abbey and East Barnwell”, edited by Caroline Biggs has been published by Cambridge City Council at £2.00 & is available at the East Barnwell Community Centre and the community wing of the Abbey Meadows School.

READERS WRITE

Madge Close from Fen Drayton writes: “It was nice to read of 20 Trinity Street Cambridge. I lived and worked there in the early 1930s, Mr & Mrs Wade had the house at that time. Two Haddenham girls were living there. I was working at Newnham College and knew both well, & their pay was 10s more than I was earning. I applied and had a job there for about four years. It was a great place to be, always something going on, the young men played planks but nothing vicious” [SCAN OF TRINITY STREET 1930S]

Mr P. Seeby from Trumpington remembers the first Standard 8 car when it came out in 1938/9. He had just started work for King and Harpers in their depot in Milton Road, Cambridge, who were agents for this car, one of the first to feature independent suspension on its front wheels. All the mechanics regarded it as superior to its Morris equivalent which was one of the first English-made cars to have its headlights faired into the front wings

Memories 29th October 2003, by Mike Petty

“Shut up, dad, we’ve heard that tale a hundred times already” is a sentiment that most of us have expressed, at least secretly, at some time or other. But as we get older it can be comforting to retreat into memories of earlier and happier days. Roger Human from Burwell encouraged his dad, Sid, to set down something of his life’s story. And a fascinating record it is.

Sid Human had been born in a two-bedroomed cottage at Isleham on 22nd June 1906. When other lads collected birds eggs, he preferred the bird itself: “One boy would walk along one side of a hedge and beat it while two others, who had a folding net fixed to two poles, walked along the other side. As the birds flew out we caught them in the net and took them home - especially blackbirds - for our mothers would pluck them and make a blackbird pie. I expect in those days some families needed them for extra food when they had a chance”

The adults were more commercial in their approach: “Five or six men in the village made their living by catching song birds. They made their nets and tackle and had two folding nets made with pole frames about 10 feet long by five feet wide swivelled at one side. Two small stakes were laid apart and attached to a long cord well away from the nets. The catcher would sprinkle a lot of seed to attract birds between the nets and when they were busy feeding he would pull the cords and the nets would fold over and trap the birds. He would then go and retrieve them from under the nets and put them in cages. To also attract the birds they had 'decoy' birds on small stakes with string fixed to them so that the men could just make these decoys fly up enough to attract other birds. The catcher would then go home and put each small bird into a cage with a wire front that he had made with light packing case wood

purchased from the shop. The birds were taken to Isleham Station for shipment by train to Covent Garden Market at 5 pm. The song birds caught were Linnets, Chaffinches, Bullfinches, Larks and Greenfinches and this business continued until they were stopped by the Government making a law to protect birds.”

All too soon play gave way to work: “I left school at the age of thirteen and a half and started to work with Father in the workshop. We made farm carts including the wheels, bodies, ladders and shafts complete with iron work and painting. We also made coffins which was not too bad but I didn't like taking them to the houses and placing the dead bodies in them. Sometimes we had to make a coffin and fetch the body from Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge and this was practically a whole days work with our pony and cart. In cold weather it was not very pleasant. One particular funeral my father had to deal with was rather embarrassing. He always checked to see that the old gravedigger, Pip Brown, had dug the grave large enough for the coffin to go down. But this time he did not check and, on lowering the coffin it was so tight that it loosened some chalk stones, and the coffin only went part way down the grave and just hung there by the lid. As you might guess my father was so afraid that the screws in the lid would give way and let the coffin drop down without the lid. Fortunately it held until the service was over and after the mourners had gone they had to lift the coffin out and enlarge the grave. This never happened again because the grave was in future always checked before the day.” [SCAN OF FEN FUNERAL]

Sid Human's recollections go on to record his war-time experiences as a part-time fireman: “We were supposed to be on call for local fires and when war broke out we had to form a rota, being on duty every third night. Although we had some dangerous times in the Brigade we also had some amusing ones, especially when on duty at the station. We all had our own single beds and blankets for sleeping. My shift was made up with six members and one, John Gordon, would take out his false teeth and put them in his wellington boots before getting into bed! Herbert Griggs always made the tea before getting into bed and would boil the kettle and warm the pot before making the tea. Joe Housden would always tuck his bed up so tight that we used to say that he needed a shoe horn to slide into bed. Ernie Crack turned up when the pubs closed at 10.30 pm, even though he should have reported for duty at 7.00 pm, and would then sit up talking and cracking jokes until midnight! It did not matter to him as he worked on his own and did not need to get up as early as the rest of us who had to wash, shave and have breakfast before starting work. [SCAN OF ISLEHAM 1930S SHOWING VILLAGE FIRE STATION]

Sid's memories, produced just for the family, are full of interest and will be handed down for generations as a proud record of one man and his life. If you have similar items I should be pleased to see them

Wilf Free from Cottenham found his memory jogged by a tv programme about a catastrophe at Bethnal Green underground station during the war, when 198 people were crushed in a panic caused by the firing of a rocket salvo, rather than an actual air raid. These were rockets fired from projectors spaced out over about an acre of ground and Wilf remembers that there was one such site in Newmarket Road, Cambridge where Peverel Road now stands. It was manned at night by members of the Home Guard. Wilf was only a youngster and never got to operate the site though he dug quite a few holes for the mounting of the projectors. He can remember the names of three who were based there, all of whom are now dead. There was Mr Leader., a watchmaker from Burleigh Street, Mr Hazel (who had a lovely daughter) and Ray Woodman, a carpenter with a business off East Road. Can you recall others [LIBRARY PIC OF PEVEREL ROAD?]

Dr Colin Forbes has a question that you can perhaps answer from personal experience. He writes: “If you go to the East end of Lower Park Street and start walking along the path with Jesus Ditch on your right, you will see on your left the outlines of two buildings showing

brown in the otherwise green grass. These were communal Air Raid Shelters; I remember their demolition - I think it was in the summer of 1948; yet they still show each dry autumn. Were they ever used for real? The nearest bomb would I think have been the one which fell at the junction of Jesus Lane and Sydney Street - scars can still be seen on the stonework of Whewell's Court (Trinity College)". Did you shelter there, if so let me know.

Mr D.J. Evans from Sutton had an interesting discovery in the attic of his home, which was once the police house. He has unearthed a file of Isle of Ely Constabulary Crime Sheets for 1942 that were circulated to each police station. The most common war-time crime involved the theft of bicycles, though the person who left his bike unattended at Ely for just two minutes on the afternoon of 19th December that year had a particularly bad Christmas. The thief left the bike but took a brown paper parcel containing tins of Tom Long and Royal Seal tobacco together with 500 Craven A cigarettes, 200 Senior Service, 400 Park Drive and 10 packets of Rizla blue cigarette papers. If you can help the police with their enquiries please ring March constabulary on 2222 [SCAN OF ELY MARKET PLACE SHOWING TOBACCONISTS SHOP]

Other readers are also seeking to put names to faces; each day Peter Allinson, butler at Clare College, finds himself looking at a framed photograph of Clare college servants who worked in Old Court in 1924. He has delved back into college records and come up with a list of names of people on the payroll at that time – but who is who? And there are more people on the picture than were listed in the wages book. If you can help put names to faces he would be delighted to hear from you [SCAN OF PHOTO AND SCAN OF LIST OF NAMES]

Linda Fixter seeks your help in putting together some memories of Orchard, House on Huntingdon Road, now part of New Hall. She writes:

"My Grandfather Frank Deaney went to work for Horace and Ida Darwin at their home, the Orchard in Huntingdon Road in 1925. He was employed as their Head Gardener. Sir Horace died in 1928 and

my Grandfather continued to work for Lady Ida until her death in 1946. They were buried in the old St Giles Cemetery in Huntingdon Road and my Grandfather continued to tend their graves until he became too infirm to do so. He and my Grandmother, who also worked for the family are buried in the same Cemetery"

Linda has a photograph of a staff tea party perhaps to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of George V in 1935. Emma Deaney her grandmother is standing on the back row left next to her grandfather Frank Deaney with her Aunt Mavis (Peggy) is centre front row. But who are the others? [SCAN PHOTOS OF STAFF OF THE ORCHARD & PRINT OF HORACE DARWIN IN DECKCHAIR IN GARDEN 1896]

Memories 5th November 2003, by Mike Petty

Last Thursday evening Haddenham Methodist Chapel was packed with people who'd come to remember an event that local historian Lorna Delanoy described as probably the greatest in that village's history.

The lights were dimmed and images were projected of a familiar landscape that was unrecognisable, of waves where there should be fields, of bungalows with their roofs awash. A few in the congregation saw people they had known, members of their family, friends or relations. But for many others it was a new experience and the incredulous look on their faces

to see how the work of centuries of drainage could be swept away almost overnight echoed that etched in the faces of the people captured on film back in March 1947.

The story of that black winter was one of long hard frosts and seemingly incessant snow that melted overnight and was washed away in torrential rain. The unstoppable flow of water filled the fenland drains and rivers to the very brim, then came the savagery of a gale that whipped the water into waves and the inevitable collapse of banks deep in the blackness of a fenland night that sent people fleeing from their homes.

It was a national disaster, soldiers were brought in to supplement local labour and prisoners-of-war but more acres of fertile land were to be lost to the flood before sheer manpower & military hardware were finally assisted by nature herself as the tide literally turned and the waters subsided.

It was a struggle reported in the press, broadcast on radio news & pictured on cinema newsreels. Then the journalists went away and the ordinary people were left to rebuild their lives and homes unseen and forgotten, like the flood itself.

But one man, Walter Martin Lane, had made his way to the heart of the action, journeying on army amphibious craft and rowing with farmers returning to the shattered remnants of their houses. His remarkable photographic record was donated to the Cambridgeshire Collection more than 30 years ago and has since been shown almost weekly to audiences throughout the region.

Yet Martin Lane could not get everywhere, while he snapped the scene at Haddenham others were experiencing similar problems at Swavesey; Lane watched part of the battle to hold back the flood at Southery but could not get across to Hockwold or Hilgay. His remarkable record is just part of the story.

Now thanks to the dedication of another fenman much more of that story can be told. For more than a year Tony Buckingham from Littleport has been seeking out people whose experiences have never been recounted, they have opened up their memories & their scrapbooks to him in a series of remarkable interviews that he has captured on video. Tony has also delved deep into film archives to unearth newsreel footage unseen for more than 50 years and tracked down contemporary radio programmes which recounted the personal experiences of people who themselves have now become history.

All this has been combined with modern filming, historical reconstruction and the latest technical wizardry to produce a two-hour video dedicated to the story of the 1947 fen floods.

The expertise of river board engineers is recognised along with the professional skill of the men who drove tugs towing lines of barges and the long cold hours and sheer hard work of the men who patrolled river banks and laboured to prevent yet more breaches and more devastation. But there is also the human story of distress at seeing a lifetime's work washed away and the generosity of the insurance agent who had himself paid the premiums for farmers who thought they had lost everything. Many of those who played their part in those dark days of flood have themselves passed away, including several who Tony managed to interview just in time. His film is a tribute their memory and their courage.

As one man amongst the crowds in the Methodist Chapel remarked, it is a video that should be compulsory viewing for every Environmental Agency manager, planner and everybody who looks at the fenland landscape and sees it as flat, black, fertile and dull.

"The winter of '47: a countdown to disaster" is available for £20 at many local newsagents or direct from Tony Buckingham on 01353 861333. [SCANS OF 1947 FLOODS]

Lorna Delanoy herself has been active in compiling a third in the series of 'Village Voices' featuring interviews with Haddenham residents between 1975 and 1995. In one of these George Amory recalls his memories of poaching

"There weren't so much shooting of pheasants and woodpigeons, but I'll tell you what used to be a nice bird, a peewit, some people call them lapwings or plovers. I remember a farmer I were working for once, He had taters in a field and some fallow beside it with cows in it. The peewits were making nests there, and he were scuffling them. When they got up, it were like a cloud was getting up, thousands of them. So he went and got his gun, and I carried it down to where he reckoned they were. I give him his gun, he loaded it up and he crept through the wheat, you see, to where he thought they were. When he got through to within about a yard or two, he just put his head out and they went straight for him. He went, 'Bang!' and they got up, like a cloud; 'Bang!' and he cut a tunnel through them, a tunnel. I've never seen a man do that; sixty he picked out in one go! That's as true as I'm here. We had some string and we tied them in bunches, ten in a bunch. He had a bunch in each hand, and he put a bunch on his haywain and gave me two bunches to hang over me shoulder. We picked up sixty, and God knows how many we couldn't find. I've never seen a man shoot so many peewits in me life! He told me to take two, so I went home with twenty birds, and Mother and one or two of the girls were plucking 'em and burning the feathers, then Mother drawed and done 'em, and we had three or four dinners. They were beautiful, yeah, one of the richest birds you can eat. But you can't now; they're on the preserve list. You know, people are still talking about them sixty birds, even people who weren't born then."

'Village Voices, book 3' is available from bookshops in Ely and Soham at £2, or direct from Lorna Delanoy on 01353 777691

Readers write

Peter Hall from Impington e-mails to say that he recognises one of the Clare College members of staff in the 1924 photograph I featured in Memories last week. On the front row, fifth from the right is a portly gentleman with a 'Walrus' style moustache. He was Edward Ingrey Hall, Peter's great-grandfather, who was head porter at Clare and lived in the college-owned buildings in Coe Fen Terrace. [SCAN OF THIS GENT, SCAN OF COE FEN TERRACE]

Michael Harvey from Cambridge has sent a picture of some apprentices and motor mechanics who worked for King and Harper in Thompson's Lane, Cambridge in 1961. Mick was then 19 years old and in his third year of a five year apprenticeship. He names his colleagues as, left to right, Dick Roberts, Abrose Papp a Hungarian refugee, Eric Davey, Frank Hollman, John Little, Reg Rignall, Mick himself, John Cousins, Charlie Palmer, David (can't remember) and Derrick Jackson. The photographer was Sid Hall and the car in the background a Morris Oxford. [SCAN OF MECHANICS]

Yvonne Hull from Willingham had her memory jogged by a picture of cottages opposite Over church (Memories September 17th). Her parents lived in one of the cottages all their married life, all Yvonne's family were born there, including her eldest son in 1940. [SCAN OF OVER (NOT HER COTTAGE)] Yet more memories of Over are recorded by Eileen Webster and Jean Nelson in the latest volume of their chronicle of the Bicheno family. One of the most remarkable was the Rev James Bicheno, 1752-1831 who attended services at the dissenting congregation at Stone Yard in Cambridge – now St Andrew's Street Baptist Chapel - and was one of 16 people baptised at Whittlesford mill in 1769. But next year he was banished from church membership, probably for an involvement with a young woman, and went to London to seek his fortune. He was persuaded instead to seek a new life in a new world and boarded a boat for Virginia, North America. On arrival he was sold as a slave but, being an educated

man, became tutor to the children of the family. It was two years before he managed to make contact with his family back in Over and the Rev Robert Robinson and members of the Baptist congregation sent money to buy his freedom and repatriation. Even when safely back in Britain his involvement with the sea was not over and a few years later he was shipwrecked on rock off the Isle of Wight. "Bicheno: a family from Over" is available from Eileen Webster, 1 Longstanton Road, Over CB4 5PP for £17.50, including postage.

scans

FLOOD 1 : how the News reported the situation in March 1947

FLOOD 2: despair in the faces of farmers flooded off their land

FLOOD 3: men working at night to try to repair banks

FLOOD 4: families return to flooded homes

FLOOD 5: a house collapses at Southery

CAR : King & Harper mechanics

CLARE: Edward Ingrey Hall, head porter at Clare

COE FEN TERRACE: houses at Coe Fen Terrace, owned by the college

OVER: street view c1910

Memories 12th November 2003, by Mike Petty

WE SEEM TO HAVE LOST MY BYE-LINE PHOTO OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS –
IS IT STILL AROUND?

I'LL CALL IN ON TUESDAY MORNING

The progress in the work to place a new cycle and footbridge at Milton has been attracting attention, culminating last weekend with numerous people making the trip to see it slid into position across the A14.

But a similar event attracted even greater crowds in 1930 when it was not a road but a river that was spanned and the bridge was to carry not cycles but trains. The original railway bridge at Chesterton had been a trestle bridge, pictured by John Roget, the son of the compiler of the famous Thesaurus, in the 1850s. This had been replaced by a low girder bridge that in April 1930 was succeeded by a much larger and stronger structure which, like the Milton bridge, was constructed alongside and then slid into position over a weekend. [SCAN OF THE ORIGINAL RAILWAY BRIDGE AND WORK TO REPLACE ITS SUCCESSOR WITH THE PRESENT BRIDGE IN 1930][PERHAPS MODERN PIC OF THE NEW MILTON CYCLE BRIDGE]

The erection of this new railway bridge over the Cam at Chesterton was photographed by Ted Mott and is included on a new CD-Rom issued by Hugo Brown in association with the Cambridgeshire Collection. Called "Interactive Cambridge" it includes five tours, featuring new and old photographs of the city centre, colleges, churches and pubs together with three maps & over a thousand photographs, old and new. It offers tourists a unique guide and residents a fascinating glimpse of their city.

However Cambridge researchers have other such places where they can locate pictures of Cambridge. The indexes to the Cambridgeshire Collection record over 400,000 such images, then there are numerous books of old photographs and of course the News' own files hold many thousand pictures of the last 50 years or so.

But where does one go for similar pictures of 'the other place', Oxford? For historians anxious to compare and contrast college buildings, streets or indeed railway stations there has been little option but a journey across to the Midlands.

Now Hugo has extended the techniques pioneered in Cambridge with a new CD-Rom exploring Oxford. Once more he has located and scanned over 1,000 photographs but this time of High Street rather than Kings Parade, Magdalen Bridge rather than Magdalene, All Saints church Turl Street rather than Jesus Lane, the University Arms pub rather than Hotel. He has also included an interactive tour, just as with Cambridge you can click on a map to find your way round with pictures depicting what you are seeing and what it looked like in the past.

Nor has he stopped there for there are pictures of 34 Oxfordshire villages with exotic names like Duns Tew, Kingston Bagpuize and Woodstock. If you wish to discover something of their history then this is supplied in pages of the 1895 Kelly's Directory of Oxfordshire, together with indexed lists of surnames & tradespeople.

By combining the Oxford Explorer and Interactive Cambridge one can compare and contrast some of the sights of the two University cities without leaving your computer.

The Oxford Explorer costs £20, the Cambridge Interactive guide £10; Both CD-Roms are published in Queen Adelaide, near Ely, by 'The Cambridge Explorer'; for copies or a list of stockists contact Hugo Brown at www.cambridge-explorer.org.uk or phone 01353 665493

COMPARE PICTURES OF OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE

CASTLE STREET OXFORD 1920, CAMBRIDGE 1900

JAMES STREET OXFORD 1906, CAMBRIDGE 1920s

HIGH STREET OXFORD 1900 and KING'S PARADE CAMBRIDGE 1930s

MAGDALEN [NB NO 'E'] COLLEGE AND BRIDGE OXFORD 1943 and MAGDALENE CAMBRIDGE 1905

ALL SAINTS CHURCH OXFORD & ALL SAINTS CHURCH, CAMBRIDGE

LNWR RAIL MOTOR CAR THAT RAN BETWEEN OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE 1910
(from Oxford Explorer)

READERS WRITE

Fred Nunn from south Arbury writes to say that like Wilf Free (Memories 29th October) he too was at the Ack Ack site on Newmarket Road during the war; "I joined the Home Guard when I was 16 years old, with my friend Roy Cox. We started on the 'twins' as they were called and later the big boys arrived, they fired nine rockets at a time. We enjoyed our trip to Heacham training range on some Sundays and got three shillings expenses". I'm told there was another such site near Cherry Hinton – can anybody else remember it or add further details?

Ann Barton from Cambridge spotted he uncle, Phil Smith on the picture of Clare College servants (Memories 29th October). He is on the back row, third from the right; Phil started at college working on D Staircase in 1924, and so would have been a new boy when the picture was taken. He continued working there until 1962 and died five years later.

Cambridge historian & street-sweeper Alan Brigham has sent this tribute to a real old Cambridge man: "I've just been to the funeral of Gerald Littlechild (1912-2003). It was a lovely day, and a lovely funeral at Barton Church followed by a woodland burial. I used to sweep in front of his Health Food Shop in Rose Crescent. He refused to retire until he was well into his 70s, when it became probably the first Cambridge Take-Away Sandwich Shop, Peppercorns. After that every retail unit that became vacant became a food or drink outlet, cinemas included. Gerald was born in Cambridge & died in Cambridge hoeing his garden, alert until the end. He loved the city, took great pride in living here, knew an awful about it

and was stopping me in the street until the end to tell me something he thought might interest me. He'd just rung me up the week before he died to tell me something about Hobson's Conduit! I always meant to tape him, but never got around to it because it felt like he would always be around. He left school at 14 to do a proper grocer's apprenticeship at the old International Stores. I never found out what took him into Health Foods, but that must have been quite a brave and novel venture in the 1930s. Another part of Cambridge passes away. And I start to feel old!" [PICTURE OF GERALD LITTLECHILD, CECIL COLLEN AND STAFF IN THE HEALTH FOODS STORE, ROSE CRESCENT APPEARED IN SARA PAYNE'S 'DOWN YOUR STREET' ARTICLE ON ROSE CRESENT, MAY 1982 – CHECK LIBRARY FILES]

Memories 19th November 2003, by Mike Petty

Cyclists and bridges have been in the news again last week, with the closure of the footbridge over the Cam at Cutter Ferry Path, alongside Elizabeth Bridge, after an inspection revealed it to be structurally unsafe. [CUTTING OR MODERN PIC]

The bridge was one of two built just over 75 years ago replacing ferries that had plied across the river, the ferrymen making a useful living from the tolls they charged and the residents not being too inconvenienced by the delay in crossing. Sometimes when the ferryman had finished for the night people took themselves across, turning the handle that engaged the chain that ran across the bed of the river. Although when the ferry was on the other side of the river – as it always seemed to be - it had to be pulled over by tugging on the chain itself, slimy - and worse - from the depths of the river.

Whilst the old residents of Chesterton were content to cross the river in the traditional way occupants of new houses on the De Freville Estate were soon campaigning for something better - a footbridge. In 1913 the Borough council decided that a bridge was necessary at Ferry Path [NOT CUTTER FERRY PATH], though it was another 14 years before it actually opened. William Pauley had operated a ferry there since 1887 and carried an estimated one-and-a-quarter-million passengers. Those waiting to make a last nostalgic crossing were disappointed when the ferry sank just before the new bridge opened. [SCAN OF PAULEY'S FERRY WITH CYCLIST]

Chesterton folk were very happy at the opening of the new footbridge and there was a fairly large crowd on both sides of the river to watch its inauguration. The Mayor reminded them that the bridge had been a very long time coming. But there was an old proverb: "Bridges were made for wise men to walk over, and fools to ride over" & cyclists should remember this and the warning of the penalties awaiting those who did not dismount when crossing the bridge.

Further downstream the Cutter ferry, worked for years by the Dant family, had also been superseded by a footbridge opened a few weeks earlier. But there were soon problems as the News reported in July 1927: "There was a good deal of grouching before the inhabitants of Chesterton had a footbridge over the Cam at Dant's Ferry. Now they have got one they have found something else to grouse about". A correspondent complained: "At five minutes to eight every morning the instrument workers at Pye's are hurrying to work from the other side of the river. They curse and groan, trip and stagger under the burden of carrying their bicycles up and down a steep double flight of steps. Sooner or later some panting person carrying a bicycle will fall backwards or pitch into the river. The bridge was not made for cyclists who should get up earlier and ride up Victoria Avenue. But it is quite as much a death trap for pedestrians: the steps are much too steep". In 1932 the bridge had to be closed while the

approaches were being reconstructed and the ferry was brought back into use once more.
[SCAN OF CUTTER FERRY BRIDGE WITH THE OLD FERRY VISIBLE ON THE RIGHT]

Could this be the solution to the present problems for cyclists: does anybody have an old ferry they could offer?

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Many Sawstonians were puzzled by the picture of their High Street that I used to illustrate Memories on 22nd October

Several people went out into the street to try and identify the scene and even Keith Westley who has known the village all his life e-mailed to say something was wrong. But it really was their village, though the News photographer had used a telephoto lens when he took the picture IN [SEE PRINT-OUT] , giving a different perspective on the scene that was also selected as a postcard view in about 1910. [REPRISE PHOTO, SCAN OF SAME AREA OF HIGH STREET 1910].

George Challis was one man who knew the village in those days and had the foresight to set down his memories in a booklet he published about 70 years ago. Long unobtainable it has now been reprinted with an up-to-date commentary by Bryan Howe.

George recalled how in his early days Sawston was a manufacturing village with no claim to beauty and as such did not attract independent, retired people. Tradespeople looking down upon factory hands, and factory hands upon the farm labourer who occupied the lowest step.

"The Yard" and "the Mill" were responsible for the employment of the majority of the working population of the parish. At the Yard, owned by Thomas Evans, tradesmen abounded - tanners, fleshers, frisers, splitters, grounders and glove cutters. In addition nearly a hundred parchment makers were employed. Boys were drafted into the works from Linton Workhouse. The tramp of men in their clogs going to and returning from work was a well-known sound. At the back of the 'Woolpack' was a huge barn in which a horse walking in a circle turned a mill which crushed the bark used for tanning. Women made up gloves and also with yellow cotton stitched up the holes in the chamois leathers. But to maximise his profits Evans paid the men at his own public houses where they were expected to spend at least 4d. for the good of the house - which sum they often greatly exceeded

Sawston was also famous for its paper; George remembered when the Mill was owned by Captain Towgood and their blue foolscap was to be found in almost every lawyer's office in the country. Various tradesmen were employed - millwrights, fitters, turners, papermakers and specialists who were responsible for the paper being absolutely up to standard with the unpleasant task of sorting and cutting up rags was done by women.

But during the second world war paper from Sawston's Spicer's factory played a largely unrecorded part in the aviation industry. The constructed long-range fuel tanks, made from paper, animal glue and gelatine to give Typhoons and other fighter aircraft the extra flying time needed to escort bombers to their targets. They were cigar-shaped and made in three sections bonded together to become perfectly petrol-proof. And this is where Keith Westley would like your help; he knows most of the technical details but not how the front and tail were fixed to the main body of the tank. If you can put him out of his memory please e-mail g4wez@waitrose.com or write to me and I'd forward it on. "Sawston 150 years ago" is available from Bryan Howe at 16 Henry Morris Road, Sawston CB2 4JW (01223 833963) for £6.50

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It has taken Mr B. Gill some time to respond to a Memories article on Melbourn– but then he is writing from Melbourne, Australia! “My wife and I were sent a copy of the CEN 15th October relating to the Sheepshead Row Cottages before restoration in 1938. The one with the little girl at the end one was of my wife when she was 6 years old. She lived with her grandparents Mr and Mrs Negus and her Uncle Alfred until about 1946. She is seen with her favourite Teddy Bear which she carried about everywhere. Also she is wearing black boots which she hated. Her name is Sheila Gill nee Winter, and her mother Emma Maling nee Negus is still alive aged 90 and lives in Litlington. [SCAN OF THE COTTAGE TAKEN 1938 TOGETHER WITH A DETAIL SHOWING SHEILA GILL]

Hildersham & Balsham residents could also be excused if they failed to recognise their own villages as seen on two calendars issued to raise money for church restoration funds. For Andrew Westwood-Bate has delved back into the past for a selection of old photographs, one of which shows the Post Office at Hildersham over 100 years ago, when most villages actually had post offices. Supplies of the calendar are limited so contact Andrew on Cambridge 892430 [SCAN OF HILDERSHAM POST OFFICE AND BALSHAM HIGH STREET c1900, PERHAPS CEN PHOTOS FROM LIBRARY]

If your interest is centred further south then you may find something of relevance in the latest (autumn) issue of the Saffron Walden Historical Journal. It covers Walden and north-west Essex generally and there are items relating to Newport, Hadstock, Radwinter, the Chesterfords and Ashdon. Articles include one on the fascinating history and architecture of the beautiful timber-framed house known as Saffron Walden Youth Hostel, the town's First World War V.A.D. Hospital and Newport church bells maker Miles Graye. Copies are available at £2 from Harts bookshop, the Tourist Information Centre, Lankester Antiques or by mail from 9 High Street, Saffron Walden - postage is 50p extra.

Memories 26th November 2003

When Wilf Free from Cottenham wrote to recall his memories of a Home Guard rocket battery on Newmarket Road Cambridge (Memories 29th October) he touched upon an aspect of Cambridge's wartime experience that had not been raised before.

Now Michael Bowyer, the aviation expert and author of numerous books including ‘Air Raid: the enemy air offensive against East Anglia 1939-45’ (Patrick Stephens, 1986) has been delving into his files to fill this gap.

As the country prepared for air attack in 1941 300,000 Army personnel were scheduled to man anti-aircraft gun defences. Having so many troops tied up and rarely engaging the foe was clearly pointless so ATS women and the Home Guard were trained to man heavy and light anti-aircraft guns. Thirteen British heritage cities became Gun Defended Areas and on 29 April 1942 eight 3.7 in. mobile Anti-Aircraft guns arrived at Cambridge. Four guns moved onto a site near where Priory School stands, with others at Grantchester. Following the so-called ‘Baedeker Raids’ the enemy switched to extremely low-level night operations and the heavy 3.7-inch guns were of little use against them. So 40-mm Bofors light anti-aircraft guns and machine-guns at searchlight posts were used. One such gun positioned on Midsummer Common early on 28th July 1942 briefly engaged the low attack Ju 88 which unloaded ten high explosive bombs and large incendiary weapons close to the ‘Round Church’ killing three and injuring 19 people. The guns opened up again on 29/30 July and 6th August when eight Dornier 217s attempted to bomb the Arbury Road instrument factory and shrapnel fell widely in the eastern parts of Cambridge. The ‘crack’ and ‘flash’ of anti-aircraft fire became usual

around Cambridge. [SCAN OF 3.7" ACK-ACK GUN (NOT CAMBRIDGE) and GUNS AND OPERATORS POSED ON PARKERS PIECE]

In April 1943 Home Guard recruitment for rocket batteries began. Within a month sufficient Cambridge Home Guards had volunteered or been directed to fully man the Cam 101 'Z' Battery, their twin-rocket launchers easy to see from Newmarket Road alongside four Regular soldier manned 3.7- inch guns and sometimes their Bofors.

Electrically fired, the rockets were intended to burst as one in the form of a box with the enemy raider caught in the centre and too seriously damaged to survive. Fusing, simultaneous launch and correct trajectory were essential, and not easy to achieve. Each 3-inch diameter rocket 'shell' consisted of a metal tube about six four feet long with a sharply pointed black or bronze lacquered warhead and four tail triangular shaped vanes. It needed to be fused then carefully lifted on to launch rails which were then aimed appropriately. Training was given at weekends at Heacham Beach Practice camp

Their expertise was tested early on the morning of 26 July 1943. At 00.25 hours the alert sounded. A Dornier 217 was about and at 00.38 from an arc of bright light in the eastern sky came a giant 'whoosh'. Cam 101 was firing for the first time. Fiery trails spewed from the rocket tails as they whistled away easterly. Purple and red flashes followed, at a surprisingly low altitude. It was not a text book launch as only half the battery had managed to fire, their rockets exploding spasmodically over a wide area of sky. The enemy aircraft continued over central Cambridge and had turned about when almost at once Cam 101 fired again, this time in the direction of Milton, with 32 rockets racing off in close formation and producing surely the most spectacular firework display Cambridge has even seen. The warheads exploded almost simultaneously producing a curious echo, which seemed to bounce around the sky. A third salvo was then fired while out west the heavy crackle of Grantchester's guns came as they tackled a higher flying raider. Very abruptly an eerie silence followed and the all-clear wailed at 01.15 hrs. [SCAN – GRAINY – OF ROCKETS IN ACTION – NOT CAMBS.]

That silence was broken next morning. Hot chunks of rocket had cascaded onto Swaffham Bulbeck, Swaffham Prior and Quy & strong complaints flowed from those upon whom the rocket remnants fell. Clearly, these novel weapons needed to burst over unoccupied areas whenever possible. That would not be easy to achieve, but Cam 101 fired several times that late summer and complaints were fewer. [SCAN OF UNION SOCIETY DAMAGE 1942 – BUT FALLING ROCKETS DAMAGED VILLAGES]

By autumn Cam 101 was training to use 'niners', 13 of which were to equip the battery. More space being needed, a new operating site was chosen, a field at the eastern end of Walpole Road. From there they and Grantchester's guns opened fire on 21 January 1944 at enemy aircraft heading for London. On a later occasion a Dornier 217 was caught in the middle of a box of bursting rockets but still proceeded and on 22nd February 101 fired a full salvo at four raiders passing by the city.

Operating the Z projectors had taken the Home Guard into the front line, destroying notions that Dad's Army was just a comedy show. Just how successful the anti-aircraft gunners were it is impossible to say; they were certainly effective in driving away attackers, but less successful in causing their demise. [SCAN OF 5TH CAMBS A COMPANY AA BATTERY 1944, SHOULDER FLASH OF CAM 101 Z BATTERY]

Other readers have also recalled the batteries

One man who actually worked on them was James Langford who still lives in Cambridge. He recalls: "I joined the 'twins' battery from the Pye Home Guard & from there I move up to the 'nines' battery where Wimpole Road is today". He remembers training at Heacham as "fun

but serious stuff. A regular officer was posted on top of a pillbox to warn of approaching aircraft. Alas he did not see a Wellington bomber, gave the order to fire and we nearly shot it down". Francis Gilbey from Soham recalls that his father, Bob Gilbey used to man the Walpole Road rockets. He worked on the land at Pemberton's Trumpington during the day and served in the Home guard at other times.

Dr Richard Eden, Emeritus Professor of Energy Studies has other experiences of anti-aircraft activity:

"During the war Cambridge undergraduates reading mathematics, science, or engineering, were interviewed by a group led by C.P. Snow. I expressed a preference for working on radar, and this led to my attending lectures at Imperial College followed by a ten-week course at the Radar School in Petersham, Surrey in 1942. After this I was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME), and was posted initially to the HQ of the searchlight regiment based in Ely. After three weeks there, I was attached to the searchlight battery with its HQ in Royston. This battery was responsible for 24 searchlights in the area to the west of the line from Royston through Thriplow to Cambridge. Each searchlight was linked to a radar system, SLC, (searchlight control), and it was my job to supervise the maintenance of the radar sets.

"Typically, each week there would be several breakdowns amongst the 24 radar sets in the searchlight battery. Sometimes the troop radar mechanic could fix the problem, but more commonly I would be called in, so after a few weeks I had encountered most of the commonest faults and diagnosis was relatively easy. In the more difficult cases, or where spares were required which we did not stock, it was necessary to take a unit from the radar set to the REME workshop in Northampton, usually collecting a working unit in exchange.

"My other job was to improve the efficiency of the radar sets, by relocating them if necessary to avoid 'clutter' arising from reflections from the surrounding hills. Since most of the region is fairly flat, this problem was rare, though in the case of Thriplow, we had great difficulty in finding a satisfactory site. From the viewpoint of radar alone, the best site was the village green, but the major commanding the battery thought the crew would prefer more privacy, since their quarters were always immediately adjacent to the searchlight and its radar.

"Two of my searchlight sites were near Cambridge, one at Trumpington on the Clay Farm site just off Long Road and another at Dry Drayton. In the Spring of 1943, it was decided that there should be a fitness exercise and for this occasion most of the 300 or so men in the Royston-based battery assembled in Grantchester one Sunday morning, and were required to run to the Dry Drayton site. The starting point was in Grantchester near the site of an anti-aircraft battery on the Cambridge road. The considerable complexity of guns' radar meant that there was one REME officer responsible for maintaining each GL2c radar set, and coincidentally, the radar officer in Grantchester was a Mr Cadwell, who had formerly been my mathematics master at Hertford Grammar School from 1937-39.

"There was very little enemy activity in the skies over the Cambridge area during the period when I was looking after the searchlight radar. Sometimes, there were three or four alerts each week, but there were fewer actual incursions into our area. From time to time there were practice alerts when RAF planes provided practice to the searchlight and radar teams."
[SCAN OF SEARCHLIGHT OPERATOR FRANK SADLER FROM STRETHAM (NOT TAKEN IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE); THRIPLow GREEN NEARLY SELECTED FOR RADAR STATION]

Does any of this jog your memories – write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories 3rd December 2003, by Mike Petty

Rural post offices have been part of community life for generations, but like various other village institutions they are declining. Without them people are faced with longer journeys to collect pensions or benefits and rural life becomes the poorer.

In their heyday the village post office and general stores supplied most of the villagers' needs, as Beatrice Stevens recalled in her book: "Stretham: a feast of memories"

"Swan's was a general store and housed the village Post Office. This was a small box-like office at the left of the entrance, and had a fascinating aperture through which you voiced your requests and received the stamps and Postal Order that you might want. Occasionally one needed to send a telegram, but only when sad news was to be transmitted. Someone was ill and the daughter in service in London must be sent for. Or, perhaps even worse, one of the family had died or had had a farm accident, and other relatives must be informed."

But the post office side of the shop was eclipsed by the other things it sold.

"You could buy almost anything at Swan's. Most of the left side of the shop was given over to drapery, and numerous small compartments, about fifteen inches square, contained an abundance of goods. Each compartment was labelled: socks, vests, pants, cottons, and larger compartments held the more bulky goods: men's and boy's trousers, women's combinations, warm knickers or drawers, thick lisle stockings, long-sleeved vests.

Open shelves held parcels, some with brown paper wrapping and others packed in white cloth to keep the contents clean: unbleached calico for sheets and underwear, towelling for the roller towels which hung on the back door of every house. At the very top were less-neatly wrapped bundles, holding speckled wool for home-knitted socks and gloves, and later, as jumpers became fashionable, you could buy gaily-coloured wool in brilliant shades of green, blue and red. Swans stocked boots and shoes, mainly of the heavy kind for work on the land, but, as this was a higher-class shop, you might, also, see on display a few pairs of lighter shoes with patent toes, black, of course. Brown shoes were for the unconventional, and Mr. Swan even stocked a few pairs of these.

One could also buy slippers there, and, at Christmas, there was always a large assortment of tablecloths: damask and linen for use at teatime on Sundays and special occasions, and chenille for afternoons when the living-room put on a more leisured look after the mid-day dinner. Duchesse sets for the dressing-table, fancy embroidered mats, sensible overalls, which really were overalls, and, later, small printed aprons, provided a display that tempted many a mother to spend more than she could afford. And Mr. Swan, knowing the problem, never pressed anyone to buy, but, when they did, he wrapped the purchase up as if it was of the utmost value, and, always, with the greatest courtesy.

The same courtesy was shown when small items for the children's stockings were asked for, maybe, a handkerchief with a nursery rhyme to decorate it, an embroidered white pinafore, warm, black stockings and, for pure luxury, a pink, sugar mouse. The boy of the family was something more of a problem, but Mr. Swan was sure to point out the caps and socks, and maybe, a chocolate watch, with its hands painted in red on silver paper.

The shop was a veritable Treasure House, a large counter at the right, holding jars of sweets, brass scales and a bacon-slicing machine, this last being an object of wonder. Stacked on the floor, in front of the counter, were open biscuit tins containing mouth-watering jam puffs,

ginger biscuits, fig slices and Garibaldi's, all for a few pence a pound, and for tuppence you could buy a big bag of broken biscuits. These were the best of all, to my mind. You never knew what you might find. There might be tiny pieces of ginger biscuit gone soft or crumbs of a plain kind, but there might also be a whole cream biscuit, or one with chocolate covering. Ready-made bags, with almost a blotting-paper texture in a darkish blue were used for white sugar, with a rose-red coloured one for brown sugar, an unintentional but attractive combination of colour.

Mr. Walter, the younger of the two Swans, was mainly in charge of the drapery department, and, although unmarried, would serve the most intimate garments of women's wear in such a natural and factual way that there was no embarrassment on either side. Mr. Ernest looked after the grocery side of the business. He was just as courteous as his brother, giving as much consideration in supplying a small item as making up a large order, which might be for delivery in the village itself, or in the fen. They even went to neighbouring villages, and everywhere they called there would be a warm, personal welcome for the Swan brothers, who were honoured for their integrity."

In the 1920's Swan's gave up the postal side of their business which transferred to another village shop – now the last in Stretham. But it has not always been easy to find a new site for the post office, as the villagers at Ashley found back in October 1926. The News reported: "At the Newmarket Police Court a solicitor on behalf of Greene, King & Sons, brewers, said there was a real difficulty in Ashley in obtaining premises for the sub Post Office and he proposed that it should be attached to the Crown Public House. In order to do this it would be necessary to carry out structural alterations. Nobody could enter the public house through the Post Office, or the Post Office through the public house. If it were possible to get another property it would be desirable to do so as the language at a public house was not always of the best". Now such proposals are being made once more.

Back in April 1973 the British Tourist Authority pronounced that the village shop was alive and well and to prove it they picked out the village shop and post office at Gt Abington. The shop, run by retired R.A.F. squadron leader Jack Armitage, was highlighted in an article in the magazine "In Britain". Since he and his wife took over the shop they had modernised the inside but left the old front as it was to blend in with the rest of the village. Since they took over three years ago before turnover had almost doubled. "I am sure there will always be a place for the village shop", she said. That shop continues but other communities have seen the closure of even this once-basic facility. [PHOTOS OF VILLAGE POST OFFICES AT ARRINGTON c1900 - KIRTLING, WHERE A CUSTOMER LEAVES HAVING PURCHASED A BAR OF CHOCOLATE, 1930 – INSIDE THE POST OFFICE, SUTTON 1964 - AN ELDERLY COUPLE OUTSIDE LT WILBRAHAM POST OFFICE c1910 AND INTERIOR OF NORFOLK STREET POST OFFICE CAMBRIDGE SHOWING MANY OF THE THINGS RECALLED AS ALSO BEING AT STRETHAM]

Margaret Wilsher has written from Frinton-on-Sea with her memories of Balsham where her mother ran Cartwright's Stores in the 1940s and 1950s. Next door to the shop was an old cottage, since pulled down to make way for Trinity Close, where Bert Smith was a harness maker and once made a boot for a cow. Such details are most interesting to local historians like Anthea Robinson, a relative newcomer to Balsham, who has been compiling a village history, a few copies of which may still be available from her at 11 West Wickham Road, Balsham CB1 6DZ. It includes a list of village amenities which in 2001 included new trades never envisaged before such as computer repairer and carpet fitter, industrial development site – as well as that essential post office.

Two correspondents have sent photographs of St Paul's school in Russell Street, Cambridge though at different periods. Gladys Allen (nee Rudd) knew it first: "My twin sister Oliver and

I went there in the mid 1920s, although we moved out to Girton. My mother wanted us to stay at the school so we had to walk from Girton Road to Oxford Road to catch a bus". Oliver is the girl in a drill-slip and Gladys is second on her left. Anne Ramsey (nee Froste) from Cambridge was there about 20 years later and has sent a picture of a PT session in 1947 or 1948, with Norwich Street in the background. She and her sister, now Diane Lever (arrowed) were pupils there at the time and she Anne has fond memories of the old, cold building and the teachers, Miss Chestnut, Mrs Honeyman and the excellent headmistress, Miss Grey. Does anybody recognise themselves on either snap? [TWO SCANS OF ST PAULS SCHOOL- THE GROUP c1925, THE PT GIRLS c1947]

A number of people have written asking for information on old Cambridge photographers Linda Gooch would like to know about T. Whiffin whose name appears on the back of some pictures that belong to her mother Mrs Eileen Mansfield. [SCAN OF WHIFFIN PICTURE OF GROUP OF MEN NEAR HOBSON'S CONDUIT]

David Tooke is interested in Edward Johnson, a very early photographer in Wisbech who took a photograph of his ancestor Thomas Tooke. Johnson won a prize in an exhibition in 1866, some of his fine photographs of appear in a series of books on Fen and Marshland Churches. Lorna Perry is after Clarence Hailey, a Newmarket photographer of racehorses; she has one of his pictures dated 1921 and would appreciate more information

Tim Sergeant from Kent is researching the Basebe family, one of who was a photographer in Cambridge before the First World War

If you can assist, or have photographs taken by any of them, please let me know

Memories 11th December 2004, by Mike Petty

Last week's tributes to Sir Arthur Marshall on his 100th birthday recalled that he was born just 13 days before Orville Wright made what has gone down in history as the world's first manned, powered, controlled and sustained flight in a heavier-than-air machine. It took place near Kitty Hawk, Carolina but that distinction was nearly claimed by a Cambridgeshire man, E.P. Frost of West Wrattling Hall whose story was told by the Cambridge Daily News in December 1953. His nephew, Ald E. Gordon Frost recalled that it was back in 1870, more than 30 years before the Americans that Frost built his first machine. A keen naturalist he based his design on the wings of birds, a creation of willow, feathers and silk described as 'a wonderful piece of work' by A.J. Winship, a well-known Cambridge engineer, who helped Frost and his colleague Dr H.. Hutchinson in their experiment.

This was before the days of the internal combustion engine and they planned that the machine would be driven by a specially-built steam engine with a vertical boiler. But the engine did not develop the required power and although the wings flapped up and down it could not lift the heavy craft into the air. The machine was left under the trees in the park and by the time a petrol engine was available, 30 years later, the weather had left it a wreck. But Frost kept one of the wings in his house and would invite people to sit on a music school and flap it up and down, finding themselves being whirled around the room. [SCAN OF FROST'S STEAM PLANE]

Many of the outstanding pioneers in aviation, with famous names like Handley Page, Inglis, Maxim and Hargrave, visited the Hall or were associated with Frost. As a tribute to his foresight he was made President of the Aeronautical Society in 1909 when the Wright

Brothers were awarded the Society's Gold Medal for their historic exploit. This body, now the Royal Aeronautical Society, now stage an annual lecture in Sir Arthur's name; and even at 100 he is still active, being thanked warmly for his help in the latest history of his company "Marshall of Cambridge" by Stephen Skinner (Tempus £12.99)

It was in 1909 too that a newspaper correspondent journeyed out to Oakington and asked an old roadman if he could direct him to the aircraft works of Messrs Grose and Feary. Eventually he found his way to a barn at the end of a farmyard where two men were working on a cigar-shaped machine – an all-British monoplane with an air-cooled engine that would carry a passenger as well as the pilot. As the day of the first flight neared there was a heated debate between the two designers as to who should not be the pilot – one claimed he had a family, the other that he had a widowed mother to support. Eventually they resolved the issue and the plane careered across a field; but it did not become airborne, except when it struck a bump. [SCAN OF OAKINGTON C1914]

Elsewhere in Cambridgeshire other aviation work was progressing. At Elm, near Wisbech, Ernest Pruden was building a cycloplane, though it was destroyed when the barn it was housed in caught fire. And in St Barnabas Road Cambridge a group of men, inspired by the Oakington incident, were busy on a design of their own. In May 1910 flight trials were held near Fleam Dyke; the plane rose a few feet from the ground and sailed along for three or four yards before coming down nose first and turning a somersault. Fortunately the pilot, Mr Wallis, was not injured. [SCAN OF ELM c1900]

Aeroplanes with flapping wings seem totally illogical today, but so does the idea of an autogyro – a machine like a mini-helicopter that featured in one of the James Bond films. Yet that did fly and was developed by Ken Wallis, from a company registered in Chesterton Road, Cambridge, who in 1981 rebuilt the original Wallbro Plane, using as guidance the description given by the original newspaper reporter. [AUTOGYRO PHOTO FROM NEWS FILES]

Spitfires, Wellingtons and Heinkels took off and landed in the Park beside the cathedral at Ely in 1942, their progress studied by dozens of young Jewish faces. They were members of the Jews Free Boys School modelling club who had been removed from the very real danger of aerial combat over their London homes to find safety and some degree of normality in the fenland city. As they arrived so Tommy Whewell, one of the School's teachers made the journey the other way, back to his wife in London, only to be killed in an air raid. The Jewish schoolboys were based in the King's School's Hereward Hall just across the road from The Porta, which had been built in 1881 to provide dormitories, library and studies in response to their growing number of boarders and the extra masters needed to teach an expanding curriculum. [SCAN OF KING'S SCHOOL PUPILS TAKING LESSON IN PARK]

This episode in the King's School's story is recorded in a new book by Lynne Turner that gives a unique insight into life 'In the shadow of the cathedral' from the time of old-boy King Edward the Confessor to the present day. She charts the growth of the buildings and curriculum, but also concentrates on the personalities involved, not only of teachers but also other members of staff, including Miss Canham, matron from 1906-1958. Her discipline was strict but fair and she was remembered by hundreds of pupils each Christmas time. Former Ely Mayor, Mike Rouse recalls: "In my years she presided over the line in her undercroft surrounded by piles of laundry and the sweet soapy smell of it all, dispensing small bottles of milk to us at break"

Nor is the sporting side of school life overlooked; swimming sports were introduced in 1905, though they had no pool. So it was off to the Roswell Pits for a variety of races, including one on planks which had to be launched and mounted by a pair of boys who, using their arms like oars, swam across the pit and back again. Next year was less successful; they had just gathered when the heavens opened and the banks of clay turned very slippery and sticky; it

was a sad procession back to school in the rain. They were delighted when Ely obtained its own open-air pool, a more hygienic alternative to the rat-infested pits. [SCAN OF ROSWELL PITS 1920S & ELY OPEN-AIR SWIMMING POOL 1968 – NOT WITH KING’S SCHOOL PUPILS]

In 1970 the King’s School celebrated its millennium year with a pageant, opened a new purpose-built Junior School and admitted its first girl pupils, becoming one of the first Public Schools to go co-educational. This was a brave move by the School, especially given their earlier experience with girls. For in 1604 the headmaster’s somewhat unruly daughter had been accommodated at one end of the school with some of the boarders. The Dean recorded she “suspected of very loose behaviour ... for she would not stick to put on the boys apparel and lett boys putt on hers and come into the school in his absence and daunce amongst the boys”. But one of the first new arrivals in 1970, Jocelyn Howell, recalled: “I remember arriving on the first day at Queen Emma House, (situated in the old Hereward building) to see a sign that said ‘Girls Only’ being nailed to the door. Very soon we realised that girls were to be treated, quite fairly, in the same way as boys”. And this included sport – for in that first year they were coached in cricket and rugby. [SCAN OF KING’S SCHOOL GIRLS HOOP TRUNDLE 1984, SCAN OF PUPILS 1989, SCAN OF PORTA AND HEReward HALL 1920s]

“In the Shadow of the Cathedral” by Lynne Turner is published by Elean Publications at £16.99

Grace Hughes FROM ROYSTON also says that during the period 1934-1936 she belonged to The Robins, a young people’s group organised though the Robin Goodfellow column of the CDN, that maintained a cot at Addenbrooke’s Hospital. Every year a concert was given for the Robins which was held in the Guildhall and every child on leaving was given a bar of Cadbury’s milk chocolate. Are there any other Robins who remember this, she asks.

21.11.01

Memories 17th December 2003, by Mike Petty

At this time of year we are encouraged to ‘eat, drink and be merry’. In the past this was somewhat easier than today for many villages had many pubs, as at Sutton where Peter Smith has been researching the story of its former inns. He has identified about 40 drinking establishments in the village over the years

Harold Painter, who served the village as shopkeeper, postman, newspaper correspondent and parish councillor, compiled a mass of notes on history of Sutton some of which were published a year after his death in 1989. He recalled:

“Many of the old-time public houses of the village were no more than gambling houses. One of the pubs in The Row was known as the Jim Crow. It was a house with a reputation, for

here dice, dominoes and cards gave way to wagers on foot racing, the carrying of sacks of corn, the hurling of weights and the like. Anything from a penny to a pig, or even a house or land were won and lost in this way at some time or other. [SCAN OF HAROLD PAINTER SKETCH AND POEM]

“It was in such circumstances and at such times that the inscription on a beam ‘Pay today, Trust Tomorrow’ had particular relevance. People were not encouraged to call for a round if they could not pay there and then! Most though, had their name up on the slate until the end of the week. Such signs gave the drinker a clear indication as to where he stood. Only regulars could get any credit!

“They had days when they drank themselves into a state beyond reason and then would follow a great uproar as fists began to fly, though rarely was anybody really hurt as so many missed their target. Many were felled with a push and trundled home in a stupor in a barrow to be dumped on the doorstep, from which it was up to their poor wives or family to get them into bed.

“Obviously not all drank hard and played dice, but came to enjoy a good song or two. Some were known to have a favourite one and were easily persuaded to sing. Charles might start up with ‘Love is Like a Red, Red Rose’ to be followed by ‘Old English Gentlemen’ from Bill and then ‘Little Brown Jug’ as an encore.

“With so many pubs and beerhouses, there was some competition between landlords to get custom, and there was a time when the following jingle was displayed outside the ‘Black Horse’

My ‘Black Horse’ will stand its ground
Pull the ‘Windmill up the lane
And see the ‘Royal Standard’ drowned. ”

The years that followed saw the ‘Royal Standard’ burn to the ground and the ‘Windmill’ closed its doors in the 1930s. The ‘Black Horse’ stood for a few years more. Now all have gone leaving just The ‘Chequers’ in the village and ‘The Anchor’ at Sutton Gault to supply the needs of local drinkers.

‘Time, Gentlemen Please’ by Peter Smith is one of three booklets just issued by the Sutton Feast Committee together with ‘A walk down Memory Lane’ which comprises a chronological record of village events and Harold Painter’s reissued history. Each costs £2.50 from Peter Smith, The Homestead, 32 New Road, Mepal, CB6 2AP and money goes to the feast celebrations. [PHOTOS OF SUTTON SHOWING PUBS ARE WITH CHRIS ELLIOTT. SCAN OF INTERIOR OF BROOK PUB AT SUTTON 1964 – IT CLOSED 1967, SERVING BEER AT ROYAL OAK WILBURTON 1964]

Feasts were an important part of village life. At Madingley men from other villages visited, as C. Barlow recalled in 1957: “Sometimes there was a ‘Dancing Booth’, a large tent where one could dance all the evening for one shilling – one dance cost twopence – and music was provided by a concertina and ‘fiddle’. Until about 15 years ago there were still coconut shies, a few stalls and swingboats. Lolworth men usually came over for a cricket match in the afternoon and in the evening the men of Girton visited the Three Horseshoes. This was the time when all the children were chased indoors and the door locked. The curious went upstairs and watched from their bedroom windows while the gentlemen of Madingley and Girton enjoyed their annual battle after the Inn had closed – the men of Girton were great fighters in those days.” [SCAN OF THREE HORSESHOES MADINGLEY 1929]

A similar scene at West Wickham was described by John De Fraine in 1865: “The village fair commenced on Saturday. In a little paddock, adjoining the White Hart, the stalls are built, and the great booth pitched, and the fun, and din, and roar goes on as in a town. There is a collection of waxwork figures, a wonderful pony dancing ‘Pop goes the Weasel’ & a faded and tattered show, from the stage of which a wheezy clown announced a variety of ‘comic and sentimental’ performances within & ballad singers warning the young men not to ‘kiss the girls at Wickham Fair’. Photographic ‘artists’ guaranteeing a perfect likeness in five minutes for sixpence; skittle players, full of noise and drink; the great dancing booth crowded. It was a glad sight to see the young merry and joyous; made happy with a few pence - running here and there, full of life and glee - buying a doll, or a whistle, or a penny trumpet”.

But he did not approve of all his fellow villagers: “Men whose mouths are foul with low language, who cannot see beyond a quart pot, and whose lives seem so often given up to drink, and their own degradation. They will spend pounds, and not enjoy themselves in the end like those who don't spend a penny. We could scarcely see one face that indicated refinement or intelligence. There was hardly a man with any inner sources of enjoyment. Will it always be so? Will the day never come when they shall have better amusements presented to them. Will they never be lifted above the slavery of beer, and the companionship of the tap-room?”

Janet Morris from the village adds an extra insight into John De Fraine and his connection with the village: “The publican of the White Hart at the time he wrote the piece was his father-in-law, James Cooper Traylen. John de Fraine never says how he met the publican's daughter Ursula but the couple lived in London for a couple of years after their marriage and then moved to the village, presumably so that she could be near her family. John seems to have got on with his father-in-law as he was among the guests at the opening of the Mission Hall in West Wickham in 1871 which John sponsored to provide an alternative to the pub for the young men of the village. Interestingly, the only mention of James that John makes in his books is to him as a ‘farmer’!” [SCAN OF WEST WICKHAM GREEN AND PUB 1926
SCAN OF FEAST NEAR PUB AT NEWTON 1890s]

Readers write

Miss Daphne Foreman from Sturton Street writes:

“I saw an articles in the News commemorating the first broadcast of a Royal Wedding, that of the Duke of Kent in 1934. I heard that broadcast. I remember listening with my mother and the thrill of hearing the Princess say ‘I will’. This was through our faint ‘wireless’ which my father had made from tongue-and-groove wood left over from the hen house, with bright green silk at the opening in the front, made from a cast-off item of my mother's underwear – as I delighted to tell visitors, to her annoyance. The cabinet stood about three feet high and was clear-varnished. A knob changed a pointer on a dial to National, Regional or Midland, the three wireless stations of that time.

“It came on with a simple switch, so that it often started in the middle of a word and cut off likewise. No waiting to warm up. There was a large battery in the back of the cabinet which lasted about a year and a space for two accumulators which I had to take frequently down the to the village garage to be recharged with distilled water. “

Therese May has e-mailed for help: “I work at Waterbeach Lodge and am doing research on the place from the time it was built in 1818 to the present day. I have a list of the people who have lived there throughout the years and been in contact with a Professor Debenham's

daughters who lived there in the 1920s and 1930s. I have spoken to a man who was the painter and decorator when it was used by the Carmelite nuns from 1937 to 1973 and been in contact with one nun who now lives in a monastery in America". Can you add to her knowledge. You can contact her by e-mail – therese@may5013.fsworld.co.uk or write to me and I'll pass your letters on.

SPARE STORY IF NEEDED

Greta Wakefield writes from Impington with her memories of the Robin Fellowship run by the Cambridgeshire Independent Press in the 1920s and 30s. She says: "I still have my membership badge – an enamelled picture of a robin with an outer circle of Cambridge blue. I wonder how many other still recall our annual party and concert in the New Theatre. We all used to sing our special song – 'Let's all sign like the birdies sing', nearly raising the roof. There were various entertainments and we were all given a 'goody bag' containing a small bar of chocolate, an apple and an orange. I know we went home happy. We had 'our page' in the newspaper with puzzles and competitions and birthdays were mentioned. There was a 'Robin' cot in Addenbrooke's Hospital for any small child and we collected donations for its upkeep. I wonder if there are enough 'Old Robins' for a re-union. I fear we wouldn't sing 'Tweet, tweet, tweet' but 'Croak, croak, croak'."

Memories 24th December 2003, by Mike Petty

Christmas is traditionally a time for Peace on Earth and Goodwill to All Men. But this year there will be many families who are separated, making the most of the celebrations hoping for better things next year.

Sixty years ago Frank Dobie from Austin, Texas, was one of those far away from his own home, having accepted a post as Professor of American History at Cambridge University. From his base at Emmanuel College, he set down his memories of Cambridge at Christmas 1943. [SCAN OF FRANK DOBIE AND AMERICAN SERVICEMEN, KING'S COLLEGE BRIDGE]

It is three days after Christmas and the church bells are still ringing in my ears and in my heart. Not that there was much literal ringing of church bells - except for the beautiful ones selected for broadcasting. For four Christmases now they have not rung out all over the land on Christmas morning as they are wont to ring out in normal times. They have not rung because it was agreed early in the war that the ringing of the church bells would be an alarm against the enemy.

Five days before Christmas General Pleas B. Rogers, now in command of all the vast and diversified American operations over the 750 square miles of the 'Central Base Section' called London, was showing me some of the activities of his area. It was late night when his car drove up to the terminus of one branch of the city's wonderful underground railway system. The subways are bored through clay more than one hundred and thirty feet under the street surface, and bombs have never penetrated to them. In certain places they have been turned into shelters against air raids and are fitted up with beds and other necessary appointments. The tube shelter where General Rogers took me had eight hundred beds reserved for American service men on leave. The service men are taken there on nights when too many of them have crowded into London for the Red Cross hostels, the always-crowded hotels and other sleeping places to accommodate. There they are given clean sheets and

blankets and, one hundred and thirty feet underground, sleep in air as pure as that on top of Pike's Peak.

After we had inspected the cathedral-like corridors of beds, the store rooms, the plumbing and the machinery, the manager of this subterranean refuge led us into a side room where we were surprised to find upwards of twenty volunteer workers. More than half of them were women; the men were all beyond the age of military service. Both men and women were of what is generally called 'the working class,' though that class now includes virtually everybody in the United Kingdom. These people are up at daylight to work; they work long hours; and at night they serve as air wardens and attendants in the underground hostel. It is often nearer daylight than midnight before the last soldier has been bedded down. When we were leaving two very plain women sitting knitting while they waited for a call, near the door, said, almost together, "Happy Christmas to you both." I cannot tell why or how, so deep down there in the caverns of refuge, those words came home to me. I suppose it was because they were so sincerely meant. Like a quiet bell, away off on a Sunday morning, I keep hearing the 'Happy Christmas' of those two kindly featured, plainly dressed working women down in the caverns so deep under the streets of London.

In the college hall where I have rooms in Cambridge, two other plain women, designated as 'bed-makers,' bring in coal, make the coal fires, scrub the hearths, draw the water, draw back the black blackout curtains, make the beds, change the linen and otherwise administer to us gentlemen. Two weeks ago, they both took at the same time the mild but devastating form of influenza that has been sweeping the country. Neither one quit work, however. "You see, sir," one of them explained to me, "we could not let each other down." One of them has three children at home and a husband in the army. The other one has a boy in the R.A.F. and other children, and for years now she has had two soldiers quartered in her house. She gets up a long while before daylight and gives those two soldiers and her family breakfast and gets to college in time to wake some of her charges up for breakfast there. They both do their own washing, cooking and other housework. [SCAN OF COLLEGE BEDDER]

"And how are you going to spend Christmas?" I asked a waiter of the dining hall. "It will be mostly memories this year," he replied with a certain dignity; "but that should sustain us until victory. A Happy Christmas to you, sir!"

I had several invitations to Christmas dinner - and nobody who invited me had anything to spare. In the afternoon about teatime I called at a home that has been open to me on several occasions. These people had been unable to get 'a bird' for Christmas, but they and their neighbours were combining on a rooster that the neighbours procured weeks back and began feeding in a way supposed to tenderise the meat.

My host for Christmas dinner is the manager of a seven-hundred-acre farm owned by Cambridge University. A practical scientist, he is one of the best-known agriculturists in England, W. S. Mansfield. We had a turkey. There were eight of us, including a doctor and his wife, who is a Hollander; they both escaped from Holland a little ahead of the Germans. Mansfield poured wine in wine-glasses on the table. Good wine has become as scarce as 'birds' and razor blades. After the plum pudding, than which nothing is more English or more satisfying to my mind, taste and stomach, Mansfield arose and we did likewise. "We are going to have some toasts," he said. "Ladies and gentlemen - His Majesty the King!" We raised our glasses, repeated the words and sat down. Then we had one more toast that, according to tradition, must have been drunk in thousands of places on this Day of Remembrance by these island people: "Ladies and gentlemen, here's to our wives and sweethearts, to absent friends and to ships upon the sea"

The English people do not exchange so many Christmas cards so promiscuously as we in America do. Their exchanges are largely between friends and do not generally include mere

acquaintances. Their Christmas cards do not seem to be used much as political and commercial reminders. The cards have Christmas tones, the jazz quality being almost altogether absent. Every home puts its Christmas cards up on mantelpieces, book-cases, tables, shelves, so that they make a bright and varied display.

On the afternoon of Christmas Eve I went to hear the carols in King's College Chapel, the singing of them by the Chapel choir-boys being famous, through the radio, all over the British Commonwealth, of Nations. After I came back, the porter at the gate of my college asked me how I enjoyed them. "I always used to go and sit away back so that the singing would come to me through the long spaces", he said. Always, day and night, a man is on duty in the porter's lodge. Everybody must pass it going in or out of the college. I like to step in and pass words with the porters. They have a radio, and sometimes I pause to listen with them to the news and to beautiful music. They read as many newspapers as the dons and are as well-informed on public affairs. Frequently I see one reading a book between calls. However humble their work, they are as intelligent and informed as they are civil and kind-hearted.

One of them was telling me Christmas morning about the church bells in his native village of Grantchester. That afternoon I walked to it, two miles through fields and meadows along a macadamised walk that threads through half a dozen turnstiles. A Christmas will come when the bells of Grantchester church and the bells of all the churches in England will be ringing out peace. I am absolutely certain that for every part of the world, America included, the perpetuation of that peace depends on an Anglo-American alliance with other countries. What a decent world it could so easily be if public spokesmen, instead of stirring up the people to distrust and to shortsighted grasping, would allow the natural goodness in human hearts on both sides of the Atlantic to operate.

J. Frank Dobie's memoirs, 'A Texan In England' were published at the end of the war, when censorship had been lifted. He did not mention that the Christmas Eve carol service at King's College chapel had lacked the warmth and sparkle normally associated with it, for the stained glass had been removed from the windows for fear of bombing – but then he had never known what it had been like. [SCAN OF KINGS ACROSS ROOF TOPS SHOWING BOARDED-UP WINDOW]

Christmas 1943 had topped all others in the difficulties which had to be surmounted to make it 'merry'. The search for the Christmas dinner in the first place had been like the pursuit of a will-o-the-wisp, for never had the turkey - or even the humble goose, duck or chicken - been such a rare bird. Many householders sat down to an ordinary joint of beef or mutton, or possibly even a tin of Spam. Meanwhile nuts, crystallised fruits, tangerines, dates, figs and all the other tempting extras remained merely a tender memory. Shopping had been little short of a nightmare, what with an acute shortages of supplies, depleted staffs (still further attenuated by the ravages of flu) and the problems of smuggling presents home when no wrapping paper was allowed. It had indeed been a case of 'he who hesitates is lost' for unless one gabbled a likely gift at first sight it was ten to one it would have vanished a second or so later! [SCAN OF RATION BOOKS AND CHRISTMAS LETTER FROM LONG ROAD 1942; WINTON SMITH BUTCHER'S SHOP EAST ROAD IN 1930S WHEN MEAT WAS MORE PLENTIFUL; MOTHER AND CHILD IN PETTY CURY 1940S]

But Christmas is a time for children, like those youngsters meeting Father Christmas at Eaden Lilley's staff party in the 1960s, when things, however bad, were so much better than before. [SCAN OF FATHER CHRISTMAS AT EADEN LILLEY STAFF PARTY].

Finally can I thank all those who have contributed to 'Memories' in the last year – please keep on writing after the festive sherry has worn off [SCAN OF LADY WITH SHERRY 1960s]

Memories 31st December 2003, by Mike Petty

Eileen Bourne from Coveney writes to say that her father, Frank Cook, having finally been banned from the potato harvester at the age of 84 by his wife, has spent this autumn making jottings of his early farming life in Over. She has sent an extract relating to his earliest experiences of agriculture.

Frank recalls:

I was born in Over on the 25th July 1919. On one occasion I had been with my father to the evening service at the Methodist Chapel and as we came out Mr Oliver Dring, a local farmer, joined us and we walked together slowly, as village people do after an evening service. For a while they discussed the service and then 'Ollie' asked my father 'How old is your boy now, Charlie?' Father replied 'He's just had his seventh birthday'. 'What I was thinking', said Ollie, 'whether he'd be man enough to bring my cows home in the afternoon; it would save me a lot of time while we are at harvest work. They wouldn't be any trouble, all he had to do was open the field gate; the cows will be waiting to come home for milking and then walk behind them until they get to our yard and close the gate behind them. I'll come round tomorrow at four o'clock to show him what to do'

Our cottage where we lived was built in the corner of the fields where the cows grazed & so it seemed a very simple task. I had been about with my father since I was three years old; he was a stockman and I was not at all frightened of the animals and so it was agreed.

So at four o'clock on the Monday afternoon I went to the gate and Ollie was there and we did the job together; Ollie said there was no problem, the cows knew where they were going, and that they did. For the rest of the week – six days (strictly no harvesting on Sunday in those days) – I did the job alone and got on well. On Saturday afternoon Lucy, Ollie's sister, met me at the farm gate with my wages, a silver threepenny bit. I felt like a millionaire, I'd never seen so much money.

But nothing in farming is quite so simple as it at first seems. All was going well until we got to the middle of the second week. I'd got the cattle along as far as Chapman's Allotment when I heard this strange noise coming away from the church and up the hill behind me. It was a motor car, something we rarely saw in our villages in those days.

I was immediately frightened, wondering if the noise would make the cows bolt and where they would run to. (I did not know that cows, unlike horses, are not afraid of noise). Anyway as the car approached the cattle seemed quite unaffected, walking in their usual manner along the verge on the left-hand side of the road in single file, as they did every day. But then when the car got about 20 yards away from us the youngest cow of the bunch decided to cross the road to the other side.

Now we were in real trouble. The driver of the open-topped car stood upright and, leaning back pulled hard with both hands on the steering wheel, shouted 'Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!' Well no doubt he had been used to a different form of transport. But whether or not the cow knew the language she certainly obeyed and stopped plumb across the middle of the road. The next thing was this huge bang, glass flew everywhere and the cow ended up straddled across the bonnet with all its four legs flailing the air, trying to get something solid to step on to help her off.

Well the driver got out and he was very cross. I thought he was going to hit me; he was shouting 'Look at my new motor; I only got it yesterday'. Fortunately a man from the village came by on his bicycle and stopped and helped the driver push the cow off the car. He explained to him about the owner of the cows and where he lived.

I cannot remember what happened after that; whether I took the cows the rest of the way home that day or not; I can only remember being very worried on thinking about what Ollie would say and what my father would say. I felt that I had let them both down and it was my entire fault. I have no idea who it was settled between the car owner and the farmer.

Both father and Ollie, being two kindly souls, told me that I was not to blame, but they thought it best if I did not continue with the job until I got a bit older. And so for the first time in my 75 years of farming I got the sack. I never got another job then until my ninth birthday – but that's a different story. [SCAN OF HORSE AND CART, OVER – OTHER PIX FROM CEN LIBRARY]

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Another fen countryman, Cyril Heaps from Pymoor, near Little Downham, has also been setting down his memories, this time in booklet form. He too recalls the Methodist church, his schooldays & his life in agriculture. He gives a most valuable description in a fenland style of speech of the various processes such as preparing seedbeds, planting and picking potatoes and hoeing sugar beet as seen by someone used to doing the job.

“Potato harvest is drawing near; when that did arrive the small-holders would have two or three women come along to help with the picking of the potatoes. As they picked the potatoes they would have to put them into Hessian sacks, which would have to be carted up after the women left off at half past two. The potatoes would be carted to the end of the field and put into a clamp which would be about nine foot wide and about four foot high, this would then have to be strawed down. In those days the straw would be loose, no bunches so the men would Yelm out the straw with a fork, patting the straw against their legs until it was big enough to pick up and put on the clamp. After that was done the clamp would have to be dotted, that is a spade full of earth would be thrown on the clamp to stop the wind from blowing the straw off. This had to be done before you could go home, and believe me it was very hard work.” [SCAN OF POTATO PICKING AT DODDINGTON]

Cyril also recalls several of the old fen characters like Neal Thompson of Oxloade

“This tale that I am about to tell is true because I saw it with my own eyes: Neal kept chickens, as did everyone in those days. They were free-range and his hens would scratch his peas and seeds up. So he came up with an idea to stop them: what did he do? He tied old bits of sacking and old socks around their feet which was OK while it was dry, but you should have seen his chickens when it was wet their feet were bunged up with mud they could hardly walk.

“One day I needed a lift home from Ely on market day so I cadged a lift home with Neal. Now you have got to realise this would be in the middle forties, not much traffic and of course no MOTs. His old box type Ford would not turn a sharp turn to the right so when we got to the end of Egremont Street and Downham Road he stopped and asked me to get out and kick the front wheels to the right. And again at the top of Mill Hill to turn to Pymoor we had to get out and kick the wheels again. It's a wonder that I am here to tell you all these tales.” [SCAN OF PYMOOR WINDMILL 1930S]

Cyril Heaps' account of 'Fifty years of the Methodist Chapel and My life in the fens' costs £4 from 01353 699624.

Another man who understands the hard life in that part of the fen is John Casbon from Ely who has send me some photographs of excavating one of the giant 'bog oaks' found buried in the black peat on Mr R.C. Parson's farm, Pymoor in 1962. In this photo John is to the right of Percy Harrison while Cyril Parsons stands with his spade. [SCAN OF BOG OAK]

Bog oaks are one of the topics covered by yet another fen farmer, Rex Sly from Cowbit, Lincolnshire who has produced an excellent illustrated account of the more northern fenland

'From punt to plough'. In this he details the history of drainage from wind to the latest electric pumps, including the story of the proposed Wash barrage and examines the modern problems facing agriculture in an area where the once-rich topsoil is disappearing at an alarming rate. Wildlife, fishing and fowling are an important part of the story of the area though he warns that the eels that gave the Isle of Ely its name may soon become an endangered species, perhaps because of the restrictions by pumps and sluices of their passage up the fenland drains. Rex devotes several pages to the Shire Horses which were once so much a part of the fenland agricultural scene, benefiting from the rich grazing along river banks. But March held its last horse fair in 1965 and although Cole Ambrose of Stuntney continued to use them for many of the farming processes they have now largely passed into history. [SCAN OF SHIRE HORSES AT STUNTNEY SCAN OF CYRIL CLARKE WITH EEL GLAIVE AT STRETHAM] "From punt to plough: a history of the fens", by Rex Sly is published by Sutton Publishing at £14.99 ISBN 0-7509-3398-4

Memories 2004 in one sequence

Memories 7th January 2004 by Mike Petty

Eileen **Bourne** from Coveney writes to say that her father, Frank **Cook**, having finally been banned from the potato harvester at the age of 84 by his wife, has spent this autumn making jottings of his early farming life in Over. She has sent an extract relating to his earliest experiences of agriculture.

Frank recalls: "I was born in Over on the July 25, 1919. On one occasion I had been with my father to the evening service at the Methodist Chapel and as we came out Mr Oliver Dring, a local farmer, joined us and we walked together slowly, as village people do after an evening service. For a while they discussed the service and then "Ollie" asked my father: 'How old is your boy now, Charlie?' Father replied: 'He's just had his seventh birthday' 'What I was thinking,' said Ollie, 'Was whether he'd be man enough to bring my cows home in the afternoon; it would save me a lot of time while we are at harvest work. They wouldn't be any trouble, all he had to do was open the field gate; the cows will be waiting to come home for milking and then walk behind them until they get to our yard and close the gate behind them. I'll come round tomorrow at four o'clock to show him what to do.'

"Our cottage where we lived was built in the corner of the fields where the cows grazed and so it seemed a very simple task. I had been about with my father since I was three years old; he was a stockman and I was not at all frightened of the animals and so it was agreed.

"So at four o'clock on the Monday afternoon I went to the gate and Ollie was there and we did the job together; Ollie said there was no problem, the cows knew where they were going, and that they did. For the rest of the week - six days (strictly no harvesting on Sunday in those days) - I did the job alone and got on well. On Saturday afternoon Lucy, Ollie's sister, met me at the farm gate with my wages, a silver threepenny bit. I felt like a millionaire, I'd never seen so much money.

"But nothing in farming is quite so simple as it at first seems. All was going well until we got to the middle of the second week. I'd got the cattle along as far as Chapman's Allotment when I heard this strange noise coming away from the church and up the hill behind me. It was a motor car, something we rarely saw in our villages in those days.

"I was immediately frightened, wondering if the noise would make the cows bolt and where they would run to. (I did not know that cows, unlike horses, are not afraid of noise.) Anyway, as the car approached, the cattle seemed quite unaffected, walking in their usual manner along

the verge on the left-hand side of the road in single file, as they did every day. But then when the car got about 20 yards away from us the youngest cow of the bunch decided to cross the road to the other side.

"Now we were in real trouble. The driver of the open-topped car stood upright and, leaning back pulled hard with both hands on the steering wheel, shouted: 'Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!' Well no doubt he had been used to a different form of transport.

"But whether or not the cow knew the language she certainly obeyed and stopped plumb across the middle of the road. The next thing was this huge bang, glass flew everywhere and the cow ended up straddled across the bonnet with all its four legs flailing the air, trying to get something solid to step on to help her off.

"Well the driver got out and he was very cross. I thought he was going to hit me; he was shouting: 'Look at my new motor; I only got it yesterday'

"Fortunately a man from the village came by on his bicycle and stopped and helped the driver push the cow off the car. He explained to him about the owner of the cows and where he lived.

"I cannot remember what happened after that; whether I took the cows the rest of the way home that day or not; I can only remember being very worried on thinking about what Ollie would say and what my father would say.

"I felt that I had let them both down and it was my entire fault. I have no idea how it was settled between the car owner and the farmer

"Both father and Ollie, being two kindly souls, told me that I was not to blame but thought it best if I did not continue with the job until I got a bit older. And so for the first time in my 75 years of farming I got the sack. I never got another job then until my ninth birthday – but that that's a different story."

Another fen countryman, Cyril Heaps from Pymoor, near Little Downham, has also been setting down his memories, this time in booklet form. He too recalls the Methodist church, his schooldays and his life in agriculture. He gives a most valuable description in a fenland style of speech of the various processes such as preparing seedbeds, planting and picking potatoes and hoeing sugar beet as seen by someone used to doing the job.

"Potato harvest is drawing near; when that did arrive the small-holders would have two or three women come along to help with the picking of the potatoes. As they picked the potatoes they would have to put them into hessian sacks, which would have to be carted up after the women left off at half past two. The potatoes would be carted to the end of the field and put into a clamp which would be about nine foot wide and about four foot high, this would then have to be strawed down.

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In this he details the history of drainage from wind to the latest electric pumps, including the story of the proposed Wash barrage and examines the modern problems facing agriculture in an area where the once-rich topsoil is disappearing at an alarming rate. Wildlife, fishing and fowling are an important part of the story of the area though he warns that the eels that gave the Isle of Ely its name may soon become an endangered species, perhaps because of the restrictions by pumps and sluices of their passage up the fenland drains. Rex devotes several pages to the Shire horses which were once so much a part of the fenland agricultural scene, benefiting from the rich grazing along river banks. But March held its last horse fair in 1965 and although

Cole Ambrose of Stuntney continued to use them for many of the farming processes they have now largely passed into history. *From punt to plough: a history of the fens*, by Rex Sly is published by Sutton Publishing at £14.99 ISBN 0-7509-3398-4

Memories 14th January 2004, by Mike Petty

Twenty-five years ago Cambridge's traffic problems were eased with the completion of a major new road. Discussions had started back in 1961 but progressed slowly with a 72-day inquiry into the route in 1972, the longest & most involved inquiry ever then seen into a road scheme. It had been approved in 1973 and work started in July 1976. Giant machines had cut swathes through the countryside as for 28 months Bovis Civil Engineers constructed 24 new bridges, including one over the River Cam that had utilised a giant crane, the largest in Europe. [SCAN OF NEW ROAD BEING CUT AT GIRTON]

Finally the Northern Bypass, described as a 'Christmas present to Cambridge' was officially opened at noon on 21st December 1978. But after the opening celebrities, including an Under-Secretary from the Department of the Environment, had made their initial procession along the nine-mile route it was immediately closed again.

Police had reservations about the state of the road: white lines were still being painted, safety barriers had not been installed, the Girton interchange was not finished while that at Madingley could not be completed for some months more.

But then the spirit of Christmas seemed to take over and as dusk was falling the barriers were quietly pushed back and it was opened to the public. It included one of the longest straight stretches of dual carriageway in the country, but rural drivers were not used to such an expanse of open road where speed would build up quickly so police appealed to them to get used to the road slowly.

One who took their advice was News reporter John Alexander who chose a Sunday morning for his first expedition along the new road, so he could dawdle and get a good look. But who would want to see Cambridge from this perspective, it had exposed the city's none-too-glorious backsides like Milton sewage works, the wrong end of the Arbury estate and a few dumping grounds that previously had been hidden from view.

This is his report:

"For the local travelling along this stretch of dual carriageway is a new and rather bewildering experience. Coming at everything from an unfamiliar angle creates an impression that north Cambridgeshire as I knew it has been wiped off the map. The reality is increased by the eerie quietness of the road – I met only half-a-dozen cars – stark banks of recently-moved earth and flyovers that seem to wander off into bigger and deeper piles of soil or simply disappear into the middle of a field.

"For a mile or two after picking up the new road at Quy, it was possible to retain a sense of direction. There on the left was Marshall's airport, and that must be the gasworks, and the houses which line the Newmarket Road. The first signposts help to keep one's mental compass under control. But from the wheel of a car it is difficult to visualise that the chunk of concrete overhead is supporting a familiar country lane between Fen Ditton and Horningsea.

"The next small intersection appears on the horizon before one has mentally decided what comes next. But of course, it's the A10 and somewhere around is Milton ... now is it on the right or left? The sewage works comes to the rescue, alerting two senses that of sight and smell. What a view of the plant! Just think its all happening down there and for years we've been denied this panoramic view.

"Surely Cambridge must be somewhere over there. But it seems so far away that without risking a nose-dive over the embankment I can't pick out the spires of King's. What is that collection of unsightly buildings. A factory? No Cambridge doesn't have factories on that scale. A comprehensive school? No, too big. It's the Arbury estate seen from an angle so far reserved for beasts of the fields, the odd farmer and a few glider pilots.

"Suppressing a bitter thought about today's architectural skills I press on, thoroughly confident that my next view will be of Girton. Disappointment. Girton looks like any other small village from this angle and again one has to rely on the batch of overhead intersections and their accompanying signs to act as identification marks.

"Ahead is a hill, perhaps created by those incredible earth-moving contraptions with wheels as big as bread vans. I note that my Cortina takes the gradient without the help of another gear and then pick up another view: it is the American cemetery at Madingley and there is something majestic and orderly about this well kept memorial on the gentle slopes leading up to the old A45."

But it was in Cambridge itself that the real benefit of the new road was to be seen. There was an immediate easing of the pressure as vehicles that had previously queued their way along Northampton Street to the traffic lights at Castle Street, round Mitcham's Corner, over Victoria or Elizabeth Bridge (opened eight years earlier) and along Newmarket Road, now found an empty highway. When the interchange at Girton was fully open and the Western Bypass - M11- completed Cambridge would have a road system surrounding it for which many other cities would give their eye-teeth.

Peace would descend forever. Or would it? By 1986 traffic flow within the city had reached the 1978 pre-bypass level. But the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles remained only half of the old numbers. Whatever the pressure on the Northern Bypass the prospect of a Cambridge without it seems as incredible today as the new road itself did just 25 years ago. [SCAN OF TRAFFIC AT NORTHAMPTON STREET CORNER 1963, NEWMARKET ROAD 1963 and 1977]

Readers write

Mrs Doris Cole writes from Cambridge following a Memories article about the pubs in Sutton: "Seventy years ago my grannie kept a little pub at the bottom of the hill where the feast used to be held. I think it was called the Black Horse. Her name was Sussana Clark and my aunt Annie helped her in it. Does anyone remember her? We used to visit her around the back way; she had a lovely whitecurrant bush and they tasted like grapes. I have never seen one since". If you can help write to me and I'll forward your letter. [SCAN OF SUTTON SHOWING BLACK HORSE, CENTRE BACKGROUND]

Walter Worland from Wokingham is also trying to revive his memories of a public house. This one is the Green Man in Meldreth where his father was born during the time his grandfather Abbis Worland was landlord. If you have any photographs or can assist him further please drop me a line or e-mail walter.worland@ntlworld.com [SCAN OF MELDRETH, BUT WHERE WAS THE GREEN MAN]

By contrast Alan Wyatt of Landbeach has a picture of a group of men in front of a large house. They may be gardeners for some have forks, spades and a scythe but others are holding pickaxes. It was taken by the Cambridge photographer Simpson who had a studio in Huntingdon Road. Alan thinks there may be a Madingley or Madingley Road connection, but can you recognise it for us? [SCAN OF HOUSE AND GARDENERS]

Mick Byrd from Cambridge has lent me a group photo of swimmers at St Philip's Junior School, on the corner of Ross Street and St Philip's Road in Cambridge. The teacher on the right is a Mr Hancock and amongst the lads shown might be, back row, Bob Moseley, Ken Plumb and John Bray. In the front row could be Johnny Marsh, Rodney Norden and Bernard Ewers. The date is possibly 1949 but what is it all about? [SCAN OF SWIMMERS]

Memories 21st January 2004, by Mike Petty

It seems that cinemas are coming back into popularity, with the news that the town centre Cineplex in Huntingdon is set to reopen. Formerly known as the Cromwell it closed at the end of December due to competition from multi-screen operators.

These large complexes have also had an impact on the Cambridge cinema scene, replacing the more historic movie houses where for generations people went to be entertained or to just while away time in the dark.

The cinema first came to Cambridge as part of Tudor's circus in October 1896 and shortly afterwards films were projected in the Guildhall and the Corn Exchange. The first regular shows were held in the YMCA lecture hall whilst the Sturton Town Hall and the Roller Skating Rink were amongst the early venues. But the first purpose-built building was the Playhouse, which opened in Mill Road in 1913. As developments continued first one cinema then another was erected and rebuilt.

In Cambridge building reached its height with the opening of a new Victoria Cinema on Market Hill in September 1931, replacing an earlier cinema nearer Petty Cury. In November 1952 they tried something new – the three-dimensional film which required a special screen and the audience wore tinted spectacles. New and modern projectors came in 1967, a second screen in 1972; it recovered from a fire in 1983 but it was sold in 1985 to be replaced by a new Marks and Spencer store, though the façade remains as a reminder of one of Cambridge's premier entertainment spots. Who now remembers the others – the Tivoli, Kinema, Central, Cosmopolitan, Rex or Regal?

But you did not have to come to the towns to see films as many villages were served by travelling cinemas. Thurston's the fair people took their Electric Vaudeville to Soham and perhaps this is what prompted 'Nick Knack' Taylor to convert his coach builders workshop into a permanent cinema there in about 1912. It was one of four cinemas to function there at one time or another.

At Burwell the Gardiner Memorial Hall was used for film shows soon after the Great War, its popularity waning when the Doric opened at Newmarket in 1937. At the time it was reputed to have the biggest balcony in East Anglia, outrivalling the older Kingsway and Victoria cinemas which also stood in High Street. At Haverhill cinema goers flocked to the Electric Empire in High Street, later renamed the Playhouse

Ely's first film shows were held in the Public Rooms although the Electric Cinema in Market Street opened about 1912, to be followed by the Majestic in Newnham Street and in 1929 by the Rex.

Littleport filmgoers could choose from the Electric Cinema, (later renamed the Cinema Theatre and The Empire) which was established in the Public Hall in 1913, or the Regal which opened just before the Second World War and was damaged by incendiaries in October 1940 (ironically when showing the film 'On the night of the fire')

Early cinemas had little of the latter-day comforts; sometimes as at Soham they had rough walls, a corrugated iron roof, the floor was just earth, the seats wooden benches. The only heating was a small coke stove, the projector was operated by gaslight. The films often went astray and if they did arrive had to be operated by hand and would frequently break - causing the audience to whistle, cat-call and stamp their feet.

But despite it all people came to see cowboys and Indians, Harold Lloyd, the Keystone cops and the rest together with the serial such as the Adventures of Pearl White which each week left the heroine in another impossible situation from which she could surely not escape.

The films in those early days were silent - but the cinemas were not. First there was the musical accompaniment which varied from a single piano - as at Soham - to the eight-piece orchestra at the Central Cinema Cambridge. Then there would be the sound effects -

cocoa-nut shells for horses hooves and a drum to represent canon fire in the popular newsreels about life in the King's army.

The deaf were at no disadvantage in the silent movie days as many of them could lip-read and were better informed than the rest of the audience. This had its drawbacks and one party of deaf and dumb children were quickly ushered out of the Playhouse in Mill Road when their teachers realised that they could understand too well just what the shell-shocked victims of the Battle of the Somme were silently mouthing. And then there would be those who could hear but not read very well and would insist on repeating the sub-titles very loudly to the great annoyance of the rest of the audience.

The Talkies arrived at the Central Cinema Cambridge in August 1929 with the musical 'Broadway Melody'. Some thought it just a novelty that would soon wear off and while most agreed that the music was very pleasant they deplored the all-dominant American accents.

Not that all films were American. In June 1927 the News previewed an undergraduate film entitled "Grit", believed to be the first serious attempt in an English University to obtain experience in the technique of film production. Its storyline featured the stroke of a college crew being kidnapped to prevent his boat winning the Bumps and it contained some good views of Cambridge streets and colleges. Then in December 1928 there was a report of a new 'talkie' film in course of preparation which featured almost every aspect of undergraduate life. The director was an old Cambridge man who had persuaded the authorities to allow him to film the interiors of some of their 'most sacred institutions'. Certain 'dons' whose names were household words would describe the characteristics of some of the fine old buildings while in one scene the star part was to be played by a popular University hairdresser whose saloon and waiting clients provide the setting. But does anybody know has become of these pioneering films?

Other long-lost Cambridge films have recently been reissued on video by the East Anglian Film Archive. One, entitled "Horse Sense", was filmed in Technicolor by the Cambridge Accident Prevention Council; it was directed by Mr K.O. King with a script written by the Chief Constable, B.N. Bebbington being narrated by the BBC's John Snagge. It dealt with the adventures of a horse called Patch that escapes from its stable in Barton Road and wanders about the streets of Cambridge. Last year this and the even more enchanting "Wise and otherwise" with its views of motoring hazards in 1950s Cambridge was released on video by the East Anglian Film Archive and is once more enchanting viewers, though now on the small screen.

Now this tradition of home-grown filming is once more being revived by media students at the Cambridge Long Road Sixth Form College and there is no need to travel into town to see it. For with all the new technology at their fingertips their work can be seen on a computer screen near you just by logging in to their website – www.longroadmedia.com

It has indeed been a long road from the first flickering moving images to the most up-to-date digital imaging but if you have memories of any of it then please do share them.

Readers write

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back way; she had a lovely whitecurrant bush and they tasted like grapes. I have never seen one since". If you can help write to me and I'll forward your letter. [SCAN OF SUTTON SHOWING BLACK HORSE, CENTRE BACKGROUND]

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Memories 28th January 2004, by Mike Petty

Once more the forecasters are predicting snow, but will it actually arrive?

Surprisingly it is not unusual to have snow at this time of year, as a glance through the back issues of the News will show. It is just a case of when & how much.

Thus in 1895 a great frost lasted from January to March, unbroken except for very brief thaws. From January 18th to 25th there were snowstorms, floods & north-west gales. Frosts of 15 to 20 degrees turned hundreds of acres of flooded land into skating rinks and for two months it was possible to skate from Cambridge to Grantchester or Ely. Entrepreneurs flooded three fields at Newnham and installed electric lights which encouraged skaters to flock there in the evenings and there were ice carnivals & skating races on river from Bottisham Lock to Ely

Then in 1927 snow began Christmas day & led to most complete stoppage of road & rail traffic since coming of motor car. Dorothy Grainger went out with her camera to capture photographs of deep snowdrifts around Burwell. Two years later the freeze came in mid February when the Cam froze and people took the opportunity to skate to Ely, the first time since 1895.

In early 1947 the snow seemed as if it would never stop; cars were abandoned as snow reached up to touch telegraph wires. All roads to Ely were impassable as drifts piled ten and twelve feet high bringing road traffic to a standstill. In another incident bus passengers were stranded when their vehicle ran into a five feet high drift on the Harston-Fowlmere road but a 'Clippie' accompanied them as they walked waist-high through the snow to another bus. Villages cut off by snow included Elsworth and Knapwell. "Neither the mail nor the papers have arrived to-day" an Elsworth resident told a reporter. "There are waist-high drifts in the village. The children are having a forced holiday". At Ely children rejoiced in freedom from school and indulged in tobogganing, snowball fights and snowmen. When the thaw finally came it came quickly and melting snow, further diluted with heavy rains, caused extensive flooding

On February 1st 1954 Cambridge recorded the coldest spell for seven years, parts of the river Cam were frozen over and water stopped coming out of the taps. The severe weather caused all previous output records to be broken at the Cambridge Gas Works as people struggled to keep warm. Then in February 1958 the snow was even worse and once more the roads were blocked.

It was to be a situation repeated in January 1962 but the great freeze of 1963 was one of the most severe ever. By early January seven-foot deep snowdrifts blocked Cambridgeshire's roads, Cambridge's water mains had frozen and so had the river. Cambridge itself was cut off for the first time in living memory, as were many villages. The city's police station became a hotel for people unable to get back to their rural homes. Bus services ground to a halt as diesel froze. Skaters turned out in their hundreds to explore the Backs and the commons. Others took their bicycles on to the river, secure in the knowledge that the ice was so thick it would easily bear their weight. The bitter conditions continued right through January and February and the Lent bumps had to be cancelled for only the second time in 136 years. It was in that winter that the Pools Panel was created, a panel of experts whose task was to decide the results of football matches if bad weather led to 25 or more games in the League programme being axed. Around Newmarket, the ground was covered in snow for an unbelievable 66 days. On the east coast, it was so cold the sea froze.

One of my worst memories of snow was on the evening of 7th February 1969 when I was working the nine o'clock late shift at Cambridge Reference Library in Wheeler Street. The old library was nothing like as superheated as the present Lion Yard and the staff desk near the window was always draughty. But this night a blizzard caused havoc, trapping scores in Cambridge. Fortunately our few readers managed to get out of the building and my own journey north along the A10 was one to be taken with care.

In mid January 1977 heavy snow hit Cambridge as the worst weather for 14 years caused nationwide chaos and led to widescale disruption on the roads and railways. In many places there were snowfalls of more than one foot. Thousands of people were late for work as hard-packed snow, freezing fog and black ice made driving treacherous. Many trains were late or cancelled despite an all-night fight against the Arctic conditions by British Rail who called in their full cold weather emergency procedures.

Two years later in January 1979 the Botanic Garden recorded 4½ [FOUR AND A HALF] inches of snow – the biggest fall since 1963. The situation was compounded by a strike of municipal workers. Ungritted icy roads produced a nightmare tangle of cars and lorries which choked all main roads into the city for up to three hours in the worst traffic chaos for decades. Dozens of car drivers abandoned their vehicles and walked into work and thousands of schoolchildren waited in vain for buses which failed to get further than the road outside the bus depot. The traffic only began to move again when council workers broke picket lines outside the Mill Road depot and brought gritting lorries back into action..

THEN LAST YEAR HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE WERE TRAPPED IN THEIR CARS ON
MOTORWAYS ALL NIGHT AS LORRIES JACKKNIFED ON ROADS THAT HAD
TURNED TREACHEROUS BEFORE THE GRITTING LORRIES HAD GOT TO THEM.
[PLEASE TOP AND TAIL THIS PARA]

Now the weathermen have once more issued their forecasts and we wait to see whether they are accurate. But we are assured the lessons have been learned, there will be no traffic chaos this time; you will receive your copy of the News – and so you can write with your own memories of snowtime

[SELECTION OF SNOW PIX WITH CHRIS ELLIOTT; SCANS OF SNOW SCENES 1963
– QUAYSIDE AND SKATING UNDER KING'S BRIDGE PLUS SKATING SCENE 1927]

READERS WRITE – SCANS ON DISK WITH CHRIS E

Several readers have been quick to help with Alan Wyatt's mystery picture of a group of gardeners outside a large Cambridge house. Christopher Keate e-mails to say that he and his

colleague David Cannons of Hardwick identify it as Trinity Hall's Wychfield site on Storeys Way. The house in the background still stands in its beautiful grounds as Julie Powley, the college's Graduate Office confirms. Graham Pollard and Lorenzo Banyard agree while Alan Payne believes it shows men levelling an allotment for a future playing field on the site. The picture is particularly interesting to Catharine Wilson who would like to include it in a book on the college. [SCAN OF GARDENERS].

So having sorted this out, can you help other readers?

Lynne Turner, whose history of the King's School was published a few weeks ago, is now turning her attention to the old boathouse, now the Boathouse Restaurant at Annesdale, Ely. She knows the facilities were shared by the Kings School and Cambridge University Boat Club for a number of years but would like further details. It is quite urgent as a plaque is due to be placed on the building at the end of February during the celebrations of the 1944 Oxford and Cambridge boatrace. If you can help please e-mail her at Turnerlynnne7@aol.com or contact me.

Mrs Lorenza Smith writes from Cambridge: "Long time ago I spoke to a lady telling her I had a photo of a class of children including my husband taken around 1920-23 in a school situated in the area around Bourn - Caldecote. My husband is the little one on the lap of the teacher. I went to the information officer in the library and someone gave me a few details about the school. I went after that back to my country, Italy, and travelled to and fro. My husband became ill and everything was left on the shelf. My researchers were very elementary, you certainly can do much better. Most probably somebody will still be able to remember." Lorenza over-estimates my knowledge as I can't place the building, but I'm sure somebody will help. [SCAN OF SCHOOL GROUP]

Memories 4th February 2004, by Mike Petty –

The news that prices for sugar beet could be drastically cut under new proposals being considered by the European Commission has worried local farmers. But it has happened before; in 1931 Sir Fred Hiam resigned from the board of the Ely Beet Factory in protest against the prices offered to farmers by its owners, the Anglo-Dutch group of companies. Then the Prime Minister stepped in with a special advance in the subsidy to the beet industry for one year only on condition that the factories offered farmers a firm price and agreement was reached.

The growth of the sugar beet industry owes much to Cambridge University Department of Agriculture whose experiments established that the crop could be exploited commercially. A processing factory was built in Norfolk in 1912 and after initial difficulties had been overcome others were constructed elsewhere

One of the first was at Ely where the new factory was officially opened by the Minister of Agriculture in October 1925. Amongst those not present were the Bishop of Ely, Winston Churchill and Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, but they all wrote expressing their disappointment at missing the event. For this marked an important milestone in the development both of agriculture in the country and the community at a time of depression

Already the factory had made a major impact on the local economy with more than two acres of buildings were constructed on the 66 acre site. The massive project had employed nearly 1,000 men and the wages bill alone had amounted to £100,000. It had not been a trouble-free job with a number of carpenters striking after some had been working as many as 100 hours per week. But they didn't mind this – the problem was that health officials, concerned that such a lengthy period of employment was detrimental to the men's health, had decided to limit the maximum number of hours to 56 and employ more men. [SCAN OF FACTORY SHOWING CARS – POSSIBLY AT OPENING?]

But this increased employment was not an unmixed blessing. The casual ward at Ely workhouse became full up with Beet Sugar Factory employees who should really be staying in lodging houses, leaving the workhouse for destitute people. Guardians agonised: if they filled the casual wards with people with money what were they going to do with the poor chaps who really were down and out? But who could say who was who - some of the workers concealed what money they had.

Once the factory was up and running it would employ about 500 men, providing comparatively well-paid work for local people at a time of hardship. But it also attracted vagrants from around the country who heard that there were jobs to be had. As they tramped to Ely they stopped at Cambridge and Chesterton workhouses en route, adding to the accommodation problems there. And by the time they arrived all jobs had been taken, meaning there were more destitute people in the fens with nowhere for them to stay and nothing to do, but cause mischief.

The new factory had a riverside frontage with unloading berths provided for 30 factory-owned barges that would collect the beet from riverside fields and be towed by tug to the quayside where electric overhead cranes would empty them. [SCAN OF BARGES]

But this caused problems: farmers erected a number of shoots on the banks of the Ten Mile River and the Wissey for loading sugar beet into the barges. In so doing they weakened the banks, adding to the flood problems. Then when the beet was loaded on to barges an amount of mud fell into the rivers clogging them up. This problem was not confined to fen fields: by December 1928 so much mud and refuse from Ely Sugar Beet Factory was clogging up the river that tugs could not get through even with no boats in tow, except on a channel ploughed day after day. The water was being held up towards Cambridge causing a serious danger of flooding while the whole of the river between Ely and Denver Sluice had a thin coating of slime all over it and was the consistency of a mud-pie.

The factory also had its own railway sidings; Derek Harris from Histon recalled his memories of Ely station goods yard: "The busiest period was autumn when the Sugar Beet Factory at Adelaide opened for the campaign. This embraced the transport of sugar beet and its product of sugar, molasses and pulp, well known to farmers as animal feed. Dried pulp, known as pulp nuts, was bagged and sent away in covered vans, the wet pulp dispatched in open trucks. To 'feed' the factory, coal from the mines came on a regular basis on local trains from Whitemoor yard to Ely and 'tripped' to the North Junction. During the campaign, a BR pilot engine and a foreman shunter, transferred the loaded and empty vehicles to & from the factory private sidings. The beet factory employed two industrial steam loco's with a foreman and shunter to finally place the coal and return the empties to BR."

But a challenge to both rail and river came by road and soon most of the deliveries of beet to the factory were being made by lorries. As early as 1926 this was causing traffic problems, especially along Bray's Lane, Ely which was being used as short cut to the Beet Sugar Factory. As the years went by so more and more lorries were heading through Queen Adelaide, providing work for haulage contractors who frequently found themselves held up by the numerous railway crossings along that stretch of road and causing problems to

residents who complained of noise and congestion. [SCAN OF LORRIES LOADED WITH BEET, SCAN OF RESIDENTS PROTESTS 1979]

The new sugar beet crop involved considerable labour with the onerous task of hand singling being undertaken in spring, while hand-hoeing providing back-breaking work for itinerant gangs during the early summer before the roots were lifted and trimmed by hand in autumn. It was a process suitable for mechanisation & in October 1925 a crowd of 500 farmers watched a demonstration of sugar beet lifters at the College Farm, Duxford. Mechanisation was something to be continued throughout the following years with Standen's of Ely developing a new beet harvester which they demonstrated near Ely in September 1964 [SCAN OF STANDENS DEMONSTRATION 1964]

However well equipped the farmer might be he was always dependent on the weather; a hot dry season would produce small roots but with a higher proportion of sugar than in the larger beet of a wet year. As the crop became established so the 50,000 tons of the first campaign grew more than fivefold in 25 years. During the campaign season, from September to January the factory worked round-the-clock, seven days a week, extracting and refining the sugar for domestic and industrial use. The green tops of the beet were fed to livestock or ploughed back into the soil, the beet-pulp made into high-energy animal feed while the soil washed from the beet was no longer discharged into the river but sold.

One by-product that was less appreciated was the decided pong from the factory that permeated the surrounding area. When this mingled with the whiff from Ely brewery, the reek from the sewage works and the dank river smell it made conditions along Ely's Waterside less than pleasant.

Now the Ely beet factory is just a memory and farmers are concerned that the crop itself may pass into history.

READERS WRITE

Vernon Place e-mails to add further details to an illustration of a skating match at Littleport that I featured in Memories last week. The race was for the championship of Great Britain in 1890 when J. Smart on the left won and later became Champion of the World. His opponent that day was Tommy Wells of 'Windy Hall', Isleham Fen, one of a family of accomplished skaters. [SCAN OF SKATING]

B.J. Darby from Bedford has just seen Memories for 7th January where there was a picture of Pymoor windmill in the 1930s. He tells me that windmill was built by his grandfather, George Darby, and operated by him and his son until the war. He's not seen a photo with the sails in the position shown in my view, one of those collected by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society for their Photographic Record in the 1930s. [SCAN OF PYMOOR MILL]

Mark Greenhow has e-mailed from Cambourne to say that he has become very interested in the wartime airfields and particularly the Short Sebros works on Madingley Road, Cambridge. Despite living in the area all his life he had never seen any photographs of this major company's existence in the city where, he believes, Stirling bombers were built and then transported to Bourn for assembly. The two plants employed 4,500 people between them – were you one of them, or do you have any photographs or memories that will add further to the story of this important part of the war effort.

George (Cherry) Palmer, from Cherry Hinton has lent me some photographs of the old St George's School in East Road, in what was once one of the roughest areas of Cambridge. But bullying was never heard of and the school under people such as Headmaster F. Dawson and

teachers W.P. Kingdon & C. Duckering had a policy of stimulating and encouraging its pupils. Sport was part of that ethos and its footballers achieved remarkable success, forming the backbone of a Cambridge Schoolboys team that Cherry captained during a remarkable run in the All England Schools Shield competition before bowing out to the lads of West Ham in front of a crowd of 8,000 at Grange Road in 1934. [SCAN OF TEAM AND CROWDS]. Mr Duckering compiled a remarkable photographic record of the school, which closed in 1936, and his negatives are deposited in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library

Memories 11th February 2004 by Mike Petty

Alf Peacock didn't have a funeral with a vicar and such, he didn't believe in such things. Instead the gathering of fiends and colleagues at York crematorium paid their own tributes to a man who dedicated his life to improving adult education and played him out with the rousing music he loved.

Dr Peacock was born on 30 May 1929 in Histon; it was a general election day, and his mother considered naming him Briscoe after one of the candidates, instead he became Alfred James.

Like many other lads he'd listened in the 1940s to the sounds of the dance bands coming through the wireless set, as he recalled: "Before the war I had seen Roy Fox at the Theatre Cinema in Cambridge and during the war the dance band addict was well catered for. By this time I was a member of the Cambridge Rhythm Club, the secretary of which was an ample lady called Beryl Bryden. It met in a room over Miller's music shop and we listened to record recitals and local musicians. Then, suddenly, the Yanks arrived and our Rhythm Club swung splendidly for the rest of the war. With the coming of the Americans also came the American Forces Radio Network and this regularly carried jazz programmes. Each morning one programme would finish with Tony Pastor playing The Blues with Artie Shaw. I found it absolutely impossible to leave my home at 8, Orchard Road Histon until that programme ended at about 8.45. I then rode my bike those six or so miles to the Cambridge and County High School for Boys. I must have been late every day, but I cannot remember getting into trouble. One of the few teachers I liked at Hills Road was a delightful person called T.P.R. Laing - Tippy Laing. In the mid 1960s I wrote a book about East Anglian agricultural labourers called 'Bread or Blood', and somewhat later I obtained a doctorate from York University. Mr Laing read the book and then heard that the author had a PhD. He wrote to me incredulously. 'You are not the person who was in 5BG in 1945 are you', he asked. I knew this really meant 'You are not that lazy young sod from Histon who was threatened with expulsion in 1944 are you? He was amazed to have an affirmative answer - and made the best and most constructive criticisms of 'Bread or Blood' that I got."

Alf's study of the agrarian riots around Littleport in the early 1800s was hailed as a valuable piece of social history when it was published in 1965, five years after he had been appointed warden of the York Educational Settlement. Here he continued to live in a house increasing filled with a mass of recordings, tapes, paper and publications on a wide range of topics. Two in particular fascinated him: the history of the railway and the Great War. [CHOICE OF SCAN OF LITTLEPORT, SCAN OF HISTON RAILWAY STATION]

He edited a series of publications for the Western Front Association under the title 'Gun Fire', one of which entitled 'A Rendezvous with Death' was devoted to a remarkable series of letters from the Front by a Wilburton man, Oliver Hopkin. Ollie was just an ordinary lad, the son of an agricultural worker – like Alf himself – and when men were needed for the war he made his way to the Cambridge Corn Exchange to enlist. He wrote his first letter home from the Gog Magog Hills: 'Dear Father and Mother i now take the plesure in riteing you a few

lines hoping it will find you all well as it leaves me at present'. This was a greeting he was to repeat in letter after letter from far less pleasant surroundings. In July 1916 he continued: 'i am sorry to tell you that i have been wounded ... there is not many of our Battalion left and i don't now nothing about the Wilburton Lads at all i got 4 bullet wounds ... i am pleased i am alive.' He recovered and went back to the front. But then in April 1917 the letters from Ollie stopped. The family got another, signed Sergt W. Gilmore. 'Sir, These photos & pocket wallet was found by one of my men in a dug-out. The man thinks they belong to the dead Corporal who was in the dug-out, therefore I am sending them to you'. [COLOUR SCANS OF A WWI SILK POSTCARD FROM FRANCE AND CARTOON OF TRENCH LIFE (NOT HOPKIN), SCAN OF WILBURTON SHOWING COWS AND THE VILLAGE SCHOOL IN BACKGROUND]

The family kept and treasured the letters that Alf transcribed, annotated and published back in 1986 – a booklet that is now virtually unobtainable. But then they were stolen. Now his friends and colleagues at York are faced with the task of ensuring that his other papers are preserved; his tape recordings of Great War soldiers are already deposited in the Churchill College Archive Centre, just a few miles from his former Histon home.

The loss of valuable papers has long been a problem for historians. Back in Victorian times Nathan Maynard from Whittlesford discovered masses of parish archives crumbling to dust in the church chest and preserved them for future generations by pasting them into scrapbooks. To these he added his own diaries, notes & jottings on village happenings, which were continued by his son. These were deposited in Saffron Walden Museum which had been the catalyst for Nathan's interest following a visit in 1835 and where he would end up as curator. Now they have been transferred to the County Record Office in Shire Hall Cambridge

When Tony Carter retired from lecturing at the 'Tech' – now Anglia Polytechnic University in East Road, Cambridge - he had more time to continue his own studies on a variety of topics. He had already made his mark in his adopted village of Whittlesford, as Parish Councillor, Charity Trustee and founder of the village Society and had already participated in the publication of their village newsletter and Silver Jubilee history. Now he turned his attention to the Maynard manuscripts. The resulting publication 'The anatomy of a Victorian village' was published a few weeks ago, just a year after Tony's death.

The initial impression is of a nicely-produced book enhanced by numerous original Victorian colour sketches of country life, brickmaking, tollgates, the village stocks, carpenters shop or school. But it is only when one starts to read it that one truly appreciates the amount of scholarship that has gone into the text. Through an analysis of the landscape, via inclosure, poverty, witchcraft and festivities to the story of the important characters and the ordinary working folk Tony has left few stones unturned. One can appreciate how Tony Carter's students felt both inspired and overwhelmed by his lectures – so rigorously researched and documented that they scarcely left any scope for them to find out new things for themselves, yet so stimulating that they had no option but to do so.

It is a model and inspiration for anybody interested in Victorian times and an essential addition to the bookshelves of anybody whose family has lived in the area. 'The anatomy of a Victorian village: Whittlesford 1800-1900' was edited by Tony Cartwright, Jack Sutcliffe and Pat Carter & obtainable from Jack Sutcliffe at 34 Maynards, Whittlesford CB2 4PT for £15 (including postage).[SCAN OF PHOTO OF WHITTLESFORD GUILDHALL, COLOUR SCAN OF PICTURE OF MAN IN STOCKS, FROM THE BOOK]

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This week the News has carried the story of an historic visit to Iran by the Prince of Wales but in one of those co-incidences Iran was making headlines in Cambridge just 25 years ago. For

on Saturday 10th February 1979 the CEN reported: “Two hundred Iranian students made Cambridge demonstration history when they knelt on Parker’s Piece, prayed and recited from the Koran. In what is thought to be the first political demonstration starting with a mass prayer ritual on improvised prayer mats covering the wet turf, the Muslims called upon Allah to bless the efforts of the Ayatollah Khomeini to establish a republic in Iran based on Koranic law. When the prayers were over – all said facing in the direction of Mecca – the students left for a march taking in King’s Parade and the Market Square, before returning to the Piece. No incident was reported although some confusion existed among Saturday shoppers, knowing it was the first day of Rag Week. Several asked demonstration marshals whether the event was associated with the Rag. But the slogans ‘ “Death to the Shah” and “Long live Khomeini” soon dispelled their doubts.” [TWO SCANS ARE IN THE LIVE PHOTO ARCHIVE UNDER ‘IRAN’]

READERS WRITE

Mr R.J. Course from Meldreth writes to help Walter Worland of Wokingham with his quest for information on the Green Man public house in Meldreth. He tells me it was situated on one corner of Brewery Lane and the High Street. The opposite corner was occupied by Jarman’s Brewery which doubtless owned the pub. Abbis Worland was almost certainly the last landlord before it became a public house; he died on 26th November 1893, aged 58. The brewery ceased to function about that time and the property was sold, including the adjoining Malting House which was the residence of the brewery manager. Prior to being a pub the Green Man was probably the village Guildhall; there is a dragon beam running diagonally across the ceiling of the main lower room and protruding through the outer wall.

Cherry Palmer from Cherry Hinton has phoned to tell me that he was not the captain of the successful Cambridge Schoolboys Football Team I mentioned last week; that honour fell to Alf Greenwood. Sorry to both.

John Lester from Grantchester has written to say he can help Mark Greenhow with information on the Sebro depot on Madingley Road during the Second World War. He used to work there and adds that they didn’t built Stirling bombers, only repaired them, as Sebro stood for Short Bros Repair Organization

Memories 18th February 2004, by Mike Petty

Now the weather is becoming warmer so the memories of the wintry conditions that brought much of the county to a standstill just a few weeks ago have started to fade. It was nothing like so bad as 1963 as Audrey Glauert from Fulbourn recalls. She has lent me a picture showing skaters on the Backs which won first prize in a CDN competition for the best picture of the bitter conditions. It was taken on 15th January that year by her brother, Dr Richard Glauert of Trinity College [SCAN OF SKATING PICTURE TAKEN FROM CLARE COLLEGE BRIDGE]

Mr C. Free from Cottenham has observations about the latest traffic disruption caused by a few inches of snow. He recalls; “Before the last war most of the council transport was horses and ‘tip-up’ carts. A gritting crew consisted of two men, a driver and a man with a shovel who spread the grit according to the road width. Down the centre of the road they went – no other traffic to bother them. Later when transport changed to lorries the crew expanded to three men, two of them grit spreading, each one working alternately. The lorry travelled at

much faster speed and again there was little traffic". Not like today when the gritters can't get through the congestion to do their work.

The need for mechanical spreaders was appreciated in the 1950s, and Mr Free was in the forefront: "At that time Heathrow Airport was growing larger and there was need for a fast spreader. I was working for the engineering division of Pest Control of Bourn and was given two ex-Army trucks and two lime-spreaders with the instruction to 'get on with it'. The spreaders were made with adjustable deflectors to restrict the width of the spread. These were tested on the runways at Bourn airfield and accepted."

Alan Brigham, the Cambridge street-sweeping historian also recalls the hard working men who work long hours in all conditions to keep life moving: "I've been sweeping the same streets for over 20 years and for much of that time I worked with just two 'mates'. They are retired now, but I visited them over Christmas and it reminded me how lucky I had been to know them. First I worked with Ernie Hart, then with Trevor Seager. Between them they must have kept Cambridge city centre clean for over 30 years, and both would top my New Years Honours list.

"When I started as a road sweeper early one dark November morning Ernie showed me what to do, helped me when I was lagging behind (getting up at 5.00 am every day was a struggle!), sympathetically listened to my problems - and bought the tea twice a day. Did I listen to his problems? Did I buy the tea? No! Ernie taught me that the job mattered. It may not have been well paid. Many considered it 'dirty' and beneath them. But he took enormous pride in keeping the streets of the city centre clean. And he made sure that I did too. I was young and on my way somewhere else (I thought!), but this was his home, where his friends and family lived, and I wasn't going to be allowed to let him down! [SCAN OF ERNIE HART MAKING TEA]

"Trevor Seager was the same. He used to get to work early to clean Petty Cury before the first college cleaners came by, made sure that I swept into the deepest corners, and with good humour kept me going on cold winter mornings. [SCAN OF TREVOR SEAGER WITH HIS ROAD SWEEPERS CART ON A SNOWY MORNING]

"For both Ernie and Trevor the city centre was their 'patch'. Invisible to most shoppers and tourists, they cared about Cambridge. And were conscientious workers. Between them they taught me that the job does matter, and that it is important to do it well. I owe them more than a cup of tea!"

Roger Coleman from Cambridge has written following one of my daily 'Looking Back' snippets on from 1954 in which I mentioned an underwater camera designed by Pye. This had particular relevance to him as it was designed by his father, Donald Robert 'Ben' Coleman together with Douglas Allanson.

Following the tragic loss of a De Havilland Comet off the coast of Elba it was vital to discover the reason for the crash. But the plane was lying deep in the sea so the Admiralty turned to Pye of Cambridge for help and their Technical Director, Mr Baden Edwards, received instructions to create a television camera that could be sent down to survey the wreckage. One of the major problems they faced was to design a waterproof case which would protect the camera's valve electronics in depths of up to 900 feet. The aluminium alloy casing was produced in the workshops of Dan Morley's garage on Mount Pleasant Corner, Huntingdon Road by a team of highly skilled engineers that included Eric Maxim. The team worked around the clock and the camera was flown out in just nine days!

It was successful in locating over 90% [PER CENT] of the wreckage and provided the evidence needed. The innovative camera attracted worldwide attention and Ben Coleman

appeared on the BBC Television Newsreel programme. Roger has vague memories of seeing his dad on their home-made 12-inch tv and has a studio-made 78 rpm record of the sound-track of his dad's voice from all those years ago [SCAN OF BEN COLEMAN AND THE UNDERWATER CAMERA]

Some weeks ago I appealed for memories of Cambridge cinemas and the messages have been coming in.

Basil Bonner from Whittlesford writes: "The reference to silent film accompaniment ranging from piano to eight-piece orchestra reminds me that cinema organs were originally designed specifically for the accompaniment of silent movies, and were equipped with a range of tonal and non-tonal percussions as well as pipework. Three Cambridge cinemas had such organs installed after the advent of sound. These were British instruments of which the first was a Christie unit organ at the Victoria in Market Hill, (1931), the second a small Compton organ installed at the Rex in 1934 and the third another Compton at the Regal in 1937. They were used for linking films and for short solo interludes". Basil frequented all of these cinemas, as well as the Central, Cosmopolitan, Kinema and Tivoli, usually accompanied by the lady who more than 50 years ago became his wife, Beryl. [SCAN OF REGAL CINEMA ORGAN 1971, GEOFFREY GOODE AT THE KEYBOARD, WATCHED BY RON CARTER]. Mrs E. Golding from Cambridge has sent me a picture of the staff at the Regal Cinema in either 1942 or 1943, when the manager was a Mr Roberts [SCAN]

Jennifer Nicholls from Waterbeach has special memories of the Rex Cinema in Magrath Avenue, near where she was brought up in Stretten Avenue. She recalls her music teacher, Mrs Cadogan took her school class to see 'West Side Story' there about 1964. When it finally closed down Jennifer's late husband, Gordon Cave, bought the building and had plans to turn it into a nightclub. But local residents were opposed to the scheme and it never happened. It was in February 1979 that the building which had become almost derelict since the Abbey Sports and Social Club closed six years earlier was put up for sale by auction and was bought by the County Council £33,000. [CEN PHOTO OF MAGRATH AVE]

All this is particularly of interest to Richard Finch from Haverhill as he is arranging for a visit to Cambridge by members of the Cinema Theatre Association and would appreciate as much information as he can get. So if you can help please e-mail him at bud_logan@hotmail.com or drop me a line and I'll pass it on.

Cherry Palmer's photo of the Cambridge Schoolboy Footballers who played West Ham in 1934 has sparked memories for several readers. Brent Greenwood saw his late father amongst the team, while Mr E. Shrimpton from Bar Hill later became friendly with one of the lads, Sammy Cornwell. He writes: "I came to Cambridge from West Ham with my family a couple of days after the Second World War broke out. I played against Sam for the Cambridge Borough Police in the Thursday League. He came from a great footballing family and his dad still played for Cambridge Wanderers together with Fred Pickett – though both were in their seventies." [SCAN OF SCHOOLBOY FOOTBALLERS]

Mrs Margery Haigh (nee O'Dell) believes she can identify her late husband Desmond seated at the end, far left. He played for the team during his years at the Central Higher Grade School, Parkside and she has two medals awarded to him between 1933 and 1937. While digging amongst her own souvenirs Margery has unearthed an early picture of Milton Road Infants School sometime in the 1920s. She can identify the Headmistress, Miss Hurry and teachers Miss Clarke and Miss Crossman. The boy holding the slate is Arthur Dunne and she is sitting next to him. Other names include Frank Hindle, Margaret Keele, Harry Missing, Lilly Tabor, Donald Pedley, Margaret Speed, Oliver Gilbert, Hilda Allan and Myrtle Bygrave. Although the school is about to be replaced with something more appropriate for today's youngsters Margery recalls it as a very healthy environment, on the very edge of open

countryside, a really super, happy little school. [SCAN OF MILTON ROAD SCHOOL CLASS]

Memories 25th February 2004

Bob Briggs, who describes himself as ‘an old farm boy from Manitoba, Canada’ has got himself interested in life in Boxworth, the village from which his family emigrated.

He writes: “I am in touch with some of the families that have passed through Boxworth over the years and each have a story. I have collected some material from back years and am always looking for extra information. What I am working towards is where did some of these people come from, their time in Boxworth and where did they go.”

Bob’s grandfather Percy Briggs had planned to become a minister but opted to go to Canada instead in 1911. His brother Arthur and sisters Con and Kate followed ten years later and it broke their mother’s heart to have four of her children so far away. [SCAN OF WALTER, CONSTANCE, CHARLES, KATE, HARRY, SUSAN, ARTHUR AND ELLA BRIGGS IN SCHOOL HOUSE LANE c1919]

Bob has tracked down somebody who actually remembered them:

Harold Ernest Crossley recalled: “I was five and have recollections of Con, Kate and Arthur going to Canada. They went out on a scheme - £10 passage and a farm on the prairies. I remember seeing them off with my mother, on the boat train from Euston to Liverpool and then across on a ship called the Mettagam. Kate returned, she could not stand the extremes of weather, so she said.

“I spend my school holidays of my boyhood (5-15) with Charles & Susan Briggs at 1 School Lane, Boxworth.. Life in those days was very primitive. There was no running water, no electricity, no sanitation, and the privy was up the top of the garden.

Their cottage had been extended before the 1914-1918 war, when the Briggs family had outstripped the accommodations of the old cottage of two up & two down. The kitchen had a brick floor and a kitchen range with roasting spit hanging in an open chimney. The range had ovens both sides and two ovens in the walls. Fuel was mainly wood, coal on cooking days, usually Sundays. Kettles were boiled by the addition of kindling wood to make a flame. For quick boiling an oil stove was used. Lighting was by paraffin oil lamps. Uncle Harry bought his father and mother an Aladdin Lamp which gave a lovely light, placed in the centre of the table.

“The second room downstairs was the Post Office and in the wall was the posting box. Aunt Ella was the Post mistress and in doing so collected all the gossip of the village. [SCAN OF PERCY BRIGGS OUTSIDE POST OFFICE]

“Charles Briggs was a dear old man and he and I got on well together. He worked hard as a farm labourer on Mr. Mailers farm and being in his 60 - 70’s used a scythe a lot in the harvest fields, mowing the wheat at the corners so that the horse drawn binder could negotiate the corners without stopping. As the field of corn became smaller the rabbits started running and us lads had a whale of time trying to catch one. A rabbit meant a dinner that didn’t have to be bought in those days.

“His day would start at 6am, he came home to breakfast at eight, home for dinner at one, then back to the fields carrying his flask of tea before finally coming home at dusk, between nine

and ten at night. Susan and I would take his tea about six in the afternoon which we all ate together. He could not read or write but nevertheless seemed to get by OK. After he retired he had an allotment up the other end of the village and would go up to the Golden Bull. He enjoyed a pint or two and would often find one of the younger villagers would have left a message for him to work a row of his potatoes whilst at he was at work.” [SCAN OF GOLDEN BALL]

“Susan was a very small person and she kept the home going. She had about 20 hens and kept them fed with scraps & ‘gleanings’ from the harvest field. The men’s wives were allowed to go into the field after it had been cut to pick up ears that had not been harvested. Saturday night in the summer she usually called on her sister Mary and brother Jim who lived in a row of cottages called the ‘Grapevine’. Susan and Mary would then walk down to the New Inn on the main road and have a drink. I walked with them but had to be content with a bag of crisps outside, as children were not allowed in pubs.”

Bob Briggs is delighted to share his information with anybody interested; you can e-mail him - rj.briggs@shaw.ca - or drop me a line and I’ll pass it on.

When Lorenza Smith from Cambridge wrote about a school photo she’d found amongst her husband’s papers, she wasn’t too sure of the details. But she has sparked memories for various readers.

Jane Reeson has e-mailed to say that she too had been clearing papers following the death of her Gran, Irene Jacklin (nee Wilson), and came across another picture showing the same people. It was of Kingston School which Irene had attended with her brother and sisters and where she met the lad who was to become her husband, Horace Jacklin. He later worked at Childerley Gate. [SCAN OF KINGSTON VILLAGE, ? CEN PIC OF KINGSTON SCHOOL]

Margaret Adams from Caldecote has memories of the Childerley Gate Council School which opened in 1910 on the St Neot’s Road close to the present entrance of Bourn Aerodrome. It was built to cater for 80 pupils, but even three years later was only half full. Many of the children were unusually backward in their education, having been so far from the other schools in the neighbourhood that they simply had not often got there. Like other schools the playground was divided into boys and girls’ areas and the kitchen garden was tended by the older pupils. They also had to cut the school house lawn with scissors, resulting in large blisters on their fingers. The school became a victim of wartime, being in the way of the bombers using the newly-constructed Bourn airfield. By then there were 100 pupils, the number boosted by London evacuees. They were dispersed around various village halls while a new ‘Temporary’ school was constructed. Margaret started there in 1943, having lived in Caldecote all her life. It consisted of two pre-fabricated huts heated by coke stoves whose chimneys were in the habit of being blown over, causing the room to fill with smoke. There was no electricity, water was carted in, sanitation was a cesspool and the playground regularly overflowed because of bad drains. The schoolmaster, A.G. Vincent Bruns was a very religious man and built himself a private chapel in the garden. The ‘temporary’ school finally closed 1963 , though the building still stands just before the BP garage on the left. [IS THERE A PIC IN CEN FILES]

Other readers have come forward with information on the Sebro Stirling aircraft repair works on Madingley Road to help Mark Greenhow. One, Mrs O. Osborne (nee Blundell) from Comberton writes:

“I volunteered for war work & was employed as an aircraft repair fitter on the spa structure section, Madingley Road from 1942 to 1945. The fuselage, wings etc were all taken to Bourn Airfield for full assembly. It was a very difficult job. I’d had six weeks training at the

Technical College in Mill Road where Mr Grayston, our instructor had told us it would be hard and strict. But on my first day I just could not believe how slow and boring it seemed. We were once told to hide in the cloakroom through lack of work. However things gradually quickened pace; men and girls from all over Britain appeared including girls from Norfolk who had to go back at certain times of the season to work in the 'Flax Factory', which they really didn't care for at all. Our foreman used to love to show his authority by getting us to screw a tank top down just ten minutes before we were due to clock off. But I have great memories of wartime work and fun!"

Mark Greenhow also asked about the Green Man at Meldreth; Catharine Walston writes: "That is our house! It is not called The Green Man any more (sadly). I think it was only a pub for a fairly short period in its 500-year history. We bought it from a member of the Cavendish Labs, who had lived here for about fifteen years after extensively doing it up. Before that, it belonged to a family called Parker who had a riding stable here. It used to be faced with rather ugly yellow bricks and had a front door giving directly onto the road. Now it is timber and render and the front door is in the stable yard."

Last week's mention of the Pye underwater camera has sparked memories for Rodney Dale of Haddenham. He recalls: "Fifty or more years ago, I worked in the holidays with Ray Woodman, cabinet maker, who had a workshop in Sandy Lane which runs along the back of the houses on the south side of Chesterton Road between de Freville Avenue and Haig Road (as was). One day, we were visited by Ben Coleman from Pye; they had been working on an underwater camera which was in constant use, and he wanted a full-size wooden model for showing at exhibitions and so on. All we had was a sheaf of photographs and one or two key dimensions. Just the sort of problem I loved, and I invented a device for scaling measurements taken from the photographs to enable us to make a plausible model in wood. When it was finished, it was generally agreed to be indistinguishable from the real thing – perhaps it was the one in your photo! [PYE CAMERA PHOTO]

Chris Scurrah who organises the Soham Community website writes to say that Soham and Chesterton now have another claim to fame: "I thought you might like to know that Olaudah Equiano, otherwise known as Gustavus Vassa, has been voted 'The 4th Greatest Black Briton' on an internet site – www.100greatblackbritons.com. He was an African slave who gained his freedom and became an activist for the abolition of slavery in the 18th Century. He wrote his celebrated Autobiography - 'The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African 1789'. Olaudah married an English Woman, Susannah Cullen from Fordham at St. Andrew's Church, Soham on the 7th April 1792. They had two daughters but one of them Anna Maria Vassa sadly died on 21st July 1797, aged just 4 years old and is buried in Chesterton churchyard. Olaudah himself died on 31st March 1797, aged 52, just ten years before Slavery was finally abolished in England This is just part of a mass of Soham information on Chris' website – www.soham.org.uk – which is well worth a look by anybody researching the area. [SCANS OF CHESTERTON CHURCH 1880 AND SOHAM CHURCH 1797]

Memories 3rd March 2004, by Mike Petty

For me the last week was one of memories of wartime. Over lunch at Clare Hall on Thursday Dr Audrey Glaeurt recalled her experiences when bombs fell in the vicinity of her family's home in St Barnabas Road, Cambridge, and watching the flames as the Perse School blazed following another raid. Then at a meeting of the Haddenham Interest Club that night Tony Locke spoke of the bombing of Great Eastern Street and others mentioned crashes on Histon Road and how secret Cabinet Meetings were held at Pembroke College. [SCAN OF CUTTINGS OF GREAT EASTERN STREET AND PERSE SCHOOL BOMBING]

Now Archie Roberts has written from Thetford in Norfolk to say that reading an earlier Memories article on the anti-aircraft sites during the war has stimulated his own memories of some of the bombs that fell on Mill Road railway bridge.

He writes: "I was a boy of 7 at the time and living with my parents and younger brother at 13 Cockburn Street, Mill Road. My mother used to shop in the International on the town side of Mill Road opposite the then Maternity Hospital, and we often walked over the bridge to and from the shop. I can remember the ruins of the bombing of the two houses very close to the bridge, and also the patchwork repair of the side of the bridge damaged either by blast or shrapnel. In the 50's or 60's the houses were rebuilt in the same style as the originals. [SCAN CUTTING OF MILL ROAD BOMBING]

"I cannot remember the actual bombing but what I do remember is standing on the front step of 13 Cockburn Street in mid afternoon one day when a Mr Quelsh, a baker, was delivering our bread from his small van. While he was there a German bomber flew very low along Mill Road from the Cement Works towards the town. My brother and I were ordered to dive under the dining table in the central room, which we did. I always believed that the bombing of these houses was due to this bomber, but the Michael Bowyer's book 'Air Raid' says that it followed the railway line from Ely to bomb. So what did this dark unmarked particular bomber do?"

He continues: "However, what is missing from this very good book is the bombing of the Baptist Sunday School which was about a third of the way down Stockwell Street from Mill Road, and behind the Baptist Church on Mill Road. The Sunday School was flattened. Half way down Cockburn Street opposite numbers 13 and 11 stood the Tracey Hall, which up until the time of the bombing had a church spire. The blast from the bomb blew the spire off into our street, the corrugated hall itself shielding our windows from the blast. I can remember mum saying that the sticky papered bedroom sash window rattled like hell but didn't break; we were close and very lucky.

"I can remember that (in my age group) Raymond Holder, Brian and Barry Anderson (with their parents) lived in Cockburn Street directly behind the Sunday School, and like Fred Rouse, his sister and their parents, and Mr & Mrs Marks and their daughter, they would have all been affected by the blast from the bombing. These were the people living in the two houses on either side of the Tracey Hall at the time. I would be very grateful if your readers could come up with their memories of it, particularly the date and time."

Michael Bowyer has recorded that it was just after midnight on 29th August 1941 that a hundred houses were damaged when nine high-explosive bombs fell in ones or twos in Gt Eastern Street, Argyle Street, Sturton Street, Stockwell Street, Greville Road and Cavendish Road area. Two people were killed in Great Eastern Street and five injured. The dead were named in the CDN as Mrs Louisa Rowell, aged 82 and John Bowles aged four whilst Mrs L. Clark, Mr & Mrs A. Petit, Mrs Dorothy Driver and Mrs Florence Bell were treated for minor injuries.

One casualty was Sturton Street Methodist Church which was the only religious building in Cambridge put 'out of action' by the Luftwaffe. The chapel was in the news just 50 years ago – CDN 5th March 1954 - when the Master of Downing College laid the foundation stone of a replacement church to be built on the site. The News reported that it had been a hard fight - the War Damage Commission had given them a very raw deal, only offering £800 towards rebuilding costs. But they had pursued their resolution in the face of frustration to which all were accustomed in dealing with Government Departments and got £1,170. The rebuilt chapel reopened at the end of September 1954 [SCAN OF OLD STURTON STREET CHAPEL]

A few weeks ago Mrs H. Bainbridge from Cambridge sent me a series of newspaper cuttings from the CDN of August and September 1942. Much of what was happening at the time could not be published because of censorship but these articles celebrate the achievements of an important branch of the wartime workers – the National Fire Service.

Their first anniversary was marked by a drumhead service on Parker's Piece on 23rd August 1942 when between 200 and 300 firemen and firewomen were on parade. They heard their Regional Fire Officer, Mr R. Kidd, read congratulatory message from the King expressing his appreciation for their courage and devotion. Then the Vicar of St George's church paid his own tribute: "We do not know, quite frankly, what would have happened without your help and no one will deny the heroism and matchless courage of all ranks of the Fire Service during the past year". He went on: "For many generations the story will be told, and it is graven in stone up and down the country how you have saved both property and, what is more important, human lives". [SCAN OF CUTTING NFS PARADE]

But little of their story seems to have been remembered; Cambridge man Frank Reeve produced a dramatic account of their work in his unpublished work 'Going to blazes', but this is based on his experiences in London. Who can help piece together their story locally?

But wartime was not the only topic readers have asked me to feature; rambles walking the footpath from Linton to Hildersham will know there is a unique impediment in their way – a clapper stile. It looks like an ordinary gate, but when you press on the top bar it pivots down to let you through. But are there any others elsewhere in Cambridgeshire, or do you have any old snaps of this or other stiles? [SCAN LINTON STILE]

The hunt is also on for any transparencies of views of Bottisham, particularly in the 1930s, that I could borrow to show at one of my meetings, or does anybody have memories of the village at that time. [SCAN BOTTISHAM PUB]

And can anybody help me with reminiscences or stories about Cambridgeshire fountains, as I've been asked to speak at the Cambridge conference of the Fountain Society in September. I know there is the fountain on Market Hill, Cambridge, the ones at Trinity and King's Colleges, that magnificent affair in March and the one that used to stand on Ely market place; but there must be more. Any pictures would be welcome together with any interesting anecdotes that would help me spark up my talk [SCAN FOUNTAIN ON MARKET HILL, SCAN OF MARCH FOUNTAIN]

Further memories have been jogged by the story of the Pye underwater camera

Peter Prime has e-mailed to say he worked with Ben Coleman when a young man as did Ronald Hurst from Impington who adds that the waterproof case was tested in 1951 at Banham's Boat Yard and on the completion of the tests the camera and case were taken to HMS Reclaim at Portsmouth accompanied by Ben Coleman, Dan Robeson and Ronald; the trials were cut short as the ship was ordered to put to sea to investigate a missing submarine.

Mr W.A. Reeve from Cambridge writes following mention of the Cambridge Rhythm Club in Memories of 11th February. He recalls it back in the 1930s, as he writes:

"About 1934, encouraged by the Melody Maker, clubs were formed throughout the U.K., the Cambridge one being no.77. The paper covered not only the dance band scene but the jazz scene as well with articles on early bands and musicians and the Golden Age of Jazz.

"The Cambridge club was formed about October 1934 by Len Salmon, Basil (?) Cranfield, Roy Wickes who was a drummer. Rupert Buttress, a collector of jazz records, Sid Barrett a double bass player and myself joined the managing committee. A number of undergraduates

also joined and were quite influential in its affairs; including Rupert Clerke who later became a fighter pilot. One evening one student brought along his cousin, Leonard Feather who was jazz critic for the Melody Maker and in the 1940s manager for the Duke Ellington band. Grace Wade who worked in the record department of Millers Music Shop was very helpful and very popular.

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Wendy Maskell (nee Bell) from Cambridge has written to say that she saw her dad, the late Reg Bell in the picture of the Cambridge Auxiliary Firemen I featured on 14th March. Also pictured was Reg Smith and Wendy recalls: "During the war we lived at 26 Hobart Road and the Smith family lived at no.12. As soon as the siren sounded both 'Reggies' would cycle off to the fire station in Coleridge Road and my mother, brother and I would join Mrs Smith and her two children at her home. I remember my dad having to assist the London Fire Brigade during the blitz. Another memory is of him saying he didn't enjoy climbing to the top of the training ladder, which of course, was all part of his training!"

Memories 10th March 2004, by Mike Petty

Don Unwin of Cambridge is seeking information on the development of the Unicam Instrument company.

He writes:

"It was a small outfit, founded around 1933 by Sidney William John Stubbens, an ex Cambridge Instrument Company foreman. I worked there from 1935 until 1946. When I joined it was run by the boss with his two brothers Earnest and John and had only about 20 or 25 employees including ex Cambridge Instrument Company men Bill Varley and Earnie Marsh. The directors of the company were all local men, Mr Pretty, a director of Robert Sayles, Winton Smith the pork pie maker, Mr Slater a solicitor and W G Collins ex-works manager and later director at Instrument Company.

"My starting rate was a halfpenny per hour more than the normal starting rate of a penny per hour because I had been to the Tech, which came to 4s 8d (24p) per week less deductions that included a penny for the hospital!

"The workshop was in Barrett's warehouse yard next door to the Bun Shop in St Andrews Hill, an old rickety two floored building. It was equipped with mostly old machines that were driven by belts from line shafting mounted in a timber framework and powered by an old electric motor which when starting up had to be helped by pulling on the belt. The upper floor had a similar line shaft driven from the bottom shaft by a belt through a hole cut in the floor. Although there were stairs the direct access to the ground floor from the top was through a hole in the floor and down a ladder! The old boiler room on the ground floor was rigged up with a spray painting booth, fumes exhausting into the chimney through one of the soot cleaning holes! [NEWS PHOTO OF ST ANDREWS HILL SHOWING BARRETT'S WAREHOUSE?]

"In an area off the workshop on the upper floor was partitioned into three rooms, one Mr Stubbens' office, next door a small offices for the secretary. In a third larger work room were Mrs Stubbens and a Miss Sharpe who did engraving, dividing, electrical wiring and similar tasks.

“The main products were simple laboratory apparatus such as lab stands, lab clamps for glassware etc as well as special work for the near-by University laboratories

“Sometime at the end of 1936 Sid Stubbens was sent to his new works on a site between nos. 54 & 58 Arbury Road to help fit it out. It was just a roof, walls still being built and a dirt floor. Eventually the place was ready for occupation and the plant was moved from Barrett's Yard and installed. [SCAN OF ARBURY ROAD c1930]

“The business must have been doing quite well, a defence contract for optical instruments had been obtained resulting from the pre-war rearmament programme. As a result during the next year an extension, twice the area of the original building was announced. However soon after the two steel erectors had started work one of them put his hand through a window and then there was only one! He asked Sid if he could borrow a couple of men to help and guess who was one of them detailed to help. Yes, I was one of them, climbing up stanchions, drilling $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch [THREE-QUARTER INCH] holes in girders by hand using a ratchet brace, oxyacetylene cutting and welding, all in freezing cold weather. I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it and it was a wonderful and valuable experience.

“Then the War started, the roof lights were fitted with sliding shutters, side windows fitted with loose blackout shutters, light locks on all external doors and air raid shelters dug in the grounds. In April 1940 we were told that to increase production two shifts were to be operated in the machine shop. We were to work 12 hour shifts, alternate weeks of 7 days and 6 nights. On the night shift there were the only two non-productive people and the chargehand was totally responsible for everything, discipline, quality control, setting machines, designing jigs and fixtures, accidents, first aid, evacuation during air-raids. On occasions a platoon of gunners came with their artillery and demonstrated how the instruments we were making used

“Just before the war a number of Jewish refugees, mostly quite educated, joined the work force but during the war however the number of employees increased dramatically, reaching about 600. They were from every walk of life, male and female, some quite young, others old enough to be grandparents, some very intelligent, some dim, mostly unfamiliar with machine work and working in a factory.

“Yet another large extension was built on the side of the existing building to house instrument assembly and a larger canteen. There was an optical mounting department in the Riley House garage on Mitcham's Corner and the London Instrument Company works at Newnham Mill were taken over.

“After the war there was a great slimming down. I left to join Cambridge Instrument Co and moves took place to join up with W G Pye to form Pye Unicam. By mid 1961 Unicam had relocated to York Street.” [SCAN OF YORK STREET IN 1950S]

Mention of St George's church in on the Milton Road in Cambridge in last week's memories has prompted Donald Flory to contact me with some details of its connections with Australia.

St George's church started in a hall back in 1932, complete with a harmonium and a lectern borrowed from St Botolph's Church on Trumpington Street. But they had plans for something better and an appeal was issued by the Bishop of Ely, which was supported the novelist Dorothy L. Sayers: “The church on the Milton Road is urgently needed and must be built. It will be built but let us see that priest and people do not have to start their work with a millstone of debt around their neck”.

A design for the new church was prepared by Thomas Henry Lyon, a former Director of the University School of Architecture and accepted in 1937. The foundation stone was laid on St George's Day 1938; it was consecrated in October before becoming a parish in its own right

the next month. It had cost no more than three of the semi-detached houses alongside it, making it a wonderfully cheap church

Its unusual architecture attracted praise, but not from everybody; for although its acoustic qualities were great for organ and choir it was less successful for the spoken voice which reverberated within the lofty barrel vault. But there was a solution – fill it with people.

[SCAN OF CHURCH INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR / NEWS PHOTOS]

However it was not the only St George's church that Thomas Lyon produced, for 35 years earlier, in 1902, he had designed another one at Goodwood, near Adelaide in Australia. It was in part a memorial to his sister, Caroline. She had had married a friend of his, a fellow Corpus Christi College undergraduate named Percy Wise and emigrated. She died in 1900 while returning to England and her distraught husband persuaded his brother-in-law to visit his Australian parish and design its new church. Sadly Lyon never saw the completed church which has a similar plan to the one in Chesterton, both sharing an appreciation of Byzantine architecture, though the local one is the larger of the two and boasts its dominating tower. It was as near as he got to designing the Cathedral he had always wanted to build. [SCANS OF TWO ST GEORGE'S CHURCHES]

The Australian church celebrated its centenary in October last year, the Chesterton one still has some way to go but if the last 66 years have been any guide they will manage it.

The picture of the bombing of a house in Great Eastern Street has brought a very personal memory back to Margaret Jordan, (nee Watts). She e-mails: "The picture shows my Grandmother, Lydia Watts' bedroom at no.35 which is where my mother Edith Watts and sisters Doreen, Esme and I were asleep at the time of the air raid in the beds shown. We had just moved from Eastbourne to escape the bombing. My grandmother was asleep downstairs in the front of the house as was a Sister from the Maternity Hospital. Luckily we were all uninjured. [SCAN OF GT EASTERN STREET AS LAST WEEK]

Jean Perraton from Cambridge e-mails to ask some details of the annual 'Swim through Cambridge' from Mill Lane to Jesus Green. In a 'Looking Back' snippet for June 1977 I mentioned that the race had been cancelled that year – but did it subsequently start up again. My feeling is that it did not, but can you confirm it for her. She is writing a book about swimming in lakes and rivers and would like details to include. You can e-mail her - jean.parraton@virgin.net or drop me a line and I'll pass it on. [SCAN OF SWIM THROUGH CAMBRIDGE]

Jean Gimbert from Cambridge has sent me some old photographs discovered during a house clearance at Chatteris. Some show sights that are little changed, but a postcard of Brooklands Avenue shows just what a rural street this was back in 1905 before Dutch elm disease and motorists took their toll. There is a sketch of the corner of Magdalene and Northampton Streets in 1911 showing the White Horse Inn, the present Folk Museum which is currently closed while new facilities are added in the former inn yard. But two in particular needs explanation. One shows a group of smartly dressed hand-bell ringers outside a church door. There is no doubt as to the date, 1950, but where was it taken? The only clue is that it was taken by John Slater of Newmarket. So do you recognise faces please? The other shows an imposing building with a number of policemen outside – but where is it? [SCAN OF MAGDALENE STREET CORNER, HAND-BELL RINGERS AND POLICE STATION]

Memories 17th March 2004, by Mike Petty

Pat Richards has send a copy of the latest edition of the magazine of Addenbrooke's Hospital League of Nurses magazine that she edits. In it Margaret Dorman who worked at Addenbrooke's from 1959-62 recalls her memories of working with young patients:

"I was sent to the Children's Ward in my first year. At the time I was living still at Owlstone Croft with two friends, Carol Dickson and Margaret Chaston where we were sharing a large room on the first floor. The rest of our set had left for the main Nurses Home in the hospital but there were not enough rooms for all of us so we elected to stay. It was a large room with a bed in each corner and the reason why it is part of my memory of my Children's experience is that this is where I used to call out in my sleep in my anxiety; Carol replying in her sleep, and the ever pragmatic Margaret listening in some amusement and able to report in the morning.

"My previous wards had been Private Patients 1, with Sister Bowyer and Hatton Ward (female medical) through a long hot summer. One of my first allocated tasks was to special nurse a six week old baby with a tracheotomy. The staff nurse led me to the area screened off by glass windows from the main ward to a tiny cot to show me this little mite. I recall two instructions. 'Don't forget to feed the baby' and 'If there is any problem, wave'. Conscious that I hardly knew how to hold a baby let alone feed it and had never seen a tracheotomy before, I became aware of that cold panicky feeling low inside the body. How could I do it? Where did I start? How long before I could justifiably wave for help? Already just nine months into nursing I had internalised the precept that you could never say that you couldn't do something, you just had to find a way. The gods were kind that day. Help arrived just in time for the baby, and me, in the form of a Consultant Anaesthetist who spoke kindly and went to find the Staff Nurse. Very quickly we changed places, she became the one behind the glass windows but I don't suppose she would need to wave.

"Sister was a remote person to me and had a reputation for being a bit erratic. I remember her throwing out all the equipment from the treatment room into the corridor with great passion. Perhaps it was her way of saying it was not tidy enough and had to be done again. She did not dislike me and for some reason I never understood, tended to give me more senior work (in the workbook) than would be expected even though there were more senior students. She did expect us to work hard and long. I quickly learned that there was no point in going to her to ask if I might go off duty unless it was at least half an hour after the due time. This seriously cut into the brief hours off duty. I frequently had split shifts and commonly the morning off from 10am to 1pm. By not going off until 10.30am, there was little time to do anything except cycle 20 minutes back to Owlstone Croft in the uniform and back in time for lunch at 12.30 ready for duty again at 1 pm. There could be another half-hour added to the 8pm finish time, but I was used to staying late by then.

"Children then had to be bathed on admission and separated from their mothers which was so traumatic. I remember a little boy, possibly about six, whom I had to bath and admit and he cried all the time. He was in pain too from the large swellings in his body and lay on his bed in total misery, learning how painful life could, and would be. Then there were medicine rounds and trying to persuade toddlers to drink their medicine with variable success prior to their operations. During this time however, I did learn to bottle feed babies. The Consultant was not to be forgotten, as he sported bright red braces as a personal feature. How well that worked too. I cannot recall his face but his name was Gairdner and the red braces are as vivid as in 1959.

"But the memory which will stay with me for all my life is having to special nurse three boys with head injuries. One was a toddler, the other two about seven and eleven. I can't remember what ill fortune led to their accidents. The three beds were in line on the ward and my responsibility was to take vital signs every 15 minutes and chart it. So each child, body, head and arms thrashing about on the bed, had to have a thermometer held under the arm

sufficiently to register, then take the pulse and then the blood pressure. It was a combination of a sprint and a marathon since this went on for hours, with me rushing to the next child, struggling to hold him still to do the signs and then rushing off to the next. No wonder Margaret heard me talking in the night ... 'keep still, please keep still, please keep still' as it was my turn to thresh about.

"She also heard Carol and I discussing and agreeing in our sleep that Sunday was the best day of the week. The reason - Sister came on duty later and the pressure and possibility of catastrophe was deferred for half an hour. On such small patches of hope did we cling and so survive."

Pat Richards is always interested in hearing from nurses and patients with memories to share of the days when Matron ruled the wards. You can e-mail her at perl1@cam.ac.uk or write to me and I'll forward your letter. [SCAN OF OLD ADDENBROOKE'S HOSPITAL 1966, PIX FROM NEWS FILES]

Various readers have written following recent Memories articles

The piece on war-time bombing (March 3rd) has prompted Rod Norden from Quy to write: "I can remember being taken as a small boy to Mill Road bridge to see the bomb damage done there. I can also remember the German bomber mentioned by Archie Roberts. I was in our garden at 94 Catherine Street where I was born and was with my cousin Chris Norden who lived in Thoday Street. The plane came over very low. I think it was a Sunday dinner time and I was told he was trying to bomb the Norman Cement Works. I also remember going down the air raid shelter across the road from our house in the old builders yard owned by Crown and Cox. My father who was an engine driver on the railway was also an Air Raid Warden for that area" [SCAN MILL ROAD BRIDGE BOMB AS REPORTED CDN 31 JAN 1941]

Mrs E. Day from Histon also recalls the raids: "I was five years old at the time and lived on Mawson Road when the raid on Mill Road happened. I was ill in bed with measles and saw the German plane fly past and drop the bombs on Mill Road bridge. My late father-in-law, 'Banger' Day, was an air raid warden living in Sturton Street opposite the Methodist Chapel and when it was bombed he went in and turned all the gas off, otherwise it would have been completely demolished".

Betty Giddens from Sutton is seeking help in tracking down a photograph of all the children who attended a party held in Priory School, Galfrid Road to commemorate the Coronation in 1953. She was in the picture together with her sister Gill and nephew Geoffrey. I have one but am not sure whether it's the one she wants. Do you have others [SCAN OF ABBEY ESTATE GROUP]

Betty is very kind about the Memories articles and about my piece in the new "Our Time" magazine on the Lion Yard area before redevelopment. She recalls: "I walked through those narrow streets on many occasions – mostly going to and from work at Francis and Co., solicitors in Peas Hill and at the Guildhall. I hope you have more pictures of Cambridge in the next issue". [ALEXANDRA STREET PHOTO AS USED OUR TIME – REF 149876, LOOKING TOWARDS PETTY CURY 1972] Indeed I will, having found some marvellous photographs of Fitzroy Street and some of the shopkeepers there, that were taken back in 1964 – 40 years ago. There's more space in the new magazine and the glossy paper means that we can reproduce the pictures much better.

Rod Edney from Stapleford has send me a photograph of an old cottage at the junction of Airport Way and Newmarket Road, Cambridge. Does this jog memories for anybody and can you tell me anything about it? [SCAN OF THATCHED COTTAGE]

Richard Sanders from Stourbridge in the West Midlands was interested in Margery Haigh's picture of children at Milton Road Infant's School, Cambridge (February 18th) : "One of the children recognised by Mrs Haigh, Myrtle Bygrave, was my mother. She would probably have been living at 52, Oak Tree Avenue at the time, although the family had lived at Thompsons Lane prior to that. After leaving Milton Road, she went to the Cambridgeshire High School. She later worked at Chivers, the Pathology laboratories in Lensfield Road and then Pye/Philips. She married, had three children, and lived in Haig Road/Elizabeth Way from 1952 until her death in 1993. If my mother was in Miss Clark's class, the photograph would probably have been taken in 1925 or 1926 as she was born in 1921. Regarding Miss Clark, not only did she teach my mother, but also myself, some 28 years later, in 1953/54. Coincidentally, my third year junior school class teacher at Milton Road in 1956/57 was Mrs Cadogan, who is featured in another article on the same page." [REPEAT MILTON ROAD SCHOOL PHOTO FROM FEB 18TH – I DON'T HAVE COPY]

Barry Benton has e-mailed following another 'Memories' article (February 25th) one featuring the memories of Bob Briggs, an old farm boy from Manitoba.

Barry writes: "My great-grandparents were married in Waterbeach on 13th October 1904 and emigrated to Medicine Hat around 1908. He was working for the city as an electrician when he suffered a fatal accident on 4th December 1913. My grandmother and her younger brother were subsequently send back to Waterbeach to be brought up by their aunt while their elder brother remained in Medicine Hat with his mother. I am in regular contact with my 'first-cousins-once-removed' who still live and work in the area." But why, Barry asks, did they emigrate to Canada and were there 'recruitment advertisements' in the local papers to encourage them?"

Well on 12th March 1903 the CDN carried an interview with James D Bambridge of Manitoba who was visiting Cambridge to offer the depressed English agriculturist a chance in the farmer's El Dorado, Western Canada.. The Canadian government were giving a free grant of 160 acres of land to every emigrant, most of it prairie – virgin soil, rich in quality. The difficulties of the old settlers were now largely a thing of the past, no longer were they plumped down in a forest and expected to clear the timber before they could plant and sow. It was not only farmers that were wanted but all labouring classes, male and female, who could make \$250 [TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS] a year, much more than they would earn at home. It was expected that 120,000 people, like Barry's great-grandad, would emigrate that year. English agriculture did not pay whilst the Canadian farmer was making good money. It was an ideal time to seek a new life in a new world. [SCAN OF 1903 ARTICLE]

Did your family take up the opportunities offered, and did they prosper?

Memories 24th March 2004, by Mike Petty

The news of the impending closure of the Lion Yard multi-storey car park in central Cambridge will mark another chapter in an ongoing saga

Ever since the Honourable undergraduate C.S. Rolls brought the first car to the town in 1897 the mechanical monster had proved a problem. By 1907 it was felt doubtful if any other town of similar size had so many cars and motorbikes as Cambridge in term time: cars that not only knocked over cows in Victoria Avenue but also kicked up dust; cars that exceeded the speed limit with a taxi driver being fined £2 for driving at 12 mph in 1909.

As traffic increased so new measures were urged to control them. In 1921 staggered lunch hours were being urged to relieve congestion and four years later one-way traffic was introduced in Market Street and Petty Cury.

But if moving cars created difficulties, finding somewhere to park was already causing considerable problems

Relief was soon available with the opening of Drummer Street bus station and car park in 1925, though the area devoted to cars was soon found to be inadequate and in 1932 New Square car park was opened. It proved only a temporary solution, by 1934 cars and bikes were often parked so closely in Petty Cury and Sidney Street that pedestrians could not find space to cross over. Parking restrictions were introduced in 1936 which limited motorists to just fifteen minutes, using different sides of the streets on odd or even days and more one-way systems brought into operation. [SCAN OF DRUMMER STREET CAR PARK c1925 AND VIEW OF NEW SQUARE 1964]

Already the idea of using commons for cars was being urged and in 1938 came the suggestion of an underground car park on Market Hill, which could double for an air raid shelter in the fast-approaching war but war-time restrictions on petrol eased the problem for a while.

In 1950 a survey showed that whilst 43,000 motorists used New Square and 59,000 parked on Market Hill the favourite parking area was at the rear of the Lion Hotel, attracting over 80,000 cars in a year. The numbers increased as more and more of the old properties were demolished. [SCAN OF MARKET HILL PARKING 1964 AND LION YARD PARKING AREA 1960s]

By 1951 it was felt that the lack of central parking was driving shoppers away but the Trades Council wanted parks on the outskirts of the town and all waiting in the centre banned.

Much depended on whether the Holford Planning Report, the County's views on how Cambridge should develop.

The debate and arguments rumbled on... enlarge Lion Yard (1954), scrap Lion yard and build on the outskirts instead (1956). 1957 saw a plethora of plans ... parking meters in February, Park Street multi-storey car park in April, under Parker's Piece in May.

The Parker's Piece plan was deferred until October, the Park Street plan was deferred until the Parker's Piece plan had been discussed, the parking meters idea came up again ... and in the context of all this came the new idea. One morning in June 1958 Cambridge awoke to find that the Undergraduates had come up with their own solution. Parked neatly on top of the roof of the Senate House was an Austin 7 van. It had arrived there overnight and stayed for several days, finally having to be cut into sections before it could be brought down, perhaps a high price to pay for free parking in central Cambridge! [SCAN OF SENATE HOUSE ARTICLE – THIS HAS BEEN USED BEFORE, KEEP IT SMALL]

That year the concept of cars above houses approved not in Senate House Hill but in the prophetically named Park Street. Cambridge's first multi-storey opened in 1963, dwarfing Cambridge's last thatched cottage. [SCAN OF PARK STREET CAR PARK CONSTRUCTION OR IT DOMNATING THATCHED COTTAGE IN CLEMENT PLACE]

Elsewhere homes in Doric and Gothic streets were demolished to make space for more motors and multi-storeys were proposed for Donkeys Common and King Street. Others wanted parking meters, park and ride and underground car parks on Parker's Piece and Lion Yard.

Thus was the stage set and throughout the 1960's most of the alternative ideas were recycled.

Then in 1964 came the first parking meters. The charges of 1/- (5p) an hour would "produce a profit of £10,000 a year and they would pay for themselves within three". In fact by 1972 they had earned £101,000 and cost £145,000 in administration. Their immediate impact was to clear the streets, with long queues for car parks which were already full; traffic conditions were described as frightful and some traders reported a 78% dip in their takings. Double yellow lines began to appear in March 1965, and shoppers switched to the Fitzroy Street area where parking was easier and where the talked-of redevelopment seemed as unlikely as anything actually happening in Lion Yard. [SCAN OF PARKING METERS CORN EXCHANGE STREET 1965]

Yet in the centre things were changing though not for the better. In 1969 parking meter charges were doubled and one of the long established parking spots was closed as cars were banned from Market Hill. That Christmas the chaos was such that police had to invoke emergency powers in an attempt to clear streets clogged solid by jammed cars.

Worse was to follow next year when another central parking area became home for builders' vans rather than shoppers' cars. At long last work had started on the Lion Yard scheme after over 20 years of debate and despite a last minute hitch when University dons objected to the proposed design.

Envisaged in the Holford Report of the 1950s at a cost of £160,000, it would now come to over £700,000. And while Holford had wanted 400 cars it would now take 550. Completion was only two years away and in the meantime the Queen Anne Terrace car park and Elizabeth Bridge were due in 1971 and there was talk of pedestrianisation, a Western Relief Road, a Northern bypass and even 100 more meters

Lion Yard car park finally opened in July 1972. It was designed for shoppers, its prices pitched to discourage those who wanted to park their cars longer. Thus whilst parking for the first hour was 5p, with 15p for two, 25p for three and a horrendous 35p for four it would surely be only the richest motorist who would stump up the monumental sum of 75p for a whole days parking!

It has since been expanded and now will continue in a much-reduced capacity while the Grand Arcade scheme is implemented. In years to come will old folk ask themselves: "Do you remember the old Lion Yard Car Park?"

Or with park-and-ride, guided buses or whatever will we just marvel that it was ever possible just to drive and park in central Cambridge.

Readers write:

The photo of a thatched cottage on Newmarket Road has brought quick responses from readers.

Barry Pemberton from Sutton writes to say that the cottage was owned by Rueben and Sylvia Scott in the 1950's and 1960's. "My half brother Neville married their only daughter Beryl, and I visited the house on many occasions, I believe it was called Rose Haie tea room. The house had a great garden and orchard with superb views over open fields. The Scott's lived in the house up until the time it was demolished to make way for the extended airport runway. The picture shows a Morris Minor on the drive, this was owned by the Scott's and later sold to

my brother. The Scott's have both now passed away and Beryl lives with my brother in Bosham Sussex" [SCAN]

Richard Doe e-mails: "Your picture of the cottage brings back memories. Firstly it stood to the west of the old Teversham Road, near the Park & Ride, and was not on the modern Airport Way. The picture was taken shortly before its demise to make way for Marshall's runway extension, notice the concrete posts for an additional security fence along the front. It overlooked a green area and was kept company by a magnificent horse chestnut tree, which I recall climbing on several occasions. Along with about eight other draughtsmen I worked in the cottage in its last role, as an annex to Marshall's aircraft drawing office. Before that I believe it belonged to a gentleman, I use this term in its old sense, who spent his last remaining working days in the admin section of the drawing office. My guess to its age is modern, probably 1930's. I would put the date of the photo at 1965/7."

Helen Seeley of Cambridge adds: "I remember going for cycle rides as a child with my father and sister, and we often stopped off at that cottage to buy apples, pears and other fruit and veg from a stall outside the cottage gate. In the photo, the front looked a bit overgrown. I always remember it as having a lovely garden and it was my dream to live in such a cottage one day! Incidentally, I have a book from 1906 on cycle rides around the Cambridge area. It describes the road between Cherry Hinton and Teversham and beyond (now Airport Way) as a dirt track, sometimes impassable, even in the summer!"

Chris Bell from Fordham recognised the picture of a handbell-ringing team:

"I am a member of Fordham parish church bell ringers and instantly recognised the photo - we have a framed one on the wall in the church tower with all the ringers identified as follows: left to right - Keith Munns, James Morley, Anthony Doggett, Roland Morley, George Rampley (captain) and Claude Sargent.

They were all tower bell ringers as well as handbell and the photo was taken outside the west door of Fordham church probably around Christmas 1950 as it was the tradition until the late 1990's to play Christmas carols on Boxing Day morning around the village, in the pubs, clubs & some local houses as requested" [SCAN]

Mrs B. Challis from Witchford was another eye-witness to the bombs falling on Mill Road bridge in Cambridge during the Second World War. She writes: "I saw them actually coming from the plane. I was going to St George's School on East Road and to get to the air raid shelter we had to go through the boys' playground; the bombs dropped before we got there and my best friend was killed"

Richard Sanders from Stourbridge in the West Midlands was interested in Margery Haigh's picture of children at Milton Road Infant's School, Cambridge (February 18th): "One of the children recognised by Mrs Haigh, Myrtle Bygrave, was my mother. She would probably have been living at 52, Oak Tree Avenue at the time, although the family had lived at Thompson's Lane prior to that. After leaving Milton Road, she went to the Cambridgeshire High School. She later worked at Chivers, the Pathology laboratories in Lensfield Road and then Pye/Philips. She married, had three children, and lived in Haig Road/Elizabeth Way from 1952 until her death in 1993. If my mother was in Miss Clark's class, the photograph would probably have been taken in 1925 or 1926 as she was born in 1921. Regarding Miss Clark, not only did she teach my mother, but also myself, some 28 years later, in 1953/54. Coincidentally, my third year junior school class teacher at Milton Road in 1956/57 was Mrs Cadogan, who is featured in another article on the same page." [REPEAT MILTON ROAD SCHOOL PHOTO FROM FEB 18TH - I DON'T HAVE COPY]

Recently the pages have been full of stories about the proposed revival of the old railway line from Cambridge to St Ives for a guided bus. But just 25 years ago – on 2nd April 1979 – the News was covering the re-establishment of a passenger rail service – albeit only for a day.

The line had been closed to passengers on 3rd October 1970 & the only trains to use it since then carried freight and aggregates from Fen Drayton and oranges to Chivers' factory at Histon. But a now Saturday 'special' was being chartered from British Rail by the East Anglian branch of the Railway Development Society in co-operation with the Cambridge Rail Action Group which wants to see passenger services restored. Every single ticket was sold within five days: "We had to turn away as many people again", said the branch.

But by the time the 13.10 'special' for Cambridge calling at Longstanton, Oakington and Histon arrived at Swavesey it was already a little late. In fact the 50 minute journey took twice as long as the original passenger services on the line because the crossing gates had to be opened and shut manually by the train crew. One of the capital costs of reopening passenger services would be reinstalling automatic gates to remedy this problem. This was common on other lines too; it could take some time before the crossing gates over the A10 Cambridge to Ely Road at Little Thetford could be closed in the face of oncoming traffic when that line too was being used for goods trains. [NEGS 645.79.22 et seq. SCAN STATIONS AT LONGSTANTON c1910, OAKINGTON 1920s, HISTON SIGNAL BOX 1960s & OF RAILWAY GATES AT LITTLE THETFORD]

But 25 years ago no one was complaining at Swavesey. A few minutes extra wait did not seem to matter very much on top of the eight and a half years that had lapsed since the last passenger train pulled up to the platform. Not that there was actually much left of Swavesey station. The station house and offices had all gone, leaving just a few broken seats and a creeper-covered shelter to accommodate the traveller. The man who once lived in the station house at Swavesey, former station master Mr Herbert Wakefield, knew the line well and confirmed that Swavesey and St Ives were always very good passenger stations.

Amongst those waiting for the train was the chairman of Swavesey parish council, Mr Bob Stone, though he didn't make the journey as he didn't get a ticket in time. But the chairman of Longstanton parish council, Mr Jim Young was aboard and when the train stopped at Histon the chairman of their council handed over a letter of support.

Other passengers included neighbours Mrs Sue Watson and Mrs Carol Snelling of Ramsey Road, St Ives. They said they would use the train for shopping as it beat travelling in by bus which took too long and by car, which was difficult and expensive to park. Former county councillor Mrs Ethel Heffer, who had originally fought the closure, used to travel from Swavesey to school in Cambridge by train & was enjoying retracing the journey. Then on journey's end at Cambridge station the Mayor, Coun Alec Molt and his wife were waiting to give the train an official reception.

Although these councillors were convinced of the case for reopening there were others who were less enthusiastic, especially those on the Cambridgeshire County Council which would have to subsidise the reintroduction of passenger services.

Now a quarter of a century later the issue is still being debated. But did you ever travel by train along the route from Cambridge to St Ives, and do you have memories to share?

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The pages are also full of stories of a rates-strike by people at Cottenham, which they see as a way of registering their protest against a travellers' site. But 100 years ago the same tactics were being employed by other law-abiding people. Then it was prompted by a change in the

Education Act that introduced the teaching of the Prayer Book and the Catechism in schools. Many nonconformists objected to something they considered anathema to their religion and protested by refusing to pay a portion of their education rates.

The council had no option but to take them to court; but it was not a peaceful scene: In Cambridge large crowds packed the entrance to the court and decorum broke down with lusty cheering which the police made no effort to subdue. Even University dons were involved: Professor Sims Woodhead, speaking on behalf of Cambridge Passive Resisters, told magistrates that they were refusing to pay their education rate as they believed the money would be applied to the teaching of religious doctrines with which as Protestants they absolutely disagreed. Supporters in the grand jury gallery and in the space usually occupied by the public applauded.

As the process dragged on eventually the Council sent in the Bailiffs. Sales of goods seized from the Resisters were held at the Cambridge Corn Exchange and despite the presence of a large force of constables, there was a good deal of disturbance, shouting and hissing. It was a complete fiasco: the auctioneer conducted the sale from behind a barrier of corn merchants' desks but the crowd made a determined attempt to break through and would have succeeded but for the very active resistance of the police. Mrs Christine Newman from Cambridge has recalled: "My grandfather was a passive resistor. They had a chair just inside the door called the 'Passive Resisters Chair' and so when the bailiffs came to take some furniture to cover the debt, they always took this chair. Then the resisters went to the sale of their goods and brought the chair back for the money they owed. My aunt told me that nobody but the owner of the chair ever bid for it". [SCAN OF INSIDE OF CORN EXCHANGE 1920's – NB NOT DURING THE PROTESTS]

Nor was it a protest limited to Cambridge. At Newmarket 21 persons were summoned for non-payment of the rate, warrants were issued and the police called at the defendant's homes there to select one or two articles they considered of sufficient value to cover the rate and costs. But when the first sale of goods seized from the passive resisters of St Ives was held near the police station none of the local auctioneers would accept the job so a Peterborough firm was imported to carry out the sale. The appearance of the auctioneer was the sequel for an uproar of groans, hooting and hissing. The sale closed amidst general uproar and the crowd made for the Cromwell Statue for a great demonstration.

It remains to see whether the Cottenham protests are attended with equal excitement.

READERS WRITE

John Scott from Cherry Hinton writes:

"I can fill in some facts to both the Mill Road bridge bombing and Rose Haie, the beautiful cottage depicted in the picture.

My memories of the first live on clearly today; at that time I was a pupil at the Morley School and cycled to and from Mill Road, number 22, each day. I was returning home on that day, up Argyle St to the bottom of the bridge & had just reached that point when I saw the Bomber, I think a Heinkel 111 k, followed by a Hurricane. Its bomb doors were open, and I saw the bomb released. Needless to say I got well down behind the base of the pillar at the beginning of the bridge. I do not recall the explosion but rather the flying debris and dust. I picked up my bike, and set off over the bridge towards home. I remember an Air Raid warden trying to stop me, who I managed to avoid, saw the damaged houses on my left, and probably broke some cycle speed records. My Mothers reception is my starkest memory; her concern was the state of my school uniform for which I was severely reprimanded!

"Rose Haie, is part of my family history: I built a Hornet Dinghy in the garage on the right in which my brother and I competed with some success. The house was owned either by my Uncle Reuben & his wife Sylvia, or Jesus College for whom he was Head Chef. Reuben and

family moved to Kings Hedges Road and it passed to Marshall who demolished it to extend the runway.”

Sid Hunt from Bar Hill has responded to my photo of the Abbey Estate Coronation Party; he was the Boys Brigade Band shown and wonders if anybody has other pictures of the band itself. Richard Doe e-mails to say the picture was taken in Beche Road with the old gas works retort house in the background. He was at Priory School from its opening in 1950 and does not remember any Coronation Party there.

George Sewell from Cambridge writes:

“Recently you mentioned Childerley Gate School and a lady responded with her memories. This school was unique in both of its settings; both were adjacent to the old A45 (now A438) and were distant from any village. I attended this educational establishment from January 1950 until July 1956. I was even taught, as many people were, by Miss Thompson, later Mrs Brightwell, who had taught my mother and in other cases both parents as well of other pupils. I sent the article to my aunts and uncle who attended the school and they have responded with their reminiscences. As this school, on both sites, only existed for 53 years I think some kind of historical record should be made and would welcome the help of past pupils who may have other memories and photographs.”

If you can assist George in his task please write to him direct – George Sewell, Mayfield, 27 Humberstone Road, Cambridge, CB4 1JD

George can obtain inspiration from the work of Maurice and Sheila Hornsey who have been researching the Cambridge Castle End schools in Victorian times. They have based much of their study on the log books preserved in the County Record Office at Shire Hall and have included examples of the syllabus and examination questions together with notes on some of the individuals who served in the school. A copy of their findings has been deposited in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library

Somebody else seeking assistance is

Roy Rodwell from Letchworth Garden City is trying to contact some friends who attended the Cambridgeshire Technical College and School of Art engineering class iiB in 1944. He has sent a photo showing the people he’s seeking:

back row: Parker, Simkins, Mr Holmes, Mr Purvis, Twigg, Simpson,

middle row: Parish, Gardiner, Frank Stubbings, Rex Stubbings

front row: Dale, Rodwell, Stockbridge & Walker.

Missing from the photo are Reed, Crawford, Ship and Whittaker.

You can contact Roy on 01462 649761 [SCAN OF TECH GROUP

Memories 7th April 2004, by Mike Petty

Chimney sweeps seldom find themselves in the headlines but in April 1979 Jock Hall of James Street, Cambridge was being featured in the News.

His home had always been distinctive because of the sign above the door that read:

“University Chimney Sweep”. But now it was unmissable, for it stood alone amidst the rubble of what had been a row of terraced houses, demolished in preparation for the long-discussed and debated new Grafton Centre. [PICTURE FROM NEWS FILES WITH ANOTHER OF A BRUSH EMERGING FROM A CHIMNEY – NB NOT ACTUALLY JOCK’S]

The innards of the neighbouring houses hung from the outside walls and the dust swirled everywhere – not that the neighbours were there to see. They had been moved out some time

before to be replaced by squatters who had themselves been moved on just before the bulldozers finally moved in. [SCAN OF SQUATTERS IN JOHN STREET 1972]

The old street that in 1904 had been home to a mixture of the people who kept Cambridge going – laundry ladies & college servants, paperhangers and porters, cowkeepers and undertakers, butchers and plumbers was being redeveloped. Even Morley's pawnbrokers was not immune to change in a changing world though just last week one lady recalled how she called each Monday morning to return her father's Sunday-best suit that had been redeemed the day before. [PHOTO/SCAN OF JAMES STREET 1964 SHOWING MORLEYS, SCAN OF ZEBRA PUB 1920S]

Jock had been a sweep since joining his father working for Kirkup and Sons of King Street. He started his own firm after the war and the 'University' tag dated from the days when he'd swept all the college chimneys, with a fireplace in almost every room. With some 250 in Girton College alone he'd been kept very busy. But by 1979 modern heating methods and smoke control regulations had done away with many of the open fires. But there were still enough to keep the firm going, and they still preferred the traditional chimney sweep's brush.

It was all a very long way from the days of the chimney sweep boy when lads were sent climbing up inside the chimney. Often there were problems: some chimneys were so narrow they had to climb with their arms straight out ahead of them and then when they come down their shirt got rumpled up and they got stuck. Sometimes they had to be cut out, and that could take two hours or more. When the chimney was on fire it presented particular problems. But as a chimney sweep reported to the Cambridge Chronicle back in 1820: The fire is only at the bottom of the chimney and up nearer the top where the soot's alight. The lad'll go up quick to stop himself being singed and with any luck he'll find the blaze further up can be dealt with all right. Sometimes they'll get halfway up and then yell down that it's so hot they can't go no further. Then I have to go out and climb right to the top of the roof, carrying a heavy bucket of water. I pour the water down the chimney - that helps put the fire out - though it can wash the lad out as well

But there would be less call for chimney sweeps in the new James Street. The rebuilt homes would be better, more convenient, warmer – but at least in Jock's case there would still be a fireplace!

READERS WRITE

Amanda Monks (nee Stone) of Over writes: "Last week's article about the 1979 rail passenger service made me smile. The picture of 'passengers ready to take their seats on the Saturday 'special' at Swavesey' shows myself and two of my sisters at the back of the queue. [REF 162123] The strange thing is I can't actually recall this particular journey. What I do remember very well is nine or ten years previously to that before I started Swavesey Primary School, when my younger sister and I would catch the train from Swavesey Station every Wednesday morning with our mother to meet our grandmother in Eaden Lilley's for coffee. Could the reason for my memory loss of this event be because my sisters and I didn't in fact manage to travel on the train on that Saturday in 1979. You report 'the Chairman of the Swavesey Parish Council, Bob Stone, didn't make the journey as he didn't get a ticket in time' and indeed Bob Stone is our father!"

Alan Beamon from Girton writes to say that there was another trip later from Swavesey to Cambridge and back. He should know: "I had my office in the old Station buildings at Histon reached from the defunct platform, and I opened there in September 1988. I remember it was pouring with rain and the passengers were waiting about six deep under the canopy for the train to arrive. I think it was the Railway Development Society again which organised it, just

two diesel carriages, and true to BR form it was late. It was strange that although the Office was visibly open, only one person asked to use the toilet which was, I believe, the former ladies waiting room!"

He's right, the News reported that four trains ran during the day with 500 crammed on Swavesey station for the first of them with another 100 at Longstanton, 200 at Oakington and 100 at Histon, many of whom had to be turned away as the four-carriage train was full. [PHOTOS FROM NEWS FILES OF PACKED TRAIN ARRIVING AT CAMBRIDGE STATION AND QUEUES ON SWAVESEY PLATFORM – MY PHOTOCOPIES DON'T HAVE THE DATE ON THEM; PLEASE CHECK THE NEWS LIBRARY INDEX 'RAILWAYS.CLOSED LINES. CAMBRIDGE-ST IVES' OR CUTTINGS FILES ON THE SAME TOPIC, I THINK IT WAS 2000]

Mrs M. Southon from Cambridge was another eye-witness of the bombing raid on Mill Road bridge in 1941

"It was on a Thursday afternoon. During the war my mother used to go on the bus over the bridge every Thursday afternoon to help my father, Mr Reg Pilbeam, to clean his gents hairdressing saloon which was in Corn Exchange Street, as this was early closing day. She always took my younger sister Mary with her. They had just reached the town when she heard an enormous bang. I was at St Philip's School., Thoday Street, and we were all taken to the air raid shelters which were in the playground. My husband Derek, who is the same age as me, attended the Romsey School and was taken to the shelters across the other side of Coleridge Road. Does anybody have pictures of these or other shelters?

Susan Travers of Sawston has memories of the old Addenbrooke's Hospital and of the nurses who worked there. She writes: "I myself was a patient there in the early 1950s at four years old, having an operation for a hernia caused by me having whooping cough. It was very traumatic, being left there by my father. After the operation I would not take my medicine and can remember being pinched by a nurse to make me swallow it."

Colin Matthews from Bassingbourn wonders if anybody knows the location of an army camp in Cherry Hinton during 1915. He's been trying to find out about it for along time now with no results so far. This might be a military Venereal Diseases Hospital which caused controversy at the time. The papers reported protest at lack of control at this and another establishment at Barnwell. There was talk of insufficient guards allowing patients to escape causing great danger; Barnwell took 750 patients, Cherry Hinton 800. The prejudice even applied to the orderlies who were nursing there; and an autograph book kept by one of them at the Barnwell Hospital which contains poems lamenting the fact that they were a forgotten part of the war effort. There is a photograph showing a line of ambulances making their way along the road, but where was it? [SCAN OF ARMY AMBULANCES IN CHERRY HINTON ROAD WW1 AND POEM]

Lennard Lee has e-mailed to ask whether any Cambridge University student has ever swum across the English Channel; he's involved in a Varsity cross-channel swim this year against Oxford and is keen to know whether he'll be following in anybody else's wake, as it were.

Other people who I've met this week have been recalling topics that might jog memories:

Did you ever work in the engine sheds at Cambridge Station during the days of the steam train; who were the characters you recall and just how dirty was the work? This would need to have been before 1962 when I believe the last steam loco left. And do you have any photos of the railway engine turntable at the station, preferably while it was being used. [SCANS OF STEAM LOCOS AT CAMBRIDGE STATION 1950S AND EARLY 1960S]

The Queen Mother paid several visits to Cambridge over the years; but were you amongst the crowds that gathered to watch when she visited the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1975 [SCAN OF QUEEN MOTHER AND ONLOOKERS 1975]

Whilst I was out at Leziate near King's Lynn a lady was recalling the devastation that was caused by a severe hail storm, she thought in 1937. But whereas heavy snow, floods and gales seem to get rooted in the memory, and snapped by photographers, who has pictures of hail, or their own memories of this particular phenomenon?

Memories 14th April 2004, by Mike Petty

Derek Stubbings from Chesterton has kindly sent me his memories of steam locomotive days at Cambridge station in the 1950s, when he was a keen train spotter.

He writes:

“The point rods moved, the signal wires shook and with an audible clank the signal arm went up.

Amongst the dozen or so train spotters beside the railings conversation faltered as all eyes looked towards Cambridge south signal box and the plume of smoke rising behind it. The London express was about to depart, as the train came into view a green B 17 was seen pulling its load of 8 LNER teak coaches carefully across the pointwork onto the up main line. The engine was 2848 ('Arsenal'), a B17 Sandringham class engine in the footballer series, and a Cambridge depot engine on a regular turn.

The service road between the cattle market wall and the railings beside the tracks carried only traffic to the goods shed and very little of that. It was a splendid spot to see all the trains in and out of Cambridge to the south. Main line trains, branch line trains and the long slow moving goods trains provided continual interest, with a wide variety of the steam engines then in use providing the motive power. Between trains the shunting of carriages and goods wagons went on all the time often passing close to the railings.

The signal gantry by Hills Road bridge gave warning of movements and which lines were being used. The signals at the centre of the main platform could be seen and foretold an arrival from the London direction.

This spot, known as Hills Road bridge by the train watching community, was very popular especially so on Newmarket race days. After the races finished the several special trains followed each other at short intervals, taking the crowds of race goers back to Kings Cross. The great interest to the engine spotters was the motive power as Kings Cross shed sent the big LNER Pacific express engines to haul these heavy trains, often 10 or 12 coaches long. These engines were not often seen at Cambridge in normal service so each were viewed with special interest. Appropriately many of these superb engines were named after famous race horses – 'Papyrus' was frequently seen.

The long summer days allowed railway engineers to carry out work on the tracks and if this was done between Hitchin and Peterborough all the Northern main line trains to and from Kings Cross were diverted via Cambridge and Ely at weekends. Services were frequent (but did not stop at Cambridge) and hauled by a variety of locomotives not usually seen at Cambridge. These trains always attracted lots of local people to watch the continuous passing of the famous named trains (the 'Flying Scotsman', the 'Dalesman' etc.) with their carriage roof destination boards.

The familiar LNER green engines were seen less and less as the Britannia class BR standard engines took over, joined later by the diesel engines, especially the Deltics with their fine looks and distinctive engine notes.

The East Anglian region was the first to receive the Britannia engines. Good looking and powerful with names relating to our area – 'Boadicea', 'Hereward the Wake', 'Oliver

Cromwell', with 'Britannia' itself leading the class and bringing a new interest to local train services.

The northern end of Cambridge station complex was just a popular with train watchers but the views and interest were different. From Devonshire Road railway staff had a footbridge giving access to the engine sheds, workshops and staff rooms over the busy rails in and out of the depot. This bridge was private and much frequented by those interested in all the engine movements continually taking place.

Provided you behaved yourself the railway accepted your interest and presence on the footbridge, which gave excellent views of the engines on the shed and those coming and going for turning and coaling.

Trains arriving from the Ely direction could be seen as could the signals on Mill Road bridge. Main line trains from London stopped at this end of Cambridge station when the newly arrived engine (perhaps a 'Claud', a 4.4.0. engine *D/16* class) would then leave the train, go forward under Mill Road bridge and a few minutes later pass under your feet for attention. Then, if the train was going on, a new engine would back down from the engine siding onto the train, then away to Ely and probably Kings Lynn, and in days now long gone onto Hunstanton.

From this footbridge the turntable and coaling plant were easily seen and looking the other way was the Dump. Here were stored the engines currently out of use for some reason, perhaps awaiting repair in the workshops. .

Today Cambridge station is not much changed but the surrounding are. The engine shed and yard with the turn table and coaling plant have disappeared, much of the goods yards have been redeveloped. Two and four coach sets provide most services under the wires; these have their own interest but it is low, especially when compared with the days of steam which so many of us older citizens remember and why these memories have been committed to paper."

[PHOTOS AND SCANS OF STEAM TRAINS AT CAMBRIDGE STATION]

Derek is by no means alone in his love of steam trains; the News snapped a group of youngsters at Barnwell junction station in 1965 [PHOTO/SCAN OF CHILDREN 1965 AND STEAM LOCO AT BARNWELL JUNCTION STATION IN 1950s] while back in May 1938 Capt Cyril Hatfield one of hundreds of people who made their way to Cambridge station to witness an exhibition of various types of locomotives and rolling stock staged in aid of Addenbrooke's Hospital. Amongst the locomotives was the "Green Arrow", "Coffee Pot" and the "Papyrus" that Derek recalled. But there was also a breakdown crane, electric cooking restaurant car, a banana van and even some Italian and German wagons. Those attending were encouraged to bring their cameras, for there was a prize of two guineas for the best snap. Capt Hatfield took several views which are now preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Lion Yard Library. But do you have others amongst your photo albums? [SCAN OF HATFIELD VIEW OF CROWDS AT DISPLAY; SCAN OF PROGRAMME OF EXHIBITION]

Dick Smith from Cottenham has discovered a much older memento of the Cambridge steam engine days; its far too ancient for anybody to see themselves but somebody may be able to give a clue as to the date and names of any of the men shown. The visible part of the engine number plate reads 'Great Eastern Railway' and the first two digits are '04..' [SCAN OF OLD PIC OF TRAIN]

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Lennard Lee's request for information on any undergraduates who may have swum the channel has brought a quick response from Catharine Walston. She e-mails to say that in 1949 Philip Mickman, then a schoolboy from Ossett near Wakefield, became the youngest person to swim the channel. He then came up to Trinity Hall in 1952 and repeated his feat at the age of 21. He died a couple of years ago but is still remembered by college staff and alumni

Madge Close from Fen Drayton has been sorting out her boxes and come across a photo of a staff outing at Homerton College sometime in the mid 1930s. She recognises her sister Wyn

as the dark-haired girl sitting on the floor while her cousin Ivy Adams is on the back row. Do you recognise anybody else [SCAN OF HOMERTON GROUP]

Memories 21st April 2004, by Mike Petty

This week four readers have mentioned the River Lane area of Cambridge, between Newmarket Road and the Cam.

The first was Alan Thompson who e-mailed with more details of a photo of Coronation celebrations on the Abbey Estate in 1953 that I featured in Memories on 17th March. [SCAN OF PROCESSION.]He says the photo was taken at the River Lane end of Beche Road, and the building in the background is the old Cokeing plant of the Gas works. In the front of the fancy dress procession are two cowboys, the one in the lighter outfit was Brian Holbrook who now lives in Cwmbran; then on the left, the gentleman with his hands in his suits pockets is Mr Ernie Wilderspin. Carole Hillen (nee Wilderspin) of Newmarket Road also remembers the event, recalling that the children marched behind the Boys Brigade band to the party at the Brunswick School where there was a mighty tea for over 100 kids from the estate, and all received a coronation mug. Alan has other photographs of the tea party which were taken by Percy North who had a chiropody practice on Newmarket Road

I had the privilege of knowing Percy J North. He had a memory as sharp as the photographs he took. He could sit and recall the names of tradesmen in the shops around Burleigh Street as they were in the days of his youth, nearly a century before. His memory was not only of names but sounds - the calls of the traders who hawked their wares around the small streets off East Road. Cries such as 'Jam jars or bottels' encouraged children to bring such containers to be exchanged for a paper windmill, the lavender girl attracted their older brothers, the trotter man none at all.

He could also recall the sounds of the great Midsummer Fair, held on the common almost opposite his Newmarket Road chiropodist's premises. Percy saw it change from the days when horse-drawn caravans were strewn across the grass and the drinking booths by the river thumped to the sound of heavy dancing. Nearby would be the cockle and whelk stalls where Mrs Hames used to have a great boiler of hot peas - an old halfpenny a basin. Nearby too was the Red Cross tent where North and his colleagues administered to the innumerable accidents and illnesses, sprains, monkey bites and air gun slugs which afflicted the visitors and fairground people alike. [SCAN PEA STALL MIDSUMMER FAIR – NB NOT HAMES AND NOT TAKEN BY NORTH]

All these presented no problems to the man who had joined the St John Ambulance brigade in 1902, transferring to the Red Cross at the beginning of the Great War - the first man in Cambridge to don the uniform. During the next War he was commandant in charge of stretcher parties at Addenbrooke's Hospital and saw every casualty caused by the raids over the city.

He enjoyed many hobbies: music - at one time having his own orchestra – needlework, oil painting and antiques - he was able to tell the story of each of the items in his mini-museum which ranged from old lemonade bottles to clocks and fine furniture. But his main love was photography. Percy North made a photographic survey of the back streets off Newmarket Road, recording the dereliction and demolition of an area that he could people with memory and recollection. Many of these snaps he passed to the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library where they constitute a magnificent record of the changing face of this area of Cambridge.

Although blinded by an attack of shingles when he was 90 years old he remained independent, preparing his own food and baking his own bread until his death in 1983, five

months short of his 100th birthday. [SCAN OF VARIOUS OF HIS PICTURES; CEN PICTURE OF HIM]

Percy could doubtless have answered some of the other questions raised last week. Whilst speaking to a meeting at East Barnwell two ladies recalled a wartime incident that seems not to have attracted much publicity. They were living in River Lane and recall a German plane coming over the Gas Works firing its machine guns. Joyce Griffiths remembers she was helping to get in the washing at about lunchtime and the bullets hit the top of their roof while Joan White recalls that a Hurricane was soon on the scene and went after it. But neither is sure when this was. Can anybody else recall it?

The previous evening I'd had the pleasure of meeting members of the Cambridge branch of the Royal Air Force Benevolent Association when George Blows asked an obvious question – why should Drummer Street be called that name? According to Ronald Gray and Derek Stubbings' book, 'Cambridge street-names, their origins and associations' (CUP) it goes back to at least 1248 when it was called 'Drusemere', probably meaning 'muddy pool'. The authors comment that the shape of the present bus station is still pool-like. George also believes that he knows the probable owner of a motorbike snapped at the Drummer Street bus station shortly after it opened. He thinks it belonged to James Scott, photographer with the firm of Scott and Wilkinson who had their premises in St Andrew's Street. He was a photographer during the Great War and had connections with the Royal Flying Corps. But do you have more details of this or other early Cambridge photographers. [SCAN OF DRUMMER STREET AND MOTORBIKE 63.74]

Another one of the topics of conversation was coal merchants and this seems something that might make another 'Memories' article – but only if you can share your memories or snaps. I have one of a line of coal trucks belonging to Wardales who had the premises in Trafalgar Road and we could recall other names such as Coote and Warren & Shelford Corn and Coal but there must be more and there must be tales. Please help. [SCAN WARDALE COAL TRUCKS 1920s - 88.32]

My mention of Jock Hall in Memories of 7th April has brought letters from his son, John. He writes: "I was very surprised to open the paper at your Memories page to find the photograph of my late father, Jock Hall, the chimney sweep, taken in James Street in 1979. I actually made the 'University Chimneysweep' sign above the door. My father was born in 1900 and worked hard all his life. I remember when he used to go to work at 6 am each morning on his carrier bike to sweep the chimneys. Later a cycle master was fitted to the back wheel and finally he had a van which was so much easier. My two brothers worked with him. Jock had many stories to tell. One comes to mind of the lady who came to order the sweep and asked if she could have a word with him. When my father told her that he was the sweep the poor lady was so surprised and explained that she expected him to be black because of the soot. To this he replied 'Madam I do have a bath every day, after I have finished work!' Jock kept on working until he was in his early 80s and lived to be 86. He was a real character of Cambridge"

The article also prompted Terry Reynolds to write from Over; he says it brought back childhood memories: "Mr Hall and his family lived in Burleigh Place in a small semi next to a man we all knew as Soupy Barrett. Mr Hall's son Derrick used to play with my brothers and me

as our house at 28 Gold Street had a back gate to Burleigh Place. We later moved onto East Road when my father carried on the rock and sweet business from my grandfather in the 1950s."

Mrs Doris Cole from Chesterton writes following my mention of one of the Queen Mother's visits to Cambridge. She recalls: "I did a little job at Christ's College serving the evening meals for the undergraduates and the Manageress asked me if I would come in as the Queen Mother was coming for lunch. She sat at the top stable and although I didn't serve her I could see her very plainly. Afterwards we had to stand in a group outside and she walked round to thank us for a delightful meal. I remember she wore a lovely diamond brooch which shone in the sun". Doris has lent me a picture of herself and the other staff as they waited to be presented. Do you recognise anybody [SCAN OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE KITCHEN STAFF]

Peter Starling from Girton believes he can help locate the site of the first world war military hospital near Cherry Hinton. He writes: "I was born in Perne Road, a few doors from what is now The Ancient Mariner public house. In those days it was a field and a chalk path from the site crossed the bottom of our garden. During the early 1940s when I used to play in the field there were still the foundations of what I always understood to have previously been a hospital.

Percy North would have known for sure!

Memories 28th April 2004, by Mike Petty

Newmarket is a town that has been attracting visitors for centuries; and where there are visitors there are people providing services for them – hoteliers, public houses, shops, and postcard publishers.

In March 1904 the News reported: "Newmarket is being well catered for in the way of pictorial postcards. A delightful set of six views in colour has been issued by Mr Ernest Parr, stationer. Having seen them one can well understand the enormous success with which they have been received. The cards are selling at the rate of 250 a day. The series includes views of St Mary's church, horses returning from a morning gallop, the royal entrance to the Jockey-Club grounds and the High Street on market day". [SCANS OF NEWMARKET HIGH STREET SHOWING CAR AND SHOWING BICYCLE – NB NOT BY PARR]

Now Newmarket Local History Society is staging a major exhibition of old postcards in the town's Library. They are part of the collection of one man, Roger Newman who was born and educated in Newmarket and for many years has been acquiring images from every available source, including the internet and postcard auctions. He has tracked down over 800 cards from which the Society has made over 300 good-quality colour copies to make it easier to see details. Some of the rarer ones are now quite expensive and while a few go back to the earliest days of postcards most were taken by Sherborn during the late 19th and early 20th century. In addition there are several Comic Cards, one of which emphasises the sporting side of Newmarket – searching out bed bugs, mice and other pests in hotel rooms! [SCAN OF CARTOON CARD]

But Roger's collection includes topics of interest outside Newmarket itself. There are pictures of the Beta airship that took place in the army manoeuvres of 1912 and of troops based in the town during the Great War together with views of the various railway stations that will appeal to the transport historian. [SCAN OF PASSENGERS LEAVING STATION]

There is also a most interesting picture of an early motor car surrounded by onlookers. To track down its history I turned to Andrew Murkin's 'Illustrated tour of Burwell', a magnificent pictorial history published not in book form, but on CD-Roms.

The picture recorded an historical occasion in Cambridgeshire: the removal of one of the last turnpike toll gates at Burwell in December 1905. During the 1800s the landscape of many local parishes was altered forever by Inclosure Acts. When the commissioners surveyed

Fordham in 1809 they decided it would be appropriate to construct a new road to Burwell. The Burwell commissioners agreed when their turn came in 1814. But when the new road was finally laid out it became clear that right in the middle of the route was a stretch of private land owned by Sir Vincent Cotton. He erected a tollgate and demanded payment from anybody passing through. Agreement was reached that if the villagers kept the road in good order they would be able to go through at a charge of only 1d, but he could charge other people what he liked.

The gate continued long after others had ceased and was a subject of constant complaint. In 1899 A.J. Wyatt wrote to the News: "Sir – I was cycling from Cambridge to Soham and between Burwell and Fordham I came suddenly upon a closed and barred gate, which I was kindly permitted to pass through on paying a toll of twopence. I learned that the gate is called the Ness Gate, that the roadway at this point is Crown property. In its present position this gate is a danger to cyclists but its very existence is a ridiculous and monstrous anomaly with its toll of 1d for every vehicle hailing from Burwell and 4d for every vehicle coming from less favoured districts. It is a very unfortunate circumstance that this piece of road is rented by the vice-chairman of the County Council"

Negotiations were started to have the toll removed once and for all. The Newmarket Rural District and Cambridgeshire County Councils each agreed to pay £250, but the remaining £100 was to be found by public donations. The chairman of the Newmarket R.D.C., William Ambrose undertook to organise this collection and Newmarket Member of Parliament Charles Rose, a racehorse owner and Jockey Club member, undertook to make up the balance if insufficient funds were forthcoming.

But there were no difficulties, and on 1st December 1905 a large number of people made their way to witness the final rites. There were speeches before the photographers moved in to record the final moments. One picture was taken of Mr Ambrose paying the last toll to the gatekeeper with a brand new 6d. Then the gate was lifted off its hinges and photographed in mid air and the gateposts undermined. The gate had gone and the road was open forever. But was it? Somebody seems to have had the idea of another picture, this one of Charles Rose M.P. in his motor car. The vehicle was manoeuvred into place, and his supporters gathered round, but if you study the postcard in Roger's collection it does seem that the post has been stuck back in the hole temporarily just for the record! [SCAN OF PAYING THE LAST TOLL; SCAN OF THE MOTOR CAR]

Modern roads permitting Roger Newman will be travelling down from his home in Stafford to perform the opening ceremony at Newmarket library on Tuesday 4th May at 11 a.m. after which the exhibition will continue for the rest of the month.

Readers write:

Basil Beavis from Stapleford has contacted me to say that he remembers the railway exhibition of 1938 that I featured in Memories 14th April. One of the highlights of his day was to take a trip in an open carriage that was hoisted high over the track by a crane. Capt Hatfield photographed this too and Basil might even be amongst the people he snapped! [SCAN OF WAGGON BEING LIFTED]

Mr B.G. Humphreys from Cambridge has recognised a number of people in Madge Close's photograph of Homerton college staff. Mr Allen, the chef is second from the left, Fred Cousins, porter and gate keeper fourth from the right with Mrs Cousins to the left of him. [REPRISE HOMERTON PIC]

Mrs Alma Bennett phones from Cambridge to say she recognised her uncle, Ted Holland in front of the hot pea stall at Midsummer Fair (Memories 21st April) and thinks it is probably

her mother glimpsed inside the stall. Her mum and dad travelled with Thurston's fairs all around the Eastern Counties and Alma joined them for a time when she was a little girl.

[REPRISE FAIR PHOTO]

Janet Ingle from Gt Shelford has sent her memories of the Outpatients Department of the old Addenbrooke's Hospital, now Browns' Restaurant. She writes: "Who can recall the red flecked stone floor in that vast hall, the long wooden benches filled with those facing the long wait to see specialists in the small consulting rooms? I can remember the Women's Royal Voluntary Service – then the W.V.S. presence there, 50 years ago. In a dark corner near the dispensary two ladies stood behind a counter. Two iron kettles simmered on two gas rings. There were white cups and saucers and plates of current or long iced buns housed under clear plastic covers. There was little else as food was rationed still. The washing up was done at a small sink in an enamel bowl. Despite the drab surroundings and limited fare the W.V.S. ladies were much appreciated as patients had many miles to travel and long hours before they returned home again. So much has changed and present visitors to the W.R.V.S. restaurant in the current Addenbrooke's outpatients department remark how impressive the new makeover and extension is, how bright is the décor and how up-to-the-minute are the new uniforms. But one thing that doesn't seem to change is the need of that welcome cup of tea after a stressful day at the Hospital" [PIC FROM NEWS FILES]

Were you a wartime bride? Kasie Davies has e-mailed from Imago Productions, a television company in Norwich. She's working on a documentary for Anglia tv and is trying to track down any couples who met during the war and are still together, living in Cambridge. Ideally the man would be an American pilot who fell head over heels for an East Anglian girl. If you fit the bill then phone her on 01603 727600 or e-mail Kasie@imagoproductions.tv

Memories 5th May 2004, by Mike Petty

A recent television series 'Restoration' concentrated on buildings in danger of demolition but Brian Bowles from Cambridge has his own memories of one that disappeared nearly 50 years ago.

Impington Hall was begun about the middle of the 16th Century by John Pepys and was well-known to the most famous member of that family, Samuel. He was always glad to go there knowing he would be guaranteed a fine time. His diary records several visits: on August 3rd 1661 he wrote: "At Cambridge at night I took horse and rode with Roger Pepys and his two brothers to Impington".

Another visitor was the Milton antiquarian William Cole who recorded this description in 1774: "At a small distance from Impington Church, and South of it, stands a very elegant seat of seven windows in front and built of brick, belonging to Mr. Pepys, adorned with beautiful gardens and canals about it. I long had a mind to see the house as every one praised it, and it pleased me much and is the best of the sort I ever saw. A noble hall, with two Corinthian pillars on one side of it, is in the centre. On one side a dining-parlour, kitchen, etc. On the other an elegant dining-room and drawing room, and by the hall a most beautiful saloon and staircase, with an open space to the top of the house with a gallery into which all the bedchambers have entrance - the whole elegantly fitted up and furnished"

The building was improved in 1862 when a rich undergraduate spent a fortune remodelling the Tudor mansion, adding a new wing, and emulating the lifestyle of his fellow student, the Prince of Wales. It was later sold to the Macfarlane-Grieve family and in 1909 a new library was built out from the north western front

Brian has a copy of the sale brochure for the auction of Impington Park Estate in May 1921. The House was still substantially what it has been for the last 300 years. It had a fine entrance hall with a handsome Carton Pierre ceiling, elaborately carved overmantle supported by Griffins, a drawing room with another fine ceiling with a moulding of a fen eagle, an oak-panelled dining room and library. The main staircase with carved balusters led up to a handsome gallery, billiard room and six principal bedrooms with another seven on the floor above. It had central heating with radiators in the principal rooms, running water and cesspool drainage.

When the estate was bought by the Chivers family the hall became an educational centre for its employees. During the Second World War it was requisitioned as a billet for companies of Royal Engineers with Italian prisoners-of-war housed in Nissen huts in the overgrown gardens.

By the time the war was over Nikolaus Pevsner found it neglected and derelict and its renovation was deemed impracticable. An expert from the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments was invited to inspect the remains of the building and declared that none of the interior decoration was of particular interest, except the ceiling in the south Drawing Room. This was offered to Magdalene College but they had nowhere to put it. The library fittings were removed and presented to the Perse Boys' School, some of the door pediments went to Pinewood Studios but the rest was of no interest to anybody in that immediate post-war period. But such an important site could not be left unused so the building was gutted to the outer walls and converted it to a grain-drying and storage plant for Chivers Farms. Forty years later the site was sold to developers who built the present Percheron Close.

Brian discovered the Mansion in 1950 when it had fallen into a state of disrepair. It was possible for anyone to enter and he did, many times, climbing in through the windows and wandering around the ruined building, relishing its unforgettable timeless atmosphere. On several occasions he took his Kodak box-brownie camera and snapped many of the interesting features that remained.

His photographs survive and remain a most valuable record of the final days of one of Cambridgeshire grandest houses. [SCANS OF BRIAN BOWLES' PICTURES OF IMPINGTON HALL]

READERS WRITE

More readers remember the German plane machine gunning near the Cambridge gas works as recalled by Joyce Griffiths and Joan White (Memories 21st April)

Mr W.R. Chamberlain from Foxton also saw it: "I was on Pye sports field and took cover near the pavilion where there was some sand bag protection. No air raid warning was given. I think a Home Guard fired at it, and had a quick reply. It was reported that a dog was injured"

Joyce Mansfield (nee Phillips) from Cambridge writes: "I too can remember a German plane flying low over me as I stood in the back garden at my home in Ferry Path. This happened in broad daylight so the markings on the plane were clearly visible. I was a pupil at Milton Road Junior School and the boy pupils also saw it because there were arguments next day as to its identity." She also recalls knitting for the troops using khaki wool under the supervision of two teachers, Miss Spall and Miss Tredgett and collecting all sorts of scrap metal. Their hard work was recognised in a picture that appeared in the CDN in July 1940. [SCAN OF PHOTO FROM NEWS 11 JULY 1940]

John Beynon from Haslingfield tells me that the late Annie Woods kept a daily diary throughout most of the war years. "As a poultry-keeper it was natural that Annie's Monday mornings were taken up by regular visits to the Cambridge Cattle Market, then located at the top end of Cherry Hinton Road, behind Rustat Road. It was there that she and many others saw a sight that would be imprinted on their memories – a low-flying German warplane. The aircraft was a Dornier Do 215 which made a number of low passes over Cambridge and Marshall's airfield whilst machine-gunning streets in the vicinity of the gas works" Annie's diary records: "Monday 30th December 1940: "German bomber came over Cambridge Cattle Market three times. Dropped seven bombs Waterbeach. Machine gunned street and Gas Works".

But although we may have solved one mystery John Betson from the Ditton Fields area of Cambridge has sparked another. He recalls that about 1944, when he was about 12 years old, there was a rumour that a military Red Cross train would be coming in to Barnwell Junction station. Like a number of other lads he made his way there to see a fleet of single and double-decker buses lined up. The train arrived and a number of soldiers were disembarked. The walking wounded were put in the double-deckers and taken to the Leys School which was then a military hospital, while the stretcher cases went into the single-deckers and were taken off to Addenbrooke's Hospital. The soldiers were pleased to be home; they showered the children with chocolate and one threw his helmet to them, saying he would not need it any more. Military Police soon rounded up the souvenirs but John remembers it was a paratrooper's helmet. But he does not know where the men had been; was it Arnhem, the 'bridge too far', he wonders?

Mrs Betty Butler from Cambridge writes following a picture of G. Wardale & sons' coal trucks (Memories 21st April): "He was my grandfather and my dad was one of his six sons who worked in the coal business. The trucks were sent to the sidings at Barnwell Junction from the Nottingham coal pits and then dad and his brothers unloaded the coal, bagged it up and loaded the lorries. My brother and I often went to watch and spent many happy hours there. I went with dad sometimes on his rounds, mainly to the villages around Cambridge. It was a lovely surprise to see this photo; I shall treasure it." [SCAN OF WARDALE COAL TRUCKS]

Betty Sanderson from Cottenham has lent me some photos of steam trains at Cambridge station. Her husband, Ron, was a signaller for 42 years. He started at the goods depot in Hills Road and Brooklands Avenue on his demobilisation from the forces in 1942, working at

Chesterton Junction, Oakington and Trumpington signal boxes as well as doing relief work at Foxton and Newport before ending up at the power box on Hills Road bridge. Both their sons are now train drivers having started as traction trainees and at one time working on the goods trains on the St Ives lines. [SCAN OF TRAIN AT TRUMPINGTON SIGNAL BOX]

Memories 12th May 2004 by Mike Petty

The news that Sir Arthur Marshall is to be made as A FREEMAN OF CAMBRIDGE RATHER THAN THE FREEDOM – PLEASE CHECK - prompts thoughts of other recipients of such civic recognition.

One was General Horatio Kitchener best known for the ‘Your country needs you’ poster of the Great War but then celebrated as the hero who had revenged the death of General Gordon at Khartoum. The proceedings in November 1898 started quietly enough: he arrived by train and was conveyed to the Guildhall by carriage through streets decorated with flags and bunting but only a few cheering spectators - the weather was blamed for the small turnout.

The front of the Guildhall itself was barricaded, the vestibule smothered under palms and plants, the steps were carpeted and drapery hid the unattractive walls. The floor of Large Hall was covered in crimson cloth and adorned with green and yellow drapery. It was packed with councillors and those those fortunate ratepayers who had been able to get tickets. On the stage was a table bearing a beautiful casket, especially designed by Mr G Munsey the jeweller, in which lay the scroll conferring the Freedom of the Borough.

Suddenly Lord Kitchener was there amongst them together with the Mayor, George Kett, whose speech was of great difficulties cheerfully overcome and the glory of the British Empire. Then it was over and Kitchener was gone off to inspect the Guard of Honour formed by 50 members of the 3rd (Cambs) Volunteer Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment.

Whilst the Mayor and Aldermen could relax another section of Cambridge was preparing. For next it was to be the turn of the University to honour the hero. Already Kings Parade was packed and undergraduates had taken their places high in the Senate House where they found a hosepipe to spray water to cool the temper of the distinguished gathering down below, already annoyed by their chants and songs such as “The Soldiers of the Queen” repeated endlessly. Cheers from outside announced Kitchener’s arrival, drowning the cries of pain and distress of undergraduates crushed when the great railings around the Senate House were pushed over by sheer weight of numbers. There were more speeches of praise, this time in Latin (and accompanied by student comments), before the procession moved off, his carriage pulled by undergraduates as far as Christ’s college where a contingent of police could not prevent the crowds surging through. Later students sought anything that would burn - handcarts, goal posts, fences from the Backs and much of the Christ’s Pieces bandstand to feed the flames of a bonfire on Market Hill. Next morning the centre of the town had all the appearance of having been in the hands of a mob, many cartloads of debris being removed from the bonfire site. [SCAN OF CROWDS ON MARKET HILL, I WILL TRY TO FIND OTHERS]

Such bonfires were a traditional way of celebrating major events, as Julie Langford from Fenstanton can show. She was sorting through her husband’s late uncle’s house when she discovered an old photograph taken on Midsummer Common on May 17th 1900. What was its story, she wondered.

At that time people were keeping an anxious eye on the news from the battle zones, then in South Africa. A Cambridge man had been amongst those trapped in Ladysmith; Sergt-Major F. Ingle of the Imperial Light Horse, who previously worked for Messrs Eaden Lilley, wrote to his brother. “Only by going into every house, hole or corner, could you be lucky enough to

find someone who had found in some unexpected place, a small amount of food that had been mislaid or forgotten". The news of the lifting of the siege was the occasion for great rejoicing in Cambridge and undergraduates distracted draw police attention from the market place long enough to light a bonfire, fuelling it by burning the wooden framework of the stalls. The bandstand on Christ's Pieces was attacked again and the seats removed to the market and quickly consumed. Other damage followed and a number of undergraduates were arrested and convicted by the Cambridge magistrates, though others pointed out that most of the windows were broken by townspeople and over 1,200 petitioned the Home Secretary for a pardon. [CARTOON POSTCARD OF BONFIRE BATTLE]

It was not the end of military problems overseas, for Robert Baden-Powell and his men were trapped in Mafeking. When the news of their release broke cheering crowds took to the streets of Cambridge once more. In an effort to prevent a repetition of the previous disturbances the Borough Surveyor had arranged for a huge bonfire to be constructed on Midsummer Common using piles of builders' materials, boxes and other fuel from local tradesmen. This is what Julie's picture shows [SCAN OF BONFIRE ON MIDSUMMER COMMON]

Every precaution was taken to keep it safe and special constables built a fence around it. There were various attempts to set it on fire prematurely: one young man procured a box of matches, lighted them and then threw the burning mass on the brushwood. The police promptly scaled the fence and extinguished the flames.

People poured in as thousands from the country flocked to Cambridge and several streets were rendered well night impassable. But the crowds were orderly and the police had no difficulty regulating the traffic. Cambridge celebrated the relief of Mafeking right nobly and peacefully.

It could not be repeated once the Cambridge Volunteers came home. Many had responded to the call to arms in January 1900 and travelled by train and boat to South Africa. They had endured long hot marches, interspersed with long hot boring periods of inactivity and the occasional spell of excitement. It was September when they really saw action, getting near enough to the Boers to fire their rifles, and three days later in the chief incident of their campaign they captured a hill-top camp and held on to it for three days without rations. Everything else was anticlimax. More long marches, more waiting, a little more excitement at the turn of the year, and then home by coal truck and cattle boat, home to the great celebrations that Cambridge had planned its returning heroes.

Traffic was banned, shops were shut, and flags flew as both town & gown Volunteers in their khaki were escorted by other Volunteers in scarlet tunics before attempting the final march from the station into town. It was prove one of the most dangerous of their entire campaign. Every inch of space was occupied and walls, fences, balconies, windows & roads were packed. Near the Senate House a contingent of mounted police were drafted in but without avail. In the chaotic crush people were subjected to suffocating pressure and a bandsman was seen fighting for his life, using his drumsticks as weapons.

Somehow they squeezed into Gt St Mary's for a service, thence to the Guildhall where they were admitted Honorary Freemen of the Borough and into a Corn Exchange laid out as a banqueting hall for a meal of lamb, turkey and ox followed by African Gateau and Kimberley Jelly. Meanwhile the streets of Cambridge saw the traditional "rag, "Mob law on the common and the Market Place" read the headlines over stories of battle, charge and countercharge that resulted in more casualties amongst the participants than had been suffered by the Heroes they had gathered to honour. [SCAN OF SCENE IN GUILDHALL AND DETAIL OF MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS, SCAN OF THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT]

Others have followed in their footsteps including American servicemen in August 1945 and the men of the Cambridgeshire Regiment in 1946. It was in recognition of their service in the South African War, for its superb professionalism during the fighting in Flanders in the Great War and for its latest valiant fight in the Far East and the years of captivity that had followed. Now there was flag waving and a particular flag had place of honour on the Guildhall flagpole – it was the blue flag of the 1st Battalion of the Cambridgeshire Regiment that had somehow been kept hidden from their captives during the long years of captivity. As the procession wended its way down Petty Cury it was the drums that marked their progress. And amongst the drums were some emblazoned with the Regiment's honours won in earlier wars but lost in the fall of Singapore. Amazingly they had been found by a Dullingham girl, Mary Taylor, during her work with the Red Cross and shipped back to Cambridge.

In October 1946 they led the old men of the First War and prematurely old boys from the Second to the Guildhall to receive the Freedom they had fought to preserve. [NEWS REPORT OF THE FREEDOM FOR THE AMERICANS, CAMBRIDGESHIRE REGIMENT MEN ASSEMBLE IN FRONT OF GUILDHALL 1946]

ADD OTHER INFORMATION ON RECIPIENTS IN MORE RECENT TIMES - ?PERCY COWELL
PICTURE OF SIR ARTHUR MARSHALL FROM NEWS FILES

Memories 19th May 2004 by Mike Petty

One of Cambridgeshire's former railway lines, that from Cambridge to Mildenhall features in the May issue of Britain's leading historical railway journal, 'Back Track' to which Geoffrey Skelsey has contributed a detailed eight-page article on the goods traffic received at Isleham station.

He has examined a rare survival of the mass of railway paperwork that used to be produced: the Goods Delivery Book between 1893 and 1894 in which railway officials working at the Isleham booking office by the light of a dim light of an oil lamp jotted down each consignment. They recorded each crate of soap, hamper of grocery, cask of vinegar, kilderkin of beer or bag of bacon received at the station. Careful analysis shows that the principal commodities included Yarmouth bloaters, cattle feed, wallpaper and paint but there were also more unusual items – a harmonium, a piano, a sewing machine and a kitchen range amongst them.

The railway's main user was John James Rudland of High Street Isleham, who not only sold grocery and drapery but also traded as a wine and spirit merchant and a corn, flour and offal salesman. He accounted for a fifth of all inwards transactions at the station.

The records paint the picture of a country goods station in its heyday, receiving items from all parts of the country. Some came from far afield with consignments from Millwall Dock, Stratford Market, Birmingham and Liverpool. But more came from places just down the line such as Fordham, Soham or Burwell for in those days, and indeed still, Isleham was an isolated community with only narrow roads. But once motor transport became reliable, and Mr Rudland shut up shop, then the station saw its trade decline and long before it closed for general traffic in 1962 almost all of the business had disappeared.

It was a story repeated elsewhere. John Humphreys, the fenland historian from Bottisham, recorded his schooldays memories of the goods trains at Sutton station in his book 'A countryman's year' (David and Charles 1996)

“We called her the Fenland Flyer, the little train which puffed its way through a string of fen villages stopping at the market towns. On a busy day she came through my village as often as twice. We had a proper railway station with platform and all, an office marked 'Station Master', a garden of blazing summer flowers, frilly wooden canopy over-head and our village name blazoned on a white board, as if anyone did not know where they were. In summer that train bore the heavy responsibility of taking our produce to market. Many folk with cottage gardens or an acre of land worked hard to make a few pounds from their labour. The train would stand hissing to itself in the station while on the platform stood a cornucopia of punnets of strawberries, bundles of chrysanthus, baskets of runner beans and trays of eggs. The door of the single waggon was slid back with much clanking of bolts and our few bits of produce safely stowed inside. By the time it reached the market town it was full of flowers and vegetables, each offering identified with a label showing the owner's name and address. Within a week a cheque for often no more than a few shillings came through the post. In those thrifty days every little helped with straitened family budgets. Now and then you could make a killing if you had something which was in short supply. If your beans were a week early, if you happened on a good stand of field mushrooms or a batch of early goose eggs, prices doubled, but it did not last long. Soon everyone else was in full production. There were quiet times when there might be only a couple of baskets to collect, together with the usual four milk churns which stood on the platform like dumpy silver policemen. The driver would not go to the trouble of unlocking and heaving back the heavy doors of the waggon; instead he stood the churns on his footplate and took the few baskets of produce into the cab with him. The fireman stoked the boiler, black smoke billowed, the Flyer gave a peremptory whistle and chugged on to the next village and more churns and baskets. By the time it reached the town the engine resembled a travelling harvest festival.”

Arthur Randell described the reason for the decline of the goods train in his ‘Fenland Railwayman’ (Routledge 1968). “In about 1926 or 1927 a big lorry arrived one day and parked just outside our goods yard gate (at Waldersea, near Wisbech). Presently one of the fruit agents began to stop some of the lorries which were coming down the road bringing strawberries for us to load, and we saw the fruit being transferred to the parked lorry. 'That's a bit of cheek,' said Mr Jordan, the Station-master, while some of the porters remarked that the fruit would be in a fine state by the time it got to Sheffield market - it would be like so much pulp, after being jolted all that way on the road. 'Well' said one of them as we watched the lorry drive away, 'I'm sure we shan't see that again'. But we did, for that lorry came every day, and from then on our loadings began to dwindle. The next year brought two or three lorries and by 1930 we were only getting half the fruit we were used to handling. Then lorries which up to then had been used to bring sugar beet down to the goods yard began to take it themselves to the factories. The same thing happened in the case of potatoes, so that instead of loading twenty or thirty trucks a day we were only loading ten or twelve”

The steam locomotives gave way to less-attractive diesel engines and then, in the 1960s came the wholesale closures of small village stations. Some of the buildings were converted into homes, others to industrial uses, more – like that at Sutton - disappeared altogether. Often the railway lines were removed and the land on which they had run sold off to landowners on either side. Sometimes they were left as a reminder of a transport system once so important that was displaced by the motor car and lorry but whose memory will never quite go away.

Basil Beavis from Stapleford has memories of an incident at Shelford station during the war when a train came off the line and caught the engine of a goods train, pushing it over on to its side. Do you have more details. [SCAN OF LOCOMOTIVE AT SHELFORD IN 1920S]

Do you have memories of life at a country station – write to Mike Petty

READERS WRITE

Patricia Cooper from Rushden in Northamptonshire e-mails:

“My cousin David from Cherry Hinton sent me your article of 28th April 2004. I have so many lovely memories of my childhood with my parents & grandparents, who told me of their memories when they were young & living in Cambridge. I was born in Silverwood Close in November 1944. My sister Ann & I went to the Brunswick School before our parents moved to Shelford Road. We then went to Fawcett Infant's school, where Miss Hinkins was the head teacher. On graduating to the junior school the head teacher there was Mr Walker. My mother was an infants teacher at St. Philips school & my father, Frank Fortin, was a craftsman at Rattee & Kett for most of his working life & spent many happy hours on the water with the Cambridge rowing club. As a family we enjoyed punting to Grantchester Meadows where we always enjoyed a lovely picnic.

In 1960 I left school & commenced a hairdressing apprenticeship at Robert Sayles where I met some great people. After finishing there in 1964 I went to a lovely salon in Cottenham called Elizabeth's, named after the mother of the joint proprietors Hillary & Rosemary Bull.

My father bought a piece of land in Leeway Avenue in Great Shelford in 1954 & had our house built by Butler of Sawston. We made some lifelong friends there including Janet Ingle who asks in her letter in your' article mentioned above, 'Who can recall the red flecked floor in the vast hall at Old Addenbrooke's Hospital?'

I was unfortunate enough to have an accident with my bicycle when I was four years old and my mother & father took me to the hospital with me perched on my seat on the back of Mum's bike. We sat for hours in the hall with the red flecked floor, my mother trying to take my mind off the pain I was in by getting me to count the specks on the floor. My parents were not allowed into the hospital ward but had to stand at the entrance, a very different scenario to today's practice I am glad to say.”

Mr R. Crankshaw of Cambridge writes: “I read articles and books with keen interest but I never seem to see a report on the Abbey School that was in River Lane off Newmarket Road, Cambridge”. He has sent a photocopy of a class group about 1930 and wonders if anyone else is still around from that era.. He adds: “I was known as Lancashire Bob as I came each year from Lancashire for six months and stayed with my grandparents on Newmarket Road” Do you have memories or pictures of Abbey School?

Memories 26th May 2004 by Mike Petty

A new chapter in Cambridge entertainment history will be written with the opening of the new nine-screen cinema on the site of the old Cattle Market on Cherry Hinton Road. Together with the Cambridge Vue multiplex in the Grafton Centre and the Arts Picturehouse film fanciers will have a wider choice than ever before.

But not-so-long ago the best cinemas were to be found in the city centre – the Central, Victoria and Regal, whilst those in the further-flung regions such as Magrath Avenue, Mill Road or Mitcham's Corner catered for a more local clientele

Back in January 1988 News film reporter Alan Kersey contributed his own reminiscences of the merits of Cambridge's cinemas

The **Rex**, on Magrath Avenue had started life as a roller skating rink but was reconstructed after the First World War and became the Rendezvous Cinema and ballroom. In July 1931 it was destroyed by fire but reopened next year and changed its name to the Rex Cinema in 1938. For a while it doubled as a bingo hall but was revived again in 1970, only to close suddenly two years later. After debate over its future use it was demolished in 1979. For Alan it was "better known to a generation of Teddy Boys for its ballroom next door and showed 'The Wild Ones' in defiance of a nationwide censorship ban in the Fifties. The proprietor George Webb could not rake in the money fast enough. He used to turn the heat up in summer to sell ice creams and down in winter to sell hot dogs and coffee"

The **Tivoli** on Chesterton Road had been Cambridge's second purpose-built cinema when it opened in March 1925. The News reported that their 'representative' (not Alan) who had a look around came away very much impressed with the general air of comfort and the attractiveness of the interior. It had comfort, excellent lighting and excellent decoration. Over 600 people could be seated in the body of the hall and gallery and if you wanted a private box for six people you could have one for the sum of 15s. Alan recalled: "Here I watched 'Tarzan and the Amazons' three times in a row and my grandmother rang the police to find out what had happened to me." It showed its last film in November 1956. [SCAN OF TIVOLI CINEMA SOON AFTER OPENING]

On Mill Road the **Kinema** occupied the former Sturton Town Liberal Hall; it had been the Empire combining variety and pictures before becoming the Kinema in 1916. It showed films for over 60 years before becoming a bingo and social club. Alan remembered: "It had a hole in the roof and smelled of stale urine, but when Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin were on it had a magical atmosphere" [SCAN OF KINEMA 1957]

The **Playhouse** nearby in Mill Road had been Cambridge's first purpose-built cinema, opening back in May 1913. It had its own orchestra & cameraman who took pictures of local events for newsreels. It closed as a cinema in 1956. "It stood derelict with the front knocked out before becoming a supermarket. Drunks used to sit on the forlorn, empty stage", Alan commented. [SCAN OF MEMBERS OF THE '50 CAR CLUB OUTSIDE THE PLAYHOUSE, 1951]

The **Central** in Hobson Street opened in 1921 and became the first cinema in Cambridge to show Talkies with the musical 'Broadway Melody' in August 1929. Some thought it just a novelty that would soon wear off as silent pictures offered a haven of peace from the rush and turmoil outside. Most agreed that the music was very pleasant though they deplored the all-dominant American accents. It was completely rebuilt in 1930 and again in 1940 following a serious fire. It showed its last film in 1972 before being converted into a Bingo Club [SCAN OF CENTRAL CINEMA BEFORE REBUILDING IN 1930]

The **New Theatre** on St Andrew's Street opened in 1896 and showed its first films in 1912. It became a venue both for variety performers and the actors of the silver screen until 1956 and was demolished in 1962. As a theatre it achieved mixed fortunes as Mr W. Chamberlain from Foxton recalls. He writes: "Does anybody remember a variety show at the New Theatre in the 1950s. It was a very good do, but there were only 24 people in the audience that night. At the finish all the performers came off stage and talked or shook hands with all present. The only name I can remember was Dennis Spicer, a ventriloquist, who was killed soon afterwards in a road accident." [SCAN OF NEW THEATRE AND CDN OFFICES c1962]

Not all films attract mass audiences and the arts film movement had its base at the Cosmopolitan Cinema in Market Passage between 1933 and 1935. It then moved to the Arts

Theatre which had regular film seasons until 1947 when the projection equipment was moved back to a new **Arts Cinema** in the original building. It continues as the Arts Picturehouse but in another new home, the former Regal Cinema. [SCAN AT PROTEST OVER CLOSURE 1998]

The **Regal** opened in April 1937, complete with organ, and soon proved a successful venue. It installed cinemascope in 1954, stereo sound in 1955; it hosted live music in the 1960s with pop groups performing on its stage before doubling the number of screens in 1972, becoming ABC 1 and ABC 2. It succumbed to the demand for newer and bigger cinemas on East Road. [SCAN OF REGAL SHOWING 'THE RAILWAY CHILDREN' 1971]

But Alan's reminiscences were occasioned by the impending closure of the **Victoria Cinema** on Market Hill. It could trace its origins to the Electric Theatre that had opened in 1911 before being renamed Victoria in 1915. It achieved its greatest success following the construction of a brand new up-to-the-minute building near the corner of Market Street that opened in September 1931 in the presence of 1,500 guests. It incorporated a large bar and lounge, a restaurant and dance hall together with a spacious orchestra pit should the talking pictures not catch on. There was also the essential cinema organ capable of producing every possible noise necessary for the accompaniment of a film, from telephone bell to tram car, bird, boats, motors and surf. Subsequently it was restyled in 1952 in a 'eurythmic' design – "designer, architect and illuminators combining to make a symphony of shape, colour and tone". New and modern projectors came in 1967, a second screen in 1972; it recovered from a fire in 1983 but rumours of redevelopment were persistent and it closed in 1988. [SCAN OF CROWDS LEAVING AN ALL-NIGHT FILM SHOW 1972]

What are your memories of Cambridge cinema, and given the commemoration of D-Day shortly where did you see the newsreels that reported on those momentous days? Write to Mike Petty

Last weekend the streets of Monte Carlo reverberated to the roar of motor cars – but Cambridge too has been deafened by such sound, as Brian Lister recalls.

Motor-racing legend, Archie Scott Brown drove Lister Jaguars designed in Cambridge and in 1957 was asked by Coleridge school to open their summer fete. The children were told of his visit some days in advance and became very excited as the prospect of meeting not only a racing ace, but also his racing car. But one poor lad was unable to attend being ill at Old Addenbrookes Hospital. When Archie heard of this he put aside his mild dislike of infants and trundled down Tennis Court Road to the hospital grounds, stopping the racing car outside the ward window. There he sat, happily burbling the engine, so that the little fellow could appreciate it. The event reinforced Archie as a hero in the eyes of his young fans, although there were some grumbles at the noise of 260 bhp of barely-silenced racing car growling about the city centre. [SCAN OF ARCHIVE SCOTT BROWN AT COLERIDGE FETE]

Nor was this his only public appearance to be remembered this week. Archie lived with mother in Portugal Place and joined her at one of the Christmas parties for residents organised by the Birdwood Club. David Gillingham, whose parents knew Archie well, has lent me a photograph of him posing behind Santa Claus. [SCAN OF ARCHIVE SCOTT BROWN AT BIRDWOOD CLUB PARTY]

Memories 2nd June 2004, by Mike Petty

Friday May 21st 1979 was a night Cambridge culture-vultures had been looking forward to – an evening at the Sadlers Wells Royal Ballet. Nor would they have to travel to London to see it, for it would be performed in a big tent pitched on Jesus Green, right in the centre of the city. From around the region people phoned to book their tickets, arranged visits to the hairdressers, a table for dinner afterwards. They were ready for an experience of a lifetime.

It was a rare event, but not Cambridge's first experience of ballet.

In December 1922 the Russian Ballet had entertained audiences with a variety of dances at the Guildhall. Supporting the Ballet was Cavalier Gennaro de Tura, the famous tenor and dainty comedienne Miss Trixie Kay who found her way into the hearts of her audience. But, the CDN commented, 'Cambridge Guildhall is not the best of buildings in which to present such an entertainment and the fact that the Ballet held us whenever they appeared was testimony to the excellence of their work.'

In the 1930's the Vic-Wells Ballet had given regular performances at the Festival Theatre until its closure in 1935 but within a year the Arts Theatre had opened to provide opera, ballet, music, cinema and theatre for the people of Cambridge. During the Second World War the Ballet Jooss spent time in Cambridge

History was made at the New Theatre, Cambridge, in April 1948 when the International Ballet Company presented a full-length version of "The Swan Lake", described as the most spacious classical ballet spectacle ever to be seen in Cambridge. The result was an evening of sheet beauty. A company of over sixty presented a performance outstanding for its virility and attack, and there was a first class orchestra - their numbers made it necessary for them to overflow from the orchestra pit into adjoining boxes and the stalls. Leading the superb company was the prima ballerina Mona Inglesby

But ballet was not just for the professionals. Jean Garner (nee Spicer) of Cambridge recalled in 'Memories' in March 2000: "My sister Sheila and I started dancing classes (tap and ballet) around 1936 with the Martin School of Dance, then run by Michael Walsh. When he was called up the school was run by Valerie Redfarn and her mother Joyce was pianist. We carried on throughout the war, doing over 1,000 shows for troops".

When the war was over the Nina Hubbard Ballet School introduced more youngsters to the art. They celebrated their second anniversary in July 1952 with a production of "Cinderella" as a ballet at the A.D.C. The News reported how more than 60 pupils took part, with Helen Deakin delightfully convincing in the title role while Anna Wooster brought dignity to the role of Prince Charming and other pleasing performances were given by Patricia Read and Irene Smith as the step-sisters. Jennifer Andrew was outstanding as Cinderella's father and the doll dance by Carolyn Sanders and Margaret Jones, who danced on her points, was particularly pleasing. After the final curtain Nina Hubbard thanked Miss Humberstone, the pianist and other helpers.

Nor was ballet just for the young and athletic: At Christmas 1953 nearly 500 people attended one of the most looked-forward to and popular functions of the year, the Dustman's Christmas Ball in Cambridge Guildhall. Dustbins were displayed on the stage behind the Astrals All Star Dance Orchestra, reminding the dancers of the occasion and Miss Daphne Frostick of East Road was chosen as the new "Queen of Scavengeria". The cabaret was amusing and skilful with four men and four girls entering into a ballet. Although the men were a little less graceful than their partners they gave a performance that will long be remembered, but whether for its precision or other factors the reporter chose not to say.

And then in 1976 the Royal Ballet had pitched its large tent on Jesus Green for the first time. It was welcomed: "Sitting in the enormous blue tent on Jesus Green and watching the

incomparable Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet I felt that this is what a fully international university city should be all about. The huge tent provides a sufficiently large stage and seats to stage large performances and make them pay. Cambridge should consider investing in something of this sort. It took a lot of courage, hard work and imagination to bring Sadler's Wells to Cambridge and they have brought Cambridge to the crossroads. Either it goes forward from here or it retreats" the News commented on the following years' visit

But on Friday 21st May 1979 it all went wrong

Ballet dancers arriving at the Big Top on Jesus Green, Cambridge found their 'blue boxes' which contain their make-up, practice clothes and spare shoes were standing in solitary state in an empty room. Heavy rains for two days meant that workmen were behind in assembling the pre-fabricated portable cabins which they were to use as dressing rooms. Some had no water, no glass in the windows and no heating. There were no trestle tables and chair, let alone bulbs, basins and bins. An icy cold wind whistled through the pre-fabs as groups of dancers dressed in a variety of old, loose garments rather like floppy pyjamas & woollen socks huddled together trying to keep warm, while wardrobe staff could only sit and wait. All around them people struggled to ensure the show could go on.

But it was to no avail: at 5.15 they decided for the first time in the company's seven seasons in the Big Top that there could be no performance that night.

Hundreds of disappointed ballet enthusiasts had to be turned away and City council entertainment staff headed by Mr John Wilkinson had to break the bad news to the ballet-goers who trudged through the squelching grass, many having travelled from as far as Bishop's Stortford and Hatfield. They were not interested in refunds, they wanted another chance to see the ballet. But most of the 1,200 tickets had been sold and the company's schedule means that no replacement performance could be held.

The bad weather continued incessantly for almost a fortnight but finally it relented and peace returned to the Big Top. At last it was possible to enjoy performances without the accompaniment of heavy rain on canvas, whistling wind and a variety of off-stage rumbling though audience and artistes still had to be on their guard against damp patches on the walkways and duck-boards.

It was a visit the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company was unlikely to forget. But were you amongst those that ducked the showers and wrapped up against the wind. If so, what do you remember of that experience of a quarter of a century ago?

Negatives 175.79.61

READERS WRITE

Peter Willis from Gravesend has contacted me to say that he took the photograph of a locomotive at Barnwell Junction station that I featured in Memories 14th April. He can confirm John Betson's memories of the arrival of an ambulance train at Barnwell Junction station, Cambridge during the Second World War. Peter has distinct recollections of seeing the Sandringham class locomotive 'Elveden' number 2804 but cannot remember quite when it was. I have a photo of wounded soldiers arriving at Cambridge station during the First World War but can anybody add further light on the Second? [SCAN OF WWI TRAIN AT CAMBRIDGE STATION AND PETER WILLIS' PHOTO OF LOCO AT BARNWELL JUNCTION STATION 1950s]

But though Peter may have partially solved one question he has prompted another: about 1944 a Flying Fortress and a Marshall's training flight crashed on Fen Road, Chesterton; he remembers bodies being recovered from the river. Does anybody have further details.

One who would probably have known was Sidney Clover. I met his son, Arthur, at a Royal Naval Association meeting recently who showed me a series of cartoons drawn by his father during the war when he worked as a stock controller at Marshalls and served with the Home Guard. The drawings depict various light-hearted activities, but one has especial interest. Whilst thousands of troops stormed ashore on D-Day on 6th June 1944 members of the Cambridge Home Guard were engaged in other activities. One of the cartoons shows a group of distinctly bedraggled men with the caption "After the storming of Spud Farm on the 6th of June 1944 – s'pity it rained". Was this a diversionary raid perhaps, staged to attract attention away from the real activity down on the South coast? Can anybody shed further light on this or other episodes in the home front campaign. [CARTOON]

And can anybody shed light on a photograph lent by Lola Craft of Cambridge. It shows her grandfather Jim Baker from Fitzroy Street amongst a group of other men. She thinks they might be members of the 'Long Cigarette Club' but what was it and what did they do, apart from smoke oversized fags? [SCAN OF LONG CIGARETTE CLUB PHOTO]

Memories June 9th 2004 by Mike Petty

Today Sir Arthur Marshall is due to receive the Honorary Freedom of the City of Cambridge and Marshall's airport celebrates its 75th anniversary. It was born in the heady days of the 1920s when flying was all the rage.

People recalled the early fliers, how in August 1911 Lieutenant Barrington Kennett had been the first to fly an aeroplane over Cambridge whilst Second Lieutenant William Rhodes-Moorhouse had actually landed his monoplane on Parker's Piece after he ran short of fuel. He had left next morning to complete his journey to Huntingdon but later returned to land on Butts Green while he collected some shoes from Cambridge bootmaker Frank Dalton. The following year W.W.Ewen, the 'Daily Mail' airman's had brought his Flying Circus to town and in 1914 Gustav Hamel the aviator had given a show on Rock Meadows, Cherry Hinton Road.

Such was the enthusiasm for the new mode of transport that in 1929 University Proctors drafted rules for students who wished to use aircraft during term time. They recognised that undergraduates flying their own or civilian aircraft might cause annoyance by low flying and that there might be accidents. Now no student could fly as pilot or passenger during term time without written permission from his parents and tutor. Those offending will be liable to be punished by suspension, rustication, expulsion or otherwise.

But young men had a great passion to take to the air; the Cambridgeshire Aeroplane Club was formed at Conington just down the Huntingdon Road and on Monday 10th June 1929 they staged an entertainment spectacular. For nine hours there was always something happening and spectator's necks became stiff from staring upwards. It was opened by the Lord Lieutenant in the presence of club president, Lady Bailey, one of the most courageous ladies there had ever been whose flying exploits – she had flown over the Congo forests in just two days - were then legendary. She arrived in a silver-coloured Gipsy Moth, resplendent in a daffodil hat, skirt and coat with a white jumper, over which she wore a black flying coat.

Some 40 machines from around the country made their way for an inter-club rally, with the pilot who crossed the finishing line nearest to noon being declared the winner. The successful aviator had flown his Avro Avion from Cheshire and arrived dead on time.

There were giant planes such as the 'Inflexible' monoplane weighing nineteen tons which carried a crew of four, and a tiny monoplane with a Scorpion engine which could be put together in two minutes and be ready for flying

Great excitement was occasioned by the arrival of Mr E.N. Alliot of London in his Klemon Salmson monoplane though it was his passenger who attracted most attention. Mr J. Tranum, a daredevil stunter who was seen to be 'horseriding' the machine, sitting astride the body and urging it on by slapping the sides, waving his arms in the air and swinging his legs. On the second day he plummeted towards the earth, arriving safely due to his Russell Lobe parachute.

There were bombing attacks on motor cars, formation flying and aerobatics. But best of all there was the chance of a joyride; it was something the CDN representative could not resist. "A first flight dispels all fears one may have about flying. No sign of dizziness is felt and the experience seems nothing more than sliding along in a comfortable armchair. The banking provides a thrill when the wing on one side dips and round the machine turns. The landing holds no fears, for all that is felt is the bump of the underwings", he reported.

It was a thoroughly successful occasion and seemed set to establish Conington as the flying centre of Cambridgeshire.

But it had competition. A new private aerodrome had opened just the day before – in fact Lady Bailey, Mr Alliot and the stuntman Tranum had stopped off there on their way down.

It had been established by a motor car engineer, David Marshall whose son Arthur had become enthusiastic about flying and bought himself a Gipsy Moth aeroplane. He'd needed somewhere to land it and they'd gone shares on a farm near Fen Ditton, levelled the fields and put up a hangar.

Shortly afterwards they heard another plane landing unannounced. The pilot turned out to be a national hero, Sir Alan Cobham who had recently made a 26,000-mile flight to and from Australia to pioneer international air routes. Now he was considering sites for municipal aerodromes, including Huntingdon, when his engine had developed a knock. Over lunch they discussed whether the Cambridge field might be opened for others to use too.

One thing led to another and on 9th June 1929 Sir Alan was due to return in his Giant Moth as part of an Air Pageant. He promised free flights to councillors and officials: the Mayor, President of the Chamber of Trade, Borough Surveyor and Town Clerk would all be given a view of Cambridge from the air whilst a number of children selected by the Chief Education Officer would also be given a free flight. Sadly he'd crashed his plane the day before but he did arrive in a smaller one and anyway there were some forty other aircraft, a military band and lots of ladies in their summer frocks to entertain those invited to watch a flying spectacular.

There were displays of aerobatics, formation flying, aerial golf and dropping flour bombs on small cars. Mr Tranum performed his usual tricks of parachuting – with a variation in which he plunged from two thousand feet and dropped like a stone for six seconds before opening his chute. He was also booked to do his wing-walking routine but his plane too had broken down. So Arthur Marshall lent his own machine instead and Tranum walked all over it, burning his shoe on the exhaust pipe in the process.

The pageant attracted large crowds who went home thoroughly delighted at a magnificent spectacle. But not all were pleased: senior members of the University boycotted the event and the Bishop of Ely spoke out against it. The art of flying was a magnificent new accomplishment and Sunday flying had already come, like the Sunday motorist. But unless there was some restriction of time and place in 50 years we might get such a buzz of aeroplanes on Sunday afternoons that quiet would be almost impossible, churchmen complained.

Flying was here to stay but Conington did not flourish. By March 1930 the club was losing money, its telephone was disconnected, the machines flew away. It was inconvenient to undergraduates who had to drive nine miles through twisty by-roads for a twenty-minute lesson whereas Mr Marshall's field was just down the main Newmarket Road less than two miles from Cambridge. It had a railway station 200 yards away and a 20-minute bus service connection, making it truly accessible.

Soon the airfield was too small and meetings were held to discuss a new site near Teversham Corner. Permission was granted and it opened in October 1938. The rest is history.

[SCAN OF CONINGTON CHURCH – OTHERS FROM NEWS FILES, MARSHALL'S AIR PAGEANT OF 1929, ARTHUR MARSHALL AND HIS FATHER WITH SIR ALAN COBHAM, ARTHUR MARSHALL'S FIRST PLANE, WHICH WAS USED BY THE WING-WALKER, MOORHOUSE TAKING OFF FROM PARKER'S PIECE AND NEWS REPORTS OF THE TWO FESTIVALS]

Readers Write

Brian George e-mails in response to Mr W. Chamberlain's memories of a variety show at the New Theatre where there were more on the stage than in the audience. He writes: "This I don't remember but as a school boy I was in the enviable position of having a mother who worked at the New Theatre as a dresser and consequently had a complimentary double ticket for the performances every week. The theatre reopened after the war in April 1948 with a show called 'Over the Wall' and appearing were Danny O'shea, Jack O'hagen, Arthur Rigby, Gold and Cordell (Ballroom Dancers) and of course the famous Max Wall. I have all their autographs. In those days you could have a real belly laugh with the comedians. I saw Arthur Lucan and Kitty McShane. the famous "Old Mother Riley" and also Max Miller who always asked which colour book you wanted the jokes from.

"There were dog acts, jugglers, magicians, roller skaters. I remember once skipping school and watching the great escapologist Alan Alan escape from a straight jacket suspended from chains by his ankles from the jib of a crane outside Hobbs pavilion. This was a preview of the next weeks stage performance.

"It was a beautiful theatre with a stalls, circle, dress circle, and the Gods. It was a pity that it was ever knocked down."

Basil Bonner from Whittlesford writes: "I was most interested to read your Golden Age of Cinema spread. I should mention that the Regal and the Victoria were not the only organ-equipped cinemas in Cambridge. A cinema organ was installed at the Rex/Rendezvous in October 1935. I consider the point worth making, as these instruments were not cheap. A cinema organ was likely to add around 10% to the cost of a new cinema if one includes the cost of the chambers required to house the hidden pipework and percussions. This indicates the importance of such an instrument in the minds of the larger cinema developers during the 1920s and 1930s!" [SCAN OF THE REX CINEMA AND MAGRATH AVE]

Those interested in cinema history might like to know that there will be an evening with the East Anglian Film Archive on cinema throughout the decades as part of this year's Cambridge Film Festival from 8th to 18th July. Keep you eyes open for details.

Memories 16th June 2004, by Mike Petty

Geoffrey Hawes from Waterbeach has come forward to share some very rare glimpses of the activities of the Home Guard in Cambridge during the Second World War. He writes:

“It was November 1940, just a few weeks before my 15th birthday, when I decided to join the Home Guard. At the time I was attending the Cambridge Boys Central School and my friend, Charles Haydn Ross decided to go along with me. We both went down to the Home Guard office and joined as runners, to run messages as required. This meant that we were not armed but we were kitted out with battle dress, boots, gaiters, great coat, gas mask, steel helmet etc. This equipment was issued to us by our Company Quartermaster, Mr. Stanley Woolston, who had an antique shop in St. Andrews Street where he kept one room for his Home Guard stores.

“After being runners for some months and been involved in several night exercises they overlooked our tender years and Haydn and I were issued with an American .300 P17 rifle, complete with 18 inch bayonet and bandolier containing about fifty rounds of live ammunition. At the age of 15/16, years I had the responsibility of keeping a rifle and ammunition stacked in the corner of my bedroom at home! It certainly would not be allowed these days, but these were desperate times! We served with other ‘Dads Army’ characters, many of who wore service medal ribbons from the 1914/18 and even Boer Wars. They were all great fellows and game as fighting cocks!

“We had an old motor van painted a pale Khaki colour with a carved badge of the Cambridgeshire Regiment above the driver’s cab and the name ‘Godfrey’ painted on the side. This was often used to take us to the Barton Road Rifle Range for firing practice. Sometimes I was detailed to the ‘Target Marking Party’ whose job was to stand behind the protective earthworks under the targets and show the firers where they had hit by the use of a long stick with a black and white disc on the end. Often the marksman would try to hit this disc while you were marking his target. If he did you would end up with a shattered disc and stinging hands. Occasionally a bullet would hit the iron framework, and ricochet off with a whine. For all that it was quite safe. We used Gallyon’s 25-yards firing range at the bottom of Madingley Hill to fire our automatic ‘Sten Guns’. They were simple and very cheap to manufacture but they were not always reliable: they had a nasty habit of firing automatic when on single shot!

“We also used the Cherry Hinton Chalk Pits for live grenade practice. A small pit had been dug approximately eight feet in diameter and two feet deep. We were in a nearby slit trench and the object was to throw your grenade into this pit, watch where it had landed and then duck! Another time we were taken out to Fleam Dyke; we all stood down in the ditch with steel helmets on while Army instructors fired machine guns over our heads and detonated explosive charges buried along the side of the Dyke to simulate battle conditions. It was really noisy.

“By this time they had formed all of the younger and fitter men into a section which they loosely called ‘The Commando Squad’. We spent evenings in the County School gymnasium being taught unarmed combat and became fairly proficient. They also took us into the Cherry Hinton Chalk Pits where they got us to climb the cliff faces in full combat equipment, sometimes even wearing our gas masks. I do recall on one occasion sliding down some loose shale, ending with a ten foot drop - but that was because I had detached myself from the safety line, ‘Stupid Boy!’

“On June 20th 1943 our Company gave a training demonstration on the Perse School playing fields. The programme had such events as rifle drill, Lewis Guns in action, gas procedure etc. But the highlight for us was what was described in the programme as ‘Unarmed combat: the Commandos of the Company demonstrate the ungentlemanly side of their characters’. Someone had procured several German uniforms together with a staff car and two army motorcycles; half of us acted as a German column while the rest of us ambushed them by

felling a tree in their path (a long pole with branches attached). We then chased the Germans who conveniently spread around the arena where we fought them hand to hand using unarmed combat. Needless to say the commandos won and drove from the arena in the captured German vehicles.”

Geoffrey spent some time manning the Anti-Aircraft Rocket Projectors before his Home Guard career ended when he became old enough to serve in the His Majesty’s Services. “I had had a good schooling”, he adds [SCAN OF HOME GUARD PARADE 1942, HOME GUARD ENROLMENT JUNE 1940, HOME GUARD EXERCISE CHERRY HINTON PITS, HOME GUARD ON THE MARCH]

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Another previously untold story has been researched by Penny Rumble from Chittering near Waterbeach. As she explains:

“In September 1996, my husband and I purchased Causeway End Farmhouse, a Tudor building set on a raised bank overlooking the flat land of Chittering Fen. Abandoned in the early sixties, it was in a state of total disrepair and required nearly three years of back-breaking work to restore it to its original condition. Over the months, we uncovered ancient reed ceilings, mullion windows and huge inglenook fireplaces. The building leaked history from every beam so when finally we moved in, I thought a fitting tribute to the restored farmhouse would be a potted history of the site. Starting with the Roman period, I trawled through the archives of centuries and discovered many secrets but there weren't enough hard facts to fill a scrapbook.

We were unaware quite how closely the conservation team in Cambridge had monitored our progress and were astonished to find our name heading the list for the bi-annual award for the most sympathetic restoration of an historic building. On the day of the presentation in Cambridge, the Chairman of the District Council whispered in my ear. ‘I'm so pleased you won this award. My great grandfather once lived in your house; I've got his portrait at home. Why don't you come and see him some time’.

My research hadn't yet reached the nineteenth century but I was excited by the invitation and I called by later in the week. The man in the painting stared at me with critical eyes as my camera clicked and whirled. That night I woke suddenly at three in the morning. There was no creaking of floorboards or heavy breathing yet I was convinced there was someone standing in the doorway. Terrified of the unknown presence, I turned my head to sneak a glimpse of the intruder. The moon lit up the bedroom and although I saw nothing, a rush of air swished across my face, followed by a strong smell of cigar smoke.

But you know how it is when your heart knocks at your throat in fear and your mind is befuddled with sleep; so in the morning I put the whole event down to an illusion brought on by far too much red wine earlier on. But the following night I woke again. There was the same pungent smell of cigar smoke. Too strong to ignore, I flung open the window and sniffed the air. Nothing. Like a tracker dog I ran into the hall trying to trace the origin of the smoke but the smell had dispersed.

When this experience was repeated a third time, completely oblivious of any logical explanation, I binned my original research and refocused my work on the life and times of one man - the sombre fellow in the portrait - Mark Wyatt.

Knowing that he was a disciple of the famous Baptist minister, Charles Spurgeon; I began my revised project with a search on the web for anything related to him. Up popped an article: ‘Spurgeon's Love of Fine Cigars’ which said he did not regard the smoking as a sinful activity and that ‘by the grace of God he hoped always to enjoy a fine cigar before retiring to bed.’ I still have no idea whether Mark Wyatt was a smoker or not. But I do know he copied

Spurgeon's ways and ideas to the letter so I became convinced that my cigar-smoking visitor had been Mark Wyatt himself. Thereafter the smell of tobacco vanished from the bedroom”.

Now Penny has published her researches in ‘Portrait of a Baptist farmer’. It paints a vivid picture of the life and time of a man who was minister to his flock baptising them in the Cam at Waterbeach, father to his family and a farmer though the hard times of agricultural depression and the Great War. Copies are available from Penny at £10 – phone 01223 861831. [SCAN OF BAPTISM IN THE RIVER CAM & THE PORTRAIT OF MARK WYATT]

Shirley Smith from Southwold has also come across a picture of somebody she’s like to know more about. It was taken by the CDN in the mid 1960s and shows a lady and her parrot. But who was she and why is there a snap of her amongst Shirley’s family pictures? [SCAN OF LADY WITH PARROT]

Readers write

Mr A.C. Waldock of Fulbourn writes: “Your article on the Golden Age of Cinema brought back a few memories as I worked for ABC/EMI/CANON as a projectionists from 1941-1988, though not continuously. I vividly remember the 3D. The Victoria was the first in Cambridge to show the true 3D – not the red and green type. This was about 2am on the opening Sunday in 1951. The then chief Phil Howlett, myself and two engineers installed the equipment overnight. The projectors had polarising filters in front of the lens to separate the images, one for the right-hand reel and one for the left – one horizontal and one vertical. The patrons were issued with glasses to separate the images”. He has lent a picture of the projectors and another of the staff at the Victoria in those days. [SCAN OF VICTORIA CINEMA STAFF c1951]

Liz Ingle e-mails from Cambridge: “How lovely to see you asking for memories of the ballet in Cambridge. My daughter and I went to a lot of the Big Top performances. During the first season we booked modestly for about the middle of the seating, but there were so few in the audience on the first night we went that we were asked to move a few rows closer at the interval! One night we had a ferocious thunderstorm - we were in the front row and were totally unable to hear the big drum absolutely next to us. One young and wonderfully athletic dancer broke his collarbone when landing awkwardly, but carried on for the rest of the ballet. Coming out of the tent I remember having to wade through knee deep water, and I assure you I do not exaggerate! We went to all of the three seasons and I think all of the separate performances, We were so sad when we were told the tent was not coming again”

April Burgess-Martin writes: “I was interested to read in last week’s Memories a report of a performance of Cinderella by the Nina Hubbard Ballet School in 1952. I was in this as a very small spark who jumped out of a fireplace to dance and I still have the little red tutu! I now run my own Ballet School following in the footsteps of Nina Hubbard.

Memories 23rd June 2004, by Mike Petty

Do children still play ‘Cowboys and Indians’ or have the stories of the Wild West now given way to other, no less violent, pastimes

Just 100 years ago, on 24th June 1904, Cambridge went cowboy crazy with the arrival of one of the greatest shows on earth – Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show

His company arrived at Cambridge station from Hitchin early in the morning in its own three special trains including 15 carriages of livestock that were shunted into the sidings. Within a very short time the 800 men, 500 horses and other appliances were unloaded and on their way. The procession of cowboys, Indians and Cossacks in military order attracted much

attention as they made their way through town though many lay sleeping in their beds unaware of the spectacle outside their windows. They were en route to a field on the Huntingdon Road where the kitchens and mess-tents were the first to be erected, soon supplying a hot breakfast to hundreds of rough riders.

By two o'clock in the afternoon Stars and Stripes floated gaily, highly suggestive of the land of George Washington. As crowds arrived for the first performance 'Programmes, sixpence each' echoed from all sides in accents that could be cut with a blunt knife. The audience flocked into the canvas-covered tiers of seats in a vast arena that would become the Wild West, the Rockies, the steppes of Siberia, or Mexico, Australia - even the sandy wastes of the Sahara, depending on whichever part of the show was being performed.

A cowboy band struck up 'Yankee Doodle' to welcome the undergraduates, dons, schoolboys and schoolgirls – for this was an education - countrymen, aristocrats, even a member of the Salvation Army. Then came the performers, gorgeously painted and feather-decked Indians - Sioux, Ogallallas, Brutes, Uncapappas, Cheyenne and Apache tribes- followed by New South Wales horsemen, Mexican cavaliers, Arabs from the wastes of North Africa and of course the US cavalry. Once assembled all let out a cheer as a figure with flowing grey locks, riding a superb horse, swept into the area. This was Buffalo Bill himself, Col. W.F. Cody the world-renowned scout who knew more of Indian warfare than any man living.

Then it was on with the show: wonderful sharpshooting despite the flickering electric light; the lassoing of a horse-thief; the Deadwood Stage pursued by whooping befeathered braves, Indian war dances, bucking horses. There were Arab athletes, Japanese jugglers, galloping Russian Cossacks, even a man jumping through space on a bicycle. It culminated with Custer's last stand at the Little Big Horn with red limelight effects redolent of bloodshed and slaughter though the 'whoop' of the Indians was not nearly so terror-striking as expected.

Afterwards there were additional attractions to extract more sixpences from spectators: a variety performance by Buffalo Bill's Concert Party including a female saxophone player or an exhibition of 'freaks'. But there was to be no inspection of the camp itself, though numerous attempts were made to evade a strong cordon of police and take a peak backstage.

That evening they did it all again. Then it was over; as the crowds made their way back into town, the mess-tent was busy serving cowboy, Indian and Russian alike. Horses were fed and watered as tents were dismantled and everything made ready for a late-night return to Cambridge station ready for an early-morning start somewhere else. The Wild West had come and gone in a single day but would live on in the memory of some 14,000 people who had been there and seen it for themselves. [SCAN OF ADVERTS FOR THE SHOW]

Readers write

A few weeks ago Mr W. Chamberlain from Foxton wrote to ask: "Does anybody remember a variety show at the New Theatre in the 1950s. It was a very good do, but there were only 24 people in the audience that night. At the finish all the performers came off stage and talked or shook hands with all present. The only name I can remember was Dennis Spicer, a ventriloquist, who was killed soon afterwards in a road accident."

I've now had time to scan some of the programmes of performances at the New Theatre that are preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library. There amongst them is one dated 7th March 1955 for an entertainment called 'Radio Tymes' boasting a star-studded cast of radio and television artistes. They included Ken Morrison, a concert accordionist, Dudley Dale and his gang of boy singers, comedians Billy Winsor and Syd Wilton from "Workers' Playtime" and somebody billed as "Ann Robinson, radio's lovely soprano" (it

can't be the face-lifted person from the tele can it?). And there amongst them was Dennis Spicer billed as "the unique ventriloquist from 'Showcase'". [SCANS OF NEW THEATRE PLAYBILL, AND THE NEW THEATRE IN THE EARLY 1960S]

Mr A.C. Waldock of Fulbourn writes: "Your article on the Golden Age of Cinema brought back a few memories as I worked for ABC/EMI/CANON as a projectionists from 1941-1988, though not continuously. I vividly remember the 3D. The Victoria was the first in Cambridge to show the true 3D – not the red and green type. This was about 2am on the opening Sunday in 1951. The then chief Phil Howlett, myself and two engineers installed the equipment overnight. The projectors had polarising filters in front of the lens to separate the images, one for the right-hand reel and one for the left – one horizontal and one vertical. The patrons were issued with glasses to separate the images". He has lent a picture of the projectors and another of the staff at the Victoria in those days. [SCAN OF VICTORIA CINEMA STAFF c1951, SCAN OF VICTORIA CINEMA ACROSS MARKET, 1940S]

Stan Howchin from Cambridge adds further details about the organ at the Rex Cinema when it was closed for refurbishment after 1935. He recalls that the stage end was knocked down and the auditorium extended. The speaker chamber was placed on the outside wall to make more room and extra rows of seats were added in the stalls. A small two-manual Compton organ was installed with an illuminated console and the cinema re-opened with none other than Reginald Dixon of Blackpool Tower fame in 1937 or 1938.

Sally Thoday from Cambridge remembers attending the Cosmopolitan Cinema well into the 1940s adding that as there were only a few British films made during the war they went to the Cosmo to see foreign ones. Clifford Manning's notes on Cambridge cinemas, published in the Cambridgeshire Local History Society Bulletin in 1984, records that the Cosmo had opened in the Central Hall, Market Passage as a part-time cinema in 1933 and became full-time in October 1940. It was damaged by fire in July 1943, reopening that November. Four years later it closed for reconstruction before being relaunched as the Arts Cinema in October 1947.

Liz Ingle e-mails from Cambridge: "How lovely to see you asking for memories of the ballet in Cambridge. My daughter and I went to a lot of the Big Top performances. During the first season we booked modestly for about the middle of the seating, but there were so few in the audience on the first night we went that we were asked to move a few rows closer at the interval! One night we had a ferocious thunderstorm - we were in the front row and were totally unable to hear the big drum absolutely next to us. One young and wonderfully athletic dancer broke his collarbone when landing awkwardly, but carried on for the rest of the ballet. Coming out of the tent I remember having to wade through knee deep water, and I assure you I do not exaggerate! We went to all of the three seasons and I think all of the separate performances, We were so sad when we were told the tent was not coming again"

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Pauline Broadie e-mails from Florida; her parents were the last landlords of the Woolpack Inn in Market Street Ely before it was pulled down in the 1960s and would like to see a picture of it. There is one in the News files taken in May 1969 when it closed down. Do you have memories of the landlord that you can share with her, if so contact me and I'll pass them on. [SCAN OF WOOLPACK]

Memories 30th June 2004, by Mike Petty

The recent news that Bradwell's Court may be redeveloped to include new shops, a café and 15 luxury apartments could revitalise an area described by one councillor as "1960's tat"

But in the 1960s it was seen as the latest in shopping development – Cambridge's first arcade. It provided a continuous covered walkway from Drummer Street bus station to the city centre with an additional 20 new shops and showrooms.

The Court had been a joint venture between two colleges - Jesus and Christ's - and Ravenscroft Properties and it was designed by the Cambridge architects, Hughes and Bicknell who took special care that the scheme harmonised with the adjoining college buildings.

There have been several changes of occupants – not all of them welcome. In November 1975 a furious row broke out after the manager of the Wimpy Bar complained that he was losing trade to a hot-dog stand who'd set up at the entrance. Eventually the developers suspended metal poles from the arcade roof to keep the stall out.

While Cambridge gained up-to-date shopping it had lost two old areas. One was Bradwell's Yard, which had included cottages as well as commercial premises as Paul Griffin, one-time head of Cambridge Anglo-World Language Centre recalled in the News back in September 1987. His recollections will jog many other memories.

"It was 1946 and my wife and I, newly-married, had to find somewhere to live in Cambridge. Everything was in short supply and the best we could discover was a very thin cottage sandwiched in a row of buildings in Bradwell's Yard. The cottage was used by Mr Roe, an antiques dealer for storing furniture but he agreed to store it somewhere else and put in an electric supply. There were only three small rooms occupying the same number of floors"

There was no bath, no washbasin, an open-air lavatory across the yard shared with the next cottage and the only source of water was a tap over a sink. But it became home and he started to search for materials with which to redecorate. He even managed to acquire a zinc bath the size of a coffin which was filled through rubber tubing. "We emptied it by hanging the rubber tubing out of a window and siphoning the water out on to the waste land. We were happy in that little cottage, but thank goodness it is in the past now", he concluded.

Mr E.P. Dickerson from Primrose Croft – who had wonderful memories of Old Cambridge, some of which he shared with me and are recorded in the Cambridgeshire Collection – also added his recollections of the Yard at the turn of the 1900s. "Mr Fawcett had a house on the right-hand corner, there were two or three cottages and at the bottom end was a builders' yard."

The Bradwell family were builders. One had worked on Clare College in the 1660s and another is commemorated on a tombstone against the wall of St Andrew the Great church just across the road. He was David Bradwell who designed the Victoria Homes almshouses in Victoria Road in 1837 while a namesake occupied the plot until it was demolished for the arcade in 1958

The redevelopment closed Christ's Lane which had linked St Andrew's and Drummer Streets. But it could get muddy, as a correspondent to the News complained back in 1897: "Sir: Christ's Lane is a thoroughfare that is as much used as any in Cambridge, and is owned by a college. During the last two years it has been a veritable quagmire, I came through last evening and the mud was several inches thick through the lane. When is Cambridge to be governed so that there is the same law measured out for the University as there is for the worker and when is Christ's Lane to be paved in such a manner that that it shall be as pleasant to walk through as it is walking across Christ's Pieces? - B.L."

Nor was it always a quick route as Mrs J. Jenner of Bourn recalled in June 1999: “There was a toll bar about half way up which was always open, except for Rag Day. Then the students held it shut and put sludge around it about an inch thick and ten inches long. This meant that people passing had to give them something to walk through the small gap in the sludge. The opening was only wide enough for one person at a time to pass. They gave mums with prams a helping hand by lifting the pram over the barrier”.

The barrier had put been there to deter traffic – reflections of yet another modern proposal – but like the modern equivalents there could be problems: in June 1924 a Spanish student was killed when he swung his motor cycle into the lane at speed and ran into it.

The City Council wanted the barrier removed in May 1952 so that the Lane could be opened out as a thoroughfare to be used by buses. This would alleviate congestion and provide relief for Emmanuel Street. While about it they also proposed a new road on the line of Post Office Terrace to Wheeler Street. Then with Corn Exchange Street widened this would provide for a good circulation of traffic in the city centre. Now the issue of traffic management is again being discussed but I suspect this is one solution that will not find favour.

But whatever becomes of Bradwell’s Court and the bus station beyond it there will remain a problem for shoppers – how to cope with all those bags. As Mrs Jenner recalled this was one issue that had once been resolved: “When the bus office ceased to look after passengers’ parcels a man, Jim Wooders, who lived in the Sturton street area, came and sat by the wall near Milton’s Walk to watch the parcels and sometimes cases, when people had a long wait for coaches. He charged according to the length of time parcels were there. Those to be collected before noon were placed on his right, between then and two p.m. were in front, and two to four or five on his left. He charged 1/- a parcel for each period of time. Each customer was greeted by ‘Good Morning’ or ‘Good Afternoon’ and he touched his cap to lady customers.” [BAG WATCHER - CEN SCAN 158580 – USED IN MONDAY MEMORIES 19 APRIL 2004; VARIOUS NEWS PHOTOS OF BRADWELL’S COURT AND ONE OF BRADWELL’S YARD ARE IN A PLASTIC ENVELOPE IN THE LIBRARY PICTURE FILES ‘CAMBRIDGE – BRADWELL’S COURT’] [SCAN OF BRADWELL’S COURT FRONT 1962, CHRISTS LANE FROM ST ANDREWS ST - 6934 AND THE BARRIER FROM DRUMMER STREET – 9108]

Do you have memories of Bradwells Court or Yard – write to Mike Petty

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These days we are used to seeing our news illustrated by pictures that appear almost as soon as the incident has occurred. But this is not just a modern phenomenon as events of 100 years ago demonstrate. On 16th June 1904 the News reported that two steam traction engines belonging to Pamphlins of Cherry Hinton had been at work ploughing land at Linton when tragedy struck. One of the engines boilers exploded sending debris flying in all directions some of which killed a workman who had been tending a water cart. Within two days local photographer S.F. Talbot had published a series of picture postcards of the scene and within a week views of the explosion were being shown to audiences in a cinematograph show at Midsummer Fair. [SCAN OF BOILER EXPLOSION]

Other issues seem to return over the years. Out at Sutton a new straw burning plant dominates the landscape and generates both traffic and energy that is fed into the National Grid. But back in the 1900s the village firm of Drake’s had a different use for straw – they turned it into horse feed by cooking it in steam boilers. The problem was that when the boilers were opened they released a very unpleasant odour that penetrated houses and brought objections from some of the villagers not employed by the company. When the firm wanted to expand in Station Road objectors bought up adjacent fields to try and stop them, but without success.

The straw and hay used was landed by barge at Mepal and transported to the works by traction engine – past the present generating plant.

Drake's story is summarised in a new booklet 'Open all Hours' which surveys the trades, businesses in shops in the village – copies £2.50 plus postage from Peter Smith on 01353 778665. It is published as part of Sutton Feast celebrations which will include a display of old photographs in the village church next Sunday afternoon, 4th July. [SCAN OF DRAKES BARGES AT MEPAL]

Memories 7th July 2004, by Mike Petty

Remember 'One potato, two potato, three potato, four ...' – the rhymes that we used to sing in the playground.

Some 25 years ago Ruth Craft toured the schools in the Romsey area of Cambridge to gather a selection of them as part of a Children's Poetry Week when she analysed the chants of both children and their parents.

"One potato" was one of the rhymes used for choosing 'IT' but it was not the one most favoured by the children. They preferred the version

Ippy dippy dation,
My operation,
How many people,
At the Station,
No,
So you are not IT

Romsey had its own variation of the actions where each child put a foot forward into the circle and the 'dip' began with the words "Your shoes are dirty so go home and clean them"

There were chants for various purposes; some gave a strong beat for ball bouncing and skipping games. One of these went

I went into a baker's shop
To buy a loaf of bread
And this is what I said
My name is L-I-L-I
Tickill-Ticklli
Pon-pom-poodle
Chinese chopsticks
Indian chief – How!

Then there were pledges against which the children asked their honesty to be tested; most recalled 'Cross my heart or hope to die' but Romsey had some more chilling versions like

Sky is wet, Sky is dry
Stick a needle in my eye

Ruth felt that in a sometimes-frightening world the rhymes could be a kind of ritual through which the children tried to control things that were threatening them. One mother recollected that every time an ambulance went by she used to say:

Touch my collar,

Touch my nose,
I will never go in one of those

and she had to keep the finger on her nose until she spotted a black dog.

Famous figures of the day always have featured in rude playground rhymes. Older residents recalled chanting

Hark the Herald Angels Sing
Mrs Simpson's pinched our King

But in the 1970s this had given way to verses based on television characters:

Jingle Bells Batman smells
Robin ran away
Kojak lost his lollipop
And landed in the hay

There were rhymes featuring school dinners and soggy semolina but perhaps of the favourites was the one to be chanted at the end of the school term

One more day,
One more day of sorrow.
One more day in this old dump
And we'll be home tomorrow

Such songs and sayings cannot have just be confined to Cambridge schools in the 1970s. If you can recall what you chanted – or have pictures of other playground activities – then write to Mike Petty at the News [SCAN OF CHILDREN AT PLAY, STRETHAM 1968 – BUT WHAT RHYMES DID YOU CHANT; PROBABLY PHOTO OF ROMSEY SCHOOL CHILDREN 1970S]

READERS WRITE

Kathleen Bouttell (nee Mc.Atavey) has lent me a picture of a group of Brownies taken at Sawston in 1935 at a parade in celebration of the Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary. She recalls: "I was the Brown Owl (aged 19) and remember it being a very hot day. I was preceded as guider by several people, the first being Miss May Johnson, who had been a teacher at the Infants schools, May and Ruby Ashman and, briefly, another Miss Johnson who lived at The Grove, Stapleford. Mrs Huddleston of Sawston Hall was greatly interested in the Guide movement. Before her marriage she had captained the guides attached to Westminster Cathedral and every year a contingent of guides from there came to hold a fortnight's camp on the Moor at the back of Sawston Hall. When war broke out everything came to an abrupt halt. The Boys' Brigade hut, where we held out meetings, was used for other purposes. Barclays Bank occupies the site now." Kathleen can't remember the names of all the Brownies in her picture but they include Olive Harradine, Rosemary Wade, Dorothy Wright, Lily Goodwin, Doris Allen, Rosalind Mathews, Pam Searle and Barbara Rouse. [SCAN OF SAWSTON BROWNIES 1925]

Mr K. Bright from Cambridge wonders if anybody can tell him why his father, Maurice Bright, received the OBE Civil Division (Admiralty) in June 1943. The only information he has is that Maurice worked for the Cambridge Instrument Company and together with a naval officer was involved in developing a degaussing system for ships to combat the menace of

magnetic mines. His son was serving with the Royal Navy on a landing craft at the time and although he treasures the certificate never got to learn the details. Can you help?

Steve Wilkinson has written from Histon to say he has a programme for the Rendezvous (later Rex) cinema in Magrath Avenue, Cambridge dated 21st October 1935. This when it was reopened after enlargement – having previously been reopened in November 1932 following a fire the previous July and reopened in 1919 before that. The October 1935 programme shows that the then M.P. for Dudley, a Mr B. Joel, performed the ceremony before the assembled company watched the Pathe Gazette ‘Leong’, a story of native life on Bali and the cartoon ‘An Elephant Never Forgets’. The feature film was ‘Dance Band’ featuring Buddy Rogers and June Clyde. For many the main attraction was a recital on the Compton organ by the great Reginald Dixon.

Terry Beaumont of Cambridge can solve the mystery of Lola Craft’s picture that I featured on 2nd June. It was not a ‘Long Cigarette Club’ but the Ancient Druids Brush Club – this can be seen written on a large brush being held by a young lad in the front row. Terry can identify his late father, Harry Beaumont in the back row with his grandfather a little to the left. He believes most of the men were survivors from the Great War, including one he just knew as ‘Charlie’, sitting at the extreme left of the second row, who only had one arm, part of one leg and one eye as a result of his wartime experiences. Does anybody have other details of this particular club or its members. [SCAN OF BRUSH CLUB MEMBERS]

Two more ‘Memories’ readers have written about the ambulance trains at Barnwell Junction station. Patrick Mills of Cambridge says it happened quite frequently: “Early in the war I had a school friend who sadly became ill and later died in the Leys annexe of Addenbrooke’s Hospital. When I visited his home once his mother remarked that she had to go to Barnwell Junction to meet a hospital train and I was certainly under the impression that this was a regular occurrence”. Mrs M. Pink (nee Dean) from Bottisham says: “I too remember the ambulance trains; I remember seeing the red cross on the roofs of the carriages. It must have been about 1944/45. I and my brothers used to hang over the bridge – a different shaped bridge in those days – to watch the trains and get all smoke and steam in our faces” [SCAN OF OLD BARNWELL BRIDGE, NEWMARKET ROAD 1963]

Shirley Smith from Southwold in Suffolk has sent a copy of a picture she found amongst some family papers. It was taken by the News in the early 1960s and shows a lady with a parrot. But who is she – and why did her picture get as far as Suffolk. Can anybody help? [SCAN OF LADY AND PARROT]

Memories 14th July 2004, by Mike Petty

As preparations continue for this year’s Bridge the Gap Charity Walk round Cambridge on Sunday 5th September the emphasis is on the fact that this is walking for the fun of it. Starting from Jesus Green the route winds through the historic centre and along the Backs providing local folk with a glimpse of what thousands of visitors travel often half-way around the world to see. It is of course a route open to everybody every day but this is good opportunity to see it without feeling that you should not actually be there or worry about getting lost.

Walking has long been a way that Academics have chosen to relax. Back in the early 1800s the Rev Charles Simeon recommended to his young students that every day they should make sure that the third milestone from Cambridge was still in place and a Sunday perambulation along King’s Parade was part of the undergraduate’s routine. Nor could the weather disrupt their recreation for on wet afternoons the cloisters of Trinity College were thronged with dons and undergraduates pacing backwards and forwards.

Some dons specialised in longer distances; Leslie Stephen walked 50 miles from Cambridge to London on a hot day in 1903 to dine at his Club. On another occasion the vicar of Eaton Socon complained that his parish had been invaded by four lunatics but was told that they were clergymen from Cambridge who were walking from Bedford to Cambridge. They left Bedford at 11.30 and arrived at the back gates of St John's College at 6pm having stopped at St Neots for three-quarters of an hour.

But for some townspeople walking was a serious sport at which they excelled

One such was Tom Abbott who was in the News back in July 1954. He was then hailed as one of the best-known heel and toe walking experts in Cambridgeshire. When Lewis Todd visited him at his home he found him sitting in an armchair smoking his pipe. Big, active and supremely fit, he had covered thousands of miles over 20 years of competitive walking.

Tom had started in 1925 when as a lad in the Cambridge Territorials his sergeant, Chris Hewish, had encouraged him to take up the sport. Then he saw an article in the CDN about the formation of the Cambridgeshire Walking Club. Tom took part in its seven-mile road walk becoming the first novice home. It was the start of a lifetime's interest that took him to the very top of his sport. In 1937 and 1938 he took part in the two miles walk at the British Games held at the White City Stadium and by then he held every walking record in Cambridgeshire – he still did nearly 20 years later!

He'd also won 30 championship medals. They included the E.H. Church Handicap Cup, a two-mile race at the Cambridge Railway Orphans Sports – which he won over a dozen times - the Royston to Cambridge 13½ [THIRTEEN AND A HALF MILES] mile road race held annually on Boxing Day, the County Championship ten-mile walk, another ten-miler along Newmarket Road and inter-county meetings without number.

Tom won a gold watch at the Luton sports of 1930, a canteen of cutlery at the Bury St Edmunds one-mile race in 1931, a suit case at Ely Show in 1934, a silver flower stand next year and another canteen of cutlery the year after that. As he had a family of ten, five boys and five girls, he needed as many knives and forks as he could get! Even during the Second World War, when he manned a coastal defence gun in the Royal Artillery, he kept on walking in Service races in Belgium and the Shetland Isles.

When Tom finally retired from competitive walking he joined the Amateur Athletic Association's committee and helped youngsters of the Coleridge Athletic Club, teaching them to walk with a will to win and to enjoy friendly rivalry.

Tom Abbott one of Cambridge's sporting legends in his lifetime, passed away in December 2003. Amongst his papers is one of a group of athletes lining up in Kings Parade ready to start off on a walk. If you feel like following in their footsteps then come along on September 5th [SCAN OF TOM ABBOTT WALKING 1930S COMPARE WITH SCAN OF SENIOR WRANGLER'S WALK 1859 SKETCH, # SCAN OF SAUNTER ALONG KP in 1859 AND SCAN OF START OF WALKING RACE ON KING'S PARADE 1920S – PLEASE FIND SIMILAR PHOTO OF A RECENT BRIDGE THE GAP WALK BUT NOTE THAT THE ONE ON FRIDAY 9TH JULY 2004 IS OF KING'S COLLEGE, NOT KING'S PARADE AND IS NOT ACTUALLY ON THE ROUTE THIS YEAR]

#

The quiet village of Hauxton seldom hits the national headlines; but it did so 75 years ago in July 1929, with a Cambridgeshire county councillor imprisoned and questions asked in parliament. The dispute started in 1916 when the Councillor bought some land in the village that had once belonged to the rectory. It carried with it obligations to repair the chancel of the

village church but he claimed he had not been told this at the time and so refused to fund them. The matter went to the Consistory Court at Ely Cathedral who confirmed that he should pay up as previous owners had done. But when the councillor stuck to his guns he was found guilty of contempt of court and imprisoned in Bedford gaol. The case was raised in the House of Commons but the validity of the old law repairing chancels had been vindicated. If the work had been done when first requested the cost would have been but a few shillings, now it was about £30. He could only be released once he had apologised, the work was completed & had been inspected by a surveyor. Workmen were soon on the scene, scaffolding was erected, the roof repaired and replastering put in hand. Another court at Ely Cathedral confirmed the arrangements and the councillor was released from gaol to return to his home in Brookside, Cambridge after a week inside. At Hauxton the churchwardens and parishioners were relieved that they did not have to fork out for the work themselves [SCAN OF HAUXTON CHURCH 1964 OR FIND PHOTO FROM NEWS FILES]

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Last week I featured a picture of a lady with a parrot that had been found amongst family papers in Suffolk; readers have been quick to identify her as Miss Emma Louise Heffer. All have special memories of her: Olive Clough from Cambridge remembered her as a regular customer at Munceys the jewellers while Angela Parker-Woodward e-mailed from Sutton to say Miss Heffer had been a regular visitor to Barclay's Bank Trustee department in Bene't Street where she worked during the 1960s. Sheila Mann e-mails to say Emma had been trained as a nurse at the London Hospital long before the Great War – and was said to have met Florence Nightingale. Later she became owner and matron of the Priory Nursing Home in Newmarket Road, Cambridge, roughly on the site of the old News building. Her parrot, Joey, accompanied her to church and subsequently to retirement in the Evelyn Nursing Home where they both did a daily round of patients on the ground floor and inspected babies born in the Home's Maternity Unit. Miss Heffer died in the Evelyn in her 100th year early in 1974 while enjoying her favourite food – ice cream. John Heffer, her nephew, says she was known in the family as Aunt Pom while William Heffer from Cambridge says Joey was still alive a few years ago living in the Cherry Hinton area. [SCAN OF PARROT LADY]

Now others seek your help.

Garry Carter writes from Deal in Kent sending a picture of a Post Office Telephones Morris Z van registration number GYT 866. It was first registered on the 5th of April 1945 and worked in the Cambridge area until 1961 when it was sold at Stevenage auctions for £7 10s. [SEVEN POUNDS TEN SHILLINGS]. Garry came across it looking very sorry for itself in 1990 and has now totally renovated it back to it's former glory as a Post Office linesman's van. He would like to hear from anyone who may have driven it or have any pictures. His phone number is 01304 373486 or write to 7 Sutherland Road, Deal, Kent CT14 9TQ. But if you were a post office linesman with memories to share please write to Mike Petty at the News. [SCAN OF THE POST OFFICE VAN]

Dr John Grantham is researching the history of the gardens at Anglesey Abbey on behalf of the National Trust. He knows that during the Second World War an armoured unit was based at the Abbey and thanks to Richard Ayres the former head gardener he knows where about in the gardens they were established. But he does not know just which unit it was. Can you help? E-mail JTGrantham@aol.com or drop me a line and I'll forward your letter. [SCAN OF AERIAL PHOTO OF ANGLESEY ABBEY 1930S]

Memories 23rd July 2004, by Mike Petty

They're removing the telephone box on the corner of Wood Lane and Berry Close at Stretham; the notice says it doesn't pay its way any more. I suspect it never did. It was erected in 1957 so that residents in the new council estates could make calls without walking all the way to the kiosk in the centre of the village. Soon it will be uprooted and carted away for good. It is a scene that has been repeated throughout the county over the years. [PHOTO OF KIOSK BEING REMOVED OUTSIDE CEN OFFICES, NEWMARKET ROAD IN 1988]

Our Parish Council had tried to get a telephone for the village back in 1898. This was just two years after the first trunk line had been established from Cambridge to London, opening up communication with a large number of towns which many had never heard of.

But the Post Office didn't respond to our first request, nor to the second sent in January 1903. We asked again in September 1905 and finally the negotiations started. The Postmaster General agreed to establish a call office at the Post Office, open during the ordinary hours of business. Telephone calls to Ely would be charged at 2d [TWO PENCE] for three minutes conversation but any beyond that would be trunk calls and charged accordingly. There was one snag: the Parish Council had to guarantee to cover a third of the cost of any shortfall in revenue to a maximum of £10 a year. The Council called a public meeting which approved the scheme and the telephone arrived in Spring 1907. Year after year after that the Council's accounts show payment to cover the shortfalls with sums ranging from over £9 in 1908 down to just £3.9s.4d in 1921.

Then our village was in touch with the outside world and could summon help when needed. But this was not always the case elsewhere. In July 1929 a fire broke out in a furniture store at the back of the premises of Mr Hunt, milkman and general dealer at Haslingfield. Mrs Hunt sent her maid to the Post Office to phone for the fire brigade but when she got there she was told that she could not use it. The maid was too excited to ask why not and ran to Mr Burrell the butcher, at the other end of the village, which meant a delay of several minutes. When the CDN probed the case they learned that it had been early closing day and the postmistress had been away. Her mother had been there but she'd never used the phone and nor had the maid. So they'd sent for Mr Hunt to show them what to do, but he'd never come – probably being too busy fighting the fire. Whatever the facts it was a scandal that there was no public telephone in the village. [SCAN OF HASLINGFIELD POST OFFICE IN 1920S - PERHAPS CHECK LIBRARY FOR PICTURE OF HASLINGFIELD SHOWING POST OFFICE OR PHONE BOX]

Other villages were petitioning for phone boxes; the County Council approved the site for kiosks at Harston and Histon in July 1931, Toft and Comberton that November. Stretham too was trying for a telephone kiosk but in November 1930 were told by the Post Office that one wasn't needed. Seven years later we tried again and this time we were lucky; it was installed in the centre of the village by March 1938.

It was just a red phone box, not like the earlier designs of the 1920s such as that erected in Conington [CEN PHOTO - NB I THINK THIS IS THE CONINGTON IN HUNTS, NOT THE CONINGTON NEAR BOXWORTH SO WORD THE CAPTION ACCORDINGLY] or at the Cambridge and County Bowling Club [CEN PHOTO] nor the two-tone 1929 version on Ely Market Place [SCAN]. But over the years it has become part of the streetscape like many of the others throughout the county, some of which, like the one at Waterbeach, have now been listed as buildings of historic interest to ensure their survival [CEN PHOTO OF PHONE BOX AND VILLAGE PUMP AT WATERBEACH]

The kiosk became a gathering place for the village youngsters and they used it, chatting away for hours as people queued up outside. Sometimes it was out of order or in dire need of a good clean, but it was there in emergency. [CEN PHOTO OF LEANING KIOSK AT UPWARE 1974]

When the evacuees arrived during the Second World War the phone provided a vital link to the people back home. At Sawston the coming of American servicemen added to the pressure on the telephone service as Abe Easey recalled in 1992:

“Outgoing calls from the little manual telephone exchange at 95 High Street soared to over a thousand a day and a time limit of six minutes had to be imposed on all calls. From the start the British telephone system bewildered American troops. GIs could not get used to being ‘put through’ and the manipulation of Button ‘A’ to complete the connection or Button ‘B’ to get ‘tuppence’ back if the connection proved not possible baffled them completely. One frustrated master-sergeant stumbled out of the dark kiosk near the Cross after a vain attempt to ring his new-found girlfriend. He had progressed no further than the operator who had been sitting in the little white-washed exchange only a yard or two from where he had fumbled helplessly in the blacked-out booth. ‘Crazy broad!’ he groaned. ‘Drop her on the krauts- she’ll sure snafu their communications’.”

I have sympathy for his bewilderment. Our phone box was just that. It used to have a telephone directory and a list of exchanges. You looked up the number you wanted, put in your money and dialled it. Over the years Button A disappeared, other buttons replaced the dial but it was straightforward. Not like some of the modern ones: they will connect you to the internet, apparently, but the last time I tried just to make a phone call I couldn’t understand out how to work it. Perhaps that’s why they’re not being used so much now!
[CEN PHOTO OF INSIDE OF PHONE BOX]

Do you have memories of telephone kiosks either of a user waiting for that special call or as an engineer putting them up, or taking them down – share them with Mike Petty

Readers Write

Following the excitement of the Grand Prix at Silverstone and the parade of motor racing cars in London Roy Chamberlain of Foxton has sent me a copy of a programme for a race organised by the Cambridge University Automobile Club that he attended at Gransden Lodge aerodrome in June 1946. It was, he tells me, the first motor racing in England after the war and the only track then in operation.

The meeting featured races for both sports and racing cars and motorcycles. Amongst the entries were A. Issigonis in a Lightweight special who competed against R. Salvadori in the category for racing cars up to 750cc. In the 1101 to 1500 cc Racing Cars R. Parnell in a Maserati beat G.E. Abecassis in his Alta and R.E. Ansell in an E.R.A.. The sports cars saw G. Crossley in a Frazer-Nash B.M.W. as well as a clutch of Jaguars and Bentleys whilst in a race for Edwardian Cars B.B. Tubbs in a 1904 Gobron-Brillie was up against J. Bolster in a 1911 Rolls-Royce. There was another meeting on 13th July 1947 in aid of the RAF Flood Victims Relief Fund when the first Cooper racing cars competed.

On a somewhat slower tack Roy also comments: “There was a letter in the News on 28th June this year in which someone commented on putting an empty cigarette packet in the spokes of a Hercules cycle to make a noise as you rode along. I did this many times. My father lost a leg during the First World War and had a fixed-wheel bicycle with two carriers on in, one in front of the handlebars and the other over the rear wheel. He sometimes took me to school on them. I could sit on either carrier, or on the seat or handlebars and ride it backwards and forwards because of the fixed wheel. I have never seen it done on a standard cycle”

Barry Moore from Milton is anxious to track down any pictures of Fitzroy Street Cambridge in the 1950s, especially any showing Fred Hopkins Fish and Chip shop and the Pet Shop, both

of which he regularly visited as his grandparents used to live in James Street. If you can help drop me a line. [SCAN OF JAMES STREET 1964]

Sarah Baylis has e-mailed to say she is trying to track down the story of the statue of Jonas Webb the Victorian sheep-breeder. At various times it has stood on Cambridge Market Hill, inside Cambridge Corn Exchange, outside South Cambridgeshire Offices in Hills Road and outside Babraham Hall. I was working in the old Reference Library at the back of the Guildhall when Jonas made his journey from the Corn Exchange to Hills Road on the back of a lorry having overseen a wide range of activities from roller-skating to all-in wrestling. Now he enjoys a quieter lifestyle, back in his home village. But do you remember seeing him when attending events in the Corn Exchange? [SCAN OF DRAWING OF JONAS WEBB STATUE IN CORN EXCHANGE]

Memories 28th July 2004, by Mike Petty

Tomorrow the Antiques Roadshow visits Cambridge and hundreds of people will be bringing their treasures to King's College for the opportunity of some specialist assessment. But visits of Antiques Roadshow have themselves become part of history.

Back in August 1979 Arthur Negus was amongst the experts who joined the presenter, Angela Rippon, at Ely Maltings. There they appraised a variety of objects including a 12-foot punt gun made in 1840, African carvings and a Ming vase valued by Hugo Morley-Fletcher at as much as £10,000. It remains to be seen what will be discovered this time round. [SCAN OF ARTHUR NEGUS EXAMINING ANTIQUES AT ELY MALTINGS 1979]

But Ely folk did not have to wait for bargains – they were to be found every week on the market, as Ruth Sealy discovered when she visited in July 1979. Ely's market was (and is) held on Thursdays and the city soon filled up with people, with parking space at a premium. In those days you could usually park on the Market Square but on Thursdays the stalls took over, filling the square and stretching some way along the pavements; if it was fair time too they also stretched down High Street as well. [SCAN OF ELY STALLS IN HIGH STREET 1978]

Ruth counted about 50 stalls many selling fruit and vegetables, one of which was almost totally devoted to bananas from Wisbech priced at 26p a pound. Flower stalls, some selling garden plants had ten French marigolds for 30p while geraniums, white or red, were three for £1.

Specialities included a well-stocked cheese stall where the staff were happy to cut it into cubes suitable for party-style cheese on sticks, and a 'soul food' stall selling a small selection of goods such as 100 per-cent wholemeal flour, herbs and dried beans. Many of the other stalls sold clothes and other non-perishables. 'Live like a Lord on a shilling-a-day' was the cry of one regular stallholder while others offered cut-price polish or domestic equipment. [SCAN OF ARTIST AT ELY MARKET 1970S – BUT TRY LIBRARY FOR BETTER MARKET VIEW]

For many country folk the highlight of the week was the auction sales held in the Cattle Market on what is now the Cloisters shopping centre. There was a set timetable: the fat pigs were sold at 10 am, then live poultry followed by dressed poultry and produce, furniture and dead stock and more furniture.

Notebook poised Ruth recorded what she saw: "Sale by auction is a curious business, attracting its own brand of custom. It is a jolly bantering and time-consuming affair in which you can quite easily be misled into thinking you have got a bargain.. The crowd seemed

mainly old hands, but that didn't guarantee rock-bottom prices. Quite often they reached and sometimes went above prices in the nearby general market. On occasions this was loudly pointed out by a member of the audience who nevertheless appeared to be tolerated as an unavoidable part of the proceedings. It was he who often started the bidding, albeit well below the auctioneer's asking price". [SCAN OF CATTLE AT ELY 1963 SCAN OF FARMERS DISCUSSING PRICES (NOT ELY)]

You didn't have to buy in bulk. The produce was sorted into fairly large lots but bidding was usually done on the basis of the price per single cabbage, lettuce or pound of strawberries and there was no obligation to take the lot. Most people took two or three items and bidding started again for the rest.

Today day-time television is full of programmes featuring people buying 'antiques' and hoping to resell them for a profit at auction. They are all a bit too late – they should have joined Ruth at Ely 25 years ago. There were bargains to be had in the auction of household goods: furniture and bric-a-brac. Ruth spotted an 'In Memoriam' vase for holding graveside flowers and a few old bikes, among them one with a flat-tyre. 'Needs attention' would be the way to describe it but in the excitement of the auction room it went for £11!

The Ely cattle market is no more; it closed in September 1981 after a century of trading when cattle and pigs were auctioned for the last time. During the previous few years the market had had less business as more farmers switched from animals to arable farming, so the auctioneers who ran the market Cheffins, Grain & Chalk had decided to call a halt.

It was a particularly sad occasion for the auctioneer, Mr John Grain, who first started work at the market exactly 48 years ago to the day, the third generation of his family to be involved in the market. At 10.45am he rang the bell for the last time to summon farmers, dealers and onlookers to the final cattle sale. This time there was only one cow to be sold – a black Hereford brought along by Mr Sidney King, a Littleport farmer. It tipped the scales at 680kg and was bought by King Brothers of Holbeach, Lincolnshire for 100p a kilo.

Then 78-year-old Mr 'Nips' Lee of Ely – a market hand for 63 years until he was forced to retire – was called to ring the bell to herald the start of the final pig sale. The bidding was brisk for the 50 pigs on offer, the last one being sold by Mr William Darby of Haddenham. Entering into the spirit of the occasion the bidders pushed the price up to 290p per kg, when it was bought by Mr Sidney King junior, of Littleport.

The poultry, produce and furniture auctions continued for a while longer before the site was redeveloped. [SCAN OF FINAL CATTLE MARKET SALE AT ELY]

READERS WRITE

Mr O.R. Ericsson from Hauxton writes:

"I was most interested in your short article in the Evening News of the 14th July concerning the court case for the non repair of Hauxton church in 1929. Despite being involved with the church for more years than I care to remember I had never heard of the occasion reported. I will make sure reference is made when we next edit our small booklet about the church. You may be interested to know that we have raised sufficient funds, since commencing an Appeal in 1990, to completely restore this ancient building including the chancel. We are still waiting

on a report before carrying out expert restoration of the unique wall mural of Thomas a Becket.” [FIND NEWS PICTURE OF HAUXTON CHURCH]

Edna Fryer (nee Walton) from Fulbourn writes: “I was interested in your articles on the ambulance trains at Barnwell junction station. I was an ambulance driver during World War II and also have memories of hospital trains arriving there. If my memory served me right all our ambulance work, the unloading and transporting of army wounded and sick patients was done during the night. On one occasion we were told the wounded we were working with had started their journey from Anzio off the coast of Italy by hospital ship. I think we took patients to the Leys School, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Hinchingsbrooke and I do remember that we took all the German Prisoner of War wounded to the University Exam Halls in Downing Street. The RAF had its own hospital in Ely and the Americans used Wimpole Hall. I would be interested to hear from anyone else who took part in this war work”. If you have memories of ambulance work, do write. [SCAN OF AMBULANCE CREW 1970, SCAN OF AMBULANCE ENTERING OLD ADDENBROOKE'S HOSPITAL 1962]

John Lawrence e-mails: “I moved from Cambridge in 1969 and have lived in Yorkshire ever since. My sister forwards me articles and photographs by your News historian Mike Petty that I find of great interest. One small article in particular on February 4th 2004 was of a Cambridge Schoolboys team from 1934. The teacher in that photo looked like Roy Burrell who was still very much involved when I played for the Schoolboys team in 1951-52. I have a photograph of the 51-52 team that has unfortunately been damaged and the part that is missing is that of Roy Burrell. The photograph was taken by Cambridge Daily News at Chesterton School and has a reference number 8296”. Sadly this has not survived in the News files, but do you have a copy or can you identify any of the people shown? [SCAN OF THE 1951-2 CAMBRIDGE SCHOOLBOYS TEAM]

Memories 4th August 2004, by Mike Petty

Do you remember the rhymes and songs you sang in the playground? I asked a few weeks ago.

“Yes”, replied Susan Mackay of Linton, who has delved back to her memories of primary schooldays at Ashdon County Primary School in the 1950s. She writes:

Skipping, always regarded as a ‘girls’ game was a popular playground activity with plenty of chants to choose from to accompany the different games, most of which required a large number of participants.

‘Drip Drop’ was a game for experienced skippers with good timing. The younger girls would watch admiringly as their elders ran in and out of the rope with ease. When you were allowed to join in this game you had really arrived! Two girls would turn the rope while others ran in, initially for two skips and later for just one. The skill in this game was to run in on the same turn of the rope as someone ran out. The accompanying words were

(Two skips per person)
Drip, drop
Drop him in the sea.
Please pull
The rope for me.
Come, come
Coming to the fair?
No, no
The fair's not there

(One skip per person)

I

Must

Not

Miss

One

Loop

Or

I

Shall

Be

Out

In 'Bluebells' two girls gently swayed the rope from side to side while another jumped over it until the word 'over' was reached when normal skipping commenced:

Bluebells, cockleshells

Eevie, ivy, over

My mother said that I was born

In the month of

January

February

March etc – one skip per month with the rope being turned faster and faster until the skipper failed to clear it.

'On the Mountain' could be played with the skipper turning the rope herself or with two turners

On the mountain stands a lady

Who she is I do not know

All she wants is gold and silver

All she wants is a nice young man

So come in my (name) dear (named person runs in)

(Name) dear, (name) dear

Come in my (name) dear

While I go out to play (original skipper runs out)

Our repertoire of playground rhyming games was widened with the arrival of some children from Saffron Walden who introduced us to the skipping game, 'I know a boy'

I know a boy and he's double jointed

I kissed him, made him disappointed.

Now he's dead and I've got another one.

Bless his little heart,

He's better than the other one

All right (name of skipper), I'll tell your mother,

Kissing little (name of boy) round the corner

How many kisses did you give him?

One

Two

Three etc – one number for each skip until the skipper failed to clear the rope

The same children were responsible for teaching us a game called 'The King of Spain'. The skipping in this did not involve a rope. A row of pupils stood against a wall while another pupil skipped backwards and forwards; each time they reached the wall they would put a foot against it before backing away, accompanied by the song

Here comes the King, the King of Spain
To call upon my sister Jane.
My sister Jane is far too young
To marry a man of twenty one
So fly away, fly away,
Come again another day.
Face to face,
Back to back
Choose the one you love the best.

At this point the skipper chose a pupil from the wall who joined her in to-ing and fro-ing until the end of the rhyme when another pupil from the wall was chosen to join them and so on until everyone was in the skipping line

The prelude to all these games was a few pupils running round the playground, hand in hand, chanting "Who wants to play ...?" Other pupils would tag on to form a chain until sufficient numbers had been recruited.

I was one of the Ashdon pupils who lived at Hadstock. We travelled to and from school in rickety old buses which resounded with our chanting (unless we had a grumpy driver). Some of our chants featured local people including John Morley, a fishmonger from Linton whose cry of 'Fi-i-i-sho-o-o' alerted villagers to his arrival in Hadstock:

John Morley sells fish
Three ha'pence a dish
Don't buy it, don't buy it;
It stinks when you fry it

"I hope these memories from nearly half a century ago will be of interest. I'm amazed at the ease with which they came flooding back to me", Susan concludes. [FIND PICTURE OF ASHDON AND HADSTOCK, SCAN OF SKIPPING ON PARKER'S PIECE CAMBRIDGE 1937 BUT TRY AND FIND OTHER PICTURES OF CHILDREN SKIPPING]

Once the school gates were closed for the summer, children had to find other places to play

In March 1925 five Harston lads were each fined 2s.6d. for playing football in the highway. In his evidence to the court PC Carlton said there was only a small piece of grass near the White Swan and this was unfit for football purposes. During the summer cricket was allowed in the Park and at one time Mr Arthur Hurrell had let the boys play football in the meadow, but owing to some wilful damage being done he had withdrawn these facilities. [SCAN OF HARSTON IN 1920S]

Communities rallied round to provide somewhere safe for the children to play. In May 1928 Ely council decided to open the Barracks Field in Silver Street for organised games. Ely was very badly situated for child life; the streets were narrow and motor traffic made things worse for children to play on the streets. This was a most ideal spot provided they could find another field suitable for the council's horses. But their horsekeeper objected, pointing out he got no half-day on Saturday and if the horses had to go out of town it would be impossible for him to put them out to grass.

In May 1954 Teversham people turned up in substantial numbers for the opening of their new recreational ground, Queen's Playing Field. There were a lot of youngsters and adolescents getting into trouble because they had nowhere to play and it would keep them off the roads helping reduce the appalling number of accidents. Villagers had worked hard to get the land but this was just a start and they had plans for a children's adventure playground. These were quite small and very informal. You could have all kinds of junk, as children would be far happier playing with a lot of old junk rather than with the ordinary swings and slides. [FIND PICTURE OF TEVERSHAM]

The idea of an adventure playground was developed in the Arbury areas of Cambridge when parents raised the initial funding and in August 1974 were expecting between 150 and 300 children to pour into the new Adventure Playground enclosure each day.

It was laid out like an outpost of the US Cavalry after the Indians had been. There was a 10-foot-high perimeter stockade, big main gates and a high watch-tower in the middle. In one corner were the livestock, all snuffling, clucking and crowing. On another was 'Venus' an old landing craft looking rather washed up and nearer the middle a large battered playhut. It was not for the fastidious or tidy-minded but it was an excellent place to light fires, cook sausages and potatoes and melt down old cola cans into aluminium ingots. Such activities together with others such as building dens and whizzing down the aerial ropeway were everyday events overseen by the play leaders who would supervise the site 12-hours a day, seven days a week throughout the holidays. [SCAN OF ARBURY PLAY AREA, AUGUST 1974 – NEG 1958/74/13; SCAN OF CAKE CUTTING TO CELEBRATE ITS 16TH BIRTHDAY IN 1989 (NEG 251089G) – THERE ARE BETTER COPIES OF THESE AND OTHER PICS IN THE NEWS LIBRARY]

It brought a sense of adventure into young lives that might otherwise be spent moping on street corners wondering 'What can I do ...?'

So what did you do in those long six-weeks holidays, before there were computer games to play with – and what adventures did you enjoy in the summers of your youth? Write to Mike Petty

Memories 11th August 2004, by Mike Petty

Recent "Memories" articles have prompted responses from several readers but it was Edna Fryer's experiences during the second world war that was very personal for one reader. Edna recalled on 28th July that she had been an ambulance driver transporting army wounded to Addenbrooke's Hospital and the Leys School annexe, adding: "On one occasion we were told the wounded we were working with had started their journey from Anzio off the coast of Italy by hospital ship"

This has prompted Mrs Kath Gray to write: "I was very interested in Mrs Fryer's letter about driving the wounded soldiers home from Anzio. My husband was one of them. He was wounded on the Anzio beachhead. The ship was brought into Bristol and then they came by ambulance to the Leys School. When I knew he was there I took our son down to see him. But after nearly three years apart the Sister would not let us see him until he was washed and cleaned. So we walked up and down Brookside for half an hour before I could go in. He was very badly wounded, but he was home". [PERHAPS FIND PIC OF BROOKSIDE]

Her experiences were sadly not unique; parents of young children with broken limbs were not allowed to visit them until they had been in hospital for four weeks and even then could only see them for an hour-and-a-half on Saturday afternoons.

The Leys School buildings played an important role during wartime, as Geoff and Pat Houghton have recalled in their history 'Well-regulated minds and improper moments'. After the fall of Dunkirk in June 1940 the country prepared for the worst. The Ministry of Health were looking for additional hospital spaces and the Leys had already been used in the First World War. So the school staff and pupils were evacuated to Scotland and the buildings prepared for military casualties and civilian patients.

The first arrivals were evacuees and their mothers rushed out from London and for over 3,300 people the Leys was their first experience of Cambridge. Meanwhile beds for some 375 patients were being fitted in while the basement of the school's East House was strengthened in case of air raids and converted into an Operating Theatre.

The top floors of two of the Houses were used for male patients while the ground and first floors housed maternity and gynaecological cases. This meant removing parts of the banisters so that stretchers could be carried upstairs; later a lift was installed but once the war was over it was dismantled and transferred to the main Addenbrooke's Hospital building in Trumpington Street – now the Judge Institute.

The nursing staff found that life in school dorms was not ideal; they complained that the rooms were too cold and demanded gas fires. The hospital porters were conscientious objectors who had been male dancers in the Royal Ballet Company. Once when needed to take a patient from one ward to another they could not be found. Eventually they were discovered practising ballet steps, holding on to a hospital trolley.

As well as Kath's husband the Leys cared for Canadian soldiers injured in the Battle of Arnhem and at the end of the war British soldiers who had been Prisoners of War were sent for a health-check before being returned to their regiments. One Red Cross lady given the task of getting things ready for them was appalled by the state of the beds and the chipped enamel mugs and plates. She was still so fuming as she cycled home that she rode through traffic lights on red. When two policemen rebuked her she told them they ought to have better things to do – and was duly prosecuted. She wanted to appear in court to make a protest against the conditions the ex-prisoners of war were being asked to endure, but her husband persuaded her to pay up and keep quiet. [FIND PICTURE OF LEYS SCHOOL]

But do you have memories of the Leys during wartime?

My recent mention of James Street (Memories 21st July) has prompted memories for Jack Williamson of Cambridge, who has known the area for the past 80 years. He writes:

"I was born in James Street in 1923 and lived there for a long time. The only shop in the street was Leveringtons, a general store – later an antique shop. As a schoolboy I traversed East Road four times a day to the Central Boys School on Parkside, so I know it well. The White Ribbon Hostel, next to Coulson Building Works and two houses from the corner of Gold Street, was run by the Salvation Army. Nearby was the Working Mens Club. I knew most of the businesses carried out in the Kite area and loved it. That was before they turned it into 'Legoland', and now I hate it" By happy coincidence George Blows of Cambridge has sent me a picture of the Working Mens' Club that should jog more memories. [SCAN OF WORKING MEN'S CLUB EAST ROAD]

Nick Richardson also has memories of the area: "As a young lad in the mid 1950s I can remember going with my grandmother to the phone box next to Ward's shop at the corner of East Road and Norfolk Street. She wanted to speak to her daughter who lived in Louisiana, U.S.A., and booked the time of the call in advance with the Post Office. They told her to be at the phone box at 7.30 on Thursday evening when the operator would try and get a line. We got there a few minutes early to make sure no-one was using the phone, and get ourselves into

the box. At 7.30 the phone rang and the operator said 'Go ahead with your call'. For the first minute or two they were crying, then said 'hello' and it was almost finished until the next month when they'd do it all over again". [SCAN WARD'S SHOP EAST ROAD]

Joyce and Peter Lewis write from Cambridge: "Your article about the Antiques Roadshow on July 28th gave us much pleasure, especially when we saw the photograph of Arthur Negus. He was a family friend when we lived in Cheltenham 50 years ago. He was a delightful man and very popular there before he became involved with the Antiques Roadshow which meant such a lot of work, travelling and entertaining the public with his knowledge. He looked around various sales in London for our parents as they wished to purchase a nice card table; after their death we brought it to Cambridge and still use it for a game of Bridge. I have found another picture of Arthur at Ely in 1979 – do you recognise anybody else? [SCAN OF ARTHUR NEGUS AT ELY WITH ANTIQUES ROADSHOW 1979]

Various readers have responded to the photograph of the Cambridge Schoolboys football team 1951-52 that was sent in by John Lawrence from Huddersfield. Roger Osborne e-mailed to say he recognised the teacher on the right of the photo as Henry Bugg who was still at Chesterton school when he attended some years later. This is confirmed by somebody who should know: his widow, Christina, who tells me he taught at Chesterton for over 30 years. The other teacher shown is Mr B. Chapman from the Manor School and together they taught many boys including two who went on to achieve sporting fame – Bruce Rioch and Willie Carr. The first person to respond was Maurice Rolph from Cambridge and when I e-mailed John he was delighted: "Many thanks; ironically Maurice Rolph was my best man and we had lost touch over the years, certainly for the 35 years that I have been in Yorkshire. Now I have telephoned him" [SCAN OF SCHOOLBOY PIC]

Mr K. Bright wrote in to ask for details of why his father, Arthur Bright, had been awarded an OBE for work at the Cambridge Instrument Company (Memories July 7th). Now has dropped me a line to say that two readers have been in touch to give him the information he required. Since then I have met another gentleman who actually worked in the same Laboratory. If you could do with similar help do write to me as there's a great store of information in the minds of the people who read the 'Memories' articles

[IF YOU HAVE TO CUT SOME STORIES PLEASE KEEP THIS LAST ONE]

I met Roy Chamberlain of Foxton the other day. He tells me his family always buy two copies of the News on Wednesday as neither of them can wait to see what's in 'Memories', and that there is a regular inquest next day on what was right or wrong with other members of the Foxton 'antiquarians'. Back in April Roy wrote to me and I featured some of his letter; but he went on to say: "I remember when the R101 airship had an early morning flight before its tragic intended trip to India. I heard an unusual noise, looked out of my bedroom window and there was the R101, going slowly, when it suddenly dived or hit an air pocket at about 30 degrees and went out of sight behind a small hill. I quickly dressed, got my bicycle out and went up the hill. It was still flying, very low and I watched it while it was in view, then came home to Foxton, relieved." Now I have had a letter from Mrs Joan Smith of Cambridge who has lent two postcards she found amongst the papers of her late aunt. One on them shows the giant airship Roy saw; it was taken at Cardington before its fateful flight. [SCAN OF R101]

Memories 18th August 2004, by Mike Petty

Last week year the News headlined an important new development in cinema facilities: the installation of state-of-the-art digital equipment to show subtitled screenings of the latest blockbuster films. Now the deaf and hard-of-hearing can enjoy bug screen films with friends and family. [SCAN OF NEWS HEADLINE 10TH AUG]

But just 75 years ago, in August 1929, the News was headlining preparations for Cambridge's first talking pictures, which would make subtitles unnecessary. A CDN reporter was amongst the first to experience the new age as he made his way to the Central Cinema in Hobson Street for the screening of 'Broadway Melody'. "The biggest obstacle to an English audience is undoubtedly the American voice. Its inflexions to an English ear are harsh and monotonous, a defect intensified by the limitations of amplifiers which have only half the range of a good speaking voice. The dialogue is the weakest part but the singing and the spectacular parts of the picture are on the other hand masterly. The amplification affects it far less and such numbers as 'Broadway Melody' come over perfectly", he reported [SCAN OF HEADLINE 'TALKIFYING CAMBRIDGE CDN 15 AUG 1929]

But what would the ordinary cinema-goers make of it? The News opened up its columns to its readers: "The talking film is at present a novelty and like all new things it attracts, but its popularity in the future is doubtful" – W.E. Crewe, Mill Road. "The talkies are decidedly better than the silent films; the only fear is the type of story used. Let us hope it will not be stereotyped like so many of the silent films" – Ronald Barker. "The eulogistic letters extolling 'Talkies' surely are written when their writers' minds are numbed by the tunes or doped with the American sentiment. We are now faced with a ghastly future of an endless succession of Broadway Melodies ... an invasion of American blatancy and vulgarisms far worse than the silent films. Surely we should not put up with this awful travesty of our language" – 'Non Broadway'. "I think the Talkies are wonderful and should not like to see silent films again" – L. Cherry, Round Church Street. "What if the silent film dies out? Can one imagine such films as 'Ben Hur' or 'The King of Kings' as 'Talkies'. No never; I say 'Silence is golden'" – E. Essery, Merton Street.

While everybody remembers the first talkie to hit Cambridge, what was the second? It was 'Show Boat', apparently a film that combined both talkie and silent film in one. "For the first half-hour we wondered whether it really was a talking film at all, for although the characters kept opening their mouths, not a sound came from them. The dialogue was conveyed by means of the customary screen captions while the Show Boat band or mechanical organ played a running accompaniment of old-time melodies. Later the voices came across in true 'talkie' style but were sometimes so distorted as to spoil the effect"

Whatever the opinions talkies were heard to stay; no longer would the silent cinema resound to the sound of dozens of voices reading the subtitles out loud; they were a thing of the past – until now. [SCAN OF CENTRAL CINEMA, HOBSON STREET – THE FIRST TO SHOW TALKIES; FIND MODERN PIC OF CINEWORLD OR CAMBRIDGE VUE WHICH NOW SHOWING SUB-TITLED FILMS]

Peggy Pink from Cambridge contacted me after seeing a picture of her mother swinging a skipping rope on Parker's Piece in 1937. (Memories 4th August). In fact most of the family are there too – Peggy herself, then aged 9 ¾ [NINE AND THREE QUARTERS] beside her with her aunt Hilda behind. The question was – did the original photo also show her sister Pamela as well. Peering into the edge of the photo it does seem half of her might be there and I will need to track down the negative to see if there is more. Peggy tells me that whole families went together each Good Friday for the traditional skipping and the Piece was packed with stalls set up along Parkside selling trinkets, candyfloss and balls on elastic [DETAIL OF PICTURE SHOWING PEGGY, HER AUNT, MOTHER AND SISTER (EXTREME RIGHT)]

It was a welcome break from the hardship of the daily grind in the depressed days of the 1930s. Peggy's father had worked for Fremlins off-licence in Newmarket Road, running the shop with his wife and going out with a horse and wagon during the daytime to deliver supplies of beer to well-to-do houses out at Shelford, Fulbourn and Wilbraham. Peggy remembers riding with him and had a great time, often being given a piece of fruit or a

lollipop by the customers. The horse was stabled at the Newmarket Road end of the Working Mens' Club (which by coincidence was featured in Memories on 11th August). "I used to go with my father to help him groom and clean out the stable. I was small enough to walk under the horse's stomach", she recalls, adding: "It seems such a rural thing to have a horse stabled in East Road. But an elderly aunt told me she used to see cows driven along Coldham's Lane when she was a girl to go to Goodrum's dairy to be milked!" [SCAN OF NEWMARKET ROAD IN 1928 WHEN HORSES WERE COMMON]

But her dad could not drive and lost his job when motors came in; instead he found work digging drains at Waterbeach, riding his bike there and back. The family moved to East Road and Peggy started to save for her own bike, taking a little girl called Valerie Dean to school every day for her parents who ran a busy greengrocers shop in Burleigh Street and on Saturday doing their week's washing up. After eighteen months she had saved 27/6 [TWENTY SEVEN SHILLINGS AND SIX PENCE] and her parents gave her the last half-crown for the second-hand machine. "This sturdy bicycle was passed to my younger sister, then to the eldest three children of the family of five next door, until the middle boy made a go-cart with it" she recalls.

Janet Morris from Bar Hill has sent her recollections of playtime at Morley Memorial School in the 1950s. "We certainly skipped and played jacks (fivestones) and marbles according to the time of year, and I remember one chant which went 'The big ship sails on the alley-alley-oo, the alley-alley-oo, the alley-alley-oo, the big ship sails on the alley-alley-oo, on the last day of September' (or possibly December). The game which went with it involved holding on to a tree growing up against a wall in the playground, but I can't remember how it was played. I also remember the more agile girls (we were separated from the boys at playtime) doing handstands against walls or fences and occasionally walking on their hands for a short distance. We used to throw balls up against walls and catch them, sometimes allowing them to bounce and sometimes turning round or performing other movements while the ball was in the air. Tig was another favourite game and one rhyme for choosing 'it' was 'Penny on the water, tuppence on the sea, threepence on the railway and out goes he'. But I'm not sure whether I used this myself or heard it from my parents." [SCAN OF CHILDREN AT MORLEY SCHOOL 1950S]

Such games were not confined to Cambridge as Rosamond Key recalls. She went to school in Hockwold-cum-Wilton: "One of the games we used to play in the playground and after school was skipping. We had a long piece of rope, one of us holding each end. We used to have to run in time to the rhyme that we were singing and we managed to get six to eight of us in at a time! Another game was whips and tops. We used to colour the tops with chalk of different colours so they looked pretty when they spun. We played many ball games ranging from twosey up the wall to football. A whole group of us used to play together and spent many happy hours playing hide and seek around the village in the evenings. Of course we were lucky as there was very little traffic in those days and we could play in the roads too. I also remember playing for hours with my dolls and prams."

But getting to school was difficult as sisters Barbara Allen and Mary Hanslip recalled: "Our first memories are of living in Southery Fen in 1931. We walked three and half miles to school and as this was mostly fen road we had to wear sensible shoes because of the mud. These were laced up leather boots and we hated the fact that we had to wear them and the children who lived near the school could wear nice shoes. In winter it was dark when we left home in the morning and dark again by the time we arrived home. Later we moved to the other side of the river but carried on going to school in Southery. This meant we had to cross the river twice a day we were lucky as there was an old lady and gentleman who lived on a houseboat (Mr and Mrs Money); they had wire across the river and used to pull the boat over by it. If it were near their food time she would say 'You will have to wait until we've had our

vitals'. There were no hot dinners, we had to take sandwiches with us. If anyone misbehaved at school they got the cane".

Their memories, together with those of Rosamond and a group of other fen folk have now been collected and published in a booklet "50 years in and around Littleport" which is available for £4 including postage from the compiler, Tom Daly of 20 Isleham Road, Fordham, CB7 5NL [SCAN OF A CHAIN FERRY – NOT SOUTHERY]

Kate Howarth-Brown is seeking other memories of childhood; she e-mails "Do you know if any of the Cambridgeshire photographers called Smith had a daughter called Kate or Katie. My mother has a photograph of her mother as a child taken at Aberdovey in which she is posed almost as a nymph at the water's edge. Originally there were two other photos similarly posed. Apparently Katie Smith often took her holidays in Aberdovey around 1915-1917 and whilst there became very friendly with my grandmother's parents. The reaction to the photos was very mixed even in a more innocent age but I believed this sort of fairytale photo was what she specialised in".

If you can help with this or have other memories please contact Mike Petty at the News

Memories 25th August 2004, by Mike Petty

Throughout the county, parish by parish, the constant round of coffee mornings afternoon teas or garden fetes are arranged as communities raise money for the repair of their churches. It is a struggle that has continued for centuries.

But just 25 years ago, on 25th August 1979, the parishioners at Ickleton were sharing the trauma of having been awoken late at night to find that their church was alight. While five fire engines raced to the scene they had formed a human chain to salvage valuables from their Saxon building, trundling them away on wheelbarrows to be stored for temporary safe-keeping in barns opposite the church.

But although they removed a painting of the arms of King George II, the altar cross, candles and the hassocks illustrating scenes of the village's history they could not save the fabric of the church itself.

That was down to the firemen. But despite their heroic efforts the blaze which had been started behind the organ in the south transept completely destroyed the chancel roof, a valuable fresco painted on the oak ceiling below the belfry and the organ that had only recently been renovated at a cost of £1,000. There was also tremendous smoke damage but the stone itself had survived as had the oak pews, and the church records were found intact in the safe. [SCAN 10071 ICKLETON CHURCH 1937; FIND PHOTOS FROM NEWS ARTICLE 25TH AUGUST 1979, FIND MORE RECENT PICTURES OF THE CHURCH AFTER RESTORATION]

Few other parishes have faced such devastation. One was Great Shelford back in November 1798 when the church tower collapsed. It had been obvious for some time that something serious was likely to happen and when it did the parishioners rallied round to rebuild it. [SCAN 99.65 OF GT SHELFORD TOWER AFTER COLLAPSE 1798]. But when the tower of All Saint's church at Fulbourn collapsed in 1766 the congregation decided not to bother to rebuild; for they had two churches in the one churchyard and so they just switched to St Vigor's alongside [SCAN 9606 THE TWO FULBOURN CHURCHES BEFORE 1766]

At Knapwell when the chancel collapsed in 1753 the rector obtained permission to rebuild 'the great rambling old chancel to one of smaller and more useful size'. However the problems were far from solved. In 1785 parts of the nave also collapsed and the church

became unusable. For the next eighty years services were held in a village barn. Eventually in 1861 Henry Brown was appointed curate, walking from Cambridge to take the morning and evening services. He set about raising money to rebuild the tumbledown church and a grant was made by the Incorporated Society for Building Churches. The most successful local architect, W.N. Fawcett, was employed to make the designs and the new church was completed in 1866.

The parishioners at Wendy almost got used to losing their churches. The original medieval church was in such a ruinous condition that it was replaced in 1737 by a small plain building without a chancel. But its foundations were so poor that it lasted for little more than a century: by 1863 the gable was a long way out of perpendicular and the congregation could look out into the churchyard through the huge cracks in the walls. So four years later it was replaced by a new church built by public subscription and containing a fine 16th-century double hammer beam roof which had been rescued from the old church of All Saints, Cambridge. This had itself been demolished two years earlier. However history repeated itself: the foundations were again inadequate and the church was pulled down in 1950. [SCAN 10399 OF WENDY CHURCH WHICH WAS TAKEN DOWN IN 1950]

Occasionally the damage has been caused by 'An act of God': Reach church was severely damaged after being struck by lightning in 1958 [MAY BE PICTURE IN NEWS FILES]. At other times it has been the act of man: Heydon church was damaged during a wartime raid in 1940; the bomb blew out five bells in the church tower which collapsed and tore down half the nave and part of the aisle. It was shored up until it could be restored in 1956. [SCAN 10123 OF HEYDON CHURCH AFTER BOMBING AND 64.77 INSCRIPTION RE BOMBING AUG 1964]

But whatever the cause, people have found the strength to rally round to ensure that the church building continues stands at the heart of their parish as it has for centuries, and the coffee mornings, afternoon teas and garden fetes continue to do their essential work.

Memories 1st September 2004, by Mike Petty

Caroline Wardle from Cambridge has been recalling her early days at Milton Road Junior school, soon shortly to be replaced by a new building.

She left in July 1966 and says things have changed very much since her days there. She recalls milk monitors, hymn sheets, dinners shipped in in huge silver containers and dinner money. "Dinner money - five shillings a week - had to be taken in on a Monday morning (along with your shoe bag with indoor pumps and plimsolls in). And the dinner money tended to arrive in old tins - tobacco, sweet tins etc. Odd - so many children used old tobacco tins yet most of our fathers never smoked roll-ups - so who kept supplying these tins remains a mystery!"

Caroline remembers the camp beds the youngest infant class had: "the caretaker used to erect a bed per child whilst we had lunch and we were all made to have a sleep after lunch - covered by an exceedingly scratchy, dark-grey wool blanket which made you itch!"

"In particular I can remember a May Day event when the parents attended. We all danced round the Maypole holding a coloured ribbon in our hand, and as we weaved in and out, ducking under some peoples arms, then ducking under ours at different points, we formed a beautiful design in a regular pattern of colours around the pole." [SCAN 72.01 MILTON ROAD SCHOOL MAY QUEEN 1952 (BEFORE CAROLINE'S TIME)]

And the loos: "We only had outside loos, a big, red-brick building and had to change our shoes and run across the playground in all weathers to get to them. In winter everything froze out there (including your bottom if you hung around!) so life used to get pretty whiffy and unpleasant!"

“By the time we were half-way through the Juniors, we all knew exactly why the girls and the boys had different loos (boys one side, girls the other). Obvious! Girls got pregnant if they sat on a toilet after a boy, and that's how our parents had landed up having us! They'd been forced to use the same loo at home and sometimes the naughty Daddy had forgotten to raise the seat, hence we were born!!!

“This was worked out and discussed in great depth at every break - mid-morning, lunch and mid-afternoon - for at least a week solid, by those considered brightest. The rest just listened in. But I don't think any of us bothered to tell our parents we now knew how they'd got us and all about the facts of life!”

Milton Road School has affected so very many thousands of lives - not only pupils but all the staff too – and Caroline would love to hear other people's recollections of their time there, before the old school door closes for good.

She's sent me a couple of photos of the school in the 1960s. One is of a class group in 1963:

“We had a teacher, Miss Buchanan, who came from New Zealand, and as part of a class project, learned about Maoris. We made the grass skirts ourselves at school though Mums made the girls' tops and the pois. We learned a traditional Maori song which the whole class sang whilst the boys hit their sticks together and the girls did a typical Maori dance. Apart from helping teach us about the country, culture and history of New Zealand, the class also did their song and dance at the Guildhall. In those days there was a festival for local Primary school children held annually, and our Maori routine was the Milton Road entry for that year. We all had enormous fun - as you can imagine - but because the whole project was such a 'hands on' one, we also retained the information we covered in class.” [SCAN 100.67]

“The second photograph of boys in Mr Hoskins' class in 1966 is interesting, I think, because it shows just what dramatic changes have occurred in such a relatively short space of . The dark, glazed tiles on the walls - just the desks and chairs themselves - all looks more like something from Dickens! Yet the oldest of my year are only just approaching their 50th birthdays, and at the time we certainly didn't consider our surroundings inferior - they were normal and acceptable and as far as we were concerned, we were actually rather advantaged! Having seen the pictures of the school as it is now on its web pages well, you'd never believe it's the same place and I dread to think what the present children would think if they saw the rooms as they were in my day! However, some things don't change. I noticed when I walked past the school that during term-time there were still plastic washing-up liquid type bottles of ready mixed paint standing on the window ledges of the classrooms. Very reassuring! Oh - and the white line painted on the surface of the playground - it marks the division between the infant and junior playgrounds - is still there, too. Woe betide anyone who put a foot over the line and stepped into the 'wrong' playground - though I'm sure things are more relaxed now! [SCAN 100.66]

Margery Haigh of Trumpington has also sent me one of the school in 1920s [SCAN 97.21]
[ALSO SCAN 61 – SOME OF THE FIRST PUPILS AT MILTON ROAD LEARN GARDENING C1909]

If you have memories to share please write to me at the News and I will pass them on

Readers write

Numerous readers have sent in their memories of the Leys School annexe to Addenbrooke's Hospital during the Second World War

Some helped out, as Joyce Mansfield (nee Phillips) of Cambridge recalls: “Pupils of the Chesterton Senior Girls School who were members of a Junior Red Cross group were asked to help with the washing up after the patients' evening meal. One evening two of us were asked to wash an iron bed with a carbolic solution. Apparently the patient had died and the bed frame and springs had to be washed before it could be used again. No fear of any bugs then”

Rachel Atkins, nee Rolph who is now living in Gosport, Hants, started nursing at the Leys in 1943; she might have treated Audrey Garner (nee Sharp) from Impington: "In September 1942 I was ill and taken to Addenbrooke's Hospital. They took me on to School House, Leys Annexe. I had rheumatic fever and was there for a month. They were very kind to me, but my heart was affected and I was away from the Central School for a year."

Other readers recall taking their children there:

Margaret Cream from Cambridge: "My 18-month-old daughter was found to have 'congenital dislocation' of her hips. A Mr Butler looked after her, putting on plaster in 'frog position'. She spent several weekends in the Leys over the next 13 months having checks or new plaster. It was all very successful and as Mr Butler promised she was fine until after middle age, though now all the bones are crumbling and she needs a new hip. How I wish he was here now!

Two readers had contrasting experiences of the same complaint:

Muriel Moorman (nee Le Roy) of Fulbourn: "In January 1941 my four-year-old brother, Keith, was taken by ambulance to the Leys with meningitis. My mother took me (I was twelve years old) to visit him. He was in a little L-shaped room with another little boy. My brother died next day and I have never forgotten that room". Others were more fortunate: Mabel Law from Longstowe: "My sister, Margaret Ambrose (nee Northrop) was taken ill with meningitis and was taken to the Leys for treatment until she recovered. She was a 'clippie' on the Eastern Counties bus company."

Perhaps she was one of the bus conductors recalled by Miss Margaret Skempton of Coton:

"My father Geoffrey Skempton was at the Leys during 1945. He was wounded in the Battle of Arnhem and taken to Nijmegen Hospital, then by train and boat to Derby City Hospital before going

local people and was also allowed to travel home on the bus to see my mother, and me, then living at Eaton Ford near St Neots. Having both wrists in plaster he had to ask bus conductors to get the fare out of his pocket, but some would not and allowed him to travel free. On the return journey my mother put the fare in his hand before seeing him on the bus"

Ivy Kirkup (nee Sewell) from Impington was one of those who helped the wounded: "My sister Joan and myself spent weekends helping out on the wards; most of my time was spent writing short letters to the poor soldiers' parents just to let them know where they were and how they were. We would put those patients who were not so badly wounded but very depressed in wheelchairs and take them along Trumpington Street and across a meadow down to the river for a walk to cheer them up. We got very tired as we had to cycle from Haslingfield but I think we did a good job just to see a smile on their faces. I hope many of the poor lads are now enjoying a happy retirement." [REPRISE LEYS SCHOOL PICTURE FROM PREVIOUS WEEK]

POSSIBLY HOLD OVER

The recent plagues of hover flies and wasps recalls similar invasions in summers gone by. In July 1979 it was greenfly, as the News reported: The ferocity of the invasion has turned shop fronts green with aphid slime. Motorists are battling hard as swarms of flies cause clouded windscreens while at home all doors and windows have to be firmly closed despite the heat. It is now getting difficult to hold conversations outside without swallowing mouthfuls of greenflies and all citizens are being advised to go to the nearest swimming pool, retire to the bar or simply stay indoors."

But back in August 1929 it was flies that hit. A correspondent wrote: “The flies were particularly thick in the Willingham district, where they literally clogged the air. It was almost impossible to cycle in some places without the protection of goggles. The tiny slate-coloured insects flew in dense clouds, filling people’s eyes, ears, mouths, noses and hair and penetrating to the innermost recesses of one’s clothes. About mid-day on Friday the main street of Willingham was filled from end to end with the pests and life was a burden. It is estimated that if it had been possible to precipitate them to the ground they would have covered it to a depth of half an inch or more” [SCAN 9961 – WILLINGHAM WINDMILL WHERE FLIES CLOGGED THE AIR]

So does you have memories of insect plagues?

Memories 8th September 2004, by Mike Petty

While spending a few days away in Norfolk I found myself rummaging through the books in a charity shop in Reepham. For some reason one volume caught my eye. It was a concordance to the works of Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Christian Science movement. But tucked inside it was a slip of paper that was worth a donation in its own right.

It was a bill dated 15th January 1952 from W. Rothwell of 29 Victoria Road, Cambridge to a Miss Wright of 57 Eltisley Avenue. The billhead records Mr Rothwell as a ‘Practical Furrier’, an expert in remodelling and renovations who undertook dyeing and cleaning at the owner’s risk. His job this time had been: “Natural Musquash Coatee shortened at the hem, and the ‘cut-off’ usde (sic) to repair many broken places in various parts of the coat. The old lining sewn back”. For this he had charged £1.15.0

Fur coats were much regarded in the immediate post-war days. Princess Margaret had worn a fawn-coloured version - complete with blue lizard sling-back shoes and a grey lizard bag - when she’d paid her first visit to Cambridge in January 1948, accompanying Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary on a visit to Mr S.N. Woolston’s antique shop in St Andrew’s Street.

Ellis Powell – of Mrs Dale’s Diary fame – had worn a fur coat over a royal blue dress when she’d opened the new branch of the Co-op on the housing estate at Whitehill Road, Cambridge in December 1952 although the Co-op did not include such coats amongst their usual stock. However Joshua Taylor showed a beautiful fur coat in Russian ermine, priced at only £1,195 at a Fashion Parade in 1953, alongside drain-pipe corduroy slacks in navy and red vertical stripes worn with an off white wool and mohair jacket.

But by the sound of things Mrs Wright’s coat had seen hard wear; perhaps she’d been one of the ladies who braved the elements and flocked to the University Arms Hotel in 1924 for what the CDN described as ‘a treat such as the feminine soul loves’. The middle of the large dining room was empty except for a small dais. A band discoursed dance music, and to the strains of a waltz there floated into the room a vision of beauty in a delightful blue and silver frock, trimmed with fur. She was speedily followed by another in black crepe de chine and yet another in a straight simple afternoon dress. They all went through a set programme, pausing as they entered, posing gracefully and making various graceful movements to display the garments, before finally vanishing back through the entrance. All this was done with a detached, almost mechanical air, as expected at a mannequin parade organised by Miss Poupard.

Or could she have made the acquaintance of “Ben”, a talking dog owned by Mr Alfred Brissenden of Royston, who appeared in television’s “Picture Page” in September 1946, when he almost let down the side by mistaking a fellow artiste’s fur coat for a cat.

Can anybody shed light on either of the people concerned – or should I have delved further into the rails of that charity shop where the coatee itself might still have been lurking. [SCAN OF VICTORIA ROAD 1963, SCAN OF ELTISLEY AVENUE 1925 WITH ICE-CREAM MAN – NO NEED FOR FUR COAT THEN, SCAN OF LADY IN FUR COAT LOOKING AT CLOTHES ON CAMBRIDGE MARKET STALL 1938, SCAN OF THE BILL 1952]

More memories of Milton Road School have continued to flood in.

Councillor John Powley from Soham e-mails: “I attended Milton Road Infants and Junior schools from 1940 to 1947. Obviously there was a war on for most of that time with all the problems that a war brought. The teachers I recall were as follows. Headmaster was Mr Varley, teachers Mr Leach, Mrs Tregett, Miss Samuels, Miss Buchanan. I think that the head teacher of the infants was Miss Shrive. When I was old enough I recall riding my bicycle from Lovell Road (where we lived) to Milton Road School. This was quite a long way for a young lad but there was not so much traffic in those days. We did not have any sports field, we used Cambridge City Football Club grounds or Jesus Green. I had school dinners whilst there but had the advantage (?) of my mother being a dinner lady. Another dinner lady was Mrs Andrews whose son, Richard, (now living in New Zealand) became my best man. I also recollect that we were regularly visited by the "nit nurse". I must say that Mr Varley the headmaster commanded a great deal of respect from staff and pupils, and taught everyone a sense of values not very often seen today.

Ann Stone from Swavesey has different recollections: “I have vivid memories of Milton Road School during the war in the 1940's - not as a pupil but as a patient at the Dental Surgery which was in a room at the front of the school building. It was run by two lady dentists and I can remember sitting in the 'dreaded ' chair looking at a blood stained bowl full of extracted teeth, to my left. There was also a shelf with a collection of gruesome looking dental equipment. Once I had had an injection & was sent into an anti room until it took effect. After the extraction I was again sent into another room with big wads of cotton wool in my mouth to soak up the blood. Other children sat in the same room awaiting their turn. Needless to say, with these memories imprinted on my mind I have never got over my fear of visits to the dentist! [PHOTO OF GROUP AT MILTON ROAD SCHOOL IN 1978 ON CHRIS ELLIOTT'S DESK]

Unique medical memories of the Leys School in wartime have come all the way from the USA. Mary Brown writes: “I was most interested in the article I read of August 11, 2004. I am an Addenbrookes Hospital trained nurse and was promoted to Night Sister at the Leys. I recall so well walking those grounds in the middle of the night from North House to East House, and across the street to Brookside, to make rounds on the patients. One night I went through the main entrance when suddenly a soldier jumped out from around the building scaring me. They were on military manoeuvres but I think he was as surprised as I was to see a hospital sister out that late at night. We were required to wait for military convoys to arrive from the railway station for hospital admissions. They usually arrived between 3 a.m. - 5 a.m. They were given water immediately for a brief wash, and then a meal. Many of them were quite ill from being in prison camps overseas, and had travelled long distances.

“I later held the position of Sister in Charge of a twenty bed unit for British Officers. Many of them stayed a short while and after medical clearance for such conditions as diabetes were returned to their regiments. We had a few seriously ill wounded men who were with us for a long time. I recall one officer who joined up in India. His family home was in Suffolk and his mother visited him almost every day which was a great stimulant to his progress. When he recovered from his many complications there was great rejoicing from the other officers who has been so supportive of him. On the day he was allowed out on a late pass they celebrated

by throwing toilet rolls out of the windows; I was horrified as toilet paper was a scarce item at that time!

“For a short period I was responsible for a ward of German prisoners, located in School House. There were guards on duty at all times, but we had no problems. We were taught several phrases in German such as "Did you sleep well?" and "Do you have pain?" The older prisoners were polite and grateful, but the younger ones were not so co-operative, especially when we had to turn them on their sides to dress their wounds. They would always raise their right arms and shout "Heil Hitler" when we removed the dressing cart from their bedside. We did not respond in any way to this gesture. We found out later that they were swearing badly in German while we were doing their dressings

“The task of closing this temporary hospital was considerable as we had to have detailed inventory of equipment for the Ministry of Health. This was my final task before transferring back to the old Addenbrookes” [REPRIEVE PIC OF LEYS SCHOOL]

Another regular reader in the USA is Maggie Primeau (nee Hayden) who e-mails:
“I was born and lived in Cambridge until 1964 and have recently started reading your column in the News via the Internet. What wonderful memories they are bringing back: hiding under the table during an air-raid with a swastika painted underneath to poke our tongues out at, walking all the way to school from Elm St when I did not have the bus fare. Listening to the band on Christ's Pieces on Sundays, Rock and Rolling at the Rex in the 50's. The story of Gwydir St Bath-house also brought back good times. What a great town Cambridge was then. I was also proud to be the niece of PC William Hayden who in his time was a great athlete. I now reside in the USA but will be retiring back home soon.”

Memories 15th September 2004, by Mike Petty

Doreen Bacon from Fulbourn has sent me a photo of her older brother, Charles Fitness in his magician's kit. It was taken in a field at Exning in 1946 just after he had been demobbed after the war

Doreen had a happy childhood growing up in the new council houses on Exning Road Newmarket with her mum, dad and 'Charlie magic', her big four-years older brother; “I could never remember the time when he wasn't around. Just as I was struggling to walk and following him around the house and garden there was another baby on the scene. When Charlie was called to inspect the new arrival he said in a puzzled tone, 'But why did you get another one? She's just like the one I've got'. Then off he went to start school. I was left with the baby for company, but it was not the same.

“In winter we all played in the street under the gas lamps. There was hopscotch on the pavement, skipping, paper chases, chalk chases and yo-yos. The Muffin man brought muffins and crumpets to toast on the fire with a long toasting fork. On Saturdays we would eagerly await the arrival of the mail van, if it was Mr Butler he would say 'Hop in the back'. As we knew His Majesty's mail carrier was not allowed to carry passengers the drill was that if anyone stopped him we had to dive quickly under the pile of empty mailbags.

“Dad worked in the Post Office in Newmarket High Street. When in town we called in the Sorting Office to see him. I liked to sit on the revolving stool and watch them put letters in the pigeonholes. The limbless ex-servicemen would sit on the pavement in the High Street and draw pictures. When Dad took the Post office money to the bank he would say, as he gave them something, 'There but for the grace of God go I'. He had been a soldier in the Great War

and came back all in one piece, but never forgot those who did not. I wonder how he felt 20 years later when one by one his three children put on a uniform and went off to war.

“Every year the talented post office staff gave a concert for the inmates of the Workhouse and us children were allowed to go with our mums. I was so proud of my dad dressed as a clown doing magic tricks and Charlie wanted to go up there on the stage with his father. He always had a part at the Sunday School concert and in the talent contest on the cinema stage at the Saturday matinees.

“I was always such a shy wallflower, I never had a male escort. But Charlie solved my problem: he formed a dance band with Alan and Gordon from the church and two others. Then they booked the local village halls every Saturday night hired a bus to get us there and I was all set. The partners came and I was just beginning to gain confidence when Hitler thought otherwise. King and Country needed Charlie and Gordon more than I, it seemed. Charlie packed a bag of magic tricks to take with him when he was called up.

“Charlie’s friend, Alan Barnes disappeared from my life suddenly one afternoon when a German plane bombed Newmarket post office while he was serving at the counter. Alan was one of the thirteen people killed. With Charlie away, my sister rushed off to join the Air Force and even such a weed as me was needed. So off I went to northern regions never before seen or explored.

“Charlie ended up in Italy where with the war nearly over he entered a large talent contest in Rome alongside men like Harry Secombe and Max Bygraves. But when peace came the magic had gone forever, it would never return. Childhood had gone and with it many of those we had shared it with. Charlie found his friends had died in labour camps with the Cambridgeshire Regiment; it was hard for him to adjust to civilian life so he decided to go north. He dressed in his magician’s costume for one last photo, then packed up his magic and left for Blackpool where he got a job as a lifeguard. Once he had saved enough he set up a showroom to sell magic. One of his favourite customers was Tommy Cooper who called in when performing there in summer shows.

Although we both married in 1952 and my son was born on his birthday, there never was any Fitness children to carry on our surname. Unfortunately my children only saw Charlie when he came back for our parents’ funerals. When he too left me suddenly without a sign in 1968, I was penniless in a hospital unable to do anything.

“On my Granddaughter’s birthday one year I was invited to the party, there was the local magician amusing the crowd and I must admit I shed a tear as my memory returned to Charlie Magic.” [SCAN OF CHARLIE MAGIC, SCAN OF NEWMARKET HIGH STREET IN THE 1930S; SCAN OF NEWMARKET POST OFFICE FOLLOWING BOMBING – PERHAPS BETTER PIC IN NEWS LIBRARY]

Pat Haslop (nee Humphreys) from Bar Hill has written following Memories of 18th August. “The photograph of Newmarket Road in 1928 sent me down memory lane. Although it was taken twelve years before I was born I recognised it immediately. The plane tree was fully grown by then and was just a few feet from our front door at number 124. We lived in the flat above Traylens the butchers and the leaves were level with our windows. On the corner of East Road was a cycle shop – Flitton and Frost, next door was a sweet shop. In the centre of the road were some Gents’ Toilets. It looks a lot calmer back in those days – it’s pretty ghastly there now!” [SCAN 10456 NEWMARKET ROAD 1928 – A VARIANT FROM THE ONE USED LAST TIME]

Peggy Brutnell of Cambridge also recalls the area: “My granddad, Bob Beamiss senior worked for Arnolds Dairies in Abbey Road where the cows were kept. He used to get up at

four o'clock in the morning by candlelight and go and milk the cows first, then drive them down Newmarket Road past the old men's toilet, down Walnut Tree Avenue on to the common. Then at four in the afternoon he'd fetch them back, milk them again and get the full churns ready for my two uncles, who were twins, to take them to the station and pick up the empty churns for the next day. I often went with one of them on their delivery round in a little pony trap. I lived in New Street and clearly remember the Good Friday skipping on Parker's Piece because my sister and I always had new sandals and short white socks for that very day. I could write a book about my growing up, we were poor but it was magic" [SCAN OF NEWMARKET ROAD 1963 SHOWING CORNER ABBEY ROAD - SCAN OF MILKMAN IN SCOTLAND ROAD – NOT THE ONE REMEMBERED]

More Milton Road school memories flood in

Angela Thomas, now living in Canberra, Australia recalls

"I only attended Milton Road for a very short time before the Arbury Junior School opened but, apart from the beds for infants, hymn sheets and milk monitors, my most vivid memory is of the birthday badges. I turned 6 while I was there (1955) and the birthday child got to choose a badge for the day. I had my eye on the teddy badge for the longest time and on my birthday my mum made a special trip down to the school playground so she could admire it". Angela also remembers the dreaded dental surgery which was part of the school - or was that just a nightmare? she asks. Margaret Primeau also remembers it: "I only have one bad memory of that school, when I was going to Chesterton Girls we had to go to the Milton Road school to see the dentist. That place put the fear of God into me with it's cold tiled walls and the sound of that drill. I've hated dentists ever since" while Joan Walker from Cambridge who began her schooldays at Milton Road in 1923 recalls: "the dreaded dentist arrived each year with his treadle drill – something to put you off dentists for life. There were no school meals. Some of the delicate children received sunlight treatment and daily cod liver oil and malt. We envied the boys in winter because the caretaker would put down water to make super slides for them, which we girls were not allowed to use"

For those who transgressed punishment was swift; Janet Brown from Waterbeach cannot forget being given the slipper on the hands – very painful. "Our crime: I remember it so well. The wooden desks had inkwells, top left with underneath a round hole. Some desks also had holes in the bottom right-hand corner. These were big enough for a glass marble. You dropped your marble in the top hole, having arranged books, rules, pencil cases etc inside the desk. Down, down all the obstacles and the marble drops out from the bottom hole! Unfortunately not all desks had holes and we were caught making them! With what I don't remember. There were four of us. I was the only girl"

Roger Coleman from Cambridge graduated to milk monitor in Miss Buchanan's class before he left in July 1960. "I recall the daily visit of the Co-Operative Society's Bedford 'J' type flat back lorry in the playground with the dreadful smell of sour milk on the steel milk crates. They were then moved to a lobby off the main hall, adjacent to the iron gates to the boiler room and cellar. Down the steep concrete steps you would invariably meet the very pleasant Mr Robinson, the caretaker, who would find you a box of 'Sweetheart' drinking straws. It was then back to the crates and push the straws through the silver tops of the 1/3 [ONE-THIRD] pint bottles. I have wonderful memories of this landmark 1908 building which I cannot bare the thought of being demolished. It richly deserves an imaginative new use when it finally closes its doors.

Memories 22nd September 2004, by Mike Petty

This week / NEXT WEEK / ON SATURDAY - PLEASE SELECT - one of Cambridge's best loved shops, Robert Sayle, will move from their old site in St Andrew's Street to a new temporary home in Burleigh Street. But when their old building closes it will take with it a host of memories for those who have worked and shopped there over the years.

Robert Sayle himself was born in February 1816, the eldest son of a farmer at Southery. This was a period of agricultural depression that was to boil over just a few months later in an uprising remembered as the Littleport Riots which would end with a number of fenmen being hanged for protesting at the hardship of their lot. But Robert's father was astute enough to see the opportunity to expand in times of trouble and added to his acreage.

He also sent his son to school in Ely before the lad forsook the fens for London where he learned his trade working for a firm of wholesale and retail drapers. Then daddy stepped in again, providing the money to acquire John Cooch's business at Victoria House in St Andrew's Street Cambridge where Robert opened his business on 21st March 1840.

He introduced plate glass windows, stocked up with linen, drapery, silk mercery and straw bonnets and set fixed prices which gave him a small profit but quick return. At first he lived above the shop but later moved to a house in Trumpington Road with his wife and a large family of ten children.

The rooms on the upper floors of his shop were converted to living quarters for his staff. They were strictly separated with different corridors for men and women. At mealtimes assistants sat at long tables in segregated dining rooms where meals were served by maids. In the evenings girls had to be in at nine o'clock and men by ten, but there was a reading room, a billiard room and a rowing club which was open to both sexes.

In June 1952 fire broke out in the living quarters, sending a thick pall of smoke pouring out of one of the windows on the top floor. Some twenty staff dashed downstairs and out through the shop carrying their belongings with them. One assistant, Miss Ann Todd, said: "I thought of all of my clothes and I struggled down from my room with masses of them. I wasn't going to leave them behind". As it was a Thursday afternoon there were only about 30 people in the premises at the time and staff organised a chain of buckets until the arrival of the Fire Brigade.

One of the staff employed then was Mrs Olive Turkentine who joined the firm in 1934, aged 14. In September 1981 she shared some of her memories through the pages of the John Lewis Partnership Gazette.

"Robert Sayle was *the* shop in Cambridge; ordinary people really didn't go there and I was terrified when my mother took me along to be interviewed", she recalled. She got the job at the princely wage of 7s.6d. [SEVEN SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE] (37p) a week which was a lot of money for a fourteen-year old. Olive started as a cashier sitting at an enclosed till – "a bit like a budgie in a huge cage" – and a selling assistant brought the money over to her. The pace of life in the shop was sedate. Juniors were not allowed to serve but dusted, addressed envelopes and generally fetched and carried, passing the time in between by making velvet chokers which were sold to customers.

Many people centred their social life around the shop which often held parties where everybody danced with everybody else. They also staged fashion shows, as the News reported in 1926: "To the average man, a mannequin parade presents characteristics which combine to embarrass the most strongly minded. He is overwhelmed with the importance of the occasion and metaphorically 'smothered' by the bevy of beauty which confronts him. No cheque book could have been greatly taxed at Messrs Sayle and Company's two parades as the moderate prices were an outstanding factor. It was an excellent demonstration of what really can be done for a modest expenditure and record attendance marked both the morning and afternoon displays. We look forward to a parade of men's wear, when the ladies may blush in their embarrassing minority".

It was a dignified, old-fashioned place. There were floor-walkers who strolled around to see the staff were behaving properly. The buyers were like kings who ruled their departments but the customers were most important. They were treated with great ceremony and always addressed as 'Sir' or 'Madam'. Once a customer opened an account an assistant was not allowed to ask their name; if they didn't know then they had discreetly to find somebody who did.

But it could be different in Rag Week: undergraduates would come in and pretend to be serving, taking the place of assistants who had been 'kidnapped' in the market and not released until they had paid a forfeit.

Not even Robert Sayle could ride out the recession of the inter-war years; in 1934 the store was bought by Selfridge Provincial Stores and several of the senior staff left. By then Olive had moved to the handbag counter and it was there she learned how to cope with that new phenomenon, the sale, as Selfridges cleared out old stock. "When the doors opened there were people tearing towards us, like a sea". After the war she relocated to the wool counter, witnessing customers scrabbling for the short supplies, while on the stocking counter "it was more like a swarm of locusts".

Through it all service was the key. One customer ordered two nightcaps to be knitted for her bald husband. When the orders returned there was not a Wee Willie Winkie to be seen so one poor assistant had no choice but to sit up all night and knit them herself as the customer was coming in the next day.

In 1940 the store was acquired by the John Lewis Partnership, though the old name continued and 'Robert Sayle' celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1990. But times change and now the store is moving to Burleigh Street whilst a major transformation in city centre shopping takes place.

Yet the new Grand Arcade will itself reflect the heritage of Robert Sayle. For the original 'Arcade' was the name given to a series of small businesses established in the old Corn Exchange on St Andrew's Hill after the present Exchange opened in 1875. And that conversion was just one of the brainchild of Robert Sayle himself.

If you have memories of working or shopping at Robert Sayle's store, please share them – write to Mike Petty at the News [SCANS OF ROBERT SAYLE C1910 AND 1966, OTHER PICS IN NEWS PHOTO FILES, SCAN OF THE ORIGINAL 'ARCADE' – THE OLD CORN EXCHANGE ON THE CORNER OF DOWNING STREET AND CORN EXCHANGE STREET, WHEN USED AS A GARAGE IN 1939]

PHOTO OF OUTING

Possible customers? How many of these ladies brought their closes at Robert Sayle before embarking on an omnibus excursion from the Tiger Inn in East Road. The photo was found by Maurice Rolph during a house clearance at Trumpington. The ladies are obviously dressed up and wearing buttonholes but who were they, where were they off to and when was it - can anybody add any details? [SCAN OF OUTING]

Eltisley Local History Society are researching the story of their village men who died in the Great War. They are commemorated by a memorial on the lych gate and a row of lime trees, called the Row of Honour, on the village green. There is one lime tree for each man who died, eight in a line for those killed and three forming a cross near one end called the Cross of Sorrow for those who were missing until declared dead. At the end is a spruce tree called the Peace Tree. But were any of the men your relations and can you add to their story. The names are George Childerley, Harry Cranfield, Arthur and Walter Kidman, Harry King, James Payne, Henry George Sewell, Albert John and William George Smith-Chappell, Sidney and

Harry Hayden, Frank and Martin Riseley, and Herbert Topham. If you can shed any light on their story please contact Mary Flinders on 01480 880268 or write to me and I'll pass your letter on. Or come along to their meeting in the Cade Memorial Hall on the Green at Eltisley on 27th October when I'll be talking about Ghosts and Witches of Cambridgeshire, including some other village's lads who came home though their names are on the memorial. [SCAN OF ELTISLEY GREEN SHOWING A FIELD GUN THAT WAS FOR A WHILE ANOTHER OF THE VILLAGE'S MEMORIALS TO THE GREAT WAR]

Other lads in uniform feature in a picture of Cambridge Sea Cadets on King's Parade, probably for a Royal Visit in 1948 – but can you add details. The officer on the left is Herbert Ketch and lad one from the end is Graham Race, who lent me the picture. [SCAN 100.76]

Memories 29th September 2004, by Mike Petty

This week a new chapter in the story of Cambridge transport opens with the inquiry into the proposals for a guided bus system. This would utilise the route of the old Cambridge to St Ives railway track and then on arrival at the city strike off into the centre along roads, joining the more conventional means of transport.

Surely such a multi-modal transport scheme can not have been contemplated before. Oh no? What about September 1904 – just 100 years ago?

In those days Cambridge had a traffic problem; in fact no town in England had a worse one than Cambridge in term time the *News* claimed in 1905. Motor cars and motor bicycles had arrived and numerous undergraduates were roaring about, knocking over cows in Victoria Avenue and causing mayhem. But cars were just for the rich. [CARTOON OF SUPER-FRESHER – RICH GRAD WITH HIS CAR AND CHAUFFEUR - 7026]

The rest of us relied on foot or bicycles. These had become essential as house prices in Cambridge were so expensive that ordinary folk could no longer afford to live here and needed to cycle in from the outlying districts – as the *News* contended in 1910

There were of course railway stations to bring folk from Histon, Oakington and beyond. But the station was far away from the centre of town, driven out by University concerns about the impact unregulated hoards of visitors would bring. On arrival at the station if you were in a hurry you walked; otherwise you took a cab or waited for public transport.

By 1900 Cambridge had two forms of public transport, buses or trams; both were pulled by horse. The former would roam throughout the town, the latter were more regular but constricted to those roads with tramlines running down them. The horse trams had been established in 1880 and had served the town for nearly 25 years. But there was no doubt that they were too slow, and served too few places – plodding from the station down Hills Road either to St Andrew's Street or the Market Hill via Lensfield Road, Trumpington Street and King's Parade or down East Road to their tram shed. There was a need for an extended service [SCAN OF HORSE BUS AT CHESTERTON 100t466], SCAN OF HORSE TRAM ON MARKET HILL - 'MKT']

The future in 1904 was believed to be electric power – no smelly piles of horse droppings, no motor fumes. We already had an electricity generating station on Quayside which could supply the current and a new Cambridge Electric Tramways Syndicate was established to put it all into place.

They came up with radical proposals for new tramlines down Victoria Avenue to Chesterton, along East Road to Newmarket Road, down Mill Road to Romsey and Hills Road to Blinco Grove. There would be a service to Castle Hill and along Victoria Road as far as Garden Walk.

The plans were submitted to Cambridge Borough Council who commissioned a London firm to advise them. Their report was submitted in September 1904.

They did not confine themselves to streets within Cambridge itself but looked wider, realising that much of the problem came from the surrounding area; only then it was Chesterton and Cherry Hinton from which people commuted, not St Ives and Swavesey.

One solution would have been to extend the existing tramways system to these further-flung places by running lines down Sidney Street, Bridge Street and Magdalene Street or via Trinity and St John's Streets. But they were not able to recommend such a scheme "having regard to the narrowness of the streets"; tramways would be inconvenient and would certainly meet with opposition from residents.

Although the existing horse trams ran down King's Parade these should be scrapped, the consultants recommended. The route could not be worked efficiently and, more importantly, the construction of overhead power lines for the electric trams would be unsightly. [HORSE TRAM OUTSIDE SENATE HOUSE – 100.81. CARTOON ABOUT THE ELECTRIC TRAMS - 7269]

Instead trams should be routed along Queen's Road, although even there it was likely that people would object; but 'although it is of the character of a boulevard, yet there are no properties immediately abutting on the road that would be disturbed by the working of the tramways'. In more recent times people have objected that the parking of cars along the Backs has ruined the character of the area.

But to get from the town centre to Queen's Road the trams would have to go down Silver Street. This they appreciated in 1904 was very narrow. "The character of the street is such that if a double line is constructed the tramway cars would take their turn with the ordinary road traffic, keeping left in each direction". Trams would have to take their place amongst other traffic. This problem of integrating a new system into the already-overcrowded roads is one which is likely to be debated again in the next few weeks.

Back in 1904 the debate was long and vociferous but despite the objections the majority of the council gave their support. It would be a radical system to take Cambridge into the twentieth-century.

But after all the discussion and hours of debate the scheme stumbled at the first hurdle. For before the Cambridge Electric Tramways Syndicate could implement electrification they had to purchase the existing lines which were owned by the existing horse-drawn Cambridge Street Tramways Company. They being well aware of their powerful position held out for a very high price for their principal assets. In the end they asked too much and the whole scheme foundered.

Those with long memories will have remembered that the same thing had happened back in 1898. Then the British Electric Traction Company had raised all the benefits of electric trams – they would be warm, comfortable and 'a pleasure to ride', but the opposition had then argued about unsightly lines and road obstructions.

The horse trams proprietors were jubilant, even their rivals, the horse omnibuses had gone out of business. But there was already talk of steam trams and even the prospect of that new form

of transport – the motor bus. They arrived in 1905 when not one but two companies started up, competing for the same passengers, racing each other to bus stops. But they proved too noisy & too unreliable; they ran over too many dogs and frightened too many ladies on their bicycles. Within a year both companies' buses had been banned and the old horse trams, now renovated and repainted, reigned supreme. [CARTOON OF PROBLEMS CAUSED BY BUS - 5779; OPEN-TOP BUS ON MARKET HILL - OPENBUS]

It was not to last; in 1907 J.B. Walford introduced the Ortona motor buses and competition resumed. This time the trams could not survive. As revenues dropped so the cost of their tram lines rose – they made road maintenance more expensive. And now there were even more cars. On 18th February 1914 the trams made their last runs, packed with hundreds of passengers anxious to say they had travelled on these relics of a bygone age. The tramcars, horses, stables and harness were sold off. But some of the tramlines were left since with the advent of the Great War there were other things for the council to spend money on. Sections have been rediscovered during road works from time to time. [ORTONA BUS - 9177, PASSENGERS PACK THE LAST TRAM - 6937]

The tram's epitaph was written by Will Thomas of the Black and White Concert Party

Who killed the Tramways?

I said the motor bus, for there wasn't room for both of us,
I killed the Tramways.

Now the traffic could go where it wished, with nothing to guide it. Only time will tell whether a Guided Bus replaces it. [FIND MODERN PICTURE OF GUIDED BUS]

Memories 6th October 2004, by Mike Petty

The arrival of a new batch of undergraduates has seen Cambridge streets once more thronged with young men and women about to embark on their academic career. But just 50 years ago there was even more cause for excitement since a guest house in Silver Street had been converted as a temporary home for a new, third, foundation for women, New Hall.

It was not quite the luxurious existence of some other colleges: the dining hall was soon overflowing with people eating their meals in the college office whilst the cooks, striving to cope, were resorting to an old gas oven in the pantry to supplement the one in the kitchen.

The girls drew lots for the rather Spartan bedrooms and shared three bathrooms. But a rather gloomy downstairs study room was well-equipped with desks and chairs and nearby was an out-of-doors wringer of hefty make allowing the girls to do their washing and save on laundry bills

A *News* reporter was invited to tour their new home and was shown round by Miss Angela Holder, a petite, attractive Freshman, one of the first 16 students in residence. She, like the others, had been selected following an entrance examination designed to test logical thought and power of expression. This combination of brains and charm brought articles in newspapers such as the *Iraq Times* & *Rhodesia Herald* as well as various illustrated magazines.

The girls were photographed with books and bicycles, with the college head and college gatekeeper – who was the same person - for, as Angela explained, "You try to be in by 11pm because otherwise Miss Murray has to sit up - we can't afford a porter yet".

Miss Rosemary Murray was more than that. She was also the person who fixed any broken electrical equipment, who looked after the two college punts and tended gardens. She served on numerous outside bodies, educational councils and commissions and became the University's first woman Vice Chancellor. Her foresight and courage were praised by the Queen Mother who formally opened the new buildings on Huntingdon Road in June 1965. [SCAN OF SOME OF FIRST STUDENTS; AUDREY DURNOD, SAUCEPAN IN HAND ENTERTAINS VISITORS; ANGELA HOLDER IN HER STUDY; FIND PICTURE SILVER STREET]

My appeal for memories of Robert Sayles has sent the e-mail's soaring

Jean Battelley from Babraham started work at Robert Sayle in April 1941 after leaving school aged 14. She biked 6½ [SIX AND A HALF] miles every day, except Sundays for eight shillings a week. Jean worked in the fashion workroom with over twenty girls and later went into the showrooms fitting clothes for customers. Jean stayed there over 32 years and enjoyed every moment: "It wasn't the money that kept us there, but the good company. I am still friends with many girls I worked with", she adds

Patricia Cooper (nee Fortin) from Rushden writes: "I was employed by Robert Sayles' from the Autumn of 1960, initially as a junior apprentice hairdresser. The salon was largely made up of private cubicles. There were at least ten stylists and a good number of juniors. My first job each morning was to check the appointment book to see how many perms and colours there were to be done as each customer was offered a coffee. In order to facilitate this I had to work out how much milk was required to be collected from the canteen. On arriving, one of the ladies would take the top off one of the churns of milk and with a measure, would pour the milk into a large jug. At the back of the salon and down some stone steps we had a little room where a dear lady called Mrs Gooch spent each day feeding the used black and white towels into a small washing machine. In the summer we hung the washing out to dry on the flat roof and waved to anyone who happened to look up"

Christine Stockdale (nee Summers) e-mails from Kettering: "I left school in July 1963 aged 15 and started work as a junior. There were fourteen of us, thirteen girls and one boy. During our two weeks induction the girls that were going onto the sales floor were given the traditional grey and white striped shirts and grey skirts. We were taught that the customer comes first and you give them your undivided attention. As juniors we spent a few months in different departments; I spent mine in Haberdashery, the Coat department with Mrs Piper, upstairs in the office with Miss Little and then Gloves and Handbags. My final destination was the little counter just inside the door by the stairs down to the basement; we (Averil Auker and myself) sold handkerchiefs, artificial flowers umbrellas and bridal veils. Our wages started at £3.5s and we worked a five and a half day week for that. Thursday afternoon was the time we had off. The older juniors were very friendly and you soon found your own group to hang around with. I can still remember their names & would just like to take this opportunity to wish them all well wherever they are today"

Both Francis Wayman from Bourn and Patrick Doggett from Milton Keynes recall their father and grandfather working for the firm. Francis writes : "The fact that Robert Sayle learned his trade in London would explain why my grandfather George Henry Doggett left London to work for, and later become company secretary to Robert Sayle, a position he held until the store was bought by Selfridges and he was 83. My father, Frank Doggett also worked for Robert Sayle as head of accounts until 1940 when John Lewis acquired the store". Patrick recalls: "Grandpa (George Henry Doggett) was a tall upright man with a neat white beard, he commanded respect wherever he went. He worked in the Counting House, at that time at the front of the shop behind a glass partition. This was later moved upstairs at the back,

overlooking the yard. My particular memory is, as a very small boy, being taken to see the visit of King George V and Queen Mary to Cambridge in October 1934. I was perched on top of one of the display cabinets in the front of the shop (where the flowers are in the 1966 picture), from which I got a lovely view of the royal procession. I also remember the carpet cleaning plant at the bottom of the yard, where the carpets were stretched over a large wooden drum, and brushed clean amid clouds of dust, and a lot of noise". [SCAN OF ROBERT SAYLE'S 1966 SHOWING WHERE PATRICK SAT TO SEE THE KING]

Doreen Bacon's tribute to her brother, 'Charlie Magic' has triggered memories across the country. Alan Maskell, secretary of the Pentacle Club writes: "A couple of weeks ago you featured magician Charlie Fitness and last week I caught up with a couple of magicians who knew Charlie. They were interested to see the article having fond memories of him. Charlie is well remembered for his magic studio, which was upstairs over his wife's hairdressing salon in Blackpool. It's thought that she did the better business! The magician appearing regularly at the Tower in those days was George Wallman and when he had his holiday Charlie would stand in for him and do the show. However, the one thing Charlie is really remembered for is an idea he had. He reasoned that magicians, like many entertainers, used to have a lull in February as people recovered from Christmas and prepared for Spring so he chose February as the ideal month to stage a one day magicians convention in Blackpool. It was an idea that really took off and next year sees the 53rd such convention which, now-a-days, lasts for three days and the Blackpool Magicians Club claim it to be the world's largest magic convention - and all from someone who nearly turned his back on the art!" [SCAN OF CHARLIE MAGIC]

My discovery of a bill from Victoria Road furrier, Mr W. Rothwell has brought a letter from his son who still lives in Cambridge. He tells me his father was born in Bury, Lancashire before moving to Cambridge in 1949; he retired in the mid 1970s and passed away in February 1991. Dennis Gifford writes: "I moved into Victoria Park in 1957 and well remember Mr Rothwell's fur shop; it went on until furs became unpopular". Allan Davis of Alibaba's hair studio for men recalls: "In 1989 I was lucky enough to buy Mr Rothwell's old shop, although it had been empty a number of years. When I moved to Victoria Road to open my first hairdressing salon in 1972 I took over the old barber's shop on the opposite corner of Albert Street. This had been run for the best part of the 20th century by a Mr Rolph and then on to Brian Mcquage – maybe some will remember these old barbers"

More memories were jogged by Maurice Rolph's picture of a group of ladies outside the Tiger pub on the corner of Bradmore Street, East Road Cambridge. Mrs J. Patman from Chesterton saw her mother, Mrs Patten, and her aunt amongst them together with the landlady of the Tiger, Dolly Birnes, who apparently bought the buttonholes. Amongst the others she can name are Mrs Hipkins and her daughter, Mrs Philpot, Maud Pagecroft, Dolly Philpot and Mrs Needham. Ann James from Balsham spotted her 'aunt', Victoria Foreman and her mother. They had been evacuated from Dover during the war and lived with Ann's family in Norwich Street. "Aunt Vic was a lovely lady who worked at Woolworth's all her life, getting a job in the Cambridge shop before returning to Kent in 1946", she tells me. Robert Rollings also has an interest in the picture for it shows his father's mother who passed away when his dad was just 13 years old, together with her sister. [SCAN OF OUTING]

Memories 13th October 2004, by Mike Petty

The current furore about the lopping of conifer trees beside the railway line at Gt Shelford reminds Eric George of the tall hollyhocks that used to grow along the back of the platform in the 1920s. As a lad used the station when travelling to the Perse Prep. He recalls: "Going to school in Cambridge was quite an experience for an eight year old and for the first few

terms I went by train. Going was straightforward as every train that stopped at the down platform took you to Cambridge. On one occasion my parents and I were going to Cambridge and arrived at the station just as the train was pulling out. The Station Master saw us and called to the signalman to stop the London Express which was due to pass through in a few minutes, so that we could get on.

“The railway played a big part in our lives, not only as a mode of transport but as it ran only about two hundred yards west of our house it was very much part of the scene. The up line had a siding often used by coal trains on their way to London when they had to back off the line to allow passenger traffic through. By night however they usually had a clear run and we would hear them rumbling along in the small hours. From our bedroom' windows we could see the King's Cross or Northern line where the expresses were pulled by 4-4-2 Atlantics. The bend on that line just after leaving the Liverpool St. line was very tight and engines often made a characteristic clanking noise while negotiating the curve.

“In Granham's Road near the level crossing stood Abberley House whose grounds went back into the angle between the two lines. It belonged to Mr Marsh who used to train horses for King George V and who used to wave to the Royal Train which not infrequently passed on its way to or from Sandringham. It was said that the King used to wave back. I sometimes stood with the crossing keeper, who had to keep the gates closed some minutes before and after the Royal Train passed. In those days Shelford station had a considerable staff including the Station Master, a booking clerk, a goods foreman, a trolley man, several porters and enough signalmen to cover the whole twenty-four hours. I must not forget the horse which as well as pulling the trolley for local deliveries was also used for minor shunting duties around the goods shed. As well as using the train for passengers most of the fruit and flowers went by rail to markets in London, Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds or wherever the best prices ruled at the time.”

One of his favourite lessons at the Perse Prep was gardening. “Once a week a period was devoted to gardening, the school having a fair sized allotment plot behind Bateman Street and which is now part of the Botanic Garden. As far I recollect a pair of boys shared a plot of about twenty square yards with perhaps one shrub and a few perennials already there, leaving room to grow a few other things. It must have been about that time that I persuaded Father to let me have a similar plot at home where I remember growing Aquilegias and Purple Sprouting Broccoli from packets bought from Woolworth's.”

This early interest took root and after the war he completed his degree in Botany at Downing College before launching into an academic career that was to see him become Curator of the Cultural Collection of Algae and Protozoa and travel the world before retiring in the 1980s. Now living in Cambridge he has collected together his memories, ‘Many Decades’ for his family and friends.

Someone else interested in things botanical is Sheena Macfarlane who is seeking information on her grandfather Harry Banks who used to run the Plough & Harrow on Madingley Road in the thirties and forties. She has been searching the News archives on the website (www.cambridge-news.co.uk) and came across a Memories article from 19th June last year. It featured a photograph of Harry together with his father and mother, Ernest and Laura Banks that Megan Timbrell had sent from Bristol. Now Sheena is trying to find the answer to a family conundrum – one member of the Banks family worked at Kew Gardens and developed a rose. But she doesn't know the name of either. It would mean a lot to her to be able to go back to Kew Gardens and see if they are actually growing the rose he developed. If you can help then e-mail sheena_macfarlane@hotmail.com or drop me a line

Christopher Kirk from Northallerton, Yorkshire would also appreciate your help. He writes: “My mother tells me that when she was a girl living in Histon in the late 1920's Chivers

would hire a train for a trip to the seaside. All the organisations would go along, including the churches. At that time my grandfather Earnest Setchell was caretaker at the Baptist church and Reg Barnes was Sunday School superintendent. Apparently Reg always took a movie camera with him to film events of the day and then in the following winter would provide a film show to recall their adventures. I wonder if any of that film still exists?" If you can help contact me and I'll put you in touch.

Village chapels continue to play an important part in many people's lives as they have for generations. William Hitch who now lives in Durham. He writes: "In the 1930s a new Haddenham vicar decided to upset most of his congregation and almost all of them left the Parish Church. My Mum and Dad and me were asked if we would like to go to the Methodist Church rather than go nowhere at all. So my parents accepted and we became Methodists and were made most welcome. When I grew older and left school, I pumped the organ in the morning and Ron Sulman did it for the evening service. Talk about sweat! Your arm was going like the clappers to keep enough wind in the pipes. The organists were Mabel Freeman (later to become Mrs Demaine), Florrie Chapman (later to become Mrs Morton) and Mrs Charles Bester. In the summer they wore pretty frocks and picture hats and looked very smart. I enjoyed the Sunday School Anniversaries, Sunday School trips, Harvest Festivals and the Wesley Guild at Ely. The preachers from the Circuit were Mrs Stevens from Stretham and Bob Green from Wilburton who would always start his sermons with "We will now endeavour to evangelise the inevitable". I shall always remember Arthur Freeman who used to sit in front of me at chapel; he loved singing the hymns and, if there were a good few verses, he would lean over to me and say, 'You take over now, Bill', but he would always join in the last verse when he had got his breath back. Such stalwarts showed us an example and would somehow shape our lives for ever, which would stand us in good stead for the difficult days that lay ahead". Now Valerie Bloy has recorded his reminiscences together with those of other members of the congregation of Haddenham Methodist church, past and present in a new publication 'Haddenham's Heritage', copies of which are available from [SCAN OF HADDENHAM HIGH STREET & CHAPEL]

Many memories were jogged by Maurice Rolph's picture of a group of ladies outside the Tiger pub on the corner of Bradmore Street, East Road Cambridge. Sheila Diaper (nee Birne) writes from New Milton, Hampshire, to say her parents, Dorothy and Sam Birne were the licencees at that time and thinks the picture was taken of the ladies darts team outing to either Gt Yarmouth or Southend. Most of the ladies came from three adjacent streets, Bradmore Street, where the Tiger was on the corner, South Street and Broad Street. All have now been demolished and replaced by Anglia Polytechnic University. Dorothy is fourth from the right on the front row. She thinks it was about 1949-50 but Ann James from Balsham is sure it must be earlier. She spotted her 'aunt', Victoria Foreman and her mother who had been evacuated from Dover during the war and lived with Ann's family in Norwich Street. "Aunt Vic was a lovely lady who worked at Woolworth's all her life, getting a job in the Cambridge shop before returning to Kent in 1946", she tells me. Robert Rollings also has an interest in the picture for it shows his father's mother who passed away when his dad was just 13 years old, together with her sister

Mrs J. Patman from Chesterton saw her mother, Mrs Patten, and her aunt amongst together with Mrs Hipkins and her daughter, Mrs Philpot, Maud Pagecroft, Dolly Philpot and Mrs Needham. M.W. Summerfield writes from Haddenham to say the lady on the far right, front row is his grandmother Florrie Summerfield and this is confirmed by Lesley Barham from Chesterton who can supply many details. She writes: "Florrie was married to Walter Summerfield and they had a greengrocer's shop on the other side of East Road. Before then they were based in Fitzroy Street where Costa Coffee is now. Florrie died in 1948 and Walter in 1954. [SCAN OF OUTING]

Another picture to have got readers pondering is that of the group of Sea Cadets in King's Parade, Cambridge. Mary Cox (nee Lynn) recognised her late brother Maurice Lynn in the front row on the left of the officer. He spent many years in the Sea Cadets firstly as a cadet then going on to become Commanding Officer of the unit after serving for two years National Service in the Royal Navy as an electrical artificer. He passed on these skills at the Cadet's Riverside Headquarters and, with everybody helping, restored an old boat that he used to take cadets down river to Ely for a long weekend. Marice was also recognised by Don Jeffries of Bassingbourn who joined the Sea Cadets in the 1950s. Robert Ling was also on parade together with Graham Rayner and has lent me a picture of the two of them marching with their rifles. He tells me the Sea Cadets were based at Milton Road School where the boiler house doubled-up as the armoury. [SCAN OF SEA CADETS]

Now Ivan Westley from St Ives has lent a picture of 104 Squadron of Cambridge Air Training Corps. He's the corporal in the front row but cannot remember anything else about the event. It was certainly before he joined the Fleet Air Arm in the Second World War. Can you help jog his memory [SCAN 100.80]

Many apologies for the wrongly-captioned picture in last week's 'Memories' when Queen's College was described as the first home of New Hall! Fortunately at least the Blue Plaque people got it right and unveiled their plaque on the right building further along Silver Street. [A PICTURE OF THE UNVEILING CEREMONY APPEARED CEN 8th OCT – ref 199486, IS THERE ALSO ONE OF THE OUTSIDE OF THE BUILDING]

Memories 20th October 2004, by Mike Petty

What started as a mystery picture of a group of ladies outside the Tiger Pub in East Road Cambridge has prompted numerous letters so that now most of the faces have been recognised.

We know it was the ladies darts team and that they were off on an outing to the seaside. But what was the bus they travelled in?

The answer to that should be easy, because Paul Carter has just compiled what must be the definitive book on Cambridgeshire buses up to 1950. It even has a list of bus numbers identifying the make, who bought it, when and when it went out of use.

Turning again to the photograph I can only make out part of the registration number which seems to read '177'. Paul's list includes CF 8117, a Chevrolet bought new by Norman's of Exning in 1928 and acquired by the Ortona motor company in April 1930. There were many such small operators based in local villages. They included Whippet, Harston and District, Drayton's motor service from Barley, Heydon and District, Mansfield's Brown Buses from Burwell, Barker's of Fenstanton and Jabez Cornwell Parnell's 'Haddenham and District' based at Stretham.

So is it a Chevrolet? I scan the numerous pictures in the new book. There are pictures of Leyland Titanics, Gilfords, Bedfords, Dennis and Albions, but no Chevrolets. There is however a picture of a bus that looks very similar to the one that carried the darts ladies. It has the same little lamps illuminating the destination board, the driver's window opens across the middle in the same way, the registration number is in the same place and the radiator looks the right shape. The caption records it was one of twenty saloons received by the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company in 1947. This ties up with what people think is the date of the picture.

Suddenly it seems there is a vast amount to appreciate about the humble bus and it is easy to understand the enthusiasm of people like Derek Carter, born 1920, whose dad drove them. He

recalled: "I grew up with the buses and I've never lost my interest in them. As a small boy I loved to stand and watch them coming out of the garage. I remember seeing one once with flames coming out from the engine - I suppose the petrol had caught fire. I also used to sit on the steps of the Bank on the corner of Hobson Street and Sidney Street and watch the buses while Mother was shopping in town. I liked riding on them too and I can remember going out to Girton Corner. It was a cold day for riding on an open-top double-decker and my nose was as red as a rear light by the time we got there."

Richard Covill of West Wratting remembered Claude Long's Saloon Bus Service whose small fleet included a Chevrolet. He recalled: "I travelled on the school bus from Westley Waterless to Cambridge from 1932 to 1937. The bus ran empty from West Wratting to Burrough Green, and the driver would usually hoot as he passed my house. That was my signal to get out of bed. It would turn round at the rectory in Burrough Green and wait for any latecomers. I caught it on its way back.

Mr Long was a very nice man, short and dark with a moustache, and he was a bit of a joker. He sometimes drove the bus, and he would entertain the passengers by playing the latest songs on a harmonica. One day we had a learner driver (no L-plates!) and we met a steam-roller near the old school in Brinkley. The bus went into a ditch and tilted over to about 45 degrees, but the steam roller pulled us out"

In those days buses had conductors. One of them was Gladys Hughes (nee Caston) who was called up for war work in 1941 when aged 18. She recalled: "It wasn't easy working in the blackout. We only had one very dim light in a cylinder, rather like a cocoa tin, which we could slide along the ceiling of the bus on the end of a wire. It didn't always stay there when the bus was full of servicemen. They often paid their fares with half-crowns instead of pennies, even though I always called out to them to 'scrape the edges'. The buses were often packed, especially the 'cattle truck' single-deckers, but most of the passengers were wonderful. I called them 'my public'!

"Once I was on the 101 in Cambridge. There were lots of 'boys in blue' (injured servicemen) staying at Chesterton Hall and a crowd were waiting at the stop. One had both his legs in plaster and could hardly move. It took me and four of his mates to get him onto the platform, and I told him to stay there, be my 'unofficial assistant conductor' and ring the bell when I called out. This worked until we got to Bridge Street, where I got down to help another passenger off the bus. For some reason my unofficial assistant conductor rang the bell and the bus set off without me. I had to run right through the town centre as far as the University Arms Hotel before I caught it".

Another conductor, Laddie Holland, also has memories of wartime: "One night we met a big crowd off the midnight train at Royston station who wanted to go to Bassingbourn aerodrome. I said 'Pile them all on!' When we got to the camp I counted 119 passengers get off the bus. I thought I felt it swaying about a bit on Kneesworth Hill!"

Now Paul is seeking similar memories from the post-war days to include in his second book on Cambridge buses, taking the story from 1950 to the present. His present book is full of fascinating facts and stories but inevitably there are gaps. If you can help to fill them, or have pictures or information on any bus operators that may have escaped his attention, then write to Paul Carter at 3 Woods Green, Wadhurst, East Sussex, TN5 6QN or drop me a line.

"Cambridge 1" by Paul Carter is published by Venture Publications Ltd – ISBN 1 898432 43 0 – at £17.95

SCAN:

CLOSE - Madge Close from Fen Drayton lent me this photograph of an unknown excursion; the bus is one of three Straker-Squire charabancs acquired by Ortona in 1920.

CROWDS – crowds waiting to board a Leyland Tiger in Drummer Street, 1930s

DARTS – Haslingfield darts club outing with a Premier Travel bus driven by Sid Pennell, 1930s

EMMA : A close encounter between an Ortona Leyland bus and a 'Cyclecar' in Emmanuel Street, Cambridge, 1920s

TIGER – the Tiger pub ladies darts team bus, 1940s

5808: a double-decker bus toppled over in Sidney Street, Cambridge, October 1945

I AM PRETTY SURE THERE IS A WONDERFUL PICTURE OF A CONDUCTORESS – PROBABLY GLADYS HUGHES - IN THE NEW LIBRARY'S BUSES FILE – CAN THIS BE CHECKED PLEASE?

READERS RESPOND

Terry Holloway from Marshalls has e-mailed to put Ivan Westley's mind to rest after more than 60 years. Ivan sent me a picture of himself in 104 (City of Cambridge) Squadron of the Air Training Corps but couldn't remember where and when it had been taken. Terry has turned to the Squadron's records which shows it was September 1943 when Air Marshal Sir Patrick Playfair was the annual Inspecting Officer. Also in the picture are Flying Officer A H G English, Flight Lieutenant A H Chapman (who was the then Commanding Officer), Air Commodore J B Bowan and Mr A G G Marshall - now Sir Arthur - on the extreme left hand of the picture [SCAN ATC]

Mike Nathan e-mails: "I was interested to see a photograph of the Plough and Harrow on Madingley Road in last week's Memories. My parents ran the pub from 1963 until it was knocked down and replaced by the new building. I have been trying to find a photo of the place for ages, even the Cambridge Collection don't seem to have one."

Angela Nunn, nee Flitton, can add details to the Newmarket Road bicycle shop recalled by Pat Haslop (Memories 15th September). She e-mails: Flitton and Frost's bicycle shop was run by my father, Bill Flitton and his partner Chris Frost. They sold BSA and Raleigh bikes plus spares and repairs. Father built and serviced the clowns' large small and silly cycles for Bertram Mills and Chipperfields Circuses. He was also one of the cycle engineers for the Milk Races. They were one of the first businesses in Cambridge to sell by hire purchase. The sign in the shop window said " A BOB A DAY RIDE AWAY" - seven shillings a week for hire purchase on a bicycle.

[Back in July](#) Dr John Grantham sought help about an armoured unit was based at Anglesey Abbey during the Second World War. He has now heard from Mr Bernard Proctor of Hull, who was billeted at the Abbey c.1941/42. He was a member of the East Ridings Fortress Company of Royal Engineers whose unit was sent to the Bottisham district to work in conjunction with Army track runways. Mr Proctor recalls that before his arrival the Abbey was used by an armoured squadron. But John still needs to know which one. E-mail JTGrantham@aol.com or drop me a line and I'll forward your letter.

Andrew Brett would appreciate information about and photographs of his great-great grandfather, "Professor" Andrew Prevett, who entertained Cambridge audiences with his Punch & Judy show for nearly fifty years. "Professor" Prevett lived in Vicarage Terrace, Cambridge, and died in 1928. Please e-mail any information to mitchams.corner@talk21.com or telephone 01223 293713.

Memories 27th October 2004, by Mike Petty

Matthew's grocery shop in Trinity Street Cambridge is remembered for being upper-class. It closed in 1964 after the chairman and managing director, Bernard Matthew announced that it was no longer possible to operate profitably under the existing trading conditions. "Rather than lower our standards of personal service, we have decided to close the department", he said

Matthew and Son's grocery business had started in 1821 and provided a high-class service supplying a variety of goods to the academic community. It sold items such as candles and oil lamps, china and glass, as well as a milk saucepan to a young Trinity undergraduate, Austen Chamberlain (later Chancellor of the Exchequer). An advertisement in the Cambridge Chronicle for December 1922 emphasised the wide range of commodities sold – china, hams, mince pies, cigars and all the things necessary for a happy Christmas. By 1936 they were offering eight different sorts of tinned sardines, 14 varieties of 'real' cheese including Stilton at 1s 9d (8p) a pound. There were wines and spirits, cakes and biscuits.

But the shop sold more everyday items too – washing powder, cleaning powder and cheese spread and to maximise sales they needed a good window display. The shop had a specialist in that department, Walter Bedford, who had previously run the Bottisham Stores with his brother James for a number of years before moving on to another shop at Commercial End, Swaffham Bulbeck.

But it was during his spell at Matthews that Walter had his best opportunity to exercise his display abilities. He designed a prize-winning window to mark the showing of the film 'Annie Get Your Gun' at the Central Cinema in November 1950 but his proudest moment was probably in September 1951 when the store won first prize in a national competition run by Messrs Thomas Headley, the Newcastle soap manufacturers.

The brief was to design a floor or counter display featuring at least three of the firm's brands. Walter took up the challenge to promote the new super soapy Oxydol which got whites whiter than any other soap, dreft [NB LOWER CASE 'D'] for the softest and brightest woollens, Mirro for the most sparkling of sink-tops – and he threw in Fairy soap for good measure.

It brought the firm publicity and a cheque for £250 but it brought Walter words of praise from the Managing Director, Bernard Matthew: "The credit for the display goes entirely to him" he said. [SCAN OF THE PRIZEWINNING OXYDOL/dreft/MIRRO DISPLAY]

All this is a long while ago, but the achievement has been recalled by Ros Cullum of Waterbeach who has also lend me several pictures of his other displays.

Many of the commodities such as Ryvita, Vim or Kraft Salad Cream are still familiar. But in one photograph of customers queuing for service there is a display of 'Monty' washing powder and tins of Wilsons' Macedine. Does anybody know what they were? [SCAN OF CUSTOMERS INSIDE SHOP – CAN THIS BE PRINTED LARGE]

One of Matthew's specialities was a range of teas and coffees, one of which features in another of Ros's photographs. This side of their business is still continued at a stall on Cambridge market run by Michael Matthew, the great-great-nephew of the founder. Michael started his stall in December 1983 proudly displaying the 1922 advertisement and even today a tangible reminder of the old firm can be seen – one of the wooden boxes that once contained some of their delicacies.

[SCAN OF MATTHEWS ADVERT; FIND NEGATIVE OF MICHAEL MATTHEW AT HIS STALL, 13.12.1983 – NEG 4617.83.63]

Some of the photographs were taken by Bruce Photography of Northampton Street, Cambridge – does anybody have other examples of his work?

SCAN OF A RINSO CORONATION YEAR (1953) DISPLAY FEATURING A MODEL OF BUCKINGHAM PALACE THAT COULD BE MADE WITH SPECIAL RINSO PACKETS

VIM DISPLAY ADVERTISING A FREE DISHCLOTH

DAIRYLEA DISPLAY OF CHEESE SLICES – PERHAPS POPULAR WITH UNDERGRADUATES

CAFETONE TEA – MATTHEW’S SPECIALISED IN TEAS AND COFFEES

PICTURE LOOKING DOWN TRINITY STREET, TAKEN SEPTEMBER 1964 AND OF MATTHEW’S SHOP AT CLOSURE IN 1964 ARE ON ROS’ DESK

Eric George, whose memories I featured in Memories on 13th October, has dropped me a line to point out that the Perse Preparatory School was in Bateman Street, and not the main building that I featured. The News took a picture of the street [IN 1967 – PLEASE CHECK THE DATE ON THE BACK OF THE PHOTOGRAPH OR JUST PUT ‘1960S’- PHOTO LEFT ON ROS’S DESK SATURDAY]] just after it had been made ‘One Way’ only. Even then such restrictions did not – apparently – apply to cyclists!

An appeal from Christopher Kirk from Northallerton, Yorkshire has proved successful. He was trying to track down some films of Chivers excursions that were taken by Reg Barnes in the 1920s. Now Maurice Beeton from Histon has written to say that he has preserved several of them and placed copies in the East Anglian Film Archive. Not only that but he used to live next door to Christopher’s grandfather Ernest Setchell who was caretaker at the Histon Baptist church.

Peter Holmes from Willingham e-mails: “Last week’s ‘Memories’ reminded me of the time when I worked for the Eastern Counties Bus Co. at Newmarket Road as an apprentice Signwriter for a mere £1-15s a week. I enclose a photo taken in spring of 1956; I am the young chap right at the top on the left but am unable to recall any names. The Bus was renovated by us and I believe it did go to Ipswich. Perhaps there is still somebody there from over 48 years ago?” [SCAN 100.87 OF BUS]

Hannah Bainbridge has added to the memories of Cambridge’s Milton Road School with a tribute to her mother. She writes: “Due to my father suffering from cancer my mother obtained work as the caretaker of the Infants’ School in the 1920s. During the school summer holidays every child’s desk had to be scrubbed and all the floors thoroughly cleaned. This was hard work for a woman, but she was assisted where possible by my two brothers. The caretaker of the Big school was Mr Andrews with whom my mother had a good working relationship and I remember him taking my brother and me down the cellars there to look at the boilers.

“My mother used to earn a few extra bob by washing up after whist drives and if we were lucky she would bring home a few fancy cakes, which were a treat. My father died in 1932 and eventually my mother had to give up work, due to developing eczema on both arms, which we thought were caused by a certain powder she had to spread on the parquet flooring. She was then in receipt of the magnificent sum of ten shillings a week widow’s pension, but with no child benefit”

Anne Brown (nee Wilkins) from Histon also attended Milton Road School. She was there from 1937 to 1944 when she was in Mr Leach's class. She can remember the names of her schoolmates from 60 years ago, including John Attle, Joan Austen, David Cator, Ruth Marsh, Norman Rotherham, Victor Sharp and Michael Winter.

Joyce Pryke (nee Lawrence) from Willingham also attended that school and later the Chesterton Senior Girls School and remembers running across the Cambridge Town Football Ground to the air raid shelters. Later in the war she helped out at the Leys School Hospital where her sister, Margaret, had to spend some time with a kidney infection

Mrs Label Law from Longstowe asks: "Does anybody remember Pembroke College examination hall being an annexe to Addenbrooke's Hospital? My father was in there after a hernia operation. Anstey Hall at Trumpington was a recuperation home for the army. I was a 'clippie' on Eastern Counties in 1945 and remember soldiers, some with crutches, boarding my bus at Brookland's Avenue and going to Maris Lane. Needless to say I didn't collect any fares from them!"

Memories 3rd November 2004, by Mike Petty

The new Cambridge edition of the Monopoly board includes local place names instead of the Trafalgar Square, Old Kent Road or Mayfair of the London version. Most of them are well known, but one important square, that occupied by the Lion Yard shopping precinct, is headed 'St Tibb's Row'.

But who, what or where was this, and why should it have been included instead of the somewhat more obvious 'Petty Cury'.

According to Ronald Gray's book of Cambridge Street-names St Tibb is short for St Tibba, a relation to an ancient king of Mercia, who was buried at Peterborough in the 900's. She was the patron saint of falconers and St Tibb's Row used to lead to Falcon Yard, which was roughly the present main entrance to Lion Yard from Petty Cury.

Today the name relates to that uninviting bit of road that runs from Downing Street past the back of what used to be Robert Sayle's towards the underground loading bays of the new shopping precinct.

It originally ran down to Alexandra Street and Post Office Terrace giving access to a number of properties including the Young Men's Christian Association and the Vicar's Building. This was probably the largest single building in Cambridge, except for King's College Chapel, & was erected in the 1870s to house the very poor who were crowded into the rotting galleries of the Falcon Inn. But these new dwellings were too expensive for the poor and part of the building was taken over for Arliss' printing works until 1971 when it moved out after 97 years.

Another building which catered for the destitute was the former workhouse of St Andrew the Great. This was erected about 1829 and after Poor Law reform in 1836 was used for the reception of about 30 married couples and aged women. It was sold two years later when it was bought by a shoeing smith. It was photographed by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society in 1911.

In 1900 the Row was also home to The Cambridge Gazette which started up as a rival to the Cambridge Daily News with an eight-page paper with innumerable editions, up to date in

every respect. In 1948 Mr H.C. Bruce of New Fletton, Peterborough, a former News employee recalled: "When the 'Cambridge Gazette' started their new plant in St Tibb's Row they also came out with a fine new yellow cart with rubber tyres. Every time we went out with our tall red cart with iron tyres and poor old mare they could beat us, because they had a fast trotter. They got to the newsagents first for some time and our returns began to increase, but with a little ingenuity on the round at night we managed to get and keep the lead. I got those papers to the agents before the 'Gazette' and had less returns to parcel up for waste paper". The Gazette was doomed to failure and was formally wound up in May 1902.

Like much of the area the old St Tibb's Row was swept away for the Lion Yard redevelopment and will undergo further change for the Grand Arcade. But do you remember it; now that it has been immortalised on the Monopoly board game it surely must mean something to somebody!

SCAN 5134 – AERIAL VIEW DOWN ST TIBB'S ROW FROM DOWNING STREET, 1929

SCAN 580 - ST ANDREW THE GREAT WORKHOUSE LOOKING TO ENTRANCE TO REAR OF LION HOTEL, 1911

SCAN 581 – ST ANDREW THE GREAT WORKHOUSE, ST TIBB'S ROW AND ST ANDREW'S HILL FROM THE LION YARD GATEWAY, 1911

SCAN 7348 – AERIAL PHOTO LOOKING NORTH ACROSS LION YARD CAR PARK SHOWING ST TIBB'S ROW RIGHT OF CENTRE, 1950S

SCAN IM7.7. – ST TIBBS ROW DURING DEMOLITION FOR LION YARD REDEVELOPMENT EARLY 1970S

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Christopher Harris has contacted me from Cambridge. He writes: "Again recently your fascinating column made mention of the Plough & Harrow public house on Madingley Road. I wonder, however, whether you or any reader has knowledge of another public house which once existed in the Madingley Road? The Cambridge Street Directory for 1901 refers to a Brewery located at Gravel Hill Farm and presumably associated with it a public house with the mysterious name of "The Man Loaded with Mischief" run at that time by William Cornwell. Both continue to be mentioned in records, although by 1907 Gravel Hill Farm contains only the Old Brewery. The public house continues until 1911 under the occupation of John Henry Hazlewood, but by 1912 the property is no longer occupied. By the time of the Spalding's Directory of 1927/28 it has disappeared from the records. It would be fascinating to know more about this house and about its splendid name."

In a letter to the CDN about 50 years ago Mr F.W. Saunders of Histon recalled that it was a well-known rendezvous for summer evening walks by Cambridge people before the days of motor cars and even before bicycles were common. At the rear of the house was a tea garden and a brewhouse from which was brewed beer to supply the Lion Hotel in Petty Cury. Later the 'Mischief' came into the hands of Messrs Bailey and Tebbutt of Panton Brewery, Cambridge. After the lapse of the licence the pub was demolished and a house built on the site for the Chief Constable.

A.E. Reeve, the prolific Cambridge historian, added to the debate by recalling that the pub had a very famous inn sign depicting a man bowed down by a woman seated on his right shoulder, holding aloft a bottle of gin, while a monkey sits on the other side. It was based on a work by William Hogarth though the Cambridge sign was painted by Richard Hopkins Leach. It is now in the Cambridge Folk Museum. There was another version over the door of the pub itself. In a letter to the News in October 1979 the late Anthony Leach (himself remembered fondly as a teacher) recalls that it was one of a number of Cambridge subjects his great-grandfather painted. They included oil colours of a cricket match on Parker's Piece, a fenland

scene and a view of Castle Street showing the ruins of Cambridge castle in the background. But where are they now – and do you have others? [SCAN OF OUTSIDE OF MAN LOADED WITH MISCHIEF C1910, THE INN SIGN AND THE SIGN ABOVE THE DOOR]

Thena Kendall (nee Heshel) seeks your help. She writes:

“Does anyone have any memories of the Shrubbery school in wartime Cambridge? I was briefly at the school for two terms in 1941 when it was still in Hills Road. My family had only arrived in England as refugees from Nazi occupied Austria shortly before the start of the war, and were living in pretty straitened circumstances when we got to Cambridge. We had come to get away from the blitz - we were unaware at the start of 1941 that the worst of the blitz to which we had been subjected in London was over. I was still very young & have very little recollection of any lessons - beyond having to learn to write in exercise books that were carefully ruled so that letters had to fill the space between the lines with upward strokes and loops neatly inscribed above and below. I also still own a needle book which I made at the school with the felt cover rather awkwardly decorated by my inexperienced hands - but it has lasted for over 60 years.

“I seem to remember spending quite a lot of time doing country dancing, but maybe the circles I recall had something to do with the Brownies in which we were all enrolled: a lot of English life and customs were still rather confusing! My warmest memories are of my two friends Hazel Palmer and Monica Piggott with whom I lost touch when we moved back to London in the summer of 1941. I also recall a very Big Boy, Patrick, of whom I was rather in awe!

“I cannot name any of the teachers, but I seem to remember that the school consisted of two interconnecting large rooms which were entered by doors off the main hallway. I would be delighted to hear from any contemporaries who have better memories of the wartime Shrubbery school.” If you can help please write to me.

Recent articles have prompted Peter Holmes from Willingham to e-mail: “Last week’s ‘Memories’ reminded me of the time when I worked for the Eastern Counties Bus Co. at Newmarket Road as an apprentice Signwriter for a mere £1-15s a week. I enclose a photo taken in spring of 1956; I am the young chap right at the top on the left but am unable to recall any names. The Bus was renovated by us and I believe it did go to Ipswich. Perhaps there is still somebody there from over 48 years ago?” [SCAN 100.87 OF BUS]

Another mystery has been solved, thanks to Laurence Peers from Fulbourn. Dr John Grantham is researching the history of the gardens at Anglesey Abbey on behalf of the National Trust. He knows that during the Second World War an armoured unit was based at the Abbey and thanks to Richard Ayres the former head gardener he knows where about in the gardens they were established. But he does not know just which unit it was. Laurence says it was the Northamptonshire Yeomanry - he was a boy living in Lode and remembers them well. The Northants later took part in the D-Day landings and fought in tank battles in Normandy. His family kept in touch with a member of the unit during this time

Memories 10th November 2004, by Mike Petty

As the last of the Guy Fawkes bangs dies away so we prepare to remember not November 5th but November 11th, Armistice Day.

There are only a few days in between and in the past Cambridge University Undergraduates were never slow in commemorating Gunpowder, Treason and Plot with what they termed a 'Rag' – though to other minds it seemed more of a riot. Bonfires would be built on Market Hill, Parker's Piece or any other unguarded part of the town and garden fences, wooden market stalls or anything else combustible commandeered to feed the flames. It was a time for students to be arrested, the police station to be attacked – and it was all in the name of good fun. At least it was for the undergraduates and the town youths who supported them in their over-exuberant celebrations.

Older residents saw less of the fun and more of the mayhem. They remembered other, more violent, explosions experienced on the field of battle in a war that had been meant to end all wars. When it was their turn to commemorate they wished to do it in solemn dignity. They did not want their remembrance to be turned into another excuse for violence.

Thus when in 1921 the University undergraduates asked whether they might be allowed to participate in the 'Poppy Day' collections, raising money for the Earl Haig fund, there was understandable reluctance. How could students be trusted to do it with appropriate respect? But in a leap of faith it was agreed and so the Poppy Day Rag was born. It proved a success and over the years thousands of pounds was raised.

But there could still be apprehension when the two events coincided, as they did in 1954 – 50 years ago. That year the paper for Saturday the 6th November had two stories to report. One was of 'The Fifth', the other of the Poppy Day collections.

The night before had been exciting. There had been 5,000 people crammed on to Market Square, shouting screaming, pushing and laughing. A learner-driver learned not to venture into the city centre that night: his car was bodily pushed backwards for fifty yards, until police intervened to rescue him. Things turned less peaceful when at nine o'clock there was a general exodus into Sidney Street where fireworks were thrown and there were boos and hisses as police led the perpetrators away. University 'Bulldogs' pounced on a couple of youths, only to have to let them go after they denied being students. A dustbin lid was repeatedly sent shooting up into the air after giant thunderflashes were placed under it, causing Teddy Girls to squeal at every explosion. On and on it went, until Mother Nature intervened sending rain to cool tempers and drive revellers home. There had been five arrests and numerous reports of thefts of policemen's helmets

But this was just a normal bonfire night – in fact it was 'Quiet and Peaceful', according to the police.

Next morning there was absolute chaos in the city centre where the flashing beacon on the corner of Petty Cury had disappeared the night before. Saturday traffic was held up whilst Dick Turpin galloped through the streets on his mount, Bonny Black Bess and a Far Eastern expedition crossed Sidney Street from Boots to Millers Radio Shop. It was not helped by a somewhat younger-than-usual 'policeman' who directed all the traffic into Downing Street whether it wanted to go that way or not, or by a 'Vice-Chancellor's' parade walking slowly down the centre of the road complete with pick-axes and shovels. There was an invasion of Martians, a flying bedstead and a slave market outside the Guildhall where attractive young ladies could be bought for three-halfpence and some of the demure ladies from the new New Hall college turned out as 'St Trinian's' girls. Add in all the other activities and Cambridge was really a place to avoid unless you were prepared to contribute a few coppers to the Poppy Fund. Then a few days later peace descended as Armistice Day was commemorated with due reverence.

The rags continued with parades and decorated floats until the 1960s. But then some colleges began to boycott the event and people became less tolerant of flour bombs, rotten tomatoes,

water pistols and eggs. In 1967 the 'Poppy Day' rag was held for the last time. Although the rag was revived in 1969 it was held in February, not November and the link with Poppy Day was broken.

Do you have memories or snaps to share of Bonfire Night or Poppy Day – write to Mike Petty at the News

[SCAN OF POPPY DAY ACTIVITY – A MALE STUDENT DRESSED AS A WOMAN IN MARKET HILL 1950S; SCAN OF NEW HALL POPPY DAY 'ST TRINIANS' 1954; SCAN OF HEADLINES FOR 6 NOV 1954; SCAN OF LAST 'POPPY DAY' RAG 1967]

At any large gathering there is always the chance of an accident needing treatment from those trained in First Aid. One such was Roy Chamberlain from Foxton who served with the St John Ambulance Brigade and whose photographs record some of the events he attended in that capacity, including an incident at a scramble just after the war [SCAN 101.10] and the Brigade in action [SCAN 101.14]

Roy was not accident free himself; he fell from his bike when the chain came off at the Pye Sports in July 1944 – though fortunately it was in the slow cycle race. This spoiled his winning streak as he had swept all before him in that event at the Wings for Victory meeting at Shepreth in May 1943, repeating his achievement at Croxton Park. His prize was a cycle lamp – though being wartime he was not allowed to show a light after dark! [scan 101.11 – **SLOW CYCLE RACE**]

Roy was a versatile athlete: he could run forwards, backwards, do the high jump and long jump. He

treasures a picture of the Cambridge Railway Orphan Fund show and sports which took place on Coleridge Road recreation ground on 29th July 1939. He competed in the 100-yards race, when he came 5th in his heat, and the 880-yards which he did not finish. [SCAN 101.12 **Roy Chamberlain (no.13, LEFT) competes with W. Hayden in Railway Orphan Fund 100 yards race July 1939**]

But it did not put him off. Roy had joined the Pye Radio Athletics Club in May that year and came to the peak of his form during the war, winning the 100-yards at the Foxton August bank holiday show in 1943. He repeated his success at Shepreth's "Salute the Soldier" week in June 1944 when he completed the treble by winning the Obstacle and Potato races as well and earning three half-a-crown stamps. Sadly that was the peak of his dashing career, he was down to second at Fowlmere later that month and came in fourth at the Pye Sports Day in July.

These achievements might not rate in the highest echelons of athletic endeavour but Roy has kept photographs of the meetings, which provoke wonderful memories of the competitive fun of amateur sports days.

READERS WRITE

The photos of Matthew's, the high-class store in Trinity Street (Memories 27th October) have brought back memories for various readers who have told me what 'Wilson's Macedoine' was. Jim Longstaffe from Duxford says it was small diced vegetables mixed with salad cream, a bit like sandwich spread but thicker. Gayle Wade explains that Macedoine is the French word for a mixed vegetable or fruit salad, and macedonia is the Italian word for fruit salad. Charles Taylor from Great Wilbraham remembers it from his early days in the grocery trade just after the war. It was a popular choice at the time as there were very few vegetables in the shops, apart from peas. Pat White from Fulbourn remembers that it tasted horrible. Joyce Bailey (nee Butler) of Cambridge recognises the assistant behind the counter selling it as John Ginn. [SCAN 101.21] She writes: "I joined the firm in 1932 as cashier in the café (the happiest days of my life). When the war broke out I was transferred to the main office as it

held me from factory work. We had very poor wages but a lot of fun. All the elite came in. I remember Blunt in out café, also Enoch Powell” She has lent me a picture of the bakery staff taken about 1937 [SCAN 101.08]

Shirley Rowberry from Cambridge writes: “I read with interest your article "Long-lost name pops up in Monopoly game" on Wednesday 3rd November, as I used to work with my father in the former St. Andrew the Great workhouse. My father was a bookbinder and worked at the Cambridge Bookbinding Company in Tibbs Row. He started there upon leaving school and apart from a break during WW2 he worked there for well over 60 years before retiring well past his retirement age. In fact I still have a copy of an article that the CEN published about him several years ago. I have very fond memories of the building because even after I ceased to work at the bookbinders I always popped in to see my dad on a Saturday morning when I was in town. He would make me a cup of tea and always had an interesting book to show my sisters and I. Seeing the picture really brought back fond memories for me”. [SCAN 580 – ST ANDREW THE GREAT WORKHOUSE]

Memories 17th November 2004, by Mike Petty

The Guildhall occupies a prime site in the centre of Cambridge; it is home to the City Council, its Mayor, officers, staff and associated facilities. But, councillors are now wondering, could they maximise its commercial potential by converting some of the ground-floor space to shops?

In the distant past councillors were not slow to exploit such a prominent site. The historic engravings of Market Hill show what is generally remembered as the old Town Hall. But the building that fronted on to the Market Hill was the Shire House, built in 1747 for the use of the county authorities. It contained two assize courts on the upper floors while underneath was an open colonnade where market stalls were set up.

The Town Council had let the County have the site for a peppercorn rent, provided that they could use the building for their business when the courts weren't in session. The town also had the income from the rent of the stalls and the cellars underneath.

Then in the 1780s the Town Council commissioned Cambridge architect James Essex to design them a new Town Hall. It opened on 25 May 1784 but did not feature a grand elevation because it was almost invisible behind the Shire House. It can just be glimpsed in the background of one of the old prints. [SCAN 70.38 - 1800 PRINT SHOWING SHIRE HOUSE WITH GLIMPSE OF THE TOWN HALL BEHIND IT TO THE RIGHT]

When a new Assize Court was built on Castle Hill in 1842 the old Shire House was handed back to the Corporation. The council occupied both buildings – Town Hall and Shire House – and bricked in some of the arches to provide extra space for offices. [SCAN 18109 - TOWN HALL FRONT C1900 SHOWING SHOPS TO RIGHT]

There the situation remained until the 1930s when the Corporation decided it needed a new Guildhall, unifying the whole site. They also wanted extra space and so expanded to take in a number of shops and other buildings that fronted on Market Hill and around the corner into Peas Hill. The shops were demolished and in due course offices and a new courtroom replaced them. [SCAN 5707 SHOWING FRONT OF SHOPS FROM CORNER OF PEAS HILL TO TOWN HALL – WITH MEAT HANGING OUTSIDE THE BUTCHER'S SHOP; SCAN 5689 VIEW OF EAST SIDE OF PEAS HILL BEFORE NEW GUILDHALL; SCAN 8705 – THE SAME VIEW AFTER BUILDING OF GUILDHALL]

So if some of the present Guildhall offices do actually return to shops then history will have repeated itself. But it is unlikely that we will once more see the same types of traders that were there 100 years ago. In 1904 the shops on Market Hill housed Isaac Beale a toy dealer, Palmer the tailor and Lawrence and Rose, butchers. The east side of Peas Hill was home to Jennings the cheesemonger and provisions merchant, Rose the butcher, G.P. Sennitt poulterer and game dealer and Pollard the confectioner. They were small traders of the kind driven out of central Cambridge in recent years. There was also Whitmore's wine merchant, Weatherhead the bookseller and Harris the jeweller – but perhaps we have enough of these already.

Time will tell – but what do you recall of these or of the other traders on the opposite side of Peas Hill?

READERS WRITE

Various readers have shared memories of St Tibbs Row. Alan Betterman from Cambridge writes; “St Tibb's Row has many happy memories for both my wife and I. I started work at Easter 1947, aged 14, as a telegram boy for the G.P.O. and was based at the rear of the main Post Office. In those days there were more than 30 messengers on cycles and later that year we took delivery of BSA C10 motorcycles. In 1949 my wife Marina left the Coleridge Girls' School and started work as a junior telephonist in the exchanged based at the top of the same building. We met and did a lot of our courting in St Tibb's Row. The messengers' clubroom was over the top of a shop in Post Office Terrace, close to Ramsey and Muspratt's photographers. Many evenings were spent there or at the YMCA on the corner of Alexandra Street, playing snooker in the basement”. Kenneth Bright from Cambridge also remembers the Toc H club in the car park at the back of the Lion Hotel (does anybody have more memories of this). Alan Bates worked as an Estate Agent from 1942, collecting rents from the flats in the Vicars Building which were about 7/- (35p) a week. [THERE IS A PICTURE OF THE ST TIBBS ROW SIGN AND BUILDINGS BEYOND IN THE NEWS LIBRARY FILES]

Peter Burbage from Coton has responded to Thena Kendal's plea for memories of the Shrubbery School in the 1940s. He writes: “I was at school at this time. It was run by Mr & Mrs Fulton and two of the teachers were Miss Mason and Miss Pauley. Some of the pupils were Barbara and Jack Steppings, Daphne Start, Claris Hayward, Wendy Oliver, Arthur Barton, Nelly Rayment and Maurice Childay. I remember one afternoon the air raid sirens went; it was a very cloudy day and as we were making our way downstairs from the first-floor classroom we heard an aircraft and looking out of the window I saw a German bomber below the clouds. He then released several bombs on Mill Road railway bridge. The school had no playing fields but we had the pleasure of Parker's Piece for our P.T. and games.”

The omnibus saga continues

Richard Haughey writes: “I refer to Peter Holmes photograph of the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company that he helped repaint in the spring of 1956 (CEN November 3rd 2004). The bus in question was not an Eastern Counties vehicle but a former double decker staff bus of the Histon based Chivers & Sons. This vehicle was one of a number they owned and operated to collect fruit pickers and factory staff. It was a 1929 Leyland; it being purchased by Chivers in 1937 and put to work at their Huntingdon factory collecting the factory staff from the March area. The bus operated some million miles while with the company. Prior to the vehicle being taken off the run, the company was approached by the British Transport Museum at Clapham in London, who were seeking such a vehicle to add to their collection. Chivers was very keen to donate this vehicle and it was sent to Newmarket Road for refurbishment and repainting. After the official handover, DR 4902 was displayed in London. Later it passed to the Science Museum and is now on display at their Wroughton site just

outside Swindon.” Richard has sent a picture of it taken in September 2004. [SCAN 100.87 – THE CHIVERS BUS BEING REPAINTED AT MARSHALLS IN 1956 SCAN 101.23 THE BUS NOW IN A MUSEUM]

Rodney Dale from Haddenham thinks that the shortish chap in the front row might be Ted Higgins. Rodney was a bus enthusiast as a lad: “After school, I was wont to creep in at the back door of the Eastern Counties bus garage in Hills Road, and revel in the noise and smell of the great monsters being revved up in the repair bays. That’s how I got to know one of the mechanics, Ted Higgins, who explained about bus construction and maintenance, and on occasion spirited me on board to go out with him on a test drive ('crouch down until we're clear of the garage, and when we get back').

Mabel Law from Longstowe writes: “Seeing the open stairs bus brought back memories of my time as a ‘clippie’ on the 105 route from Drummer Street to Strangeways Road. I wasn’t very keen on going upstairs whilst the bus was moving and held on to the rail for dear life!” Mabel continues: “Does anybody remember the only gas bus which was used during the war. My sister Margaret Ambrose (nee Northrop) was a clippie on it and her driver was Harry King”.

Marion Rusted from Lt Abington writes: “I read with great interest (and some nostalgia) about Gladys Hughes, a bus conductress. She was a wonderful lady on the 101 bus when I was at Paston House in Bateman Street – now St Mary’s. I was at school until 1948 and when Gladys was ‘on board’ by day was always brightened by her wonderfully cheerful nature. She was so smart in her uniform with a black beret worn at a very jaunty angle. Everyone received a helping hand from her, particularly older people who needed assistance getting on and off the bus. I remember too that when she put a new ticket reel into the ticket dispenser that we children got the remaining paper reel” [PICTURE OF GLADYS IN NEWS LIBRARY FILES – WE FEATURED IT IN MEMORIES 20TH OCT]

John Taylor from Haslingfield recalls another transport initiative from the 1930s that might solve some of the problems facing the Post Office these days – letterboxes fixed to buses. He writes: “The project was introduced, at the request of the Postmaster General, in the late summer of 1933. In the area around Cambridge, the only villages to benefit from such a service were Cottenham and Histon on Eastern Counties route 104. The letterbox was provided to give them a late collection facility since the village boxes were cleared in the afternoon. The box was brought daily from the Post Office and attached and locked on the bus that left Cambridge at about 6.30 pm. For its return journey (i.e. Cottenham to Histon to Cambridge) the bus departed at 8.15 pm and the letterbox was available for the posting of mail en route. The bus arrived at the Cambridge Bus Station (Drummer Street) at 8.50 pm and the letterbox was removed by Post Office officials for conveyance to the sorting office. The service was in operation every day except Sundays and Bank Holidays and was guaranteed to catch the regular up and down mails and be delivered in practically any part of England by the first post the next day”. It seems the box only remained in use for a few years but there does not appear to be any record of its withdrawal.

Memories 24th November 2004, by Mike Petty

Today's newspaper headlines are recording disputes over travellers who now wish to become settlers. Similar debates have been aired regularly in the papers of the past.

In November 1898 Cambridgeshire County Council considered a report on the conditions that then obtained among gypsies and dwellers in vans and tents. *These people*, the report claimed, *lead an insanity life, they are the frequent carriers of disease, often disturb the peace of the localities in which they pitch their camps, and their children contrive to evade the provision*

of the Education Act and are brought up in the most gross ignorance. It is clear that something ought to be done. How is school attendance to be enforced on children who never acquired a local habitation. The evils that call for remedies are so real that it is eminently desirable that as far as possible to do so, the gypsy should be brought within the pale of the ordinary law

One way to prevent problems was to ensure that the travellers kept travelling. It was an issue being tackled just 100 years ago, in December 1904. The News then reported:

A party of Macedonian gypsies, apparently coming under the designation of 'undesirables', are being chased from one county to another as vigorously as civilised government will permit. No -----county wants them, no county will have them. Hertfordshire police have pushed them on to the Essex police and today the Cambridgeshire police are putting them over the boundary where the same process will be repeated. Being pushed from pillar to post tries even the Macedonian philosophy and the gypsies are becoming 'more annoyed and disagreeable every day'

At Stump Cross Police Superintendent Everitt of the Linton division received charge of the forty-old wanderers who are being pushed in the direction of the coast whence they will probably be shipped to the Continent. The Superintendent, assisted by PCs Bugg and Huckle obtained horses to drag the alien caravans into Cambridgeshire and continued in charge until the Balsham crossroads were reached where Deputy Chief Constable Whitechurch of Newmarket, Inspector Sampson of Bottisham, Inspector Gobbett from Suffolk and two police constables were waiting.

It became necessary to find fresh motive power. The police searched in vain for horses and they then hit upon the expedient of pressing into service one of Messrs Covill and Sons' traction engines. So the motley crowd with their caravans and tiny ponies proceeded on their weary way. By the time the village of Six Mile Bottom was reached darkness had fallen.

There is in that place a comfortable little hostelry called the 'Green Man' which the gypsies found much to their liking. The landlord offered his foreign visitors gifts of loaves of bread which they 'graciously acknowledged' and ate. Apparently they are imbued with a spirit of reciprocity for having eaten the landlord's bread they purchased some of his good whiskey and rounded off the meal with sips of spirits to keep the cold out.

The idea of being drawn along by a traction engine greatly delighted the wanderers who crowded into their caravans and very contentedly made the journey into Newmarket where they camped for the night on the Heath within a few hundred yards of the border with Suffolk. Next morning the engine with the vans attached recommenced its journey.

The progress through Newmarket was marked with several amusing incidents. Some of the party visited the International Stores and 'lifted' a ham and tin of coffee, but these the assistants recovered. A pair of boots was carried off from a bootmaker's shop and some tin mugs were removed from one of the local ironmongers. A public house was visited, a glass of whiskey and a glass of gin was called for and a penny tendered in payment.

The whole of the party had swarthy complexions and none appeared to bear the stamp of poverty on their faces. Of clothing they had very little and this was clearly illustrated when a boy and girl were engaged in a free fight near the Tower Clock. Those of the party who walked did so at their leisure, in fact they appeared reluctant to leave the town and allowed the vans to get some distance ahead.

Superintendent Whitehead accompanied the party as far as the Red Lodge which is just outside the Cambridgeshire boundary and the Suffolk authorities continued with the procession, their intention being to dump the vans on land at Brandon in Norfolk.

Everybody in Cambridgeshire breathed a sign of relief, Newmarket returned to normality. But that town had made too good an impression and next day the gypsies were back!

To many the life living under the stars, is one that has its attractions. In November 1976 News reporter Kate Green made the acquaintance of one such 'gentleman of the road'. *Dick Barratt, she wrote, is a gypsy, a Romany, a traveller, a hermit, a woodland philosopher, a loner. He must be in his fifties, with his full head of nut brown hair, startling sailor-blue eye and his teeth black stumps in an angelic grin.*

He has eaten smoked salmon and caviar -from the bins at Stansted Airport. A gentleman of the road in every sense, he doesn't steal, beg or live off the State. He doesn't swear, spit, smell or go unshaven. He treats himself only to the odd tippie of cider. He has charm, dignity, a great sense of pride- and trusts no one. The village children call him 'Flower Power' - not so much because he's gentle and peace loving, but for the wild flowers in his many hats. Winter and hot summer long he wears the same number of layers in a never-ending variety of costumes from his rag pile

In his permanent but makeshift camp a few yards from the thundering highway he makes the occasional stranger welcome against a cacophony of barking dogs.

Dick's dogs, well-fed and clean instantly obey him and guard him fiercely. With scrap collector's pram and black dog he walks a regular beat on the Newmarket-London A11 from Widdington to Stansted. Sometimes he goes as far away as Cambridge or Chesterford. He collects rags and scrap from householders, lay-bys, ditches and tips. His hands are scarred by rusted metal and broken glass. He gleanes the left-over picking, the windfall apples

His permanent camp was treacherous with mud as the night frost melted and the morning sun found the gaps in his makeshift tarpaulin, cardboard and polythene tent slung from the trees. Rainwater, gathered in the dip of the tarpaulin roof, is his reservoir. Inside, on his rug and rag bed, he has no standing room and kneels to his paraffin lamp and heater. His ancient fridge is unwired but keeps the wasps, mice and rats away from the dog biscuits and groceries he buys in the village store.

His nearest neighbour is a former councillor and her husband. When they were burgled of a lifetime's personal collection of small treasures Dick moved his camp nearer the big house to guard them. In turn they worry for his health in winter, his safety at night and send him over a Christmas dinner. But both sides in this curious and amicable arrangement have an enormous respect for each other's privacy. He has never been in their house. They never go beyond the boundary of his woodland territory.

Dick cares nothing for time and a good deal for his three dogs & his friend Queenie. She is a distant relative, in no way his wife. She lives some distance away in her own caravan. She's not well. Her legs give way as she tries to push her pram up the earthwork ditch and she falls helpless in the mud. Barelegged and plimsolled she shivers non-stop by the hot ashes of his wood fire. They share cigarettes, food and company for a while each day.

Dick is tough and wiry; if he gets a cold he lets 'germ fight germ' and he's unafraid. But Queenie is vulnerable to illness and bullies. Hooligans twice tore apart her caravan while, terrified, she hid. They threw the contents of the old van, including a bundle of rags, on to the flames. The 'bundle' was Queenie rolled in her bedding. Three days later she returned, black from head to foot. All she could say was "I've been on the fire." It transpired that her

attackers were fellow-travellers who'd thought the caravan was empty and took it away. Later they replaced it.

"I've always been a loner", Dick said. "I don't like crowds. You only need enough to get by. You're worse off on £60 a week than two or three - people want to live off you. The world is full of greed and jealousy."

Dick and Queenie are the Odd Couple, the dropouts, the orphans of the storm, *Kate concluded*. They're out in the cold. They belong to no one.

But where are such travellers to set up their final camp and can they adapt to that strange way of life which other folk consider 'normal'. That is a question for the future to resolve.

Do you have memories to share – write to Mike Petty at the News

SCAN

566 Dick Barratt and Queenie at their camp – there may be other negatives – R66476

T2399 Travellers' children at Garlic Row, Cambridge 1978

5252 Jim Loveridge sleeping on the ground in front of his caravan, 1970s

142 Travellers' encampment at Sutton, 1991

10480 Gypsy caravans at Turf Fen, Chatteris in 1930s

10132 Gypsy caravans at Riverside Park, St Neots, 1880s

9753 Traffic on Newmarket's busy High Street was joined in December 1904 by the strange sight of Gypsy caravans being towed by a traction engine; the town made a good impression and the Gypsies returned!

NOTE: there are photos of the Macedonian Gypsies referred to in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Lion Yard Library; I will try and obtain a scan but may not be able to get it in time.

Memories 1st December 2004, by Mike Petty

I WROTE THIS LEAD STORY BUT THEN SPOTTED AN ARTICLE IN SATURDAY'S PAPER ABOUT THE EXPLOITS OF A CAMBRIDGE BURGLAR. SO I HAVE COMPILED AN ALTERNATIVE STORY ABOUT A FAMOUS BOUT OF BURGLARIES 200 YEARS AGO

Just weeks after the scaffolding has been removed from the buildings along King's Parade another of Cambridge's more attractive properties, Cintra House on Hills Road is to undergo a major refurbishment. But once more the exterior will look just the same when it's all over.

The Open University moved into Cintra House about 25 years ago and now the interior is beginning to look a little tired. So to clear the way for the builders they are moving into a temporary location in Betjeman House a little further up the road for nine months.

Open University architectural historian Colin Cunningham, who lives in Cambridge, has researched the history of the building. It was conceived as part of a grand development leading to the station and built in the early 19th century. It was given a new façade between 1860 and 1865 by Cambridge architect John Edlin. He appears in local directories for about 10 years and then vanishes so it is difficult to trace his origins in greater detail. Nor was the architect a member of the then recently formed RIBA with offices in King's Parade. Colin

thinks he may have lived in Cintra House, Shelford; or that the building may be named after Sintra in Portugal.

Cintra House was originally part of a terrace and there would have been a number of doors corresponding with the current windows. It was built in two sections, and you can see the join in the wall, Colin points out. Over the years it provided homes to many people including at least two Cambridge University academics, the Rev Joseph H. Gray, Fellow, Dean, & Lecturer of Queens' college and Thomas McKenny Hughes, Woodwardian Professor of Geology and Fellow of Clare.

The building has had other educational connection. In 1905 it became the first Cambridge base for Cheshunt College. This had been founded by Selina, Countess of Huntingdon in 1768 after six students at Oxford University had been expelled for having Methodist sympathies. Her new foundation was for pious godly young men to serve in the ministry and took its name from the town in Hertfordshire to which it moved in 1792.

With the outbreak of the Great War Cambridge prepared for the inevitable casualties and convalescent hospitals were established to nurse the wounded back to health. Three large empty properties in Cintra Terrace were placed at the disposal of the Cambridge Women's Voluntary Aid Detachment. The rooms were swept and scrubbed and the girls travelled around Cambridge collecting furniture, going out with a handcart to bring in mattresses, coal-scuttles and all the other essentials. It was the first of several such Hospitals, with others in villages such as Fulbourn, Cottenham, Whittlesford and Willingham.

By the 1920s it housed the Bird Bolt Hotel which may have been used by commercial travellers, in the 1940s it was the address of the Simplex Dairy Equipment Company which made milking machinery. More recently it has been a nurses' hostel; and a block of luxury flats, in one of which lived Sir Hamilton Kerr, MP for Cambridge.

There were plans to demolish Cintra House in the 1970s but the façade was saved and will still play its distinctive part in the Cambridge streetscape once the current changes have been complete and the Open University is back in place, Angela Schofield the Regional Director promises.

But what do you remember of this most decorative of Cambridge buildings? [SCAN OF CINTRA TERRACE IN THE 1920S, SCAN OF CINTRA HOUSE FRONTAGE TODAY]

ALTERNATIVE LEAD

GRIMSHAW AND KIDMAN, CAMBRIDGE BURGLARS

Saturday's News featured the activities of a burglar who targeted Cambridge University buildings having 'graduated' from Oxford. But despite the distress he caused his victims he really had nothing on Cambridge's own home-grown burglars of 200 years ago, Richard Kidman and William Grimshaw.

After an early life of petty crime Kidman became a skilled clock maker and turned to plumbing and glazing, which gave him ready access to college buildings. His accomplice Grimshaw was a chimney-sweep and for four years they conducted a series of robberies which defied the vigilance of the police and kept the whole of Cambridge in a continued state of amazement and alarm.

The first robbery that Kidman and Grimshaw committed took place in August 1796 at the treasury of King's College where the college plate was locked up for the summer. Using his clockmaking skills Kidman took a copy of the key, pinched the silver and locked the door up

again. It was weeks before anybody knew it had been stolen. Later Grimshaw used false keys to let himself into the buttery at St Catharine's college and made off with the booty, repeating the exercise at a Fellow's room at Trinity College.

Then Kidman cut keys to the great iron gates at the back of Trinity College and let himself in. He left with a sack so full of silver that he could hardly lift it. A robbery of this magnitude caused a great alarm. Bow Street Runners stopped every cart on the turnpike road to London and police searched Kidman's house. They found tools of all sorts and came away full of admiration for his skills as a clockmaker! He was a good bricklayer too, for the high constable actually leaned up against a wall in the cellar behind which he'd just bricked up the college silver!

Despite all their efforts the police could not find a thing. Grimshaw and Kidman became bolder. Emmanuel College lodge was robbed, then the Combination Room at Caius followed by the butteries at Christ's where they stole various silver pots and other articles. But they were disturbed while breaking into the buttery at Emmanuel College and fled leaving their booty behind. By now William Grimshaw was getting cheeky. He broke into three private rooms at Trinity by getting down the chimney he was employed to sweep and carried off the treasure in the soot bag.

But all the while they were planning their biggest ever robbery, an enterprise which required all their courage and skills to accomplish. One night Kidman and Grimshaw broke into King's College. They got hold of a copy of the key to the outer door to the chapel and let themselves in. Once inside they worked on the interior locks though these being antique were a real challenge. It took a week, returning each night, before they had cracked all the locks except one. But by now Grimshaw had had enough – he said 'that the place looked so awful, that he trembled every time as if he had the ague', and his panic communicated itself to Kidman. They gave up the attempt and left empty handed.

A few days later Kidman went back, cracked the last lock and found a treasure chest. He picked it up, shook it, then panicked and put it down again, letting himself out without taking anything. Then he picked up his courage again and went back once more. This time he brought out silver coins and a locked box containing gold and silver. The robbery of a chapel caused outrage and every college increased its security. It didn't prevent the pair removing sackfuls of treasure from Gonville & Caius College, though it took six weeks of undetected nightly raids to accomplish.

Stealing was one thing, disposing of the proceeds another and this proved more of a problem as the robbers and their fence squabbled. But they got away with it and after a while people stopped talking about the great plate robbery. Then on 24th January 1801 there was another burglary, when the house of an Alderman was entered and a considerable quantity of plate stolen. The old suspicions were immediately rekindled. Police searched Grimshaw's house in Newmarket Road but found nothing. They then arrested and interrogated Kidman; after a week he cracked.

Back went the police to William Grimshaw's house, this time they decided to pull it down, brick by brick. As they did so they revealed hidden cavities containing the Alderman's silver together with various items of college silver he'd not disposed of.

The trial took place at the County Assizes. Grimshaw made no defence. The judge sentenced him to death at which William broke down, begging for mercy and bringing tears to the eyes of the jurymen. It was no avail – too many colleges had been robbed to allow for any mercy in this world. He was hanged at Cambridge castle on 18th March 1801. His accomplice was transported to New South Wales for life, but was back in Cambridge within seven years. He settled down to his old job as clockmaker and died in January 1832

SCAN 9050 - A SOMEWHAT FANCIFUL PANORAMIC VIEW OF CENTRAL CAMBRIDGE. IT SHOWS SEVERAL OF THE BUILDINGS ROBBED INCLUDING ST CATHARINE'S COLLEGE, KING'S COLLEGE, GONVILLE & CAIUS COLLEGE, TRINITY HALL AND TRINITY COLLEGE

SCAN OF HANDBILL OF GRIMSHAW'S DYING WORDS

SCAN 1640 – KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL FROM KING'S PARADE 1820's

SCAN 9845 – CAIUS COLLEGE AS IT WAS WHEN IT WAS ROBBED.

More old buildings have been recalled by News readers.

Alan Betterman from Cambridge writes: "I was very interested in your article about family-run shops next to the old Guildhall. My grandfather owned and ran a butcher's shop at the corner of Petty Cury, his wife was the chief cashier, her brother was manager and his younger brother was a butcher. The shop was run by him from the latter part of the nineteenth century until he retired before the Great War. His advertisement in the Spalding's Street Directory of 1880 states 'By appointment to their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cambridge', so he was able to display the Prince of Wales' feathers on the front of the shop." The shop was later replaced by Sketchley's cleaners before that whole side of Petty Cury was razed for the Lion Yard redevelopment [SCAN 101.69 SHOWING CORNER OF PETTY CURY AND GUILDHALL STREET 1902.; SCAN 5132 SAME CORNER OF PETTY CURY 1972; SCAN 101.70 DETAIL OF BUTCHER'S SHOP

Pat Haslop (nee Humphreys) from Bar Hill says her memory was jogged by Angela Nunn. "Her letter about the cycle shop right on the corner of Newmarket Road and East Road stirred a lot of thoughts. It always looked a very busy shop, the doorway and windows always had cycles or parts hanging from them. [SCAN101.64 CORNER OF NEWMARKET ROAD AND EAST ROAD SHOWING CYCLE SHOP 1963] Angela and I were both in the same Brownie Pack and at one point were sixer and seconder together. We both went on to become Girl Guides; our meetings were held in St Columba's Hall in Lower York Street. Our Brown Owl was Miss Easton who lived at 12 Stone Street and organised willing Guides and Brownies to push her to and from meetings in her very heavy wheelchair. She must have been very trusting to let us youngsters push her down there, but boy was she heavy to go up the slope!"

Returning to East Road Pat recalls: "There was a place called Todd's Scales and next door to them a public house. Its sign hung on a tall white post and was an upside-down magnet. I was told that if I walked underneath it with a metal hat on I would be drawn up there by the magnet. Wherever I was going to get a metal hat from I'll never know, but I suppose there were a few about just after the war". Do you know the name of this pub, she asks, and can anybody tell me more about Todds Scales when they were in East Road

One man who probably does is Mr D. Runham of Cambridge; he wrote following a picture of the Working Men's Club on East Road. "It certainly was a memory-jogger. The shop next door was Bill Kemp's barbers where I had my hair cut in the late 1950's (for a D.A. & Quiff). He had a heavily bandaged infected foot and would hop across the road to the Club for a Guinness while cutting hair, so you sat with half a hair cut till he returned. I have cut my own hair ever since, so saving a lot of one-and-ninepennies as it was then (8p). I enjoy your pages in the News. I am now delivering them – PS I was born in Cambridge in 1942"

Mrs G. Deas from Milton has lent a picture to jog the memories of many people who may now be grandparents themselves. It was taken at a Cambridge baby show in August 1947 when her son, David, won first prize – that's them on the left on the front row with David standing on her lap. But who were the other bonny babies? [SCAN 101.29]

Such shows were an important part of the entertainment scene; there was one at the Balsham Conservative fete held on Empire Day that year along with a fancy-dress competition, a goat show and a Punch & Judy performance. Show. The star attraction however was a Penny-Farthing bicycle which could be ridden – if you dared – for a small charge

But life was not much fun in 1947. Ladies of the Cambridgeshire Federation of Women's Institutes sought an assurance that there would be an improvement next year in the distribution of ration books. One member said their village was one of several which had to go to Bourn to collect their ration books. "Imagine what happens", she said, "when the inhabitants of all these villages advance on the centre in the two days allowed". She quoted an instance of one mother leaving a young baby in the house while she queued from 10 o'clock till 4.30 in the afternoon before then having to travel three miles home.

Do you have memories of bringing up baby at the end of the war – write to Mike Petty

Memories 8th December 2004, by Mike Petty

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Open University architectural historian Colin Cunningham, who lives in Cambridge, has researched the history of the building. Cintra House was conceived as part of a grand development leading to the station and built in the early 19th century. It was originally part of a terrace with a number of doors corresponding with the current windows. It was built in two sections, and you can see the join in the wall, Colin points out.

The building was given a new façade between 1860 and 1865 by Cambridge architect John Edlin. He appears in local directories for about 10 years and then vanishes so it is difficult to trace his origins in greater detail. Nor was he a member of the then recently formed RIBA with offices in King's Parade. Colin thinks he may have lived in Cintra House, Shelford; or that the building may be named after Sintra in Portugal.

My researches show that Edlin was almost chosen as the architect of Cambridge's new Corn Exchange in 1868. He submitted designs for a building in what was described at the time as the Grego-Italian style somewhat similar to a German railway station with a square lantern roof. His scheme was praised by the famous Victorian architect Alfred Waterhouse who himself did much work in Cambridge, including Gonville and Caius and Pembroke college. Edlin's designs would have cost half of that of the rival design that was shortlisted but he lost out to Richard Reynolds Rowe, whose building still stands.

Cintra House thus remains his main Cambridge legacy. Over the years it provided homes to many people including at least two Cambridge University academics, the Rev Joseph H. Gray, Fellow, Dean, & Lecturer of Queens' college and Thomas McKenny Hughes, Woodwardian Professor of Geology and Fellow of Clare.

But the building has had other educational connections. In 1905 it became the first Cambridge base for Cheshunt College. This had been founded by Selina, Countess of Huntingdon in 1768 after six students at Oxford University were expelled for having Methodist sympathies. Her new foundation was for pious godly young men to serve in the ministry and took its name from the town in Hertfordshire to which it moved in 1792.

With the outbreak of the Great War Cambridge prepared for the inevitable casualties and convalescent hospitals were established to nurse the wounded back to health. Three large empty properties in Cintra Terrace were placed at the disposal of the Cambridge Women's Voluntary Aid Detachment. The rooms were swept and scrubbed and the girls travelled around Cambridge collecting furniture, going out with a handcart to bring in mattresses, coal-scuttles and all the other essentials. It was the first of several such Hospitals, with others in villages such as Fulbourn, Cottenham, Whittlesford and Willingham.

By the 1920s it housed the Bird Bolt Hotel which may have been used by commercial travellers, in the 1940s it was the address of the Simplex Dairy Equipment Company which made milking machinery. More recently it has been a nurses' hostel and a block of luxury flats, in one of which lived Sir Hamilton Kerr, MP for Cambridge.

There were plans to demolish Cintra House in the 1970s but the façade was saved and will still play its distinctive part in the Cambridge streetscape once the current changes have been complete and the Open University is back in place.

But what do you remember of this most decorative of Cambridge buildings? [SCAN OF CINTRA TERRACE IN THE 1920S, SCAN OF CINTRA HOUSE FRONTAGE TODAY SEND LAST WEEK AND ADDED TO THE SYSTEM THEN]

A few weeks ago I featured the 'Man Loaded with Mischief' inn sign designed by Richard Hopkins Leach and sought information on any of his other work. A cutting was soon speeding across the country to Hayes in Middlesex from which his great-great-grandson Frederick McLean Leach replies. He e-mails: "You ask the question, 'where are they now?' The answer is they are with me." He has send scans of three of the pictures, including a family portrait showing the artist himself. Another shows Cambridge Volunteers parading on Parker's Piece in October 1848 and the Gatehouse of Cambridge Castle painted in 1840. [SCAN OF CASTLE GATEHOUSE IN 1840]

The Castle gatehouse was later demolished for the County Assize courts, where the Shire Hall car park now stands. The courts are themselves now just a memory. But to one man they are a vivid memory. Charles Sharp from Barnwell writes: "I first set foot inside the imposing old Cambridge Assize Courts more than 70 years ago, when I was in short trousers and still attending St Andrew's school in Chesterton. My parents explained that as a special treat we were going to Castle Hill, where an open day had been arranged at the nearby county jail which was due for demolition to make way for a New Shire Hall. My first impression was one of disappointment. There was nothing that looked remotely like a castle, just a large piece of land and grim looking buildings with unusually small barred windows. Outside one of the main buildings was a long queue waiting to see the condemned cell and the gallows, which, we were informed were in regular use up the beginning of the First World War [SCAN OF GAOL]

"Some visitors were also invited to look inside the neighbouring and at that time fully operational Assize Court building. It had a very impressive colonnaded frontage behind which was a splendid courtroom typical of its period. Intimidating. No wonder the accused always appeared lonely and scared to death. This was where death sentences were still being passed, but no longer carried out. A uniformed officer explained briefly how British Law was

conducted and pointed out where the presiding Judge, Counsel and what, with surprising grace, he called the 'Gentlemen of the Press' sat.

"I have often thought that if there was a defining moment when I first began to take what my poor mother in years to come clearly regarded as an unhealthy interest in crime and punishment this was it. In the event it was not until I was in my last year at the Central School that the Headmaster, the marvellous 'Jock' Livingstone asked whether I had decided on a career and then enquired 'Have you considered being a newspaper reporter?' I hadn't as a matter of fact, but he explained that Morley Stuart, Editor of the Cambridge Daily News, had a policy of recruiting journalism apprentices from each of three local schools in turn - the Perse, County and the Central, whose turn it now was.

"I considered myself the rank outsider of the four applicants Jock sent for interview. To the astonishment of my parents, not to say my own utter amazement, I was chosen. Within a matter of months I would become a regular visitor to that fine old building I had first seen as a six-year-old in short trousers. Now as a young teenager, I would find myself sitting on those well-worn benches polished by the trousers of what that police officer a decade earlier had been gracious enough to describe as 'Gentlemen of the Press'. In truth you felt like a parrot perched in a church a pew, bolt upright writing on a ledge hardly wide enough to support a notebook let alone turn out finished copy. In the next three years a whole new world opened before my eyes. There I received another education far above anything I expected. All on account of the newspaper you are holding in your hands." [SCAN OF ASSIZE COURTS ON CASTLE HILL WHICH STOOD ON WHAT IS NOW THE GRASS VERGE IN FRONT OF THE COUNCILLORS' CAR PARK]

Justine Clarke from Llanelli, Wales, is researching one of her ancestors, another great Cambridge illustrator, John Sebert Clarke who was living in East Road in 1881. His father was a builder but John became a 'Press Artist' producing dozens of sketches which were featured in Cambridge newspapers. John's journalistic career started with the 'Cambridgeshire Weekly News' at the beginning of the 1890s & he returned to them in January 1897. The Cambridge Express featured his sketches of Cambridgeshire churches most weeks from 1892 and 1896. They proved so popular that they were published in two volumes entitled 'An artist's rambles in Cambridgeshire'. His work also appeared in the 'Ely Diocesan Remembrancer' as well as every edition of Spalding's 'Handbook, diary & almanack' between 1900 and 1917. He covered a variety of topics from an advertisement for Kidman's builders and contractors of Sturton Street showing their yard and details of individual aspects of their work to the opening of Mill Road Library in 1896, an important facility for the residents in the area. [SCAN OF MILL ROAD LIBRARY AT OPENING]

But little has yet been discovered about the man himself. Both he and his wife described themselves as "artists" and lived in several houses in Cambridge. The final entry in the street directory seems to be in 1907 when he appears as a builder and decorator with a workshop in Blinco Grove. Justine would be interesting to learn more of this most prolific of Cambridge illustrators but an intensely private man. If you can shed some light then please write to me and I'll pass it on.

Memories 15th December 2004, by Mike Petty

John I'Anson from the Castle Hill area of Cambridge has written to me following the recent death of a dearly-loved and well-remembered lady, Gwen Challis formerly proprietor of one of Cambridge's best-loved fishing tackle shops. He writes: For myself and many others the memories of Gwen and her son Terry recall countless untold acts of friendship and happiness in her fishing tackle shop on Newmarket Road, Cambridge, now sadly long gone.

John originally paid tribute to Challis' shop when it closed down **around October 1968**. Then with Bill Fincham (who wrote a 'Fenman' column in the News) he recalled what the eye once saw: the sign at the side of the window with its gaily-painted Mill Pool scene; angler, great leaping pike its jaws champing angrily at the plug bait between its teeth and the name "Challis and Son" above the shop

But Challis' was not just a shop where an angler went to buy something, it was a shop where friends were met and made, and Mrs Challis and her son Terry would be there behind the counter. Back in the 1960s she recalled that it had been in June 1938 when the shop opened. At the start there were very few customers; fishing was not nearly so popular and neither was time or money available for it.

Anglers of those days -who were often a laughing stock- had to make their tackle last and of the rods then bought there was mostly a demand for those of whole bamboo in the middle and butt sections and of lancewood or greenheart in the tip. They tended to be stiffish in play and nothing like as efficient as split cane. A split cane rod was an absolute luxury for an angler to buy

The newer type of metal reels were just making an appearance. The most widely-used type of reel sold were of walnut with a brass backplate. Floats were mostly celluloid or quill and there was not much variety. Lines were of plaited silk and hook casts of either gut or a gut substitute that came from Japan

A handful of eyed hooks could be had for a penny, maggots cost five shillings (25p) a gallon but not many people used a lot of them. A fishing licence cost one shilling (5p) and an angler could join any of the local clubs for about two bob (10p). There were also miles of free water in and around Cambridge.

Once the war was over business and tackle began to pick up. Rods made from tank aerals were all the rage for a while and customers' needs for reels were met by the production by the shop of the 'Cambridge Pembroke' and 'Cambridge Trinity' reels which were made of aluminium. Then came fixed spool reels; Mrs Challis sold her first two just before the beginning of the freshwater season of 1948, one of them to Hank Gentle who was still using it 30 years later.

The whole face of the fishing tackle manufacture began to change with the appearance of monofilament lines and tied hooks. With new methods of production prices began to fall and soon there were plastic floats, plastic tackle boxes, nylon nets and hollow steel rods. Next came fibre glass rods which by the 1960s had completely captured the sea-fishing market.

With the boom in angling the shop altered from its former front-parlour smallness to a bigger, brightly-lit, tackle-packed showroom, but they still sold some of the old items of tackle alongside the new. It was no wonder that generations of anglers mourned the closure of the shop at the end of the 1960s. Do you remember it – or have you other anglers' tales to share [SCAN OF ORIGINAL ARTICLE – TRY TO ESTABLISH A DATE FOR THE ARTICLE BY ASKING LORRAINE IN THE LIBRARY AND THEN CHECK FOR NEG; SCAN 5926 ANGLERS AT ELY STATION NOVEMBER 1963].

Jean Clements from the Arbury area has already written with a fishy tale: “My husband and I have many memories of the Kite area, one of them being the children’s fishing match run by the Albion fishing club. Word went round the school when the tickets were available, then there was a rush to the side door of the Falcon pub (now the Boat Race) for them. On the day we assembled on Parker’s Piece where double-decker buses were lined up around two sides of the Piece. Then it was all aboard and we went to St Ives. After a good day we had tea in the Corn Exchange then home for the prize-giving. One year I caught the longest eel with my dad’s second-best rod and was given a tin of sweets. It was a very special day”

Recent Memories articles have prompted Miss Mary Rayner from Cambridge to write me a most interesting letter on a variety of topics, including shops. “**Matthew’s** was a lovely shop; you could smell the ground coffee in Trinity Street; I remember going in with my mother. The when the art of serving groceries was slower and more complicated than it is now. The grocer would put sugar in stiff blue paper bags, twiddle it around very quickly with string and tie it up securely. He would also make stiff blue paper cones and pour dry goods into them. They had lovely wooden counters and the further you went back down the shop it got quite dark. I remember on the top of the store cabinets there were big jars, black with gold stripes with numbers on them. I think they held various types of tea. I wonder what happened to them – and to the lovely coloured glass lamps like Chinese hats which used to be suspended from the ceiling by metal chains before **Woolworth’s** was modernised. In **MacFisheries** in Petty Cury there was a huge counter of some sort of stone with the fish for sale on top; it was supported by big, square legs and below the counter, edged by these legs was a large glass aquarium with real goldfish swimming in it. I had to be nearly dragged away from looking at it”.

It was easier getting to central Cambridge in those days, Mary recalls: “Buses would drive down Petty Cury and quite often get stuck in the traffic; people used to get out and walk. [SCAN OF BUS SQUEEZING DOWN PETTY CURY c1965]. It was much better when buses were staffed. After the war for some time some of the conductors were ‘displaced persons’; one had very black hair and was quiet, another was real fun and used to call out the bus stop names, pronouncing them the wrong way or with the emphasis on a different part of the word. We used to look forward to him being on!” [SCAN 6378 CONDUCTORS AND BUSES CAUGHT UP BY TRAFFIC JAM IN MARKET STREET 1965]

One of those conductors was Marion Desmond, nee Henderson, who now lives in Lanarkshire. She moved to Cambridge in 1954 and lived in Pembroke Street with her sister who worked in the Bun Shop pub before becoming landlady of the Hat and Feathers, Newnham and the Wheatsheaf on Castle Hill. Marion meanwhile became a conductoress with Eastern Counties, where she met her husband; they married in 1958 and lived in the Vicars Building in St Tibbs Row for seven years. She writes: “I have very happy memories of that area. The telegraph boys with their motor bikes, the YMCA – a lively place with table tennis during the day and music in the evening, the noise of the printing press below us, the Corn Exchange – we had it all” - including a pigeon who would sit on the windowsill and keep watch over the Lion Yard car park”. [SCAN 5345 – A PIGEON’S EYE VIEW OVER LION YARD IN THE 1960S, SHOWING THE VICARS BUILDING ON THE RIGHT]

Ian Alexander from Dry Drayton has contacted me since he has a vivid memory of being with his mother one Saturday morning and going to a china shop which he thinks was on the corner of Market Hill and Peas Hill. He writes: “I’m not sure this was possible as I was born in September 1934 but can remember the present Guildhall being built. However the memory is so vivid that I have to relate it. We went into the shop to purchase a new chamber pot and this had to be wrapped up sufficiently to disguise what it might be. I can remember that there had to be several tries before my mother was satisfied with the result. From there we doubtless went to the fish stall on Peas Hill to get a pint of brown shrimps from the man who came from King’s Lynn each market day. That was our regular Saturday evening tea.” I think this might have been Barrett’s china shop on the corner of Great St Mary’s Passage, but do

you have other suggestions [SCAN 6883 BARRETT'S CHINA SHOP ON CORNER OF GT ST MARY'S PASSAGE, 1930s]

Jean Potter of the Coleridge area of Cambridge was quick to supply an answer to a question puzzling Pat Haslop. Pat had remembered that there once was in East Road a sign resembling a magnet, and had been told that this would have pulled her up the street if she passed wearing a tin helmet. But Jean says that it was not a magnet at all, but a horseshoe advertising the fact that her uncle, Percy Day who kept the Britannia pub was also a blacksmith and wheelwright. Many local tradespeople took their carts to them for repair.

June Atchison from Chesterton agrees, adding that the Britannia was on the Working Men's Club side of East Road. She found her memory jogged by the mention of several of the other old companies in that part of the city. Terry Reynolds from Over writes he still has a set of the original scales stamped with the name of his grandfather, Fred Reynolds the sweet-seller. He always had his scales serviced by Percy Todd at his scale works.

Memories 21st December 2004, by Mike Petty

Christmas isn't what it used to be in the old days; but then it probably never was. 100 years people were reflecting on some 'good old customs' that had gone, though not all of them were lamented. This is the article contributed by a 'Special Correspondent' to the Cambridge Daily News on 24th December 1904. [SCAN OF MAN READING A NEWSPAPER]

[START OF THE 1904 ARTICLE]

Christmas was wont to be a very merry time at Cambridge – more merry than wise. For a fortnight before and a fortnight after the fatal day there was a continual round of junketings, and sleep was much less thought off than pleasure. We do ourselves very well now in the way of social enjoyment but the former riotous 'keeping' of Christmas has gone.

One of the old customs is still lamented by the public, if not the tradesmen of the town: "Show Night". All Cambridge and his wife and family used to turn into the streets and every shopkeeper did his best to make a good display of his wares and catch the public eye by some novel form of window dressing.

The chief objects of attention were the butcher's and poulterer's where the carcasses of prize beasts and prize poultry were exhibited in prodigious quantities whilst the proprietors dispensed hospitality to their customers in their private offices or parlours. [SCAN 8824 – CHRISTMAS DISPLAY AT HASLOP'S SHOP SILVER STREET 1892; SCAN 6972 DISPLAY OF MEAT OUTSIDE SEBLEYS BUTCHERS, BRIDGE STREET, 1890, SCAN 8833 MEAT OUTSIDE TRAYLEN'S BUTCHERS NEWMARKET ROAD]

Too much emulation brought 'Show Night' to an untimely end. In their endeavours to beat one another the butchers killed more meat than they could get rid of in the ordinary way and losses followed. Then sentimentality came on the scene. Some people professed to regard the exhibition of carcasses as barbarous, 'unworthy of nineteenth-century civilisation' and the like and so 'Show Night' died out with it went a great deal of harmless enjoyment and useful social intercourse. With it also vanished the art of the butcher's dresser' of which the present generation knows nothing; whilst old residents will agree that neither the taste nor the care once shown in window decoration at Christmas time is now to be met with. 'Show Night' provided a considerable fillip to trade and there has been some talk of the advisability of reviving it.

Another and less defensible feature of the old-time season was the Christmas draws and raffles. Almost every public-house had its Christmas draw, and private ventures in this direction were often publicly advertised. The shares were a shilling each and the prizes would vary from a suckling pig or gigantic turkey to bottles of spirits or a dozen cigars. The great thing was to produce as many prizes and as few blanks as possible, and it was marvellous how successful some of the proprietors were in effecting this. Of course it meant a time of roaring trade for 'the house' and no doubt if there was a little loss on the draw it was made up in other ways. [SCAN WHEEL – MEN OUTSIDE THE WHEELWRIGHT'S ARMS, EAST ROAD]

Besides the draws there were the raffles which were not confined to licensed premises where however the basin and the dice-box (the dice used to be thrown into the basin) were to be found in almost every parlour, and mine host would exhaust his stock of fine cigars and choice wines and spirits in bottles.

Small shopkeepers, with scarce an exception, stimulated trade by raffling off Christmas trees or other attractive goods and raffles for stands of wool flowers, musical boxes, cases of stuffed birds, live rabbits and the like were held in many private houses. There was much speculation at these times. If all the shares had not been taken up the balance would be raffled for, and when the major trial of luck began there would be much competition to tempt the thrower of a high number to sell his chance. Both the draws and raffles were conducted quite openly and without the least fear of police interference. Cambridge was said to be one of the last towns in England to abandon these practices, but it is many years ago since they were extinguished by gentle, albeit firm pressure.

During the Christmas fortnight the waits were nightly at work, not a complete and noisy brass band such as is the twentieth century idea of waits, but a quartette [SIC] or at most a sextette [SIC] of players, and as each one was an expert with his instrument, the result was very far from being displeasing, even though one was awakened from one's slumbers by them. The names of Large, 'Si' Barker, Dring, and others will be remembered in this connection. Cambridge at the time under notice possessed a very considerable number of skilled handbell ringers and bands of these would supplement the waits during the Christmas week, the music of the bells having a pretty effect on the silence of the night.

Christmas Eve was a bustling and joyous time. People did not use to travel about at Christmas as they do nowadays, and the railway companies offered no inducements to do so by way of excursions. The streets were full of re-united families, and the greetings of old friends meeting once more were to be heard on every side. The singers at Great St Mary's and St Andrew's churches entered into the spirit of the season, and from the belfries Christmas hymns and carols were played on the bells, a good old custom which has been revived of late years by the Rev Mgr Scott at the Catholic Church. Business was continued until a late hour on the old-fashioned Christmas Eve, and was brisk too, far more so than is now the case.

So much for the ante-Christmas observances. Now a word in conclusion as to those which came after the festival. The custom of tradesmen giving Christmas boxes to their customers has dropped almost completely out of use, due to competition and the close profits of the present day. But less than a quarter of a century ago the tradesmen would send round small presents to his regular customers, special lines being stocked for this particular purpose.

'Beef Eatings' were great institutions during the week following Christmas, and consisted of free meals provided by mine host at the hotel or inn to the persons who frequented his house. A massive round of cold beef and a liberal supply of pickles formed the general menu, though at some places much more liberal provision was made. The guest paid for his drinks.

Men who are still in the prime of life can remember when all of these customs flourished vigorously, and their retention was fought for as pugnaciously as if the well-being of the State depended thereupon. Scarcely one now survives, and the changes in residents at Cambridge are so frequent that there are probably many who have never even heard of these things. The disappearance of most of them is no great loss: the disappearance of some is a distinct gain.

What may be regretted is that the vanishing of many of the old customs in which Cambridge was once so rich has been attended with a considerable loss of the good feeling which used to exist between all classes of the townsfolk in the presence of a common interest and common tastes. We want more rather than less of these links nowadays and then we should enjoy greater prosperity, greater content and broader views. Of a certainty we should have fewer attacks made upon the purse of the ratepayers for the furtherance of the designs of ambitious individuals or foolish faddists.

[END OF THE 1904 ARTICLE]

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But the Christmas of 1904 was not one that many would look back on with nostalgia; times were hard for many people, as the News reported

The probability of distress in Cambridge some weeks ago, before the wintry weather came to give a keener edge to hunger and a more painful and sharp reminder to the poor of their inadequate resources in food and clothing, was widely discussed but was felt to be unduly magnified. The Town Council vetoed a proposal to supply aid to the unemployed. But Miss Wilson of the Nursing Institution on Newmarket Road began to undertake the provision of free dinners to which the children of poor parents resort for their midday meal of soup and bread. "We give the children as much as ever they can hold", she said. Boys in pitifully ragged garments and decrepit old women and little girls with starvation all too plainly written on their features come with jugs to take soup home to those unable through illness or lack of clothing to come themselves. [SCAN OF LADY AND TRAMP]

Help for those in need was offered by 'Share-our club' nights. Often these clubs were organised by public houses and working men were encouraged to pay a small sum weekly – perhaps sixpence or one shilling. For his investment a man got eight shillings a week sick benefit if he fell ill during the year with the residue of the funds shared out amongst members at Christmas. But even these were not always the kindly institutions they claimed. In 1903 a wife sued one club who had refused her husband payment since he was not being given medicine by the doctors and so could not be 'on the club'. When she told them that he was beyond medical care and dying they brought forward their 'share-out' night by three weeks, distributing the funds the day before the man died. This ensured that there was nothing left to pay towards their old subscriber's funeral expenses and the widow's plight evoked much sympathy in the days leading up to Christmas.

By contrast I hope that your Christmas is merry and bright and if you have a few moments to reflect on 'the good old days' I should be very pleased to hear from you.

[SCAN OLD FOLK – OLD LADY IN MILL ROAD WORKHOUSE AT CHRISTMAS TIME; SCAN DINNER – PREPARING TO SERVE CHRISTMAS DINNER IN MILL ROAD WORKHOUSE]

Memories 28th December 2004, by Mike Petty

The post-Christmas headlines have been dominated by stories of controversial plays, earthquake & floods. All these have also occurred in the Cambridgeshire area over the years.

The theatrical story that perhaps most closely echoes the current controversy in Birmingham was acted out in Cambridge way back in 1597. It was part of the continuing drama of relationships between the University and Town.

At the time the undergraduates were feeling grieved over some supposed wrong they had suffered. But rather than continue they fight they elected to bury the hatchet by inviting the Mayor and Corporation to enjoy their hospitality at Clare Hall – later renamed Clare College. [SCAN OF CLARE COLLEGE FROM THE RIVER, 1814]

The centrepiece would be a new play that they had written themselves, with the assistance of one of the councillors, Miles Goldsborough. It was billed as a ‘merry comedy’ entitled ‘Club Law’, and would be performed in English, so that the townsfolk could understand it.

To make it a grand night out the councillors had been encouraged to bring their wives and it was a distinguished gathering that took their carriages to the front gateway of the college. In due course all assembled in the room set apart for the play and, in the spirit of friendship the guests were allowed the best seats, right in front of the performers, with their hosts either side of them.

As the play commenced it was soon obvious that all was not what they had hoped. For the actors were dressed in the councillors’ own best clothes (which the students had borrowed) and so well impersonated their habits, gestures, language and expressions that it was hard to decide, which was the true townsman, the one on the stage or the one that sat watching.

Increasingly councillors became annoyed but they could not make a dignified exit – or any exit at all – for they were hemmed in by the students alongside them and had to wait impatiently until the ‘comedy’ was over.

Once safe in their own Guildhall the councillors made an official complaint to the privy council about the undergraduates’ libellous behaviour. This taxed the ingenuity of Queen Elizabeth I’s ministers who did not wish to offend either party. They came up with an ingenious solution: they would come to Cambridge to see the play themselves and make their judgement. And to be sure they appreciated the points that caused complaint they insisted that the Mayor and corporation join them and watch the play a second time.

But the councillors had no wish to be lampooned again, for much of the mockery was too near the truth for comfort. So the matter was allowed to drop.

Earthquakes have also made the news over the centuries; ancient chronicles record a great earthquake in 974 with others in 1048 and 1075. This was followed in August 1089 by a tremendous earthquake all over England which made the buildings jump up and settled down again. There were others in 1133 and 1165 which was concentrated on East Anglia, knocked a man down and caused the church bells to ring. More followed in 1231 and 1343.

There were two in 1750, one in August the other September, the first of which passed over whole breadth of the fens near Ely, whilst Cambridge felt the shock in 1896.

Two more recent examples came in August 1926 when earthquake shocks of unusual severity were felt on a Sunday morning. In Cambridge people were awakened by the rattle of windows, crockery and furniture and residents of a house in West Road were aroused from sleep by the oscillation of their beds while a lofty wardrobe continued to shake and its

contents to rattle for some time. Railwaymen on night duty said the telegraph poles rattled and the windows of signal cabins shook. Several residents of Huntingdon felt three tremors.

Then in June 1931 the weather went mad. It was a strange day in Wisbech with brilliant sunshine followed by a terrific hailstorm, the heaviest in living memory. Then in the dead of night people in the town were awakened by the rumbling of what sounded like heavy traffic passing along the streets and the sound of crashing crockery and falling pictures

Kings Lynn felt the tremor, which left pictures swaying and caused the roof of Barnard's fruit shop in High Street to collapse. Many people left their home in night attire and the roads were alive with affrighted residents. March noticed two distinct tremors: the tower of the town clock shook violently causing the bell to ring incessantly. A Gorefield motorcyclist claimed that the road heaved like the swell of the sea and only with difficulty could he keep on his bike while the signalman at Emneth heard the noise and thought the mail train must have fallen through the bridge over the canal at

Elm crossing. [SCAN MARCH CLOCK TOWER WHICH SHOOK AND OF WINDMILL AT GOREFIELD]

The 1931 earthquake was later followed by floods in August in which 14 people died. But the most violent of local storms was that of 1953 when a very high North Sea tide overwhelmed sea defences, causing great damage with loss of caravans, and more significantly loss of life, in the area around Kings Lynn and Hunstanton. Certainly I remember being told about it when our family went for our annual sea-side holidays over 40 years ago. This Christmas lunchtime, as I sat on the Hunstanton cliffs for 'docky' and watched the sun reflecting on the sea, these events of 50-odd years ago seemed incredible to imagine. Yet next morning the news came through of the disastrous events in the Indian Ocean showing how quickly 'normality' can become overwhelmed by tragedy.

One building always in the headlines at Christmas is the great chapel at King's College, Cambridge. It has been filmed and photographed from many angles, but few can have seen it quite as clearly as

Felix Goody. He got quite used to the scene when he worked replacing the lead on the roof of Clare College Old Court. He tells me: "The lead was originally put on in 1471. I stripped it off to be sent way to be recast and then replaced by me. The amount involved was 52 tons". [SCAN OF CLARE COLLEGE ROOF]

Following my 'Memories' piece about Christmas-time butchers, Jo Edkins has e-mailed a splendid photo of a butcher, Joseph Redfarn, in Mawson Road, Cambridge. Redfarn also had a shop at 15 Gwydir Street in Victorian times. Jo runs a website about Gwydir Street <http://www.colc.co.uk/cambridge/gwydir/> and would welcome any other information about the area. [SCAN OF REDFARN'S SHOP IN MAWSON ROAD]

My picture of a bus in Pett Cury (Memories 16th December) has brought a letter from Mr & Mrs Doggett of Fulbourn; they write: "Sometimes it seems like only yesterday you took your life in your own hands as you walked down Petty Cury pavements. It was interesting to see the 105 bus edging its way past Dixons camera shop but what was even more interesting on closer examination was to see our sister-in-law, Mrs Shirley Williams, now of Oakington, pushing our niece in her pushchair. We can therefore advise that the year was 1968". Nick Richardson from Bar Hill has also been researching the picture and has spotted that the number plate on the lorry shows it was registered in 1969. [PETTY CURY BUS PHOTO]

Mrs E. Cream from Gwydir Street has memories of Cintra House when she was a schoolgirl in the 1920s. She recalls: "I was taken to choose a winter dress from the 'Gown Shop' (my name for it as it was rather grand) in Cintra House. My parents belonged to a clothing club; a set amount was paid weekly and goods purchased from chosen shops. A Mr Nicholls called at

the house with his bulging suit case taking orders and delivering goods. I remember him measuring my brother for a suit, material being chosen from his swatch of patterns. But I went to this rather grand house for my dress; a stately lady, perhaps Mrs Nicholls, looked after my mother and me. I remember the dress was brown, stiff and scratchy, with embroidery on the bodice and small red buttons" [SCAN OF CINTRA HOUSE]

Mrs A.C. Brown of Chesterton seeks help. She writes: "I was much interested in the memories of Poppy Day because by my grandfather, W.G. Clark, used to sing at the Cambridge War Memorial for the Armistice Day celebrations. He was a sergeant in the 26th Cyclist Battalion, Suffolk Regiment and left the army in 1919, having been in it right from the start". She wonders if anybody has a photograph showing Sergeant Clark in full voice. If you have let me know and I'll put you in touch.

Memories 2005

Memories 5th Jan 2005 by Mike Petty

Its that time of year when quaint country traditions such as trundling a plough around villages and seeking 'donations' to ensure that cherished front lawns are not defaced are once more in the news.

But most of our country way of life has been lost. One man who has spent the last 40 years attempting to record East Anglia's oral traditions is Neil Lanham from Helions Bumpstead near Haverhill.

As a youngster, he didn't take much notice of the country ditties his mother Ruby would sing as she went about her work. Neither did he put much store on the tales she told at gatherings of all kinds. She would 'hold court' at hatchings, matchings and despatchings (christenings, weddings and funerals) with people hanging onto her every word as she related stories from the past, punctuating them with 'howsomiver'. She would take the part of all the various characters with dialogue 'So I said to him...'and 'He said to me...' It seemed no problem for her to convert an adventure into a story, in fact she could not tell it otherwise. But to Neil this was normal: after all, she was his mother and she'd sung songs and told stories for as long as he could remember

She was exceedingly superstitious, Neil recalls: "We were never allowed to say 'goodbye' only 'cheerio' or 'farewell' and she would always kiss the gatepost when home from a long journey. Furthermore, having worked with old horsemen, she would tell of their belief in the witchcraft of charming horses with frog's bone, milch, and secret oils. When my sister, Audrey, was born with cats fur across her face (mother had put her hands on her face whilst carrying Audrey when a cat was killed on the road) mother knew that the only way to be rid of it was to rub a little of her own spittle on it night and morning, which she did and it went. She told us of this and how she had learned it, together with a good many more 'non-medical' cures, from Granny Griggs, the old village midwife. She had seen ghosts and was a strong believer in their presence."

Many his mother's stories were about horses and often from the hard days in agriculture of the late 1920's and early 1930's when 'If you hadn't got anything boy, you were lucky because you did not have to worry about it, for sooner or later you would lose it.' In these tales of no money and having to eat from a table and chairs with the bailiff's stickers on them she was sharing the experiences of life through a conversation rich in imagery, Neil now realises.

His mother also sang, but years ago everyone used to sing or whistle, he recalls. But then, back in the early 1960s, Neil visited the first Cambridge Folk Festival and, somewhat to his surprise, found he recognised words to songs a group called The Watsons were singing. "I was sure I had heard mother sing it, but how could she have seen books on folk songs or heard any folk records. The 'old goat' cannot possibly know any folk songs I thought. I was of course wrong and very wrong. She did know them: they had been passed on to her from earlier generations".

They were our heritage, Neil realised and then began to appreciate how these traditional links to the past were disappearing and would soon be lost forever. Sayings like 'Over Will's mother's way', 'Half the lies you hear ain't true' and literally thousands more expressions that tripped off the tongue of 'illiterate' people were being forgotten in the modern technological age.

Tragedy struck when Neil was only five, his father died. But his uncle Tickles Alleston from Kersey took him under his wing on a farm which had no electricity, only hand-pumped water and external sanitation. He had hardly ever been off the farm but, like all 'long headed men', had an acute awareness of the things around him.

"He was, by his own admission, 'As sharp as a bag of chisels' and 'As artful as a wagon load of monkeys', Neil remembers. "He would be down the Cart Lodge on a Monday morning with the men when they were having their breakfast, where he would get the gossip and tell it to us, embroidering it with expressions of imagery. Then by the time he went down to his local pub on a Thursday night, the tale would come out as a yarn and be filed in his head for years to come to make a point or a truism - all with humour.

"He also made his own songs as he rode the tractor, all from experiences. Like 'Three dows flew from the creach (three pigeons flew from a spinney with a watercourse running through it)', 'Pig feeding calypso' and 'When you are awfully light on the trigger' inspired by a dose of the 'backyard trots' during the blackberry season."

But more important than his stories were the strange little sayings like 'Don't you make a nais boy (keep quiet about it) or, No bumming boy (it's the truth). "He would come out 'Cold enough this morning boy for a suit of sleeved weskits' or 'You can hang round a long time, boy, with your mouth open before roast chicken fly in' and 'It is not what you know but it's knowing what you don't know, boy, that counts'. He would use local words like 'dinge', 'dag', 'hazeling', 'sludder' and would even make up his own words as he went along. He'd make it sound muddled up on purpose to make you think but it gave you the all important imagery."

All this had a profound effect on Neil: "We are all born into orality - the world of the spoken word and not the written one. Young children learn speech from their parents' influences and carry with them for life. It is the cultural identity of the individual but more so of our region and our nation, and it is being lost"

So for the past 40 years Neil has been trying to keep alive this great East Anglian heritage in song, storytelling and dance. He first went around to public houses where the old boys gathered to talk and sing. John Hobbs of Stetchworth would sing of the adventures of the watercress girl, while at the Batsons Arms, Horseheath Fred Moss the roadman relayed the naughty adventures of the German clock winder and the whole company including the

landlord would join in the 'Thrashing Anthem'. At the Three Horseshoes Shudy Camps Cicily Bradnam would oblige with 'Old King Cole' or 'When the Old Dun Cow caught fire' and others followed in hilarious small community self entertainment. Neil listened, joined in and most importantly made tape recordings of their chat and chaff, recordings that he has now produced as a series of CDs and videos

But as the old men stopped singing so Neil started and with horseman Jack Tarling who is now in his 80s continues to sing traditional Suffolk songs in local pubs along the Cambridge, Suffolk and Essex border areas. They are often joined by other friends including old sailor Bill Dolby, Andrew Stannard, and two men versed in the tradition of the horse, farrier Roger Clarke of Stoke-by-Nayland and well-known farmer Tony Harvey. Together they perform songs, step dance, stories and country banter. "We are selective about where we go, usually small rural communities with the purpose of reminding people of their heritage and keeping the oral traditional alive" explains Neil. Proceeds go to charity, especially the Suffolk Horse Society.

Neil is still searching for people who have retained the story-telling traditions and have a tale to tell. If you know of anybody he would be pleased to hear from you; visit his website – www.traditionsofsuffolk.com or write to Neil Lanham at 'Ivy Todd'. Helions Bumpstead, Haverhill, CB9 7AT [SCAN OF RUBY LANHAM ON HORSE IN 1920S AND 'UNCLE TICKLES'; SCAN OF HORSES AT HORSEHEATH, SCAN OF SHUDY CAMPS WITH HORSE AND CART AND PUB IN BACKGROUND; FIND NEWS PICS OF HELIONS BUMPSTEAD AND KERSEY].

Roy Chamblerrlain of Foxton – himself a mine of local information – recalls another singer; he writes: "Does anyone remember seeing Jimmy Young in the Pye canteen when he was starting his singing career. He sang 'Too Young' and other songs during a lunch break. In another programme the artistes included Forsyth Seaman and Farrell", He thinks they could have been 'Workers' Playtime' radio programmes.

Music of another kind is recalled by Dennis Doyle in his excellent new history of the church of St Mary the Virgin, Great Shelford. Dennis joined the church choir back in 1927 then it comprised at least 12 boys and 10 men. Their music might have been heavenly but the choirboys were not angels and had to undergo a bizarre initiation ceremony. This consisted of the new member being left alone in the vestry whilst the others disappeared in the darkened body of the church. Suddenly, the upper part of the vestry window slammed down open, whilst through it was thrust a hand and arm dripping with wet brown mud, accompanied by a ghastly scream or groan. The new boy, usually frightened to death with this sight and sound would run screaming into the dark church listening to the hoots and laughter of all the other members who had once themselves been "through it". Then in Dennis' younger days there were some old cottages near to the church whose front doors opened on to the path with heavy iron door knockers conveniently placed for mischievous choir boys to bang loudly. This mischief was reserved for autumn or winter Friday nights around seven o'clock when the boys were on their way to choir practice. Not long after, an irate occupier of one of the cottages would come storming into the church, declaring loudly what would happen to any boy or boys he could catch in the act. The vicar in his usual reply would say how sorry he was, he would have severe words to say to any boy proved to have been a culprit, and that it would not happen again. Dennis says he long lost count of the number of times it did! [SCAN OF SHELFORD HIGH STREET IN 1920S]

Memories 12th January 2005, by Mike Petty

Travelling shops were once a common sight in Cambridgeshire; one man who remembers them well is David Crouch from Swavesey.

His father, George Thomas Crouch, started at Swavesey as a hardware dealer in the 1920s. He bought a horse and wagon with a paraffin tank and made compartments to hold brushes, mats and rugs, soaps, soap powders, washing soda, clothes lines & pegs. There were baskets of crockery of all sizes from dinner and tea plates to pudding basins, milk jugs, sugar bowls, and numerous other things. Stored on top were brooms and mops, coal scuttles, dollies and dolly tubs for washing clothes. Then having spent all his savings to pay cash for his first load of paraffin the wagon was ready for the road. As the horse and wagon trundled from house to house people appeared with their empty cans and inspected the goods for sale before the wagon moved on to the next house. When they found that he provided a regular reliable service business increased

He soon developed a set routine. On Monday mornings the round started in Gibraltar Lane and School Lane through to Station Road, Swavesey before going on to Over village. Tuesdays round was the remainder of Swavesey, usually finishing earlier to give time to restock the wagon and price up stock ready for sale. Wednesday it was Fen Drayton and Conington, Thursday Boxworth and either Knapwell or Lolworth. Friday was the only day of the week when he was not on the road. This was the day when he offered a furniture removal service and there was always someone who was looking for a second-hand piece of furniture or a roll of second-hand lino. [SCAN NEAR OVER CHURCH SHOWING CLEAR EVIDENCE OF HORSES!]

The horse was an important part of the operation. The first was a lovely black mare named Polly who went on the rounds so many times she knew exactly where to go and where to stop. Sometimes they would pause at a public house at lunchtime to give the horse its nosebag containing its midday meal known as a 'sifting'.

There were problems with the weather. In wintertime when the roads were all snow and ice, they would have the horse's shoes tapped and threaded to take frost studs. Even so when they came across slippery places on the roads they had to sprinkle sand down before they dare continue the journey. Then snow would build up on the iron rims of the wheels and make the four wheeled van very hard work for the horse to pull. In the summer time when it was very hot the opposite would happen and wet tar would be picked up on the rims until there were lumps as big as teacups

They had three horse-drawn hardware vans over the years. The second one had belonged to a Mr Harry Cooper, a hardware and furniture dealer of Balsham, whose family opened the Cooper furniture shop in Newmarket Road in Cambridge. [SCAN OF COOPER'S HORSE-DRAWN CART c1910]. In 1938 the third van had belonged to a Mr Hewson of Fenstanton who was retiring. It was taken to Fullers, Wheelwrights, of St Ives to use as a pattern for a new van but the workshop was burnt down and the new woodwork destroyed. The only option was for Mr Fuller to restore and repaint Hewson's van with Crouch's name on it. The van had been in an accident and one of the parts that needed replacing were the wheels. The only ones they could find that were the right size came off a London horse drawn fire engine.

David helped his father work the rounds with horse drawn vans until 1948. Then when he passed the driving test they bought a second hand Morris 25cwt flat truck. They were sorry to see the horse go, but times were changing and to remain competitive they had to update. Now they built up regular rounds in eleven villages as well as Cambridge. In the late 1960's paraffin sales peaked at between 30,000 and 40,000 galls a year. In the wintertime the demand was so great they were often still selling paraffin in Cambridge as late as eight o'clock in the evening. But by 1980 sales of paraffin were dropping, Shell stopped making

"Pink Paraffin" and bottled gas was taking over. In 1986 it was time to call it a day. [SCAN OF MOTOR VAN FROM GUYHIRN NEAR WISBECH]

"Looking back we had some good times and over the years we got to know some wonderful people", says David. He treasures memories of riding home on a winter afternoon after a busy day. Then unharnessing the horse, feeding & bedding her down for the night before walking across the yard hungry, opening the back door and being greeted by a glowing fire in the kitchen range. There was his mother with a lovely rabbit pie with thick crusty pastry on top, to be followed by an apple pie and custard - what more could one ask for.

But there is one mystery he still puzzles over: After the last horse-drawn van was decommissioned his father sold it to a Mrs Henn of Grange Road Cambridge. She fitted it out to live in and used it to travel around the countryside. Some years later she gave slide shows and talks to W.I. meetings about her travels. He would love to know if it is still on the road!

David Crouch's recollections form just part of a collection of writings by members of the Swavesey History Society, now published as 'Memory Lane'. They include reminiscences from around the country, reflecting just how diverse a community Swavesey has become. The booklet costs £3.50 from Ann Shepperson at Boxworth End Farm, Swavesey

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It is just 25 years ago that Cambridgeshire lost one of its greatest authorities on traditional folk dances. In January 1980 Dr Russell Wortley had been performing with the Cambridge Morris Men at their annual Plough Monday celebrations when he collapsed and died. The other members of the group compiled an appreciation of the man who I will always remember for his skill on the hammer dulcimer that he would play at his home at Little Thetford. [SCAN OF RUSSELL WORTLEY – THERE ARE PHOTOS OF HIM IN THE NEWS LIBRARY TOGETHER WITH PICS OF MORRIS DANCERS; SCAN OF CAMBRIDGE MORRIS MEN 1967]

Russell's first encounter with traditional music in the Cambridge area was around 1938 when he made the acquaintance of Jimmy Broadway of Bourn who, in his younger days, had fiddled for a set of Molly Dancers somewhere in the Fens. In his old age, Jimmy's showpiece was the tune called Pop goes the Weasel, the "Pop" being vigorously plucked.

The next traditional musician he met was a dulcimer player, Will Lawrence of Comberton, who he heard playing at the Institute Hall early in the War, providing entertainment at teas for the old folks. Will had been a builder's labourer and, besides playing the dulcimer, he used to make them. They were something of a family tradition for he had a cousin Herbert at Thriplow who also played. The two would sometimes go off in the summer on pushbikes, dulcimers slung over their shoulders, and tour the village Feasts, playing in the pubs and dancing booths. If they paid their way, all well and good. If not Will would not hesitate to sell his dulcimer for a couple of quid and build himself a new one from an old piece of furniture next winter. One of Herbert's dulcimer is now in the Cambridge Folk Museum [SCAN OF ENID PORTER, FORMER CURATOR OF THE FOLK MUSEUM, WITH THE DULCIMER, SCAN OF DULCIMER]

Then there were the various bands who played for dancing at many of the village feasts. These were held on specific dates in each village and usually lasting a week. A dancing booth was taken around by horse and cart; it consisted of a tent and sectional board floor with a small platform for the four-piece band, usually made up of fiddle, concertina, drum and harp. One was led by Herb Reynolds on the concertina with his half-brother Charlie Huntlea on the harp. Charlie was a cab-driver living in the East Road and Herb lived in Cambridge Place off

Hills Road. His particular achievement was to play concertina and harp simultaneously, pumping the former on his lap with his left hand while vamping the harp with his right.

One of the outstanding players in Cambridge was Harry Huntley who made his living as a street musician but died young. It was from Harry that Russell gained much of his information. During Stourbridge Fair (once one of the most ancient trading fairs in the country) Harry used to join Herb and Charlie with his whistle on the upper floor of the Oyster House in Garlic Row where there was a room for dancing. He was a brilliant whistle player and Russell made tape recordings of him playing marches, hornpipes for step-dancing and also describing some of the tricks of the trade which he picked up from "roadsters" or tramps who played in the streets for a living. [SCAN OF OYSTER HOUSE]

Dr Wortley's researches show that Cambridge had its share of traditional musicians until well into last century. But do you recall any of them and can you add to the wonderful record that Russell compiled.

Memories 19th January 2004, by Mike Petty

This week demolition starts in preparation for the new Grand Arcade shopping project which will transform much of central Cambridge between Downing Street and the 'old' Lion Yard redevelopment – the one we all remember fondly, the one that officially opened in 1975

Many of those original shops that we recall with such nostalgia – the Alley Boutique, the Golden Egg – have been consigned to the history books as the Lion Yard has evolved, kept pace with the times, expanded. And of course much of the precinct will remain to delight citizens for some years to come. [SCAN OF LION YARD FROM PETTY CURY 1975 SHOWING GOLDEN EGG]

But one much-awaited monument to the 1970s will be replaced. It was the first part of the new scheme to be unveiled: the Lion Yard multi-storey car park replacing the rough plot of land that previously served for parking. It is several years now since last I actually used it but I recall with nostalgia how I used to crawl along in the queue of cars, admiring the architecture of Pembroke Street and Downing Street before reaching the corner of Corn Exchange Street itself and finally glimpsing the entrance to the promised parking place. [SCAN OF CORN EXCHANGE STREET BEFORE CAR PARK 1965; SCAN OF CARS WAITING TO PARK AT THE OLD CAR PARK]

Remember how you had to hold the car back as the entrance ramp sloped down, how you watched with excitement to see which of the two lanes to move into as the barriers got nearer – provided of course that both were working. The elation when you were rewarded with a ticket from the machine and managed to actually get it safe inside the car.

Then which level should you choose. If you spotted a space in that first level, the basement one, should you try and manoeuvre into it, aware as you did so that you were holding up lines of impatient motorists, each fuming at your inability to park first time. Or should you go on and take your chances that there would be a space further up. Was it Level Four that gave you the easiest way out, just down the ramp into the precinct – I've forgotten already! I used to prefer going even higher to Level Seven. Very few people realised that from here there was a passageway – decorated with a brick lion – that was dubbed 'Confusion Alley'.

It led through to the upper walkway and the magnificent Heidelberg Garden, that oasis of calm and floral magnificence dedicated to Cambridge's German Twin Town. How fondly I remembered looking down on it from the windows of the Library's Cambridgeshire

Collection when it was on the third floor and watching the skateboarders and drug-takers who seemed to appreciate it far more than the shopworkers who occasionally took their lunchtime sandwiches amidst the scraggy shrubs. [FIND PHOTO OF HEIDELBERG GARDEN IN NEWS FILES]

My most vivid memories of Level Seven and 'Confusion Alley' date back to the late 70's and revolve around an Eaden Lilley's van and Thomas Stearn the Cambridge sporting photographer.

Thomas and his wife started their business about 1867 in the premises at 72 Bridge Street that the firm was to occupy until 1970. He was soon taking his camera outside the shop, undertaking commissions from the University, especially of sporting occasions. His sons Walter and Harry joined his business. Walter was himself a prominent sportsman and expanded this side of the work, becoming better known in University sporting circles than any other townsman.

During the Second World War Stearns continued to record the local scene, now including military groups, but things became especially difficult after a bombing raid centred around the Union Society building sent shrapnel fragments that scarred the walls of the buildings near their shop. The firm decided to send their glass plate negatives to be processed in Brighouse, near Leeds for the duration of the hostilities. Later they restarted their developing and printing in Cambridge before merging with Eaden Lilley's photographic business in 1970. I visited their old premises shortly before they were vacated, to find room after room packed tight with negatives. In those days when the Cambridgeshire Collection was still confined in a small cupboard-like room at the back of the Wheeler Street library there was nothing that could be done except walk away and try not to notice as thousands of images were quietly removed, presumably to the tip. [SCAN OF STEARNS PREMISES IN BRIDGE STREET – PERHAPS PHOTO IN NEWS LIBRARY]

Later came the news that at least the negatives sent to Brighouse had survived, though now they were in the way there. So it was that through the kindness of Eaden Lilley I joined one of their photographers on a van journey to the Midlands. We duly arrived to find white cardboard boxes – black with dust – each containing a number of large glass-plate negatives. These we carried to the van until the floor was covered and the springs started to sag. Finally all were loaded and it was time to return.

But it had been a long and tiring day for both myself and the driver and I certainly would happily have dozed except for the fact that the weight of glass in the back seemed to be lifting the front wheels almost off the road. Eventually we reached Cambridge quite late and drove into the Lion Yard carpark. Then it was up to Level Seven.

Opening off Confusion Alley is one of the emergency fire exits for the new Central Library and just inside is a book hoist for conveying material up to the third floor. So with the help of the Library caretaker the boxes were offloaded on to a trolley, trundled into the library and eventually hoisted up to the Collection.

It was time to thank the driver and send him on his way. There was just one snag. The van keys had disappeared, perhaps removed by some miscreant intending to return and steal it later. As we waited for the police to arrive we noticed a car behaving very suspiciously; it had come up to Level Seven then backed into the parking space just alongside the ramp – that single spot that nobody notices. The constable took down the details and strode off to investigate the mystery vehicle, his torch ready to illuminate that dark recess. He came back with his face beaming – it had not been a villain but one of his police colleagues with his girlfriend. And their car's sagging springs had not been caused by too many negatives – at least not until the beam of the torch had interrupted their activities!

In the end the van had to be left where it was, the doors securely tied up with string. Next day it was retrieved, hopefully before the overnight parking fees gave way to what even then were considered extortionate charges. Even when it first opened in July 1972 its prices had been pitched to discourage those who wanted to park their cars for any length of time. Thus whilst parking for the first hour was 5p, with 15p for two, 25p for three and a horrendous 35p for four it would surely be only the richest motorist who would stump up the monumental sum of 75p for a whole days parking!

The car park was later expanded and will continue in a much-reduced capacity while the Grand Arcade scheme is implemented.

So that is my abiding memory of the old Lion Yard Car Park; doubtless you have others – perhaps of that giddy decent down the circular ramp, perhaps of being interrupted one night by the flashing of a police torch! If so then please share them. [FIND PHOTOS OF THE LION YARD CAR PARK FROM NEWS FILES]

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Malcolm Cousins of Haslingfield has sent me a photograph that was amongst those taken by Stearns during the Second World War. Like many of the other negatives it shows a group of soldiers, probably Home Guard. It has the negative number M88 but does anybody recognise anybody [SCAN OF STEARNS PHOTO OF HOME GUARD GROUP][THE NEGATIVE FOR THIS IS I BELIEVE AMONGST THOSE I RESCUED. I HAVE ASKED THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE COLLECTION TO CHECK FOR ME AND AM WAITING A REPLY. IF/WHEN ONE COMES I WILL PHONE IT THROUGH]

Other wartime photographs have been lent me by Jo Edkins; they are amongst those sent to her Gwydir Street website – www.Colc.co.uk/cambridge/gwydir/ One shows the ‘V.E.’ street party in Devonshire Road including the Reverend Rushton who was at that time the Vicar of St. Barnabas Church. [SCAN OF DEVONSHIRE ROAD PARTY]. Another from George Dethridge shows his brothers and sisters outside an air-raid shelter in Gwydir Street. [SCAN OF CHILDREN IN FRONT OF GWYDIR STREET AIR RAID SHELTER] This played its part in their VE party when the whole street clubbed together to give the children, the old folk and half a dozen soldiers a tea while Dale’s brewery supplied beer. It was followed by races and competitions, rounded off with dancing in the street until midnight to a band placed on top of the shelter. George was evacuated to here during the second world war and has other snaps including one of his older sister’s American boyfriend. My colleague, Chris Elliott is heading a search for other such pictures that can be featured in a special commemorative edition of the News PLEASE ADD RELEVANT DETAILS

Andy Cooper seeks your help. He had been given two photographs which show his great-great-grandad; they were taken by the Cambridge Daily News but nobody quite knows when They seems to show a birthday celebration for an eminent gentleman – or could it be a wedding. The hall is decorated with tennis rackets. Can you shed any light for him? [SCAN OF TWO PARTY PICTURES]

Memories 25th January 2005, by Mike Petty

The news that cyclists may soon once more have free reign to ride throughout the Cambridge central streets has brought concern from people fearful of the danger this may cause to pedestrians.

This is by no means been the first time that such sentiments have been expressed. In August 1857 there was a letter of complaint about two undergraduates on a double velocipede running down a child watching a Punch and Judy show in Barnwell. The attack on ‘this

dangerous and ever-growing evil' prompted another correspondent to describe the machines as ridiculous and immoral - whenever he met one he went 'as close to upsetting it as possible ... I long to send it and its lunatic piped propeller to immortal smash'

By the 1890s police were cracking down on offending cyclists using the kind of 'dirty tricks' that motorists now complain of. At the annual dinner of the Cambridge Wanderers Cycle club in December 1897 Mr G. Edwards, the Captain, admitted that not all cyclists were angels. There were men who went tearing about, whistling down the street, ringing their bells and expecting to have the whole street cleared for them. There was another class who went for a ride in the country and had a sort of liking for riding on the path. [SCAN 8842 – CAMBRIDGE WANDERERS CYCLE CLUB MEMBERS 1904]

But the police were being underhand, he continued: Had the chief constable put a constable in the road in proper uniform no one would have complained. But he had to go and put a man in plain clothes to capture the people. He was sure that the chief constable had a rise in his salary for the smart capture of cyclists

Various restrictions were put in place and then removed. In 1904 cyclists were allowed to ride on various paths over the commons but by 1908 the council were considering banning them from Senate House Passage. And when the first one way restrictions were introduced in Market Street and Petty Cury in 1925 there was one category of traffic that could go against the flow as they have done legally or illegally ever since. But people have always broken rules as pictures in the News files demonstrate with infringements at Bateman Street in 1968 and Trinity Street in 1992. [SCAN 102.35 CYCLISTS GOING THE WRONG WAY IN BATEMAN STREET 1968; SCAN 102.33 BREAKING THE RULES IN TRINITY STREET 1992]

As early as 1913 cyclists were seeking their own dedicate routes and came up with various suggestions. One correspondent in September 1923 observed: "Sir - During the time that Silver Street, Cambridge, has been closed for traffic, some hundreds of persons have used the Mill Lane and Sheep's Green to Newnham mill path. This opens a solution of the problems of relieving Silver Street of a great number of bicycles, especially during the dinner hour. I would like the Corporation to consider widening the wooden bridges, lessening the gradients, covering in the outlets of Newnham mill, and improving the cobble stones in Mill Lane, in order to encourage cycle riders to use this way"

The campaign reached a crescendo in March 1979 when the Mayor of Cambridge, Coun Alec Molt, faced 300 chanting cyclists outside the Guildhall and signed their petition demanding better provision for cyclists. Led by a Panda car they took a 15-minute tour of the city centre streets before returning to Peas Hill to hear councillors' views. Their priorities included cycle lanes on the Huntingdon & Madingley Roads and a contra-flow cycle lane in Downing Street. Since then a network of cyclways have been established including a bridge over the railway near the station. [SCAN 6853 CYCLISTS PROTEST IN PEAS HILL 1979]

But even cyclists need somewhere to park. This has again caused difficulties: "The pavements are full of parked machines whilst college courts are empty, a News editorial of 5th March 1910 observed, adding "it will be 20 or 30 years before the problem is solved". Perhaps they were a trifle optimistic.

In September 1949 the issue was being aired once more. The News commented: An author once remarked that Cambridge was unique for the manner in which its population parked their countless bicycles – 'Cambridge wise' he called it. Local inhabitants adopt an air of supreme nonchalance, when, with a careless flick of the foot, they balance their machines on the edge of the pavement, suspended on one pedal - and not much of that. Our reporter saw two cycle accidents within five minutes. In one case a cycle fell against a double-decker bus

as it passed, and in the other a machine toppled over when there was nothing near it. In both cases the cycles were damaged. In order to reduce kerb parking to a minimum, the council is endeavouring to provide all possible facilities for cycle parking clear off the highways.

In this they seem to have been successful – when did you last see a bike parked at the edge of the pavement? [SCAN 102.34 CYCLES PARKED WHEEL TO WHEEL IN SIDNEY STREET 1964, MAKING IT DIFFICULT TO GET THROUGH THEM TO CROSS THE ROAD]

City councillors themselves faced the problem of what to do with their own bikes while they were attending meetings. In May 1951 they considered reserving a number of cycle racks in the Guildhall for themselves. But the Mayor remarked jokingly: “The next thing will be that people with cars will want parking spaces reserved”. Of course one person who does have a reserved parking is the Mayor with a chained-off space on Peas Hill.

Another is the University Vice Chancellor. However when Miss Rosemary Murray occupied that post in 1976 she found that the quickest way to travel on official business around the city was on two wheels but found herself squeezed out of the few cycle racks provided at the Old Schools. So she was given a “V-C-Only” cycle stand.

The problem of riding without lights has also been a major concern. In December 1922 P.C. Cudworth told Cambridge magistrates that he was on duty in Victoria Road when he saw defendant riding a bicycle without a front light. He stopped him and asked him where his light was. Defendant said it had just gone out and he was going to light it. He then dismounted from the bicycle and witness noticed he showed signs of having been drinking. Defendant took a box of matches from his coat pocket and attempted to strike one. Witness then noticed that the lamp on the machine was an electric one. This aroused his suspicions!

But why has Cambridge gained its reputation as cycle city. Without doubt the University regulations of the 1920s that prevent undergraduates using motor cars was one big factor. But there is another. The *News* of 90 years ago was adamant, there were so many bikes because house prices were so high that ordinary folk had to live far from the centre and needed the machines to get to work.

SCANS 54.47 – A LADY CYCLIST C1905; SCAN 6854 CARTOON OF SPEEDING UNDERGRADUATE CYCLIST C1910]

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Memories 2nd February 2005, by Mike Petty

The news that Her Majesty the Queen boarded an ordinary train to take her from King's Lynn to London last week bring to mind an earlier royal rail episode that proved a somewhat more stressful journey.

A prolonged spell of hard weather in the 1870s prompted a debate as to which was the quicker means of travel between Littleport and Ely. There could surely be no doubt – the speed of the steam locomotive could outdo any other form of transport, even a man on skates. Or could it?

For along this stretch of track the railway and river run alongside each other and the ice was hard enough for skating. A wager was laid and details were settled, the railwaymen promising not to tell the driver of the train what was to take place. The chosen fenmen was waiting at Sandhill Bridge, Littleport as the 12.30 from King's Lynn pulled in to Littleport station. Then a whistle was blown and the race was on.

The speed skater had a series of pacemakers to lead him along and was spurred by the sound of the train that seemed always to be gaining on him. But then as he neared the final stretch under Queen Adelaide Bridge he saw that the ice ahead had been sabotaged: ashes and clinker had been thrown down by some railwaymen anxious not to lose the race. Desperate not to be beaten he picked his way through the obstacles, got back up to full skating speed and reached the winning post – the railway bridge at Ely – with thirty seconds to spare.

Railway officials were most apologetic about the failed attempts to nobble the race, but the fenmen were not to be placated. They would have their revenge. Which is where the Royals come in. For the Prince of Wales was making his way back to Sandringham by train that very evening.

During the afternoon relays of skaters were seen heading off from Ely towards Littleport, all carrying lanterns as if to light their way through the darkness. Others boarded the train as it arrived at Ely station.

A short distance along its route the locomotive driver noticed a red warning light on the track and stopped to investigate. There was nothing to be seen so he continued, only to find a second and then a third. They seemed to be very similar to those lanterns that the fenland skaters had carried with them earlier. It was when the train came to an unscheduled stop at yet another light that His Royal Highness lost patience; his voice could clearly be heard by the lads hidden nearby, asking if 'This blasted train was ever going to get him to Sandringham'.

One trusts her Majesty had an incident-free return without hitting the headlines! [SCAN OF STEAM TRAIN AT ELY; SCAN OF PHOTO OF LITTLEPORT STATION IN SNOW c1900; SCAN OF SKATING AT LITTLEPORT 1891]

READERS WRITE

Mrs Marlene Lask of Stapleford has lent me a photograph of 'The Man's Shop' in Burleigh Street taken in the 1950s. It was owned by her parents Pauline and Jules Goldwater who settled in Cambridge after their marriage in 1929. They also opened 'Pauline's Dress Shop'

(the London Stores) in Fitzroy Street. The shops were very popular with very modern and up to date fashions bought in London. Both shops continued in business until her father died in 1968. Were you amongst their customers? [SCAN 102.16 OF MANS SHOP, BURLEIGH STREET 1950s]

More details have come to light of a picture of Redfarn's butcher's shop that I featured in Memories of 29th December. Linda Monk has e-mailed to say that Joseph Redfarn was her two-times great uncle and the shop was at 18 Mawson Road. It's a private house now, but you can still see the lintel which used to be the top of the shop window, the cellar window, and the arch above the door next-door. [SCAN OF BUTCHERS SHOP 102.11]. The old picture was taken by a photographer named

E. Hilton who had a shop in East Road just before the First World War. I have a file on photographers but know very little about this one can anybody tell me anything more about him or do you have any other of the pictures he took?

Can you answer a question that has been puzzling Geoff Leyshon. He e-mails: "I sat in the Dobbler's Arms in Sturton Street last night and the picture on the wall of Harry Cable's shop at No.6 stirred my curiosity. It was the stylised "Fleur de Lys" marks on the door and window lintels, which seem to be present on most houses of that area, built around 1900. After over 50 years of seeing it, I got round to pondering the significance of the mark and realised I hadn't a clue what it was for. Crazy really, as I was brought up in the East Road area between 1950 and 1962 and this mark was on most of the houses around me. Can you enlighten me? [SCAN CABLE'S SHOP STURTON STREET SHOWING THE FLEUR DE LYS DESIGN ABOVE THE DOOR]

Anne Anderson e-mails following mention of Cherry's Stores in my 'Looking Back' snippets from 1980 in which I reported how customers had said goodbye to the couple who had run the shop in Norwich Street for 34 years. Lionel Cherry and his wife Kathleen had taken it over in 1946 and built up a business which, in days when petrol was cheaper, offered a free delivery service to Newnham and Arbury. Anne writes: "Cherry's Stores is now my home! Various members of my family, at schools locally, bought items at the shop (I did too after moving to the area in 1976). I moved in March 1984 - and continue to love it. In the deeds the house is Number 26 Norwich Street, rented from Trinity Hall by Robert Sayle, who installed two spinster ladies to sell haberdashery! The house is now 70-72 Norwich Street, which shows the infilling that has taken place since it was built in 1864."

Mrs Mary Denny from the Arbury has written following to say that her memories were jogged by Dennis Doyle's book on Great Shelford church. She writes: "My parents, Mr & Mrs John Cook and I were evacuated to Great Shelford Vicarage to live with Fred William Jeeves, the minister, in 1939 when I was three. I remember a large house and beautiful gardens with a tree on which my brother cut 'MC L PC'"

Andy Cooper seeks your help. He had been given two photographs which show his great-great-grandad; they were taken by the Cambridge Daily News but nobody quite knows when. They seem to show a birthday celebration for an eminent gentleman – or could it be a wedding. The hall is decorated with tennis rackets. Can you shed any light for him? [SCAN OF TWO PARTY PICTURES – 'ANDYA & ANDYC']

Memories 9th February 2005, by Mike Petty

Paul Staniforth from Norwich has written to seek your help with information on gasworks, and particularly the one at Ely. He writes:

“The 50th anniversary of the closure of the Ely Gas works will occur in 2009. To commemorate the event I am writing a history of the company. My father Claude Staniforth was the manager, secretary and engineer of the Ely Gas from 1933 until 1957. Salted away in the loft of the family home I have discovered many old papers to do with the business and along with a small selection of photographs.

“The Ely business was founded in 1835 by George Malam a gas entrepreneur extraordinaire who along with his three brothers founded 43 works through England. Little is known of the original financial backers but it is recorded that like so many new gas works at the time the Ely works was in financial trouble after only a few years”.

It was bought out by a national 'holding' company - County and General Gas Consumer Company but that too was in major financial trouble by January 1868 when it found itself in chancery for failure to pay its coal suppliers. But then the Ely town crier went round announcing that the sale had been postponed; the city's works were profitable so a consortium offered to buy the local works. They would offer £6,000, the Londoners wanted £9,000 - but one could build a complete new works for £7,500 ... the wrangle continued. Eventually the works were bought by the new Ely Gas Company financed largely by local shareholders. That company struggled through uncertain times, with several national coal strikes, and two world wars before its financial fortunes changed spectacularly and it became an extremely profitable enterprise only to be nationalised by the government in 1949. [SCAN 86.487 ELY GAS WORKS C1900]

Paul continues: “Before my father died I persuaded him to write his memories realising they would be a valuable piece of social history. These together with my own recollections of being taken as a small boy aged 5 to 11 around the works on many occasions have inspired me to write a full history of the undertaking. I must have been one of the few schoolboys in Ely who could dismiss their Mother's instructions to keep themselves clean by saying that I was off to the 'works' with my Dad to go in the retort house or climb on the top of the gas holder. Yes it did smell terrible but as an inquisitive boy I was captivated by the machinery, what it did and how it worked and not whether I came home with grubby trousers smelling of the gas works.”

This problem of smell and dust was one which afflicted residents near the Cambridge Gas Works too. In June 1954 the News reported that people could not open their windows without getting smoke on their bedding and furniture and could not hang out their washing. The problem was solved two months later, as a correspondent remarked: ‘Sir - The best part of our charming city of Cambridge is the Abbey Estate as during the past few weeks No.1 Retort House at the Gas Works has been out of commission. No dust; No smoke; No fumes; No hauling lumps of coke out of your eyes. All is peaceful. Washing can be hung out free from grit and blacks and you can see the spire of St Andrew's church nestling among the trees. Delightful – but how long will it last? – J.E.S.’ Sadly for residents it was soon back in production. [SCAN T1747 – WASHING WITH CAMBRIDGE GAS WORKS IN BACKGROUND; SCAN 89.65 AERIAL VIEW OF CAMBRIDGE GAS WORKS, NEWMARKET ROAD IN FOREGROUND, 1950]

Paul has enlisted various experts, has delved into the Ely Gas Company records in the Cambridgeshire County Archive and gone up to Glasgow University which holds the files of Woodhall Duckham who built the vertical retort which Ely citizens will remember towered above the adjacent housing situated on Station Road.

But he is particularly keen to add to the book any memories people may have and trace relatives of the stokers, fitters, and main layers. If you recall visiting the works to buy gas mantles or coke on a Saturday morning to supplement the rationed supplies of fuel or remember that very distinctive smell of town gas, Paul would like to hear from you. Did you witness the frequent occasions when the road would be dug up to trace and repair a leaking main. And did you know that the works almost caught fire, not once but twice? What a bang that might have been!

You can write to Paul Staniford at Chestnut House, Hill House, Road, Bramerton, Norwich NR14 7EE or phone 01508 538195

Other places had their own gas works: Soham's long dark and dreary streets had been metamorphosed into pleasant and safe thoroughfares in January 1849 by the coming of gas lights. Melbourn Gas Company was formed in 1865 and next year Bassingbourn organised a public dinner to express admiration at the brilliant and beautiful light supplied by their new works. 1867 saw Littleport begin to raise the £2,000 required to light their streets this way and in 1868 it was Haddenham's turn. Sutton tried to establish a works in 1870 but at the meeting there was a lack of public spirit which caused the newspaper to comment that "the inhabitants of Sutton will be quite safe from the horrors of gas explosions during the present century"

The worry of explosions was always present, in January 1870 March had suffered a strong smell of gas in the High Street for a considerable time and the unpleasant odour had penetrated into adjoining houses to the great annoyance of inmates - and an unhealthy atmosphere. It was particularly worrying as a few months before the entire front of Mr Burrows grocery shop had been blown 50-60 feet across the road following an explosion caused by a gas leak. It had come from a bad joint made by the ironmonger who had installed the supply - and by the repair man going looking for the spot with a lighted candle. [SCAN 86.974 MARCH HIGH STREET FROM MARKET 1930S]

More recently Royston was devastated by a series of explosions and fires in March 1991 after a new gas main was connected wrongly sending a surge of gas with 15 times more pressure than usual into the domestic supply. Police sealed off the town and trains stopped on the main line for fears that sparks from the overhead power lines could cause further devastation as a heavy cloud of gas hung in the air and gas appliances sprung leaks or burst into flames. Plans were made to evacuate 25 homes in Green Drift after an explosion in a terraced house shattered windows. Another huge explosion rocked Greneway School where the caretaker saw flames billowing from ventilation slots in the boiler house. The kitchen, hall and changing rooms were damaged in the blast and music teacher Adrian Jacobs led 40 children to safety.

As police with loudhailers toured the streets warning people to turn off their gas appliances some 250 engineers were called in to make checks on some 5,000 homes, shops and businesses. It was an operation that would take all night, and the fitting of new gas meters to every premise would take even longer. Once the immediate situation was stabilised the clearing up could begin. It was to be a long job. Five weeks after the explosions some people were still without heating, cooking or washing facilities, everywhere redecorating and repairs were being undertaken. . [THERE ARE THREE PHOTOS OF THE ROYSTON GAS INCIDENT IN THE NEWS LIBRARY PHOTO FILES UNDER 'GAS']

Old photographs often show gas lights; a good example of this is the earliest street scenes of Cambridge taken by Arthur Nichols in the 1860s. [SCAN OF MARKET HILL SHOWING A GAS LAMP 1860S] Now Peter Lofts has digitised the original glass negatives and is staging an exhibition in the Lion Yard Lending Library at Cambridge from tomorrow, 10th February. Peter has worked in collaboration with Chris Jakes of the Cambridgeshire Collection which

houses thousands and thousands of negatives taken by successive photographers at the premises in Post Office Terrace, including the work of Ramsey and Muspratt who operated a successful portrait studio for over 40 years. If your ancestors had their pictures taken in those ancient studios then Chris probably has the negatives and can supply you with prints. And Peter Loft's modern reproductions show that the skills that were once the preserve of the darkroom can now be emulated by modern computer technology

Memories by Mike Petty 16th February 2005, by Mike Petty

Mrs A.C. Brown from Chesterton has lent me photographs of an old party boat named 'Prince Albert' which was operated by Logan's boatyard at the turn of the century. The figure-head of the boat is a very fearsome Waterloo soldier, sword at his side, pointing ahead. But how long did it operate and what was its motive power, she asks.

My brief research has revealed an advertisement for the boat which appeared in the Cambridge Graphic in 1900 by which time it was owned by Askham & Sons. I believe it may have been a companion to the 'Victoria' which was described as the 'Queen of the Cam' in the Cambridge Chronicle of 3rd August 1844. This was used by the Conservators of the River Cam on their annual trip to Clayhithe in 1900, an event also featured in the Cambridge Graphic. It was powered by horse for the article – one of the humorous features in which that weekly but short-lived paper excelled - reads: "Five bells sounded and above the commotion of casting off could be heard the voice of the captain of the good ship Victoria shouting instructions through a megaphone – the speaking tube apparatus being out of order. At length the gentleman in charge of the equine motor ordered his steer to 'Come 'ee wut'". This mention of horse power is amplified later in the article when the Commissioners made their return journey in the boat now decorated with fairy lamps and enlivened by a pyrotechnic display. "Things went merrily until Baitsbite when some one let off an immense bomb ... The horse had not been trained to artillery, the tow-line parted and we were left in mid-ocean, a hopeless wreck. However in a short time the horse was persuaded to alter his mind and brought us safely to land with all the dignity and grace that marks that noble species". But does anybody have similar information on the Prince Albert? [SCAN 102.55MRS BROWN'S PICTURE; SCAN 102.61 ADVERT FROM CAMBRIDGE GRAPHIC SCAN 8941 RIVER CAM CONSERVATORS PREPARE FOR AN OUTING]

Sarah Thwaites needs help in researching information about Italian prisoners of war who worked on fenland farms. She had an Italian 'uncle' who worked for a long time on farms around the Haddenham area & is trying to compile some accurate historical data for her creative writing project at APU. You can contact her at email@sarahthwaites.fsnet.co.uk or write to me and I'll put you in touch. Malcolm Cousins from Haslingfield has sent me a picture for you to identify. It was one of those taken by Stearns during the Second World War but is not one whose negative has survived. So do you recognise anybody. [SCAN 101.73]. Wartime memories are also being sought by the Cambridgeshire Local History Society who are staging a all-day meeting on reminiscences of Cambridgeshire's war 1939-45 at the Joint Services Social Club on Barnwell Road on Saturday 16th April. Michael Bowyer, Michael Bentinck and Simon Sedgwick-Jell are amongst the speakers who will be encouraging people to share their own memories and experiences. All are welcome and to reserve your seat or get further details of this most interesting meeting contact Andrew Westwood-Bate on Cambridge 892430 or e-mail a.westwoodbate@btinternet.com

Ann Perrett from Saffron Walden seeks assistance from readers who know their Nortons from their Triumphs. She has an old family photograph showing her grandfather, Wisbech Bertie Burrell, sitting on a motorbike. She thought it might have been taken at Elgoods Brewery

where he worked as a cooper after the First World War, but they cannot identify the area. So can you help date the bike and recognise the model. If so e-mail ann-cater1@tiscali.co.uk or drop me a line [SCAN PERRETT - MOTOR BIKE]

And did you ever have an Austin 7? Fenella Leigh from Cottenham is a member of the Cambridge Austin 7 and Vintage Car Club which is coming up for its 50th anniversary. But she's not exactly sure when the club started – was it 1955 or 1956? They're also anxious to track down any surviving 7s with VE or CE registrations and would like as many pictures or old movie films as they can find. If you can help e-mail fenellaq@yahoo.co.uk or phone 01954 251698. [SCAN 6365 AUSTIN 7 SUSPENDED UNDER BRIDGE OF SIGHS ST JOHN'S COLLEGE 1963]

Another researcher has asked whether there was a dedicated Greek Restaurant in King Street in the 1960s or 1970s. If so what was it called and where was it? Please let me know and I'll pass it on.

Edward Beaumont e-mails from highleasfarm@w3z.co.uk seeking information on a Cambridge photographer named Alfred Goshawk who was living at 15 Pulling Terrace, Mill Road in 1881. There were other photographic Goshawks at Harrow on the Hill and he has some references to a family of the same name in the Chatteris area. Do you have any pictures taken by him or can you add further details please.

Answers have come in thick and fast to previous readers' enquiries. A couple of weeks ago Andy Cooper sent in two mystery pictures of a party that he found amongst his family pictures. Quick as a flash Ted Northrop from Cambridge phoned to say they were taken at the 90th birthday party of his grandfather Fred Cooper which was held at the Saxon Cement Club works club in Coldhams Lane. Fred had been an engine driver when young and then a road sweeper in the Cherry Hinton. Mrs Bobby Cooper e-mailed to confirm and added the date as 1949 [SCAN OF FRED COOPER'S PARTY]

Denise Warren has contacted me to say that she may be a descendent of J. Redfarn the butcher of Mawson Road whose picture I have featured. She writes: My father Harry Payne Redfarn, was a butcher all his life, working for Eastmans, and then Dewhurst, and I remember going to work with him every Sunday morning and while he did his bookwork I used to weigh tins of fruit on the scales in his shop, and indeed played shops. He worked in Petty Cury & Mill Road, and finished his career in Dewhurst in Fitzroy Street, when it was still part of the Kite area. If you can help contact her at denisewarren@btinternet.com or write to me.

Memories 23rd February 2005 by Mike Petty

The other morning I was sitting at my computer wondering what to write for this week's Memories when the telephone rang. It was a lady from Norfolk Federation of Women's Institutes: would I give a talk at Wymondham in October? No problem – that's what I do. Could I talk for an hour – yes. Without slides ... - yes (just about). To an audience of 600 ladies? So I said yes and thought - surely they're joking, or I am! Time will tell.

At least I can start as I usually do: "Those of you who read the Cambridge Evening News – and I'm sure you all read the Cambridge Evening News (pause for comments) – because it's delivered to your house free every evening (pause for 'oh no it isn't, not in our village'). Oh yes it is – on your computer". I then go on to say how each evening I look back at the news of 100, 75, 50 and 25 years ago – and how that old news often reflects the headlines in the current paper – showing that some stories go round and round.

In March 1905 the *News* carried an article about the unexpected arrival of a foreign potentate. Cambridge was already full of dignitaries with many eminent personages returning to the

University to take part in a debate on the Greek Question in which the Prime Minister had become personally involved. They were voting whether Greek should no longer compulsory be for those seeking admission to the University.

Then at two in the afternoon the Mayor, Alderman Spalding, received a telegram to say that the Sultan of Zanzibar (who was in London for the coronation) would arrive at the station in two hours' time and would appreciate an escort around the ancient town and its colleges.

What was he to do: the reputation of Cambridge hospitality was at stake for a visit of royalty 'even of more or less obscure regions' was a matter of some moment. The chief constable was an authority on the orient but was out of town, the University was involved in its own turmoil so it was up to him. He despatched a carriage to meet the visitors - not the official Mayor's coach but the omnibus from the Lion Hotel with one of the hotel waiters as escort.

The Royal party in turbans and flowing white robes descended in majesty from the train but of the Sultan himself there was no sign; his retinue explained that he had been detained in London for an audience with the King. The entourage was escorted to the Mayoral parlour but the party preferred to visit a Bazaar then in progress in the Guildhall - whose worthy stallholders (including one who had spent some time in Zanzibar) were delighted at such wealthy visitors- but disappointed when they spend not a halfpenny. [SCAN 6987 OF CAMBRIDGE GUILDHALL DECORATED FOR THE ESPERANTO CONGRESS OF 1907 – MORE SPEAKERS OF A STRANGE LANGUAGE]

Then came the tour; they were escorted to King's, Caius and Trinity where as the porters bowed low the Prince fell to his knees articulating his praise for its architecture in a language that none (including the interpreter) understood. These were the only word he spoke - except when he stumbled and stubbed his toe - then it became apparent that *some* words were the same in English and Zanzibarian

After three-quarters of an hour it was time for the visitors to depart and with many salaams they set off for the station. Crowds who'd gathered to watch their departure learned something of the mysterious ways of the Orient when the Royal party suddenly dashed to a couple of hansom cabs, and disappeared at speed towards Hills Road.

Next evening a representative from the Daily Mail travelled to Cambridge with 'exclusive' news - it had all been a marvellous undergraduate hoax by members of Trinity College headed by William Horace de Vere Cole who was to go on to establish a reputation as the Prince of Practical Jokers. [SCAN OF TWO CARTOON POSTCARDS OF THE ZANZIBAR HOAX]

But it came as no surprise to the Editor of the Cambridge Daily News. For just two weeks previously he had reflected on an incident in 1873 when elaborate arrangements had been made and not only the Mayor but University officials and Volunteer band had paraded to the Station to welcome a non-arriving Shah of Persia. It was an article that had obviously caught the eye of 'The Sultan' at Trinity College. But the Mayor also read the paper carefully and had been right in his caution. [SCAN OF HEADLINES OF THE ZANZIBAR STORY 4TH MARCH 1905 TOGETHER WITH A SCAN OF A READER'S RESPONSE TO THE EARLIER PERSIAN HOAX THAT WAS CARRIED IN THE CDN ON 4TH FEB 1905]

Then in March 1965 the rumour started again only this time the Shah was supposed to be arriving by a Heron of the Queen's flight at Marshall's airport. Quite what his itinerary was nobody really knew - perhaps a stroll along the Backs, a visit to King's and Trinity, and then round off the stay with a pint of beer and game of darts at the Queen's Head, Newton. Some believed it and a crowd of a hundred waited outside King's College chapel. Others did not including the Sunday lunchtime regulars in the village pub. But this time it as for real as the

thirty-pound boost to the pile of pennies being collected to improve the Village hall testified. [THE VISIT WAS REPORTED IN THE NEWS OF 8TH MARCH 1965 – CAN WE FIND A CUTTING AND/OR PHOTO TAKEN AT THE TIME]

There was more uncertainty in February 1979; when Saturday shoppers on the first day of Rag Week saw the damp grass of Parker's Piece covered with prayer mats, heard kneeling students reciting from the Koran as they faced towards Mecca, and watched their procession through the streets they well might wonder whether this was just another money raising stunt. But again it was for real: a political demonstration by Iranian students Calling for a blessing on the efforts of the Ayatollah Khomeini to overthrow what they described as an "unjust, irresponsible, inhuman and cruel regime" of the Shah of Persia. [STORY REPORTED IN NEWS OF 12TH FEBRUARY 1979 PAGE 3 – FIND CUTTING AND/OR PHOTO]

Only the future will tell what headlines from Iran will be carried by the News in the months to come.

Memories 1st March 2005

The news that the cricket pitches on Parker's Piece, Cambridge may no longer be maintained prompts various reflections. The story of this most famous of Cambridge's open spaces is well known – how it was acquired by the Council in 1613 in exchange for land they owned at the back of Trinity College, the college's cook Edward Parker then being a former tenant of part of the land.

In its early state Parker's was a rough piece of ground, rutted with the ridge and furrow of early agriculture and hoofmarked by the horses which were ridden around it. It was surrounded with deep ditches, one of which then caused the death of undergraduate Laurence Dundas in February 1818. After a drinking session at St John's College he had decided to make his way across to the Barnwell area of town for the company of the various young ladies who plied their trade in that area. He was so drunk he got lost crossing Parker's Piece and fell into one of the muddy ditches. It was only knee deep and he managed to struggle out of it, but then he fell back. He decided it would be easier without his gown, then his jacket and then took everything off except for his pantaloons and his stockings – but he'd pulled them down to his ankles so he couldn't move. He was found him next morning sitting in the ditch in eighteen inches of water. The coroner decided he'd died through exposure to the coldness of the night, and that it had been caused through being drunk.

The most famous event associated with the Piece is doubtless the massive out-door meal given to thousands of people to celebrate Queen Victoria's Coronation in 1838. The picture of tables spread across the grass is one that is reproduced time after time. But there was an earlier feast back in July 1814 when some 15,000 people assembled to watch as 6,000 of the poorer classes were entertained to a public dinner. It was, they claimed a 'unique event' and proved the inspiration for the one that was to follow 24 years later. The meal was to celebrate the return of peace after the Napoleonic war, but we celebrated peace too soon and the Battle of Waterloo was to follow the next year.

In 1831 the Town Council was approached by a Mr Dupuis of King's College and gave permission for an area of the Piece to be levelled off for a cricket ground for the use of both town and gown. Further improvements followed until in May 1832 it was good enough to stage a cricket match between Cambridge University and the Town.

The University had beaten the Marylebone club previous week and had strengthened their squad with eminent players including the Honourable F. Ponsonby, considered by many the best gentleman batter in England. They were confident of their success but they reckoned

without the skill of a certain Mr Fenner whose bowling took vital wickets and amassed 27 runs in fine stile before being caught. The second and third days were badly interrupted by rain and the match came down to the final over with the town needing just eight runs for victory but being robbed by a dubious umpiring decision! The University continued to play their matches on Parker's Piece until Fenner opened a ground of his own a few steps from the boundary in 1846.

Pictures of the Piece in those distant days are scarce but recently Ric Leach has shown me a copy one of the original paintings made by Frederick Richard Leach in October 1848. The building in the background is the Town Gaol that was erected in 1820 and finally closed in April 1878. [SCAN]

Two major events occurred on Parker's Piece just 75 years ago in March 1930; one we remember the other we seem to have forgotten. The former was the opening of the Hobbs Pavilion, named after the famous cricketer John Berry Hobbs who made nearly 200 centuries in his first-class cricket career, playing for England between 1907 and 1930. His story has been told time and again and will doubtless be repeated in the weeks to come [PERHAPS FIND NEWS PICTURE OF HOBBS PAVILION?]

But the other headlines of March 1930 were of a major demonstration on Parker's Piece which attracted thousands of farmers. The meeting was originally intended to bring together workers in East Anglia but interest had become so wide that nearly all the agricultural counties in England were represented. They passed a resolution protesting against the increase in unemployment amongst agricultural workers and urged that unless effective steps are at once taken then nothing but calamity faced the industry. [SCAN 30 03 01a-d]. Who says history repeats itself?

Memories 9th March 2005, by Mike Petty

'Cambridge housing shortage' is one of those stories that comes round and around. After the Second World War the problem was particularly acute; pre-fabs were introduced as a temporary measure and Mowlems erected concrete 'Easiform' houses at a cost of £1,400.

But when in 1952 Ernest Marples came down to open the 5,000th Unity steel and concrete house he urged caution on those who advocated cutting costs by reducing standards. "One has got to stop somewhere, otherwise we could be building little pigeon houses with one room upstairs and one down", he warned.

Despite it all by 1954 there was a 15-year wait for council houses and nearly half of new buildings were set aside to re-house people living in some 1,250 'slum' dwellings.

The Mayor urged the erection of large blocks of flats in the newly cleared areas rather than taking acres of agricultural land. But in February 1955 a plan was unveiled for the site of some County Council smallholdings and poultry farms on the north of the town separated from Milton Road by a line of houses.

In September 1955 the first house was completed on the new Arbury Estate. Monkman, the builders, took out an advertisement to emphasise the speed of their construction. They had started building on the 1st June and the house was occupied 17th September.

Other people took much longer to complete their dream home. Several families responded to an advertisement for ordinary people who were prepared to co-operate to build their own houses. The Cambridge Self-Build Society acquired plots in the barren fields and allotments off Milton Road. Soon however the landscape was changing as roads were laid and plots pegged out. The men bought a second-hand cement mixer some scaffolding, some spades and

the various bits and pieces needed to build a house. This included floodlights so work could continue long into the night as Essex Close started to rise. It was one way of beating the housing shortage.

Not all residents relished departure to pastures new. Their small houses might be over a century old, with a blank wall at the back, inadequate ventilation, lavatories or drainage. But they were in the New Town or Fitzroy Street areas with their local amenities and community spirit; the new Arbury was seen as bleak and unwelcoming.

The 1955 plan included provision for shops, schools, a pub, cinema and two churches. The cinema did not materialise but the church did. For a while the congregation met in individual houses but then an army hut was bought for their first building. In July 1957 Princess Margaret came to lay the foundation stone, returning nearly 20 years later for a service to celebrate its completion. Other facilities have followed including schools, adventure playground and community centre.

As the houses mushroomed and new phases expanded towards Kings Hedges Road some thought it less of an estate than a New Town but without the facilities of a new town. An CEN editorial of December 1968 described it as 'an urban wilderness, a dormitory suburb with no life of its own'; others termed it 'slumburbia', 'like a prairie' and 'completely soulless'

Twenty-five years ago in 1980 Sallie Purkis sought the views of local people to compile a study of the area; some of the children who contributed wrote: "It is a friendly place... I love Arbury and never want to move away"

But how many have indeed stayed and what memories do you have of Arbury.

Now the Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education is planning a new project to bring the original *Arbury Is Where We Live* up-to-date with free weekday morning events at the Meadows Community Centre in May 2005.

The project needs contributions from everyone, whether you have lived in Arbury all your life or are new to the area, whatever your age or background. It needs people who can help with memories, people who can help with stories, people who can describe what Arbury is and has been like. It also needs people who can help with photographs, people who could help to take videos of places mentioned in the stories, and people who can or would like to learn how to make a DVD.

At the end of the project all contributions – spoken, written or on video - will be put onto a DVD with a free copy given to all participants, however many sessions they attended: one, some or all.

So if you can help make *Arbury Is Where We Live 1980 – 2005* a comprehensive record, warts and all, then contact Sue Pemberton on 01954 280399 or e-mail rsp26@cam.ac.uk. It promises to be an interesting way to spend some time and at help to put your own slant on the history of this most important area of Cambridge.

SCANS: 4503 – Campkin Road in the 1960s – a photo taken by Derek Stubbings

SCAN 6829 – heavy frost in Campkin Road

SCAN 8944 – Arbury court shopping area 1979

SCAN 9163 – Arbury Road in the 1920s

SCAN 550202 – headlines from the CDN 2nd February 1955

THERE ARE OTHER GOOD PHOTOS IN THE NEWS LIBRARY FILES ON ARBURY ESTATE

READERS WRITE

More Home Guard memories have come in; Ray Johnson e-mails to say the many of the people on the Girton Home Guard photo I featured were Madingley men including Ray himself, along with Ray Chandler, Ted Wiseman and Buller Brand. Ray has a similar picture of the Madingley Home Guard which was taken in the school playground which was their parade ground. But does anyone have a picture of the Fen Ditton contingent; Jim Tooke from Ely tell me that his father served in it and he would love a photograph. If you can help then let me know and I'll put you in touch.

Colin Maxted from Cambridge has written with more information on Redfarn's butchers shop in Mawson Road. Colin worked with Harry Redfarn for many years and learned a great deal from him about life in the meat trade. "Harry was one of the last great 'characters' of the time and always had a tale to tell", he adds.

Memories 16th March 2005, by Mike Petty

It is hard to think of Newmarket Road as Cambridge's entertainment centre.

But it once housed a full-time indoor Circus on Auckland Road where Lilliputian people, wild cats and even Mr Edison's latest invention, the Concertphone featuring recordings of Dan Leno, attracted audiences. In 1902 it renamed itself the Empire Circus of Varieties with a programme including George Egerton, the London serio-vocalist comedian and the first appearance in Cambridge of Leno, the midget comedian. Thomas Askham the proprietor applied for a licence to perform stage plays: a dramatic performance was instructive to the working classes and tended to keep them out of public houses. But he met opposition from religious organisations who felt it would be injurious to the morals of the people. As soon as the audience came out they were 'on the Common in the dark'. They complained that the poster for one play contained the figure of a young lady almost in a state of nudity and that if a man took his wife or daughter to the vicinity the ladies would hardly know where to put their heads. The Vice Chancellor quickly banned undergraduates from attending.

As the Auckland Road theatre faded into memory another one nearby was making international headlines. All this in one of the oldest theatre buildings in the country. [THERE ARE PICTURES OF THE AUCKLAND ROAD THEATRE BUILDING IN THE NEWS LIBRARY]

That theatre owed its creation to tragedy. For centuries a major trading fair was held on Stourbridge Common; it attracted buyers and traders from around the country and various sideshows were set up. One of these was a theatre, a wooden and canvas affair that was removed once the fair was over.

Then in 1802 some villain cried out 'Fire' when theatre was packed to the rafters. Frantic screams reverberated through the darkness striking consternation into every heart, there were despairing cries, some calling in vain for husbands, others for wives, brothers for their sisters and sisters for their brothers; whilst little children crying for their parents were taken up and carried by charitable neighbours.

But not all were helping others: amidst the mayhem thieves who had sparked the panic cut the pockets from people's sides, ripped the gowns from their backs, purloined shawls and shoes and tore rings from lacerated fingers and bleeding ears. When it was all over five people had been trampled to death and the building was condemned as unsafe.

A new theatre was opened near the junction of East Road and Newmarket Road in September 1808, though not even the excellence of the Norwich Players nor productions such as the 'Merry Wives of Windsor' could revive the audiences and the building was auctioned off in 1815.

By then its replacement on Newmarket Road was already in being. The Barnwell Theatre Royal was designed by William Wilkins and lauded as 'the best provincial theatre in the Kingdom'. Crowds flocked to the comic pantomime 'Harlequin and Mother Goose' though their favourite was the tragic melodrama entitled 'George Barnwell'

The theatre could hold about 700 people in its commodious and well-arranged gallery, upper circle, private boxes, dress circle and pit. It attracted many famous Victorian artistes during its 60-year run before it was put up for auction. It reopened in November 1878 with buns and tea for 600 people – but now as an Evangelistic Mission Hall. Those who preferred their more traditional entertainment transferred to another Theatre Royal, this time in Mill Road, later renamed Sturton Town Hall, Empire Music Hall and finally the Kinema. [SCAN OF THE INTERIOR OF THE THEATRE ROYAL BARNWELL MISSION –9111]

In November 1926 the curtain rose on a new and most exciting drama. Terence Gray, the son of an Irish autocrat, ex-Magdalene College undergraduate, air mechanic for the Royal Flying Corps and Egyptologist, converted the Mission Hall into the Festival Theatre, which was hailed as the most modern and up-to-date in England.

It opened with a sensational production of the 'Oresteta' in Egyptian-style on a redesigned open stage and with new electric lighting from Germany; it was choreographed by Ninette de Valois. Over the next seven years the Festival achieved an international reputation; rising stars such as Flora Robson and Robert Donat performed on its revolving stage and seats were often hard to find. Gray installed a roof garden and restaurant- ('the view was not extensive it is true but the surroundings are novel', the News commented') and it made more money than the Theatre. Eventually however Gray's empire crumbled in conflict between his own views and those of the student critics of the 'Cambridge Review'. Humiliated by a satirical review put on by the Cambridge Footlights he left for the south of France and a new career as a horse trainer. He also married a Russian princess, became a mystic and converted to Buddhism.

The old building continued to host theatrical performances but concluded with a 'Grand Variety Season in 1940. The final celebrity to appear was a cockney comedian, Cheerful Charlie Chester – whose patter would have been familiar to those who had packed the Empire Circus of Varieties a generation earlier. In a final insult the Festival's seats were transferred to the new Arts Cinema in Market Passage in October 1947.

The building itself was rented to Pye Radio and was soon packed with boxes of boat radio sets, boxes of fuses and coils of wire; then it became a store for the Arts Theatre and gradually retreated back into obscurity. It has recently been acquired and renovated by the Cambridge Buddhist community and a few weeks ago hosted a reading by members of the famous Cambridge University Marlowe Society. The occasion was the launch of a new book by Paul Cornwell which has brought the theatre and its flamboyant creator back into the spotlight. [SCAN OF BUILDING IN USE AS STORE IN 1950S–0503 AND AS ARTS THEATRE STORE 1970 - 6849] [THERE ARE PICTURES IN LIBRARY FILES OF THE EXTERIOR OF THE FESTIVAL THEATRE BUILDING WHICH STILL STANDS ON NEWMARKET ROAD ROUGHLY OPPOSITE THE OLD CEN OFFICE]

Paul Cornwell's book, 'Only by failure: the many faces of the impossible life of Terence Gray' is published by Salt of Gt Wilbraham – ISBN 1 84471 004 1 [SCAN OF TERENCE GRAY ON COVER OF THE BOOK]

##

The Rev David Hanwell, Priest in Charge of Cockley Cley and other Norfolk parishes has sent me an interesting picture of the well known Cambridge store, Laurie and McConnal but in an unfamiliar location – March. It was issued as a postcard by A. Crowson of Bridge House March probably in the 1930s. But can anybody provide details as to how long Laurie's was in the town and when it moved? [SCAN OF MARCH]

##

As part of this year's Cambridge Science Week the University Observatory on Madingley Road is travelling back in time to 1905 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of Albert Einstein. There will be a display of astronomical books and journals as well as other more domestic items relating to the period. But the main attraction will be the opportunity to view the observatory and the other parts of the site such as the director's dining room and sitting room which are not usually open. The open day is Saturday 19th March from 2pm. [SCAN 101.01 OF OBSERVATORY]

Memories 23rd March 2005, by Mike Petty

It was 70 years ago that the driving test was introduced and since then thousands and thousands of people have learned to drive around Cambridge's crowded streets and notorious bottlenecks such as Mitcham's Corner.

One of those brave individuals who have sat alongside the novice driver as they have crunched gears was a retired policeman, Sergeant Harold Holden. He started his driving school just 50 years ago but had already been driving for 15 years before that. He was on the police traffic patrol when it first started under Inspectors Edwards and Lewis and was in charge of the department until 1946 when he passed the first-class police driver's test. [SCAN HOLDEN – ARTICLE FROM CDN 13TH APRIL 1955]

His new 'Cambridge Driving School' was to be organised on police lines using a new Ford Anglia with dual controls. He offered 1¼ -hour [ONE AND A QUARTER HOUR] lessons and reckoned the average driver would need 10 sessions to reach the standard necessary to take the test. In his experience it was easier to teach young people as they had better co-ordination and powers of observation. Harold was not the first member of his family to teach driving: his mother was one of the first women to hold a driving licence in 1908 and taught drivers during the first World War

The motorist of 1955 was aided by the publication of a new Highway Code which had its regional launch at Cambridge Guildhall that March. The new Code – described as penny-worth of multi-coloured good advice to all road users – actually cost 2½d [TWO PENCE HALFPENNY] a copy to print but was being sold at a loss. Highlight of the event was when two local schoolchildren, Gillian Layton and Peter Bowles presented the Mayor with copies autographed by the Minister of Transport himself.

It was in 1897 that the Hon C.S. Rolls, when an undergraduate, brought the first motor car to Cambridge, a four-seater single cylinder Peugeot; he was supposed to have man with red flag walking in front but would make an eight-hour dash down to London. After the abolition of the Red Flag Act Rolls imported a De Dion tricycle complete with French mechanic who unfortunately dropped the cylinder head & broke it. Rolls had made the acquaintance of Mr King & Mr Harper who specialised in making bicycles and they repaired it. In March 1905 Charles Rolls lectured to the University Engineering Society on 'The History of the Motor Car' and recalled how he frequently got into trouble through getting back to his college late at night after a breakdown. He confessed that he had squared numerous Dons by taken them out in the car though many of these runs ended in pushing the car home with the assistance of his venerable passengers.

By 1905 the News commented that it was doubtful if any town of similar size has as many motors and motorcycles running about the streets as Cambridge in term time. The main problem was undergraduate driving too fast - one crashed into a cow in Victoria Avenue. They were not the only offenders and in 1909 a taxi-driver was fined £2 for driving at the dangerous speed of 11 mph. But three years later we had got used to speed and a limit of 15 mph was being suggested in any inhabited part of the town. By 1922 the limit was up to 20 mph, though it was habitually disregarded and some people were talking of abolishing it. But the majority of road motor accidents were due to excessive speed and it was purely a matter of opinion what constituted excessive speed – said the *News* that April. [SCAN 9764 – POLICE ON THE SCENE OF A ROAD ACCIDENT, 1930S – A POSED VIEW FOR A FILM MADE BY DAVID MOORE, A TEMPERANCE CAMPAIGNER]

The Cambridge Accident Prevention Council was set up to try and reduce injuries and Sergeant Holden's dog 'Jill' played a significant part in one of their films, 'Almost Human' which was shown all over the world. Two of their other productions, 'Wise and Otherwise' and 'Horse Sense' which were made in the streets of Cambridge in 1947 and the early 1950s have been produced on video by the East Anglian Film Archive, giving a vivid picture of the period and its traffic problems. Shots of cars driving down Petty Cury and accidents outside the Round Church make them well worth seeking out from the Arts Picture House. [SCAN 9124 'HORSE SENSE' – A YOUNG RIDER WAITS TO CROSS HILLS ROAD, 1968] [SCAN 10436 TRAFFIC IN BRIDGE STREET 1937] [SCAN 104.07 POLICEMAN ON POINT DUTY AT CORNER OF SIDNEY STREET AND MARKET STREET, 1950S]

But do you have memories of learning to drive – please share them

Arbury Memories:

Eileen Bernard from Cambridge writes:

"I was born in 1933 on Arbury Road, one of the last four houses before the children's play area and the Grove pub. My mother told me the house cost £600. In 1964 I bought a house in Leys Avenue almost backing on to mother's garden, the price was £3,450. My memories as a child are of plating in the cornfields, the one where they found the grave of a Roman soldier. After they'd removed the skeleton we children were allowed to stand in the grave. We picked wild flowers in the hedgerows and went for lovely country walks past farms to a stream that led to a railway crossing and continued into Kings Hedges Woods, a lovely area. One of the farmers would bring his produce on his horse and cart to sell to people in Arbury Road. We could play in the road until dusk with only an occasional bicycle coming from the allotments." [SCAN 87.66 - SALE'S NURSERYMAN'S VAN OF ARBURY ROAD, 1920S]

Does anybody recognise these bridesmaids? They followed Winnifred Maud Jones down the aisle of Cherry Hinton church when she married Harold Herbert Parker on Monday 28th June 1926. But who were they asks Jill Mapey of St Albans. If you can help e-mail mapey@supanet.com or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch. [SCAN BRIDESMAIDS]

Memories 30th March 2005, by Mike Petty

Back in February I published a photograph from Mrs A.C. Brown of Chesterton of the figure-head of an old boat called the 'Prince Albert' which used to run river trips on the Cam. Could anybody tell her something about it, she wondered?

I have now received an answer all the way from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Joan Hulm has sent copies of a correspondence she enjoyed from the late Bill Leach, the fondly-recalled teacher and steam-boat enthusiast who has featured several times in this column. Writing back in July 1983 Bill provided information some of which he had obtained from his father.

The boat was built by John Cross of Ely and originally called 'Prince Regent', a title first used in 1812 by the eldest son of King George III. It carried passengers between Cambridge and Ely and finding the service economically viable Cross soon added a second named 'Queen Adelaide' after the wife of King William IV, 1830-1839. The boats were about 45 feet in length, probably exactly alike, and almost certainly built of oak.

One left Quayside, Cambridge for Ely at 10 am, the same time that other left Ely for Cambridge. The journey would take at least five hours, stopping at any of the riverside public houses, of which there were many, to pick-up and set-down passengers. The boat from Cambridge made a lengthy stop at the 'Five Miles from Anywhere, No Hurry' at Upware, whilst the Ely boat made a similar stop at the 'Bridge', Clayhithe, where good meals could be had. There were no sailings on Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays. [SCAN 1463 – 'NO HURRY' UPWARE c1900 SCAN 313 – BRIDGE HOTEL, CLAYHITHE c1920]

The boats were probably pulled by a pair of horses and carried a red flag at the mast-head indicating that they claimed priority of passage over the slower cargo boats who were supposed to give way to them. Their masts were taller than those of cargo boats and the towropes were attached to the top, keeping them well above the river and the riverbank so that when overtaking the rope would pass right over the other boat without catching.

The spread of the railway network brought an end to the passenger boats as the journey could be completed in a fraction of the time. But John Cross was not finished with his boats; he renamed them 'Victoria' and 'Prince Albert' and used them as 'Party Boats'. Seats were fixed to the cabin-tops where previously passengers' baggage had been carried, sheeted-down in bad weather. They survived the competition of two steamers, the 'Otter' which towed the 'Otter Hound' and 'His Majesty' which pulled 'Alexandra'. Their trade was finally taken away by H.C.Banham's motor-driven trip-boats 'Enterprise' and 'Perseverance'. The carriage of goods by river declined rather more slowly: the steam-barge 'Nancy' ceased trading in 1913, although H.C. Banham made a romantic effort to revive the business with his motor-barge 'Nancy II' in the 1930s. Two seam-tugs 'Olga' and 'Nellie' of King's Lynn continued taking 'gas water' from the Cambridge Gas Works to Lynn where it was used in the manufacture of fertilisers.

John Cross' business was bought by Foster's Bank and the two party boats were sold, the 'Victoria' to Winter's, the 'Prince Albert' to Thomas Askham. Both were probably broken up around 1910. Bill Leach remembered one of them: "As a boy I was taken aboard the 'Victoria' where it was used for a works outing of my grandfather's firm, F.R. Leach and Sons. Down the length of the cabin there ran a long, narrow table and fixed along either side were wooden seats. The cabin seemed rather gloomy and there was a lavatory of sorts under the stairs which gave access to the upper deck" [SCAN 102.61 – ADVERTISEMENT FOR RIVER TRIPS ON THE PRINCE ALBERT WHEN OWNED BY MRS HULM'S GRANDFATHER, THOMAS ASKHAM]

As for their figureheads; Bill said that the 'Victoria' is in the Cambridge Folk Museum, but he did not know what became of 'Prince Albert' – a military man in Huzzard's uniform. This is a mystery Joan can help solve. Thomas Askham was her grandfather and the family kept it as a souvenir of their river days. She has a photograph taken in the garden of the Abbey House in 1938 after it had just been given a fresh coat of paint. But where is it now? [SCAN OF THE 'PRINCE ALBERT' FIGUREHEAD IN THE GARDEN OF ABBEY HOUSE WITH ARTHUR AND ALBERT ASKHAM]

ARBURY MEMORIES

Joyce Loten from Arbury Road has lent me some pictures of a house near the corner of what is now Campkin Road that was home to Mr Sale, a nurseryman whose van I featured last week. One shows it in July 1959, the other as it was being demolished as part of the new Arbury estate in April 1961. [SCANS]

READERS WRITE:

Colin Kidman, OBE, writes: "I was particularly interested in your reference to the Festival Theatre and the late Terrance Gray. After he purchased the theatre in the early twenties a great deal of building work was carried out by our family business (Kidman & Sons Ltd.) under Mr. Gray's personal supervision. As a result of this my late father, Albert, got to know him very well and, as he used to tell me, greatly admired his knowledge of the theatre world. Among the many improvements made was the construction at the back of the stage a full sized concave shaped wall called, I believe, a 'Cyclorama'. This, together with what was at that time a very updated and sophisticated electrical installation, produced special effects which reduced the need for differing back-cloths. I remember visiting the theatre once, soon after it re-opened. I confess, however that the choice of plays Mr. Gray favoured were better suited to an academic audience rather than the plebian tastes of Cambridge residents! The programmes had inner pages which were translucent so that they could be easily read in the darkened auditorium when held up to the stage lighting. Wouldn't be great if, like the theatre at Bury St. Edmunds, the Festival could be restored to its former glory?"

Memories 7th April 2005, by Mike Petty

With the news of an impending election in the offing Mrs Dawn Telfer of Cambridge has lent me a picture which might jog some memories. It shows a visit to the Houses of Parliament made by pupils of Coleridge School in 1947. The group was shown round by Leslie Symonds, the Cambridge Labour Member of Parliament who like his colleagues was sitting in the House of Lords as the Commons chamber was still being repaired following bomb damage during the war. Were you there too? [SCAN 104.08] How many of the present Commoners will be transferring to the upper house once the present campaign is decided?

Motoring memories have been flooding in.

Beth Lane from Ely e-mails: "What memories you are stirring up! The archaeological dig on the Arbury Road which I helped with as a teenager, Mr Leach of course and now Sergeant Holden, who taught me to drive. He must have been teaching for about three years when I went to him, I was 19 at the time. Neither my mother nor myself could drive, maybe because we had never had a car! We went everywhere on bicycles, but my Grandmother had died and left Mum and Dad with enough money to start a shop in Ely.

"We decided not to move until we knew whether the shop would be a success or not. Obviously we needed transport, so a car was bought. It was a maroon Morris Oxford and mum and I went for driving lessons. Mum went to the BSM but I went to Sgt Holden. What a lovely man; he is often in my thoughts while driving, I still hear his voice saying: 'Don't swerve - hit the dog, cat whatever, but don't swerve and cause a worse accident'.

"He must have been right in thinking that he could get pupils through the Driving Test in ten lessons because I passed in nine and with no previous experience. As we used to drive around Cambridge he would point out all the changes that he had made to road signs etc and explain why. He never raised his voice, never got excited or agitated, he was always cool, calm and

collected and the perfect gentleman, getting out of the car to see you into your seat and closing the door for you. He even allowed mum to come with us for my lessons to help her too! I always considered it privilege to have known him and an honour to have been taught by him, I shall never forget him, I hope that he would still be proud of me and my driving.

Roy Johnson has other memories: "I was one of Sergeant Holden's learners. I remember one incident in the days when we had to give hand signals. We were going along Chesterton Road coming from the town and before the crossing to the footbridge he said: 'Don't forget your hand signals and put the gear into the middle and apply the hand brake' I did that all the same time. He looked at me and said 'Who the hell is driving the car!' I hadn't any hands on the steering wheel – I was thinking more about the hand signals and the gears"

Rodney Dale from Haddenham also has memories of his early driving days in 1951: "It was the Easter holidays, so I entered for a driving test and did a lot of driving in a 1923 Rover 8 car I called 'Lady C'. One evening I was visited by Mickey Mansfield and Ed Wilson. They wanted a ride in the Rover, so father came along to act as the Authorised Accompanist and Mickey and Ed sat in the dicky seat. The unladen weight of the car was only about 10 cwt, so the addition of two grown lads over the rear axle had a dramatically negative effect on the brakes which I didn't discover until trying to stop at the traffic lights in Chesterton Lane. I ran into the back of another car with a mighty 'wump'. Oddly enough, instead of getting out to see what had happened, the other driver sped away like a scalded cat - 'up to no good', we concluded.

"Lady C was making a tremendous noise because the engine hadn't stopped and father's sympathetic brake application had pushed a floorboard out which had jammed the clutch pedal down. We untangled the board and went home slowly; the offside end of the front axle was severely bent. Father took it to George Lister in Abbey Road, who straightened it for ten bob.

"Someone said that to facilitate passing the driving test it would be a good idea to have a driving lesson, because the instructors knew all about the routes used, the questions asked, and so on, so I went to Marshall's in Jesus Lane and booked a couple - 7/6d each. Mr Franklin of Marshalls - who later set up his own driving school in Tennis Court Road - took me round the test routes, and questioned me on the Highway Code. Came the day of the test. No examination before or since has worried me more - I couldn't eat a thing for lunch. Another adviser had suggested that it was good practice to book a test in the afternoon, in the hope that the tester himself had had a good lunch. It was at 2.30, and went like a dream - until, in Bateman Street, we did an emergency stop. That was all right, because when the tester looked behind, you knew that he was going to shout 'stop!' However: 'Reverse into there,' commanded Mr Langford, indicating St Eligius Street, which is very narrow. As I began the manoeuvre I noted that a dustcart was coming out, which rattled me. The hind wheel went up on the pavement, so I knew that I'd failed. 'Oh bugger - Sir' I shouted, because I knew I'd failed. 'Right,' he said, 'let's go back'. We did and he asked me some questions about the Highway Code. 'Thank you very much', he said, scribbling a bit of paper to say that I'd passed. It must have been because I'd called him Sir. They don't make tests like that these days." More of Rodney's recollection of vintage motoring can be found in his book 'Halcyon Days' (Fern House, 1999) [SCAN DALE 2 – 'LADY C BREAKS DOWN AT MILTON 1951'; OR DALE 3 – 'RODNEY DALE AND LADY C 1951']

The traffic lights at the bottom of Castle Hill were the first to be installed in Cambridge but it was a controversial decision. They were intended as a money-saving exercise: in March 1929 the cost of a policeman on point duty was about £400 a year and the signals, with purchase, would be about £200 with about £25 a year maintenance and repairs. But Alderman Pollock pointed out that they were in the wrong position and felt a better spot would have been at the

junction of East Road and Mill Road. He was soon proved right; according to a report in the News of 30th April 1930 the average motorist heading towards Huntingdon and seeing the stiff climb ahead of him accelerated when the green light was showing in order to get through before it changes. But a driver coming down often found his car had a tendency to accelerate of its own and tried to get into Chesterton Lane a little too fast, swinging out into the standard erected in the centre of the road. [SCAN 10113 – TRAFFIC LIGHTS AT JUNCTION MAGDALENE STREET AND CASTLE STREET 1937]

Memories 13th April 2005, by Mike Petty

I had an interesting phone call Gerald Bailey from Wicken following my Memories article about the pleasure boats that used to visit the Five Miles from Anywhere, Upware.

It's an area Gerald has known for many years and he even remembers the wooden barges loaded with artificial manure from the fertiliser works at Burwell that would come down the Lodes to join the Cam at Upware. They were towed down to Kings Lynn where they would be unloaded but then continued out into the Wash where they would anchor and wait until the tide fell. Then the bargemen would start to work filling them up with sand. It would take two tides before they were fully loaded and were towed back to the Burwell works where the sand was mixed with the fertiliser.

These barges were a remnant of a major transport industry which had formerly carried out turf and sedge from the fens and corn grown on the higher lands around Burwell. Others brought in a variety of cargoes, from nails to garments, cheese to coal that were unloaded at the Commercial End at Swaffham Bulbeck.

Gerald recalls the barges that would be moored in the fen rivers two abreast to be filled with sugar beet. The crop was not weighed: they went by the loading line on the outside of the hull. One farmer was determined to get as much of his crop off to the factory at Ely as he could and ordered his men to continue loading until the barge was filled to the top. But the tug driver refused to tow it away as it was too heavy and he would be responsible if it sank. The farmer refused to unload, the tugman refused to take it away. It was a stand-off that lasted two weeks but the boatman was king and in the end the farmer had to back down. It was a hollow victory for soon the barges were replaced by lorries using the concrete road that had been laid during the Second World War as part of the massive campaign to bring the fens into cultivation for the first time. Now the only barges to be seen are likely to be carrying gault to repair the river banks. [SCAN 28.03 - BARGES AT THE ELY BEET FACTORY 1930S] [SCAN 59.187 RIVER BOARD TUG TOWING A LINE OF BARGES 1976]

But as Alan Bloom, whose death was announced last week, recorded there was one cargo that was infinitely more precious. Writing in his book 'The Farm in the Fens' he recalls how in 1942 two Catchment Board barges moored near the Cock-Up Bridge were cleaned out, steps cut in the steep Lode banks and work had to be rescheduled so that the Land Army Girls were employed nearer the river. They were inspecting visitors.

"Every minute or two we would climb up the Lode bank to see if the party had embarked on the barge at Cock-Up. No one showed any excitement except in the stilted conversation. There had been scarcely time to get either excited or nervous. Then we heard the tug start, and out of the mizzle came the shape of the barges, alive it seemed with people. Our little group, due for presentation, shuffled into position as if we were about to face a firing squad. Within a few minutes the black soil was being trodden down by scores of feet."

The arrival of the King and Queen, together with the Minister of Agriculture, Duke of Norfolk and dozens of pressmen suddenly changed the scene from sullen bleakness to life and

bustle. “Tractors roared up and showed what really went on when there was no thought of Royalty or of recognition. Land girls from Manchester showed that they knew how to dig round bog oak and drive Fordsons. Stolid fenmen down in the slub of a six-foot dyke grinned and tried hard to speak King's English when spoken to. Nothing like it had ever happened before and was not likely to again in their lifetime.

“In twenty minutes the Royal Party were on their way back up to Cock- Up Bridge, and by the time I got back there, they were saying good-bye to their hosts, the chairman and other members of the War Agricultural Executive Committee”.

But not all had gone smoothly: “Something had gone wrong with the arrangements I had made with Sid King, the foreman. He was in evidence, cap well over one eye, but our own work people, who at this time should have been lining the ditch banks and cheering, were still at work. I felt like shouting to them, but realised that they had not been told and some of them wouldn't even know now that it was the King and Queen. There would be a grouse about this when they did know! [SCAN OF KING AND QUEEN ON THE BARGE 1942]

Mrs Rosemary Kunish from Dry Drayton has lent me a photograph of the ‘Otter’, one of the steam bats that used to take parties on the Cam, towing an unpowered ‘Otter Hound’ behind it. Her great-aunt and uncle are on board – he is the ‘Jack-the-lad’ in the striped blazer. They had a university lodging house in Carlyle Road and he worked at the Pitt Club [SCAN 101.34 – MRS KUNISH’S PICTURE OF THE ‘OTTER’ STEAM BOAT]

Olive Osborne from Comberton writes: “The story and picture of Mr Arthur Askam of Abbey House Cambridge brings back memories to me. We lived in the Hare and Hounds public house in Newmarket Road, near East Road corner, from 1932 to 1934. My father, James Blundell, was landlord and Mr Askam visited us as a customer, enjoying a drink and chatting to him. He mentioned that Abbey House was haunted and one day invited us to visit him there. We entered a large room overlooking the front garden; he sat by a huge fireplace and eventually pointed to a door leading to the stairs, telling us there was a ghost up there. We looked in but didn't go up. Mr Askam gave my elder brother a two-shilling piece to spend over the road at Dodd's grocery shop. We bought a bright green round tin full of toffees – what a treat! I remember him as a real gentle man, always neat in his long brown overcoat and tall hat” [SCAN 90.04 – SKETCH OF ABBEY HOUSE IN 1930S]

Arbury Memories

Miss Daphne Foreman of Cambridge lived in Harding Way from 1961 to 1971; she writes: “When I first came the Church of the Good Shepherd had moved from the original army hut into part of the new church, which was still being built. The sacristy and toilets area was open, undivided, and the congregation entered by the side steps and worshipped in the sacristy/side chapel space while the main body of the church was still being built.” She was invited to the consecration and official opening of the church by the Bishop of Ely (the Rt Rev E.K. Roberts) in October 1964 and treasures a copy of the official order of service. Joyce Loten from the Arbury has a snap she took of the church during its construction [SCAN 104.25 – JOYCE LOTEN'S SNAP OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD CHURCH DURING CONSTRUCTION]

EXTRA STORIES, IF THERE'S ROOM – IF NOT HOLD OVER

Doris Wright from Cambridge has sent me copies of some old postcards she found in her mother's album. One shows the entrance to Mill Road from Gonville Place. It was posted in the morning of 10th February 1908 and on the back was a message inviting her mother out that night! How quick the post was in those days, she remarks. Her mother would then have been

19 years old, did she keep the date I wonder? Do you have any other postcards with interesting messages on the back? [SCAN 69.13 – LOOKING INTO MILL ROAD FROM THE CORNER OF GONVILLE PLACE]

Russ Squires has e-mailed me to seek help in tracking down photographs of the Rex Ballroom and the Embassy Club on Mill Road. He is researching the story of the Cambridge dance bands between 1935 and 1980 and has interviewed many musicians, building up a large file. But there is always room for more. If you can help then e-mail him on evarus@tesco.net or contact me and I'll put you in touch.

Memories 20th April 2005, by Mike Petty

The issue of public transport is one that seems always to be in the news. However just 100 years ago Cambridge seemed to have found a solution with the arrival of the motor bus.

The old horse-drawn bus had failed the previous year leaving the field free for the Cambridge Street Tramways Company with their horse-drawn trams. But motor buses were beginning to mask their presence felt with two of the London bus companies adopting motor traction in the capital.

Then in March 1905 came the exciting news that a company was being formed to provide a service of motor buses for Cambridge. They would run a 15-minute service from Chesterton, another from the Huntingdon Road district to the centre of town and a seven minutes' service from the Market Hill to the railway station. Should the venture prove successful the more outlying districts such as Newnham Croft and Cherry Hinton would be catered for. By April 1905 the Cambridge Motor Omnibus Company was in business.

But Cambridge being Cambridge it was not going to be that straightforward and almost immediately came news of a competitor, this one called the Cambridge University and Town Motor Omnibus Company. They had a problem: owing to the boom in buses there was difficulty in securing these vehicles but they had five chassis (the working parts) and the coachwork was being pushed forward as quickly as possible

There were two makes of bus; the Cambridge Motor Company chose a Thorneycroft which would accommodate 32 passengers, 14 inside and 18 out. Its body was painted dark blue (the colours of Oxford) with yellow decoration. The 'University' had a Cambridge-blue Straker-Squire; it would carry 36 passengers at an incredible 16 mph. Both were driven by petrol, had non-slipping tyres and were upholstered with spring cushions inside and seats like light garden chairs on the upper deck.

Both had to submit to trials before they could be licensed and both were eminently successful. The Thorneycroft's hill-climbing capacities were tested on Castle Hill which seemed to present no difficulties except a decrease in speed; the Straker-Squire passed with the greatest ease. Both naturally created somewhat of a sensation in the streets and the way they threaded their way in and out of the busy traffic excited much admiration. They were under perfect control and could pass through traffic where a horsed vehicle would have to wait its turn.

Both Cambridge buses started to ply for hire on Saturday the 15th April 1905 and the novelty induced people to make trips. Had several more 'buses been running they would have been crowded. The scene on Market Hill was unprecedented. Apart from those who lined one pavement in the hope of obtaining a seat it was alive with folk who were content with watching. As soon as a vehicle drew up a crowd swarmed around the steps, clutching the handrail and endeavouring to get a foothold on the step. Each time there were many left waiting on the pavement disappointed and most waited until it returned; some 2,000 people travelled on that first day the paper reported.

Very soon the University and Town Company turned to the commuter market with a service aimed at those Chesterton residents who needed to catch the early train to London. A bus left Old Chesterton Green at 8.25 am and ran through to the station in time to allow passengers to catch the 8.53 train. They also introduced other special services to allow people who worked in Cambridge to get to and from Chesterton for their midday meal

When the undergraduates returned after Easter they were amazed at what they found and recorded their excitement in verse:

“Oh, who will not go for a roar and a blow to the station and back to the Square
On one of the two apparitions in blue that the Vac has evolved for us there?
Oh, who would not rush in the Saturday crush for joy of a ride on the top.
Or quiver with pride - and the engine - inside, at the snort and the start and the stop”

But the undergraduate poet soon saw the problems: Petty Cury was too narrow for them

"Amazes the eyes the Gargantuan size, amazes the hooter the sense,
As swoops on its way in despotic array the Triton of traffic immense
In sooth but a few will remain in the Cury at hearing the omnibus roar
There cannot be space in that limited place for the monster and anything more"

And the double-decker bus gave unprecedented views into undergraduate rooms:

“Oh, bring up your ‘brown’ for a tour of the town, from nine in the morning till ten.
This way for a new and sensational view of Christ's and Emmanuel men!
The rooms where they keep, how they look as they sleep, the muffins for tea that they buy.
The bridge that they play and the rent that they pay, you can see all the lot from on high!”

They even foresaw the environmental consequences as the buses filled the streets and the snort of the engine was everywhere

“But a Stygian gloom will assuredly loom on the brow of the lover of peace,
That another new noise should detract from the joys that for ever and ever decrease;
And loud is the wail of the bike and the trailer and trap as they scatter afar
To left and right in discomfited flight at the voice of the God in the Car”

Within a couple of days of its arrival the new Cambridge buses experienced their first small accident. The ‘University’ bus was drawing up close to the kerb in St Andrew’s Street in order to take on a passenger when the camber of the road caused it to tilt and the top of the bus hit a street lamp which projected over the road. The top of the lamp was bent and a pane of glass smashed. This incident was captured by a cartoonist, Frank Keene and was issued as a postcard.

But others did not see the funny side. The ‘University’ bus was banned following a fatal accident when its conductor fell off the footplate into the road and was run over by the bus. The Cambridge Motor Omnibus lasted a bit longer before it too was forced off the road – it had been involved in too many small accidents and filled the streets with black exhaust smoke.

So the slow, safe and solid trams reigned supreme once more. Their triumph was short-lived. In 1907 came another bus Company - the Ortona - whose descendants still ply the Cambridge streets.

SCAN 8836 FRANK KEENE'S CARTOON POSTCARD FOLLOWING THE FIRST
ACCIDENT INVOLVING THE NEW CAMBRIDGE BUSES
SCAN 2356 – THE LIGHT-BLUE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY AND TOWN BUS ON
MARKET HILL APRIL 1905
SCAN 8835 – THE DARK-BLUE BUS OF THE CAMBRIDGE MOTOR OMNIBUS ON
MARKET HILL APRIL 1905

Readers write

Harold Gawthorp from Balsham writes following last week's Memories of the Royal Visit to Burwell Fen during the war. "My father worked for Alan Bloom and just before the Royal Visit it was his task to mow some reeds to place on the ground where the royal party were to walk so they should not get their feet dirty. But Alan would not tell him what the reeds were for, being sworn to secrecy."

EXTRA STORIES, IF THERE'S ROOM – IF NOT HOLD OVER

Doris Wright from Cambridge has sent me copies of some old postcards she found in her mother's album. One shows the entrance to Mill Road from Gonville Place. It was posted in the morning of 10th February 1908 and on the back was a message inviting her mother out that night! How quick the post was in those days, she remarks. Her mother would then have been 19 years old, did she keep the date I wonder? Do you have any other postcards with interesting messages on the back? [SCAN 6913 – LOOKING INTO MILL ROAD FROM THE CORNER OF GONVILLE PLACE]

Russ Squires has e-mailed me to seek help in tracking down photographs of the Rex Ballroom and the Embassy Club on Mill Road. He is researching the story of the Cambridge dance bands between 1935 and 1980 and has interviewed many musicians, building up a large file. But there is always room for more. If you can help then e-mail him on evarus@tesco.net or contact me and I'll put you in touch.

Memories 27th April 2005, by Mike Petty

Whilst the work of many of the wartime services has been well-documented, relatively little seems to have been recorded of the activities of the Police War Reserves. Aviation expert Michael Bowyer was speaking at one meeting when he mentioned a bombing raid on Cambridge in which a woman had been trapped in the rubble. Amongst those in the audience was a policeman who had helped to rescue her!

That gentleman might be amongst those depicted on a photograph of the Cambridge Police War Reservists that has been lent me by Marion and Alec Lant of Landbeach. It was taken by Stearns in 1945 and has a list of names of the men posing. Amongst them are those of Cudworth, Haddock, Hullock, Bradford, Peck and Pigott together with Chief Constable B.N. Bebbington and Superintendent A.E. Lilley to whom the picture was presented. [SCAN 1044.42 CAMBRIDGE POLICE WAR RESERVISTS – USE LARGE]

One village policeman was William Lythell from Stretham. He had been recruited one Saturday in 1939 as he left the football ground. The village bobby, P.C. Boulton told him, "I've got to get someone from Stretham to act as a War Reserve Policeman if war breaks out and you're just the chap for the job". Will passed it off saying "I wouldn't be much good at it" and it didn't enter his mind again until September 3rd 1939.

It was Sunday and he had just sat down to his dinner with his family when the policeman came to his house saying: "You've to report to Ely at once". So Will set off for Ely on his bike. There he was fitted up with a uniform and returned home with orders to be back at seven o'clock. He reported to Ely Police Station in good time and was on the beat in Lynn Road punctually at seven. "I felt everyone was looking at me", he recalled

As he passed the neighbouring houses one woman asked him, "Is my blackout alright?" Looking at it carefully he said, "Well there's a little glimmer of light showing in the bottom left-hand corner". Another woman asked, "What about mine?" and he noted, "That seems perfect" whereupon she commented, "Good, but of course, I haven't switched the light on yet!"

As time went on Will grew more accustomed to officialdom and he and other War Reserves were welcomed and advised by the regular members of the Force. Much of the work was routine, walking the beat in the village, riding his bike to meet colleagues at parish boundaries and duty at Ely.

Warnings of air-raids saw him on the streets, too, and on one occasion, when bombs were heard falling, albeit in the distance, one frightened Stretham woman confided afterwards, "I was really scared until I saw the policeman, then I knew I was safe!"

Although Will had many memories he was reluctant to talk of official duties but did recall one incident when armed with only a truncheon he was put in charge of a German pilot whose plane had been shot down. When he was relieved it was by an armed guard! Later, after the war, Bill had the task of guarding a dinosaur – or at least the fossilised remains of one that were discovered in a pit at the edge of the village. Despite his best endeavours some of the bits were liberated by inquisitive schoolboys! [SCAN SP 358- BILL LYTHELL GUARDING THE STRETHAM DINOSAUR 1952]

There must be other tales of policing either during the war or in the 1950s – please share them.

READERS WRITE

Miss Pamela Habgood of Waterbeach writes: "I was thrilled to see the picture of the Coleridge School political tour in Memories on April 6th. I remember the day so well and saw myself and two members of staff in the picture. Leslie Symonds M.P. was an excellent guide and the girls were most interested in the tour. On the way home we stopped the coaches for a while and the girls found a stall selling pomegranates, a totally new fruit to them, and they sucked away with great appreciation. It brought back so many memories of happy days in Coleridge School where discipline was strict and staff and pupils treated each other with mutual respect. Of course not all pupils were perfect and in most classes one could find an occasional 'class jester' who could be guilty of some minor disruption. But Coleridge was a most happy and purposeful community with an excellent record in sport and academic achievement. [SCAN 104.08 - COLERIDGE SCHOOL TRIP TO PARLIAMENT 1947]

D. Kiddy of Stradishall has been able to supply more details of a photograph featured a few weeks ago. It was taken as part of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society's photographic survey in 1928 and shows his father, Bill, uncle Jack and his two brothers, Jim and 16-year old Bill with Kit, a flea-bit grey horse. Kit was an exceptional horse who was driven by word of mouth, (no reins) and was always the lead horse. She was put down in 1936 when seven years old. The vehicle shown is a timber carriage that still survives. His father went into farming in 1913 and built up a business as a timber hauler until retiring in 1934. Then the four horses and carts went to work building the RAF station at Stradishall. [SCAN 10131- THE KIDDY FAMILY AND THEIR HORSES, TAKEN AT HORSEHEATH 1934]

Roy Chamberlain from Foxton recalls: "I took a motor cycle driving test in 1936; it was centred on the Cambridge market square and surrounding roads. The examiner told me the route to be taken and he walked or ran around the various viewing points to see how I managed the roads and corners. He also gave me an oral test on motor cycle and road laws. I passed o.k. The next year I learnt to drive a car, but did not have a test as the motor cycle licence covered it in those days. The car I started in was a 'special' as it had been adapted for my father who had lost his right leg in the 1914-18 war. It had two foot pedals, the left side for the accelerator, the other for the clutch and foot brake. You depressed the pedal a short way for the clutch and further down for the foot brake. It was converted by Mr Arch Hale of Melbourn garage."

St James' church in Cambridge is coming up to its 50th anniversary of its dedication and the congregation are planning to mark the occasion. They are looking for any information on its early years and are particularly seeking photographs of the dedication ceremony back in June 1955. If you can help please phone Jackie Bartholomew on Cambridge 246959

RESERVE

Sue Dooley from Shefford has sent me copies of some interesting pictures of Cherry Hinton one of which seems to show some sort of fairground amusements standing in the street. She knows little about it and neither do I. Can you tell us more? Her grandparents Arthur and Ada Gladys Thompson kept a diary in Brookfields and every year gave their customers a calendar and a little pot of cream. Sue still has a small screw-topped jar with their name on it. Does anybody remember them, she wonders. [SCAN 104.43 - CHERRY HINTON SHOWING FAIR c1905]

John Loxton from Somerset has sent me some snaps of a mum and daughters from London who were evacuated during the war to the Bournemouth area. He remembers the two girls, as Pat and Jean Sparkes but can't recall their mother's name. Pat later became Mrs Ward and was last heard of living in Trumpington in 1981. If any of the family would care to make contact you can phone him on 01934 517788 [SCAN 'SPARKES' = PAT AND JEAN SPARKES WITH THEIR MUM IN JUNE 1943]

Memories 4th May 2005, by Mike Petty

Whilst on a walk one evening last week I was intrigued to see one of the 'Vote for Me' signs on its wooden post being carried into a hedge in the field at the back of the village church. Soon a number of young gentlemen and one smart young lady were making their way through the crops towards it. But any thoughts of a political rally were soon dispelled as a wisp of bonfire smoke drifted away from what the youngsters believed to be their secret lair. Whatever passions were being inflamed or issues debated they were not political!

But what happens to all those election posters once the votes are finally counted. The issue is not a new one. Old photographs show similar posters plastered over buildings, but perhaps the most extreme example was that in Cambridge's Petty Cury during the county election of 1874. The whole of the front of the Lion Hotel was completely covered with signs urging 'Vote for Powell' which had to be removed once the election was over. Nor was this the only sign of campaigning – almost every dead wall, barn and public house proclaimed his name. [SCAN 10380 – ELECTION POSTERS ON WALL AT DRY DRAYTON 1929 - SCAN 104.46 – ELECTION POSTERS ON LION HOTEL PETTY CURY 1874]

Elections in Victorian times were more boisterous than those today with regular complaints of voting irregularity and bribing whilst successful candidates were carried shoulder-height through streets decorated with bunting, accompanied by a band of music. [SCAN 104.47 – ELECTION SCENE IN SIDNEY STREET 1830]

In 1910 one meeting in West Cambridgeshire was broken up by hecklers and the candidate's wife was hit by eggs and stones whilst in Cambridge women's suffrage was an important issue. The issues of the day formed the basis of a cartoon postcard issued by Harry Moden. [SCAN 104.44 – HARRY MODEN'S CARTOON OF CAMBRIDGE ELECTION 1910]

Once the votes are cast crowds gather to await the declaration of the poll - as on Cambridge Market Hill in 1976 [SCAN 104.45 – CROWDS AWAIT ELECTION RESULT ON MARKET HILL 1976]. But not all winning candidates are popular with everybody.

Charles Henry Cooper in his 'Annals of Cambridge' reports what happened back in 1774: After the declaration was made the mob became exceedingly furious. The friends of the successful candidates were received with hissing. A load of beer soon afterwards appeared on Market Hill, when the populace, understanding that it was sent in the interest of the winning candidates, seized it, broke open the casks and let the beer run out. Then as the Members with their friends were returning from the Shire Hall (on the site of the present Guildhall) to the Rose (in Rose Crescent), under the protection of constables and others, pelted them with barrel staves and burnt the beer cart. But two loads of beer which appeared later on the hill, provided by the friends of the losing candidates, were drunk with cheers

Compared to that the events of last week seem positively tame!

A recent Memories picture of Coleridge School's trip to the Houses of Parliament in 1947 sparked great memories for Miss Pamela Habgood of Waterbeach who writes: "I was thrilled to see the picture. I remember the day so well and saw myself and two members of staff in the picture. Leslie Symonds M.P. was an excellent guide and the girls were most interested in the tour. On the way home we stopped the coaches for a while and the girls found a stall selling pomegranates, a totally new fruit to them, and they sucked away with great appreciation. It brought back so many memories of happy days in Coleridge School where discipline was strict and staff and pupils treated each other with mutual respect. Of course not all pupils were perfect and in most classes one could find an occasional 'class jester' who could be guilty of some minor disruption. But Coleridge was a most happy and purposeful community with an excellent record in sport and academic achievement. [SCAN 104.08 - COLERIDGE SCHOOL TRIP TO PARLIAMENT 1947]

VE AND WARTIME MEMORIES

Amongst all the celebrations of VE Day last weekend was an exhibition at Horningsea Church on Sunday afternoon with a series of short talks by people who remembered what happened locally. The centrepiece of the display was be a copy of the church register in which the Vicar recorded not only births, deaths and marriages but also other items of interest. He noted bombing raids, plane crashes, frost with ice thick as a penny – on 11th June 1942 – and flying bombs falling near West Wrattling in July 1944. Some of his random jottings include for 1st August 1943: "Very small congregation. Bomb in fen let off by our men killed cattle. Raid on Monday shrapnel fell in village. Mussolini deposed and the end of Fascism in Italy" On 4th July 1944 he recorded: "Cold weather back again. Part of an ammunition train blew up at Soham, two men died. Caught 38 jackdaws in a trap"

Christine Green from Comberton has responded to my appeal for memories of War Reservecemen; she tells me that her father Leonard Colpus was one and recalls some of the amusing incidents he would tell her.

She writes: "There was a lot said about the one legged Irishman who was always causing trouble. He would be taken in the police car 'over the border' and left in Newmarket. Each time the policeman got back to Cambridge, they always found that he was back into the county before them.

"Then there was the lady who lived in the next road to us. Dad was called out on several occasions to take her home after she went out riding her horse without her clothes on yet again! He also mentioned the two well built nuns who regularly went over to the continent. Eventually they aroused suspicion and it was found that they were really two men with yards of expensive silk wound around their bodies.

"Dad did traffic duties in various places and was also on our local beat. I was always so proud of my father when he did traffic duty outside my school and I would leave the playground and go and stand in the middle of the road with him. No one seemed to mind. Definitely not allowed now.

Dad was also a member of the A.R.P. and he and my Granddad spent many hours with their colleagues (and their bottles of beer) in their post on the Recreation ground off the Richmond Road. All the policemen at that time seemed to be able to get a drink out of hours. He said they would go to a pub, check that last orders were carried out and when the customers had gone the landlord would lock up and the policemen would be invited into the back room for a pint or two. He seemed to know most of the landlords in Cambridge indeed several of the war reserves went on to become landlords when they had finished their war time service."

SCAN OF CHRISTINE GREEN'S PHOTO OF LEONARD AND GEORGE COLPUS IN AIR RAID WARDEN UNIFORM; THEY ARE POSING WITH A STIRRUP PUMP WHICH THE FAMILY USED TO KEEP THEMSELVES COOL IN SUMMER

Ron Ryder from Cambridge has also been delving in his photograph album to unearth a rare photograph of the Cambridge Air Raid Wardens in the Ramsden Square area of Cambridge. They were proud to be of service to their neighbours and if needed could deal with emergencies. The head warden was Mr Winkworth and in the middle row are Ron's brother Cyril, his father H.J. Ryder, H. Dennison, Mr Mallyon & Mr Brown. Do you recognise anybody else? [SCAN 104.48 OF RON RYDER'S A.R.P. PHOTO]

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for the clutch and further down for the foot brake. It was converted by Mr Arch Hale of Melbourn garage.”

Memories 11th May 2005, by Mike Petty

THIS IS A REVISED VERSION OF THE ARTICLE SENT 4TH MAY; MOST OF THE PICTURES ARE ALREADY IN THE SYSTEM; THERE IS ONE NEW ONE – 104.51

Whilst on a walk one evening last week I was intrigued to see one of the ‘Vote for Me’ signs on its wooden post being carried into a hedge in the field at the back of the village church. Soon a number of young gentlemen and one smart young lady were making their way through the crops towards it. But any thoughts of a political rally were soon dispelled as a wisp of bonfire smoke drifted away from what the youngsters believed to be their secret lair. Whatever passions were being inflamed or issues debated they were not political!

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NEW SCAN – 104.51 - OF CHRISTINE GREEN'S PHOTO OF LEONARD AND GEORGE COLPUS IN AIR RAID WARDEN UNIFORM; THEY ARE POSING WITH A STIRRUP PUMP WHICH THE FAMILY USED TO KEEP THEMSELVES COOL IN SUMMER

Ron Ryder from Cambridge has also been delving in his photograph album to unearth a rare photograph of the Cambridge Air Raid Wardens in the Ramsden Square area of Cambridge. They were proud to be of service to their neighbours and if needed could deal with emergencies. The head warden was Mr Winkworth and in the middle row are Ron's brother Cyril, his father H.J. Ryder, H. Dennison, Mr Mallyon & Mr Brown. Do you recognise anybody else? [SCAN 104.48 OF RON RYDER'S A.R.P. PHOTO --]

RESERVE

St James' church in Cambridge is coming up to its 50th anniversary of its dedication and the congregation are planning to mark the occasion. They are looking for any information on its

early years and are particularly seeking photographs of the dedication ceremony back in June 1955. If you can help please phone Jackie Bartholomew on Cambridge 246959

Memories 18th May 2005 by Mike Petty

When I was a lad we in Stretham had a man who came to deliver the milk, but he did not come with an electric float, he came with a horse and milk cart. Then in November 1971 Geoff Beasley retired after 42 years, and so did his black pony, Jenny. She was an important part of the team, she knew when to pull the cart further down the road, but also knew at which houses she would be rewarded with sugar – and would then refuse to go on until she received some. Now such clever transport has it seems passed into the history books. [I WILL CHECK FOR PICTURES ACCOMPANYING CEN ARTICLE 10 NOV 1971]

But it was not just milk that came by horse, coal did too and in Orwell the tradition of horse drawn deliveries continued into the 1990s thanks to a local man.

Alan Neaves was born in the village in 1943 but as a lad spent much of his time out in the fields with men and horses at his grandfather's farm at Chatteris. Back home in Orwell he worked from the age of ten as 'Saturday boy' for Arnold Brothers, the only local farmers who still used horses. After leaving school at fifteen Alan continued working full-time with their Shires. Then in 1967 he took over a coal round and decided to use horsepower for his local deliveries; this he did until 1993 when his last horse, Captain, retired. [I WILL CHECK FOR CEN ARTICLE AND PHOTOS ABOUT ALAN AND HIS COAL ROUND]

Now Alan's experiences of working with horse have been captured on video, sharing anecdotes from the people he worked with, passing down the wisdom – and the tricks of the trade - of past generations when the horse was a vital part of life. [SCAN OF HORSES AT WORK NEAR ELY 1970 – DO NOT BE SPECIFIC ABOUT WHAT THEY'RE DOING]

The film has been made by Neil Lanham from Helions Bumpstead who has been recording memories of Suffolk county life for many years, amassing a rich archive of sound and video tapes. But now he's branching out over the border and is anxious to speak to men and women who have a tale to tell or an ear for country sayings. If you know somebody who fits the bill then contact Neil at 'Ivy Todd', Helions Bumpstead, Haverhill, CB9 7AT or see his website www.traditionsofsuffolk.com. [SCAN OF COVER OF VIDEO WHICH COSTS £12.95 FROM NEIL LANHAM]

Another horseman, D. Kiddy of Stradishall has been able to supply more details of some horses I featured a few weeks ago. It was taken as part of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society's photographic survey in 1928 and shows his father, Bill, uncle Jack and his two brothers, Jim and 16-year old Bill with Kit, a flea-bit grey horse. Kit was an exceptional horse who was driven by word of mouth, (no reins) and was always the lead horse. She was put down in 1936 when seven years old. The vehicle shown is a timber carriage that still survives. His father went into farming in 1913 and built up a business as a timber hauler until retiring in 1934. Then the four horses and carts went to work building the RAF station at Stradishall. [SCAN 10131- THE KIDDY FAMILY AND THEIR HORSES, TAKEN AT HORSEHEATH 1934]

READERS WRITE

Eileen Waller who now lives in Impington has sent a photograph which captures an often forgotten part of wartime life. In those days her family lived in Burwell, where the Manor House became a convalescent hospital for seriously burned servicemen from the RAF Hospital at Ely, before going on to have radical plastic surgery. Eileen recalls:

“My mother, Eileen Adams and Aunty Daisy used to help Mrs O’Callaghan at the Manor House and became members of the WVS (Women’s Voluntary Services). They helped to run a ‘Busy Bees Club’, giving support to evacuee families in the village. The club was formed in April 1941, Mum was the secretary, and it initially served cups of tea each afternoon, except Wednesday at the Congregational Schoolroom. With the WVS they also spent a lot of time knitting socks and gloves for the servicemen. By January 1943 the Burwell group had made 18 sniper suits, six sweaters for the Merchant Navy, 44 pairs of Special Slippers and 24 Surgical Mittens. We have vague recollections of my uncle, from Sheerness in Kent, being able to obtain herring roes that he sent up to the manor house for the benefit of the patients”

Eileen can put many names to the faces including Margaret O’Callaghan in the centre of the front row; Eileen herself is the little girl with the bow two from the right with her mum behind her on the left. She’s less sure as to the identity of the two WVS ladies but thinks they may be Mrs Tharp from Chippenham and possibly a Mrs Wostendale. Can you put her mind at rest.

The photograph was taken by Albert Grainger at rear of the Congregational Chapel Hall in Burwell. [SCAN 104.52 OF BURWELL BUSY BEES CLUB]

Eileen would also like information on a Hurricane which crashed in Burwell during the war. She recalls: “I can remember quite clearly going to see the wreckage and the deep depression in the ground for a long time afterwards. I have always understood that my mother (Eileen Adams) was first at the scene with the local chimney sweep Stan Faircliffe. Mum was collecting with a house to house collection in the Mandeville area when she saw it come down and she ran over the fields with Mr Faircliffe. As we were very young she did not ever spoke to us about the crash.”

READERS REMEMBER

Mrs. R.J. Rowlinson 56 Metcalfe Road, Cambridge writes to say she was very interested in photograph of the Cambridge Police War Reserves (Memories 27th April). It shows he father, Mr. Jack Tooke, fifth from the left on the second row from the back. He joined the War Reserves for some time and eventually enlisted as a regular Police Officer. He was one of the first Officers to join the Vespa motor scooter patrols and was later transferred to Panda Cars. His main beat was in the Chesterton area. After his retirement he served for a few years in a civilian capacity in the C.I.D. at Parkside Station. He enjoyed his time in the Police very much and was a keen member of the Police Fishing Club. [SCAN 104.42 POLICE WAR RESERVISTS SHOWING JACK TOOKE 5TH FROM LEFT, SECOND ROW FROM BACK]

Ken Saunders e-mails from Newmarket following the photograph of the Ramsden Square wardens (Memories 11th May); he writes: “The man on the front row, third from the left, is my late father, Richard 'Dick' Saunders. I well remember Mr. Winkworth, in the white helmet next to my father, as he used to visit our house on occasions and cut my fathers' and my own hair. Cyril Ryder, known as 'King Pin', was employed for a time after the war at the Cambridge University. Engineering Laboratory, where I was working as an apprentice. Coincidentally, before and after the war, my father was employed by the Cambridge Express Printing Company in King Street, which was run by George and Leonard Colpus, who appear in the other photograph.” [SCAN 104.48 THE RAMSDEN SQUARE WARDENS]

Memories 25th May 2005, by Mike Petty

I am always grateful when readers send or lend me items for ‘Memories’.

Last week I received a collection of colour transparencies, which had been rescued from destruction, though sadly nobody seems quite sure who took them.

They include several taken in and around Chesterton during the mid 1960s. Amongst them are a view of Union Lane snapped on 25th September 1965 with a Mr Miller at the corner [SCAN 104.70] whilst another from May 1970 shows the Prince Albert public house [SCAN 104.71] and a third shows the former Baptist Chapel in Church Street in January 1968 [SCAN 104.72]

But one slide in particular caught my attention. It shows a large house of varying dates and additions on the corner of High Street and Chapel Street. When our mystery photographer snapped it on a snowy day in December 1967 it was home to a shoe repairer. [SCAN 104.74] But the scene rang a bell – it was a view I’d seen before.

So I turned to another batch of photographs taken by a professional photographer, Bryan Manning of Glenacre Close Cambridge, which he had given me a few weeks ago. And there is the same building from the same angle with what appears to be the same snow. But looking again there are differences – a telephone box has gone, a chimney stack has been removed and in Bryan’s picture it was occupied by Hallen’s Motor Cycles. [SCAN 104.77]

Several of Bryan’s other photographs show window displays at Laurie and McConnal, the much-loved store in Fitzroy Street [SCAN ‘FASHION’ – LADIES’ RAINWARE]. But another shows the sad sight of those windows closed and boarded-up in 1978 as beyond the builders prepare for the construction of the Grafton Centre. [SCAN 104.75]

And this is where a third co-incidence comes into play.

Beth Lane of Ely has also been busy sorting out her files and has lent me a number of invoices from the 1930s, including several bills from Laurie’s which include a picture of the shop in more thriving days. [SCAN 104.78]

Beth’s collection also contains a bill for a wardrobe (price £4) from Robert Sayle in July 1933. [SCAN 104.79]. There on the top is a sketch of the shopfront in St Andrew’s Street, then thriving but now derelict as once again the developers move in to create a new shopping area, this time the Grand Arcade.

Sayle’s have moved across to Burleigh Street while work progresses, occupying the site of the old Co-op and – almost inevitably – Bryan has a photograph of it taken in the 1970s. [SCAN 104.76].

Does any of this ring a bell – if so let me know.

If you have old transparencies or snaps of Cambridgeshire scenes I should be pleased to see them – you might have been standing at the same spot taking the same view as another News reader!

CONTRAST 104.74 AND 104.77 – BUILDING ON CORNER OF CHAPEL STREET
CONTRAST 104.78 AND 104.75 – LAURIE AND MCCONNAL’S
CONTRAST 104.79 – ROBERT SAYLES AND 104.76 – THE CO-OP SITE IN
BURLEIGH STREET WHERE SAYLES ARE NOW

Memories 1st June 2005, by Mike Petty

Mrs Penrose Green from Girton has contacted me following a mention of an undergraduate who was struck by lightning during the May races in 1892. She writes: "My father J.V. Hammond who was 'up' then & stroked the Selwyn 1st boat was a witness of the occasion. The victim was hit quite near by but apparently had no sign of damage except for a burn on his heels. I was glad it missed my father or I should not be here", she adds.

Not everybody has been quite so lucky, as stories in the back issues of Cambridge newspapers have reported over the years. In October 1897 A little girl, aged nine, was killed by lightning while sitting at tea in her home at **Great Paxton**, near St Neots. Her little brother was also knocked down and rendered unconscious. His body was marked with the complete outline of a tree, the branches being shown distinctly.

July 1900 a party of four men were carting hay from a field in Bannald's Drove, **Waterbeach** when a heavy storm accompanied by thunder and lightning compelled them to seek shelter. Three of them crept underneath the cart, the fourth remained on top holding his pitchfork which was struck by lightning. 'The fork acted as a conductor to his body, through which the electric fluid passed, finally losing itself in the earth where the three men were crouching' the paper reported. One man was killed and the others badly injured. [SCAN 979 – A HARVEST SCENE – HILDERSHAM 1891] One **Great Wilbraham** lady had a lucky escape during that storm: 'Mrs Morley was at her wit's end and sat upon the side of her bed and watched the vivid lightning with bated breath. Then came a flash that rendered her well-nigh unconscious & the room was enveloped in flames. In an adjoining room slept some children from an orphanage in London who were rescued with difficulty. The alarm was raised and soon there were upwards of 200 men, women & children on the spot and everything of any value was saved. Only the chimney and portions of the walls of the house remain to testify to the havoc wrought by the storm'. [SCAN 10139 – GREAT WILBRAHAM 1929– NB NOT THE HOUSE STRUCK]

In August 1901 the News described how: 'The usually quiet village of **Hemingford Abbots** was the scene of a very sad occurrence from the effects of a heavy thunderstorm. A farmer and his sons were engaged on the land and determined to return home to dinner. The farmer and one son took a shorter route across the fields, leaving a married son to bring two horses round by the roadway. Nothing being heard the farmer found one of the horses on its haunches and the other lying in the ditch. Near by was his son, also dead. It was found the lightning had struck the man on the side of his head. The other horse had to be destroyed.'

During August 1904 a spell of hot weather was followed by thunderstorms. At **Needlingworth** James Allgood's cottage was struck by lightning, bursting the wall open. The current passed through the bedroom and descended to the room underneath where Mr Allgood was sitting opposite the door. He was struck senseless. His wife was sitting near the window at the sewing machine wearing a steel thimble on her finger. She was struck on the right side and at first it was thought the shock had killed her. Both were put to bed and were progressing favourably, readers were informed.

But one man was either particularly lucky, or unlucky, depending on your point of view. For in August 1923 the News reported that Mr James Tuck of **Ely** had been struck by lightning twice. In 1914 he was putting hay into an elevator at Chettisham when there was a vivid flash of lightning and the fork he was holding was torn from his hands. The lightning scorched his face and left red marks of a zig-zag shape on his arm. Doctors were astonished that he recovered. Then in 1923 he was driving some pigs when suddenly there was a vivid flash of

lightning and he was stuck to the ground in a dazed condition. With the exception of a headache he was little worse for his experience.

Nor are such stories limited to the earlier years of the century; in April 1979 lightning caused thousands of pounds worth of damage at Pidley when it hit a tree. The blast shattered dozens of windows in nine cottages and blew in a cottage door. A young man working near a dike was thrown into the water by the shock and children coming home from school had a narrow escape as the flash struck only yards from the bus shelter where their coach stopped seconds later. The Mad Cat public house was among the buildings damaged when most of the front windows were smashed

It seems ironic when churches are damaged by such Acts of God. In June 1900 the steeple of **Lt Staughton** church was demolished by lightning. The ruins fell in the belfry, and caused great damage. February 1928 saw lightning struck the church at Takeley and set the old building on fire; flames which could be seen for miles around shot out from the steeple on which the cross had been struck, with the lead running down the sides of the roof. Crowds of villages watched from the churchyard. **Fen Drayton** church spire was struck by lightning in September 1929 with stones crashing down on to a grave in the churchyard. More debris fell in Church Street or was hurled into Mr E.J. Warboy's premises on the opposite side of the road. Thomas Johnson had a lucky escape; he had been giving a little girl a ride on his bicycle and had alighted at his father's house when the lightning struck; they managed to get inside as the stones rained down. [SCAN 86.539 – FEN DRAYTON CHURCH SPIRE 1890S]

One other incident that comes to mind was in 1958 when Reach church was severely damaged. [SCAN 10349 – REACH CHURCH 1938]. There must be more – and do you have memories of lightning strikes – write to Mike Petty at the News

Not all church are ancient stone-built affairs; Michael Kenelly from March would like details of the “tin-tabernacles” – corrugated-iron buildings that were erected at the turn of the century. He is researching the story of March High School for Girls which started life in one such temporary building off Station Road in 1905 before moving to County Road in 1908. Parts of the old structure were later shipped to Christchurch but nobody seems to have any details.

My researches show that something similar was erected by the London Evangelistic Mission in Stretham in January 1884. It was designed by a London architect. The interior walls were lined with wood & included a coffee room and lavatory. It was subsequently sold and re-erected on the corner of Brays Lane Ely for the use of the St John Ambulance Brigade. Another may have been Stetchworth gospel hall, an iron building with 400 sittings which was registered for Congregational use in 1885 and was demolished by 1961. Do you know of others? [SCAN SP40 – STRETHAM MISSION HALL c1920] [SCAN 86.1335 – STETCHWORTH GOSPEL HALL c1900]

CHECK FOR NEWS PICTURES OF
GREAT PAXTON
HEMINGFORD ABBOTS
NEEDINGWORTH – COTTAGE
LT STAUGHTON CHURCH
PIDLEY
GENERAL VIEW OF LIGHTNING

Memories 8th June 2005, by Mike Petty

I have quite a collection of Cd-Roms and DVDs – those circular disks like silver gramophone records. In fact last week I acquired three more of them; one came free with the Saturday newspaper, one came free with a book on Melbourn and the third I bought.

The one with the paper was an old movie, the one with the book included an even older movie and the CD-Rom I purchased was a list of people in my village 144 years ago

In 1861 the Census officials were making their ten-year survey of the country, walking down each street and recording the names and details of the people living in each house. They meticulously recorded how David Sennitt, a wheelwright aged 36 was living with his wife Martha and their two children, a nephew and niece; how the Rector had four servants and Matthew Jackson was living in a barn. They listed the butchers and bakers, pig jobbers and castrators, railway workers and paupers, ministers and schoolteachers compiling complete a picture as possible of the community at that time. All this might be expected but there is at least one mystery-man: William Bates aged 29 who was living with his wife and two children gives his occupation as ‘Retired Gold Miner’; his three-year-old son George had been born in Victoria, Australia – something else to be explored!

Given the amount of information on just this one parish it made my purchase worthwhile. Except that I didn’t just get this list for my village; I got it for Abington and Ashley, Melbourn and Milton, Pampisford and Parson Drove, Sawston and Shelford, Tadlow and Teversham, Waterbeach and Willingham – in fact everywhere in the old counties of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely. Except for Ely and Tydd St Giles – somebody had got there first and run off with the records!

But all the rest have now been carefully transcribed and digitised by members of the Cambridgeshire Family History Society who have already completed the censuses for 1841 and 1851. They are each available for £30 plus 80p postage; contact Carol Noble at 22 St Margarets Road, Girton CB3 0LT or e-mail carol.noble@ntlworld.com.

The Melbourn DVD doesn’t have such lists of names and addresses. Instead it opens up with an old cine projector showing a grainy film of the village in the 1930s in which people act-up in front of the camera, winking and tipping over their barrow-loads of furniture until reprimanded by the bobby. But a click on the mouse replaces the moving images with a series of old photographs of the village, revealing a place at once familiar and strange – and there is more. For the disk also includes a recording of local residents chatting about times gone by – the old nicknames, street lights, entertainment, shops and who sold paraffin.

All this is fine for people with computers and time to sit and click. But you can’t look at it in the bath or flick through it like you can with a book. But there is a book as well – a massive 260-pages on farming, industry, housing, water supply, loos, crime, wars and riots. The text has been researched and written by a dedicated team of Melbourn local historians who have scoured libraries, museums and archives as well as investigating the history literally beneath their feet – the archaeological record.

But for me one of the most compelling sections are those reminiscences of village folk, whose experiences could be echoed in villages elsewhere, like mine.

Peggy Abrey recalls: “My grandfather, Harry Robinson, owned the tailor’s shop. He had three sons who worked with him, making and repairing garments for all the villages in the area. The cloth was ordered from London and came by train to Meldreth station. The tailors sat cross-legged on a large table and stitched the fabric by hand. The irons for pressing were heated on a stove in the corner of the room. Easter was the busiest time as everyone had new clothes then. It was a great event when a boy had his first pair of long trousers”

Norah Cane remembers: "At school I learned cookery and needlework while the boys did woodwork. We didn't make whole garments as cloth was too expensive. Mother had a sewing machine and was able to make clothes for us, often from cut-down garments. We belonged to a clothing club and were able to have some clothes from there"

Violet Harper: "My mother used to buy 'Beehive' wool to knit our socks from Miss Pryor who lived at Crossways. In the room to the right of the front door she had a shop where she sold books, stationery, wool and haberdashery and thimbles. The fish shop was owned by 'Fessor Hinkins, he was also the chimney sweep and sold ice cream and it was not unusual for him to be seen using the same barrow for his brushes and soot as he did for the fish he collected from the railway station"

Bob Wedd remembers: "We were taken to school at Melbourn in an old Ford van driven by Len Smith. He kept pigs in an orchard and, as I was one of the first out of school, I would go along to help clean out the van from carrying the pigs and put the side benches back in. If you looked closely at the van you could faintly see 'Salvation Army' on the side."

With the support of The Local Heritage Initiative this wonderful record is being supplied free of charge to every household in the village. Any extra copies are available for sale for £8 from the Melbourn Village History Group. Contact Colin Limming on 01763 260072 or e-mail:colin.limming@ukonline.co.uk. But be warned: this is not a light-weight item and will never fit through your letterbox even if you can afford the postage.

As for that DVD of the old movie – I'll have no time to watch that now!

SCANS :

COMPOSITE PHOTO SHOWING THE COVER OF THE MELBOURN BOOK
TOGETHER WITH THE MELBOURN MEMORIES DVD AND THE 1861 CENSUS
PRODUCED BY THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

WHO'S BEEN LIVING IN YOUR HOUSE – THE CENSUS LISTS THOSE RESIDENT IN
EACH HOUSE IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE IN APRIL 1861 - THE MUNCEY FAMILY AT
MELBOURN C1900

CARTS – MELBOURN HAD A VARIETY OF TRADESMEN

CENSUS – THE CENSUS LISTS PEOPLE AND THEIR OCCUPATIONS – A PAGE
FROM THE 1901 CENSUS OF MELBOURN REPRODUCED IN THE NEW BOOK

Memories14th June 2005 by Mike Petty

Andrew Westwood-Bate from Balsham has occasion to remember the date of the 16th June. For on that day in 1965 – 40 years ago – he was at his desk at Abington School when the bell went for lunch. As he trooped to the dining room he heard a terrific bang

An articulated lorry had failed to negotiate the bend into the village, ploughed through the wire fence & landed on its side in the front playground. It rested against the wall of the

classroom a brick away from where Andrew had been sitting minutes earlier. "God was certainly with us that day, a few inches & a few minutes either side & it could have been a completely different story", he recalls. The lesson was learnt & within a few years the Abington bypass was built & huge steel barriers put up in front of the school.

[SCAN OF LORRY OVERTURNED IN PLAYGROUND – THIS HAPPENED ON 16TH JUNE 1965 – CAN WE TRACK DOWN ANY NEGATIVES TAKEN BY THE NEWS AT THE TIME]

But was this what drove the Cutters away? Jennifer Hirsh says there were dozens of them in the Abington parish records over the centuries starting in 1748 when Ishmael Cutter married Ann Andrews. In the second half of the 19th century Cutter was almost the commonest surname in the village. Now they've all gone. But Abington History Group is keen to get them back – at least for a day. They would like to invite any members of the family or their descendants to a Cutter Family Day in the Abington Village Institute on the afternoon of Sunday 26th June. So put a note in your diary and prepare for a grand reunion. They would love to meet you. For further details phone Jennifer on 01223 893352

[CHOOSE ABINGTON VILLAGE PIC FROM NEWS FILES]

And do you know anything about the Mansfield family?

Bridget Burrows is researching the story of Mansfield Almshouses at 21 Church Street Chesterton. She has delved into material in the Cambridgeshire Collection, County Record Office and at the Cambridge United Charities to discover that the four houses were founded in October 1891 and were for "women over 60 on modest incomes" who lived rent-free. But little else is known about their history before the 1950s.

The adjoining three houses, numbers 15-17, were also owned by Stephen Mansfield and their rents represented the sole income of the Charity which had to be used for the maintenance and repair of the almshouses. They were sold in 1995 to the English Churches Group but the almshouses are still owned by the Charity and for the last couple of years been managed by King Street Housing Association. In 1987 they were completely renovated with two more houses being built to the rear.

But who was Stephen Mansfield? Bridget has found little clues except that in 1937 the Trustees included Mr. A C Mansfield and Mr W S Mansfield who may have been his sons or grandsons. She writes: "Any help you can give would be very much appreciated, as I would love to find out more, and feel saddened that this individual who is responsible for these beautiful almshouses seems to have disappeared from history."

My own researches show that in 1881 a Stephen Mansfield, a draper and oil merchant who had been born in Chesterton was living in Harvey Road Cambridge. He had a son Alfred C. Mansfield who followed him into the drapery business. By 1888 Stephen was living in a large house called 'Gilmerton' at the junction of Long Road and Trumpington High Street.

As for the W.S Mansfield that Bridget mentions, this might be the man who entertained Frank Dobie to dinner on Christmas Day 1943. Dobie was the first Cambridge University Professor of American History during the Second World War. He published his memoirs entitled 'A Texan in England' in which he recalls "My host for Christmas dinner is the manager of a seven-hundred-acre farm owned by Cambridge University. A practical scientist, he is one of the best-known agriculturists in England, W. S. Mansfield. We had a turkey".

But this is just speculation; if you can add more – or have your own memories of living in the Mansfield Almshouses then please contact Bridget Burrows at 21 Church St, Chesterton [01223 562440] or email her at cambridget@ntlworld.com

[SCAN OF PHOTO OF MANSFIELD'S ALMSHOUSE FROM THE CHESTERTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY'S BOOK ON CHESTERTON – DO WE HAVE BETTER ONE IN THE NEWS LIBRARY]
[CHECK NEWS LIBRARY FOR PICTURE OF CHURCH STREET]

Sue Dooley from Shefford also seeks help. She writes:

“My mother was born in 1919 in one of a row of cottages that backed onto the Cement Works along Coldham's Lane, Cambridge. They have now been pulled down. Past the Rosemary Branch and probably slightly further down Coldham's Lane than the abattoir was a property called West House where my grandfather Arthur Thompson ran a market gardening business in about 1914. He rented the property from a Mrs Warboys for the grand sum of thirteen shillings and sixpence.

Then in 1922 my grandparents started a dairy at 50 Brookfields and every year gave their customers a calendar and a little pot of cream. I still have a small screw-topped jar with their name, Arthur and Gladys Thompson, on it”

Sue has sent me copies of some pictures of the dairy in Brookfields [SCAN 104.87] and her mother, Muriel Thompson on the family's pony and trap en route to Cambridge station to collect milk. [SCAN 104.88]

Does anybody remember them, she wonders and are there any pictures she can add to the family archive? If so contact Sue Dooley at Brookfields House, 33 Ashdown Road, Shefford, Beds SG17 5AR

Memories 23rd June 2005, by Mike Petty

Last week the News reported South Cambridgeshire District Council's decision to allocate some of its resources to repairing the dilapidated church at East Hatley. Officers fear that villagers walking past the crumbling church might be struck by falling masonry. But some councillors feel that the church which was rebuilt in 1874 and closed in 1959, has little architectural merit and should be allowed to fall down. [SCAN 10230 HATLEY CHURCH c1910 – ALSO ARTICLE FROM CEN LAST THURSDAY]

Their dilemma has been echoed in other parishes throughout the years.

In 1947 the rector of St John's church Duxford petitioned for his church to be demolished. He claimed it was in a very advanced state of decay and there was a possibility of serious accidents happening. It had been broken into, defiled and misused in a great many and scandalous ways and was in a state of considerable dilapidation. The walls were opening up and breaking away from the roof and the tiles were coming off. The rain had already destroyed a great deal of the medieval contents and irreparable damage had been done to 'really good stuff'. Efforts had been made to persuade the R.A.F. to take it over as a chapel in memory of the American pilots who fell in the Battle of Britain, but that scheme ended in failure. The church was closed but repaired by the Churches Conservation Trust and still stands. [SCAN 10004 ST JOHN'S CHURCH DUXFORD 1947]

But the most unfortunate parish as far as churches are concerned must surely be Wendy. The original medieval church having got into a most ruinous condition was in 1737 replaced by a small plain building without a chancel. But the foundations were poor and it served for little

more than a century. By 1863 the gable was a long way out of perpendicular and the congregation could look out into the churchyard through the huge cracks in the walls. In its turn it gave place to a new church in the Early English style built by public subscription. But history repeated itself again, the foundations were inadequate and the church was pulled down in 1950. [SCAN 10399 – WENDY CHURCH c.1900]

There is an unexpected Cambridge connection. Although Wendy church was only built in 1867 it contained a much older fine double hammer beam roof brought there from the old church of All Saints, Cambridge which had been demolished two years earlier. In 1950 it acquired by Mr N.A. Huddleston who wrote to the News: “Sir - I have just bought the main timbers of the fine carved oak roof of Wendy church. They are extremely massive and are said to date from the 16th century. They were offered to me as firewood for £6 ”. But was this the end of the story or are those beams now gracing some other structure? [SCAN 10143 – THE ROOF OF WENDY CHURCH CAME FROM THE OLD ALL SAINTS’ CHURCH IN TRINITY STREET CAMBRIDGE; SCAN 8587 – ALL SAINTS CHURCH, CAMBRIDGE BEFORE 1865]

Do you have memories or snaps of churches that have now disappeared – write to Mike Petty at the News

Wicken has retained its church but like all villages it has lost the people who once worshipped there. There were characters like the Reverend Thomas Thomas and the curate John John, Bob Fal-Lal, the village crier who would also fetch medicines from Soham and take the opportunity for a little poaching, or Billy Morris the postman-cum-cobbler who took letters to Upware picking up boots en route which he repaired in a hut before returning them in the afternoon. There was Maria Knowles who wrote a village history and published poetry who lived next to her brother, a ginger-beer maker, and Emma Aspland.

Emma was born in 1871, a well-spoken and well-educated lady who had a passion for photography. Through her camera lens she captured the life and times of Wicken in a remarkable series of pictures, many of which have survived. They provided an inspiration for Anthony Day the fenland artist, who was born in the village and has devoted his life to borrowing and copying snapshots of Wicken which he has published in a series of books, the latest of which has just been issued.

But despite a lifetime of collecting, Tony knows there are yet more pictures to be tracked down from people who once lived in Wicken but have now moved away.

Recently he even found one of himself that was taken in July 1929. It shows him with a butterfly net standing outside the family home, Victoria Cottage which had replaced a low wooden home where his grandparents had lived. He can even remember the fragrance of the climbing rose that his father planted. [SCAN WICKEN – A YOUNG TONY DAY WITH HIS BUTTERFLY NET OUTSIDE VICTORIA COTTAGE WICKEN 1929]

Whilst pictures may survive, people do not and it is Tony’s memories of the folk who lived and worked in the village that makes his book such a valuable record of a community that has changed out of all recognition – even though the church and houses may look the same. If you can add to his collection of pictures or memories or would like a copy of the new book then contact Tony Day at 12 Pond Green, Wicken.

‘Wicken, a fen village’ by Anthony Day is published by John Nickalls at £7.99 (£9 including postage) (ISBN 1-904136-22-2)

Memories 29th June 2005, by Mike Petty

It was in 1897 that the Hon C.S.Rolls, when an undergraduate, brought the first motor car to Cambridge, a four-seater single cylinder Peugeot. But the car was not reliable and he frequently got into trouble through getting back to his college late at night after a breakdown. He confessed that he had squared numerous Dons by taken them out in the car though many of these runs ended in pushing the car home with the assistance of his venerable passengers.

The prospect of breaking down by the roadside is not a pleasant one, though today there are the ‘men in a van’ who can be summoned to assist. Of these the Automobile Association is the oldest and is now celebrating its centenary

In the 1920s they offered the motorist a ‘scout’ based in a box by the roadside who would assist in case of breakdown. One box stood at the junction of Shelford and Hauxton Road in Trumpington and was manned by Frank Pipe, amongst others. He rode an ordinary pedal cycle on his rounds. Living in Pampisford he would cycle to Sawston and on to Trumpington where he would stand outside the AA box and salute members as they passed. Then in 1929 the AA opened a number of fuel stations, including one at Stumps Cross, where fuel & water were available at commercial prices. [SCAN OF AA BOX AT TRUMPINGTON C1929 – FIND A MODERN PIC OF AA MAN FROM NEWS FILES]

By 1954 the Automobile Association had nearly 30,000 members in the area & installed a new radio transmitting station giving continuous communication with a Land Rover and six radio-controlled motor-cycle combinations who provided prompt assistance whenever a breakdown occurred on the road. [SCAN OF AA SIGNS OUTSIDE THE CAMBRIDGE AUTOMOBILE ENGINEERING GARAGE ON CORNER OF SIDNEY STREET AND HOBSON STREET, 1920S]

But some thought they should have another role: in January 1929 Cambridgeshire councillors argued that too much time was taken up by the police in traffic management, which was not a primary police duty. It could be controlled by the RAC and AA patrols. They were better than the police because they had motors. Other felt that it would be difficult to make arrangements with the associations and would probably mean the motor scouts becoming special constables.

But instead of controlling motorists the scouts would warn members of police speed traps.

Speeding has been around as long as there have been motor cars. Even Rolls dashed down to London ignoring the rule about having a man walking in front with a red flag. By 1905 the complaints were pouring in to the News, one correspondent wrote on 14th July:

“Sir – the motor-car has come to stay, and some day everyone will wonder how people could ever have done without it. The dust nuisance is very serious, but this will soon come off the road, the noise is objectionable and so is the smell but they are not unbearable. But the terror is the sight of an approaching car coming at the rate of 30 or 40 miles an hour. Recently an increasing number of cars have been taking the road between Cambridge and St Neots. Near the village of Croxton there are two cross roads and several cottages and the village school stand on the high road. Past these the motors dash by at such a furious rate that the numbers at the back cannot be read. There would certainly be much rejoicing if the police ‘happened’ on one of these offending cars as it was racing past the school”

But the police were indeed cracking down on motorists; they instituted speed checks, placing two officers (sometimes in plain clothes) beside the road, each with their stop-watches so they could check the time that elapsed as the cars passed them. Case after case came to court and in August 1905 they caught the famous Cash Chemist, Jesse Boot – or at least his chauffeur.

But this was not the usual time check over a short distance – the speed camera of its day. No this was something different – something that 100 years later is being reconsidered: they were calculating average speed over a long distance.

Police had set up a check on the A10 between Buntingford and Ware. One officer stood by the 13th milestone, another by the 7th, each clicked their watch as the car passed them. When they later compared the readings they calculated that the intervening six miles had been covered in 14 minutes, giving a speed of 25 and five-sevenths miles an hour. [SCAN OF POLICE CHECKING THEIR WATCHES – FROM CAMBRIDGE GRAPHIC 19 MAY 1900]

When it came to court the defence solicitor raised objections which will doubtless be aired again: the police could not prove that the chauffeur had been driving all the way between the two milestones. But in this case the only other people in the car were Jesse Boot who was crippled with rheumatic gout and his wife, one of the most nervous ladies that ever got into a motor car.

Boot was supported by the Nottingham Automobile Club who argued that it was unfair to time a driver over such a long distance. If he had been timed over 440 yards he could when stopped point to his speedometer and that record could be given in evidence. (Can any reader explain this to me – did the early speedometers include such a ‘tachograph’ facility). They also pointed out that the driver was not charged at the time and it was not until three weeks afterwards that he got the notice. The case was found to have been proved, though as the speed limit of 20 mph had not been grossly exceeded the fine was reduced to only £2.

Today controversy surrounds the use of roadside cameras that record speed more accurately than any stopwatch. Yet the idea of such cameras are not new – in July 1930 the News published a cartoon devoted to the controversial issue of police photography. [SCAN OF POLICE CAMERAS CARTOON FROM CDN 31 JULY 1930]

Today the AA offers a wide range of services. But it is not now the only motoring organisation and nor, as far as I know, does it match what the R.A.C. advertised over 75 years ago.

On 1st November 1929 the News reported: “The R.A.C. has decided to extend the benefits of its ‘Get You Home’ service to members of the Club whilst flying. It has hitherto provided a relief car free of charge for their members who have broken down on the road but a considerable number are now either owners of light aeroplanes or are members of flying clubs. Should any of them whilst flying be compelled to make a forced landing they will be able to send for an R.A.C. relief car and be conveyed to the nearest railway station. If the plane is of the folding wing type that can be towed on a public road the R.A.C. is prepared to pay for its conveyance to any town within the limits of the scheme.”

[MAY I SUGGEST A MODERN PICTURE OF POLICE OPERATING A SPEED TRAP]

Memories 6th July 2005 by Mike Petty

It must be particularly confusing for asylum seekers who find themselves at the Oakington Detention Centre whilst officials debate their future. For the Oakington camp is not in Oakington, it's in Longstanton.

And is it Longstanton or Long Stanton? And is it one village or two? For as you approach from Cambridge the church tower and spire of All Saints' dominate the community as it has for centuries. But then a little further down the road there is another church, this one low and thatched with a Holy Well - St Michael's.

There were originally a group of separate settlements along the road from Oakington to Willingham. Where a fen drove crossed the main road a cluster of houses grew up and a thatched church, St Michael's was built. Later came more houses and in about 1217 another church, All Saint's, was built further along. Soon the building had spread all the way between the two and on beyond.

Various large manor houses were built each with its home farm; one was held for a while by a French lady, Eleanor of Aquitaine the wife of King Henry II. But the largest belonged to the Hattons, a very important family: one backed Sir Francis Drake who renamed his ship the Golden Hind after the family's crest. They dominated village life and made many changes including the construction of a new road straight to their Manor House – the one now used by traffic from the A14. But then they sold up and moved away; their ancient manor house was pulled down in the 1850s, their estate broken up in 1874.

Longstanton settled into a life away from public gaze. By the 1930s it was a small quiet agricultural village with its own railway station on the Cambridge to St Ives line. Things were peaceful. But then came war and with war came an airfield built on Longstanton fields, but named Oakington. Its construction cut the road which had been the reason for the village's formation in the first place. Other battles would follow to try and get it reopened.

The noise of the bombers downed the birdsong, but it was the hundreds of new RAF personnel that transformed the village community as scores of houses were built to accommodate them. Their children packed the village school and by 1950 the situation had become desperate. The sanitary arrangements had collapsed, school meals were prepared in the cloakroom which had a water tap but no drainage and the playground consisted of 65 square yards of unsurfaced ground rendered unusable by the discharge of rainwater gutters into it. In 1954 a new school was opened by Lord Tedder, Marshall of the R.A.F. [THERE IS A BLACK AND WHITE PICTURE IN THE NEWS LIBRARY FILES SHOWING SCHOOLCHILDREN WITH A MODEL OF THE VILLAGE]

In the 1970s the RAF gave way to the Army and fears were expressed that Longstanton would become a 'garrison town' as more housing was needed. Some councillors thought it should be built in Oakington, which had been pressing for expansion. Now they are facing the prospect of hundreds of new residents this time in a new settlement of Northstowe. But already other housing estates are growing up in what were once arable fields and soon there will be no farms left.

The churches will remain although St Michael's was declared redundant in November 1973 & is cared for by the Redundant Churches Fund. Now All Saints' is in need of repair too. But if the buildings survive the memories of its congregations will not. Now a group of Longstanton residents are anxious to collect memories while there are still people around who remember what village life used to be like

But they may have left it too late. When the two parishes were combined in 1953 nobody knew where one boundary ended and the other began. There was one school, one post office, one police station, one village institute and one recreation ground and should be one parish, they agreed. But some felt the village name should be changed: the united community should be called "Stanton Green". But that would surely have caused confusion!

If you have memories or photographs of Longstanton then please ring Hilary Stroude on 01954 782560 (email neil@stroude.fsnet.co.uk) or contact Mike Petty at the News

I LEFT A CD-ROM OF LONGSTANTON PICTURES ON CHRIS' DESK ON SUNDAY EVENING.

THEY SHOW: 10356 AN ELDERLY COUPLE OUTSIDE COTTAGES IN 1929
POST OFFICE C1900

COTTAGES NEAR ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, C1904

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH c1910

READERS WRITE

Two readers have responded to my Memories article of 15th June.

Ron Smith from Gt Abington tells me he remembers the day when a lorry overturned into the school playground and has lent a cutting from the News of June 1965 depicting the aftermath of the accident. [SCAN OF CUTTING] while Margaret Heffer tells me that the Alfred Charles Mansfield mentioned by Bridget Burrows was her grandfather. She has supplied a detailed family history of Stephen Mansfield, but adds: "I had no idea of the existence of the almshouses he built, which I find very interesting"

If you are researching any aspects of Cambridgeshire history please contact me – there are thousands of *News* readers who are happy to assist!

READERS ASK

Did you act with the Pye Amateur Dramatic Society? They have all the old photographs and reviews and are now planning a reunion later this month. Please contact David Tipple on Cambridge 880763 for more details.

Memories 13th July 2005, by Mike Petty

At Christmas December 1977 parishioners at Hildersham were shocked when two 600-year-old wooden effigies were stolen from their church. The eight-foot long figures of a former lord and lady of the manor were the church's most treasured possessions and two of only 90 such monuments in the whole of the country. They were carved out of oak and carried in front of the funeral processions of the Busteler family who were lords of the manor in the early 14th century. "They were the most treasured of all the beautiful things we have in the church and we all feel absolutely shattered", said a parishioner.

The monuments are still missing but now the Society of Antiquaries of London has made a discovery that brings them back into the spotlight. For their Librarian, Bernard Nurse, has discovered a detailed drawing of the figures made in 1802. There is another of a brass of Henry Parys, which was also stolen from Hildersham and a macabre skeleton once nailed to the door of the chancel. If you spot them when browsing through antiques shops then please let the parish know. [SCAN OF THE MISSING FIGURES AND THE SKELETON WHICH ADORNED THE CHURCH DOOR, BOTH DRAWINGS MADE 1802]

They came to light while Bernard was cataloguing a volume of drawings of Cambridgeshire churches that were purchased by the Society at a sale of the collection of Lt Col. J.C.W. Francis of Quy Hall in November 2001. The volume also includes drawings, some in colour, of Isleham, Linton, Sawston and Great Shelford churches.

But Bernard also seeks your help; his volume is the third in a series of four all produced by Thomas Fisher. Does anybody know what happened to the others? If you can assist, or would like further information then please write to Bernard Nurse, Society of Antiquaries of London, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BE or email bnurse@sal.org.uk

Those seeking mementoes of ancient church artefacts can do no better than to visit Isleham where they can obtain, quite legitimately, an angel from the roof or a green man— or at least a replica. During restoration work on the church roof three such grotesque carvings were discovered, one of which is a true "Green Man". Ian Powys arranged for a mould to be taken and is selling copies of both in aid of church funds; the angel is £50 and the green man £75 – though he comes with a signed copy of Mike Harding's book on the subject. Order your copy from Ian on 01638 780519 or powys169@enterprise.net [SCAN OF THE ISLEHAM GREEN MAN]

But Isleham church too was once a crime scene. As an article from the News of August 1955 reports how workmen discovered that the solid oak beams in the roof were riddled with lead shot probably fired by Roudheads in an attempt to destroy the magnificent carved angels. Other carved figures were defaced but the angels were too high to reach. A *News* reporter clambered up scaffolding to inspect the intricate carvings and this is an ascent Ian has repeated more recently, this time taking his digital camera to record the angelic faces in detail. He has produced a CD-Rom of his photographs one of which is now attached to the back of one of the angels where it will doubtless be discovered in years to come.

READERS WRITE

Last week's horrific incidents in London emphasise the danger of travel, but Janet Webb from Cambridge tells me that her father went there on his own when a lad of 12.

She writes: "My father, Norman Bond was 90 in May and often reminisces about his past life. His father who worked for the railway built little three-valve radio sets as a hobby. Sometimes he needed parts from London and put Norman on a train at Cambridge Station – this would be about 1927. Once he arrived in London he walked to a little electrical shop in Petty Coat Lane and passed a list of items required to the shopkeeper. As it would be nearing mid-day he would take lunch in a café, then spend an hour or two in the cinema before returning to the shop. The shopkeeper would have all the items ready in a box and would escort him back to the Liverpool Street and the train to Cambridge where his father would be waiting for him. Norman got a job in the restaurant at Cambridge station selling cups of tea for 3d and helping the chef make apple charlotte, later travelling on the train to Ely to help in the station restaurant there until at the grand old age of 14 he started as an apprentice electrician" [SCAN 13380 OF CAMBRIDGE STATION 1930S]

Talking of London, Margaret Culpin from Brinkley has contacted me following an item she heard on the news recently saying how you now have to pay 50p to have a pee in the capital. "When my mother took my sister and me to the underground loos in Cambridge market place in the 1930's and 40's we had to put an old penny in the door. There would be an old lady down there in a white overall and the brass rails would gleam", she recalls [SCAN 6375 – AERIAL VIEW OF MARKET HILL IN 1964 SHOWING ENTRANCE TO UNDERGROUND TOILETS]

Miss Margaret Wilsher from Frinton-on-Sea is preparing for a talk she's giving to Great Bentley History Society on East Anglian windmills. She has a nail from Bourn Mill and several photos including Balsham where her father ran Wilshers Garage. She is seeking others

including the one at Madingley. The original Madingley windmill was last tenanted by Mr Charles French who was in bed one July night in 1909 when he heard the mill creaking ominously and then it collapsed. The great oak timbers were so shattered as to make restoration impossible. But in 1935 came the news that a new mill would be erected on the site: A post mill at Ellington near Huntingdon was dismantled and carried to Madingley. It was not the first move the mill had made. It had already been transported across several fields to a spot where its sails might better catch the wind. The work was entrusted to Mr C.J. Ison of Histon who in July 1955 was commissioned to move a derelict fen drainage mill at Adventures' Fen Wicken to a more prominent position near the entrance to the National Trust fen. It is featured in a new book by Dr Richard Hills who devotes a chapter to similar mills in Norfolk. But as he points out mills were used for much more than pumping water or grinding corn. There were saw mills, mustard mills, papermaking mills and oil mills like the one that used to stand at Ramsey Mereside. "Windmills: a pictorial history of their technology" is published by Landmark at £21.99 ISBN 1 84306 189 9. [SCAN 7841 - MADINGLEY MILL 1904]

Memories 20th July 2005, by Mike Petty

The News crime reporters have chronicled many interesting cases over the years but few can have compared to the mystery of the missing silk pyjamas that caught the attention of readers in July 1930

It all revolved around events at the University Arms on the evening of 20th February

Veronica King a fashionably attired stockbroker's wife had booked into the hotel the day before and was shown to her room by the porter. The doors were fitted with a slam lock and could only be opened from the outside by a key – but she was not given one. The chambermaid had a pass key and the manager had the master

That evening she'd dined with her brother in Jesus Lane, gone back to her room, put on a pair of pink satin pyjamas and gone to sleep. In the morning she threw her pyjamas on the floor and left her door open when she went out to Cottenham races. The door was still open when she returned to her room at 8.15pm to dress for dinner. During that evening the United Hunts Ball was held at the hotel and shortly after supper she returned to the room again to powder her nose, finding the door still open

Finally at 2.30 in the morning she left the dance and retired to bed. She found the bed had been turned down but there were no pyjamas. Nor were her slippers anywhere to be seen. By the time she missed them she was undressed and instead of standing about and incurring a doctor's bill she had adopted the sensible course of going to bed. Nor did she tell the chambermaid the next morning but complained just after lunch when she learned that others had also lost their nightwear, one lady missing a nightgown and a vest.

Two people claimed they had seen a man with a whole lot of pyjamas at the beginning of the dance, about 10 o'clock. She admitted there had been a certain amount of hilarity that evening but denied there had been any 'ragging' and no running in and out of bedrooms and throwing pillows about.

So she decided to seek compensation for the loss of the pyjamas; they were of pink satin purchased in December 1928 for £7 17s 6d as part of her trousseau and had scarcely been worn. As Lord Clive, her counsel observed: "There are pyjamas which are things of beauty to be looked at on a Sunday afternoon but which it is almost sacrilege to wear in the ordinary way"

The hotel manager, Alfred Bush Harris, said he had been there for six years and this was the first complaint of anything being lost. It was a safe hotel and the likelihood of anybody getting in to steal a pair of pyjamas wasn't very great. He had not been told of the loss or he would have checked the 'Found Book' and made enquiries.

Mabel Bottle, the housekeeper, said it was her custom to go round and shut any door left open; she had made her rounds four times that night and seen no open doors. People going in and out would have needed keys.

Edith Runham, who worked in the office admitted that a lady had asked if a pink georgette 'nightie' had been found; but the lady did not know the number of her room and had given her name as Mrs Guthrie. There was no mention of any satin pyjamas or anything else.

The judge observed that that if you travel with pyjamas of such value you were prepared to go to law about them you should take an interest in their whereabouts in the daytime. If she had attached any real value to them she would have raised a hue and cry. To which Lord Clive replied that: you don't want pyjamas except for a specific purpose or notice until the time for their use was approaching.

The defence solicitor claimed she had failed to prove that the articles were lost or that there was any negligence by the hotel. Whoever heard of a person stealing pyjamas? Anyway she had not shut her door and had contributed to any loss. The judge agreed and thought the real value of the pyjamas was only two guineas and the slippers £1.

But what really happened on the night of the Hunt Ball will probably remain a mystery in the annals of Cambridge crime. [SCAN 39117 – ENTRANCE TO UNIVERSITY ARMS HOTEL c1910 – THERE ARE OTHER PICTURES IN NEWS PHOTO FILES; SCAN 9070 – CAMBRIDGE BY MOONLIGHT – WHAT DID HAPPEN TO THE SILK PYJAMAS?]

The University Arms has changed over the years as photos from Ken Clements show; they were taken during the rebuilding of the hotel in 1962 [SCAN 105.06 OF REBUILDING OF UNIVERSITY ARMS HOTEL IN 1962]

READERS WRITE

This week the emails seem to all be concentrating on the 1940s:

Keith Ward has contacted me from Canada to say that plans are now well advanced for a reunion of old classmates of the Cambridge Central School for Boys. With the help of David Mayes from Wainfleet in Lincolnshire he has tracked down nearly 50 of the lads who enrolled on 12th September 1945. They will be visiting the school prior to taking lunch at Wetherspoons in Regent Street on 18th October. If you are one of the missing lads or can help tracking them down then please contact David Mayes on 01754 880825, or email david@mayes4.freeserve.co.uk

Colonel Paul Webber, a retired doctor from the U.S. Army has emailed from Colorado Springs; he is researching the World War II photo collection of Clarence E. (Hank) Schurwan Jr. Hank served as a photographer with the 486th Bomb Group, 8th U.S. Army Air Force, at Sudbury, Suffolk, from 3 April 1944 to 26 August 1945. He took many pictures during his tour of duty including one of the fountain in the middle of Cambridge Market Hill. But there is a mystery view that nobody can identify – does it mean anything to you. The signs say 'The nation needs your books' and 'Save Water' If so contact Paul at pwebber@pcisys.net or drop me a line and I'll pass it on. [SCAN OF MYSTERY STREET]

Midge Gillies is researching the threat of invasion of Britain in 1940 and the atmosphere of fear and rumour leading up to 7th September when the codeword Cromwell was issued - which many people thought meant the Nazis were on their way. He is using diaries, letters and interviews but has heard there plans to flood the fens and the isle of Ely to help hold back the invaders. Do you have any information or clues. If so email midgegillies@btopenworld.com and please let me know.

Dalby Hodson has another memento of that time in the form of a picture of the Morley Memorial School football team 1949-50; it includes twins Peter and John Hodgson together with Roy Whitmore and Malcolm Prime, but who are the others? [SCAN 105.20 MORLEY SCHOOL 1950]

Memories 27th July 2005, by Mike Petty

Miss Margaret Wilsher from Frinton-on-Sea is preparing for a talk she's giving to Great Bentley History Society on East Anglian windmills. She has a nail from Bourn Mill and several photos including the mill at Balsham where her father ran Wilshers Garage. She is seeking pictures of others including the one at Madingley.

But there was not one mill at Madingley; there were at least two. In 1880 Robert Farren sketched a timber mill looking down on the spires and towers of Cambridge. Then in July 1909 came disaster. The miller, Mr Charles French was in bed one night when he heard the mill creaking ominously. Then it collapsed. The great oak timbers were so shattered as to make restoration impossible and it remained a picturesque ruin to be photographed and painted by passers-by. [PHOTO WITH ROS]

Then in 1935 came the news that a new mill would be erected on the site. Following an extensive search for a replacement a post mill at Ellington near Huntingdon had been identified by Ambrose Harding, the Squire of Madingley. It was dismantled and carried to Madingley where it was reconstructed. It was not the first move the mill had made. It had already been transported across several fields to a spot where its sails might better catch the wind. [PHOTO WITH ROS]

The work of moving the mill was entrusted to Mr C.J. Ison of Histon who twenty years later was commissioned to move a derelict fen drainage mill at Adventures' Fen Wicken to a more prominent position near the entrance to the National Trust fen. It was thought to be the last of numerous small wind drainage engines that were erected throughout the fens in the 1700 and early 1800's. The wind turned sails that drove a scoopwheel pushing water up from the fenland drains into the higher rivers. [PHOTO OF THE WICKEN FEN MILL WITH ROS]

But there were problems – the wind needed to be strong enough and steady enough to keep the sails turning. If a sudden squall blew up then the miller needed to remove the canvas covering of the sails otherwise the whole machine might be blown off its base and 'walked' across the fen. As years passed and the land dried out so the fen shrank, meaning that the water had to be lifted ever higher. There came a time when one mill could not cope and a second had to be constructed nearby to lift the water into a reservoir from which it was pumped into the river.

The situation was recorded by fenland poet William Harrison

Those poor old mills had done their best
To have our drainage wants redressed.

Though often in the times of need
Found anything but 'friends indeed'.
When winds were low and floods were high
With outstretched pinions to the sky
They stood in utter helplessness
Exchanging signals of distress
Whilst murmurs, frequent and profound
Arose from those whose lands were drown'd

If we could not rely on wind something else had to be tried; the solution was steam, which in turn gave way to diesel – and now electricity. How long, I wonder, before somebody will come up with the idea of a windmill to generate the power to work the modern electric pumps that continue to keep the fens dry

It would come as no surprise to Dr Richard Hills, an expert on fenland pumping engines who has now produced a new book on the technology of windmills. Wicken drainage mill is there together with similar pumps in Norfolk, but as Dr Hills points out mills were used for much more than pumping water or grinding corn. There were saw mills, mustard mills, papermaking mills and oil mills like the one that used to stand at Ramsey Mereside. "Windmills: a pictorial history of their technology" is published by Landmark at £21.99 ISBN 1 84306 189 9.

Joan Pearman of Linton is not seeking pictures but sharing them. She has been clearing out some old papers and has come across a page from 'The Sphere' magazine of 2nd February 1957. One side reports on terrorist raids by Yemeni tribesmen on both sides of the frontier between Aden and the Yemen and how Venom jet fighters of the RAF had flown eight sorties in one day to protect the traffic passing along the road. But it is the other side that she had marked. It is devoted to protecting ancient buildings and features the group of cottages on the corner of Northampton and Magdalene Streets, Cambridge. They were acquired by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1937 when they were in exceedingly bad condition. Work on them was delayed because of the war but they had now been restored as 'before and after' photographs show. [SCAN OF BUILDINGS ON CORNER OF NORTHAMPTON STREET FROM 'THE SPHERE']

HOLD OVER IF YOU'RE SHORT OF SPACE

Old buildings need constant care and those that now survive are testimony to the work of skilled craftsmen over the years. But disaster can strike suddenly as two pictures taken of a cottage in The Grip at Linton testify. The front section of the cottage collapsed in about 1913 – but does anybody know when? [SCAN OF COTTAGE AT 'THE GRIP' WICKEN BEFORE AND AFTER COLLAPSE]

Memories 3rd August 2005, by Mike Petty

Pictures of the tornado that hit Peterborough and Birmingham last week will have jogged memories for residents in various parts of the region

In January 1978 Newmarket was devastated with more than 100 homes damaged, cars overturned and the station signal box wrecked, when a tornado with winds equal to a hurricane force ten cut a two-mile swathe through the town. Firemen, then in the middle of a strike, turned out to deal with the emergency, police reinforcements were drafted in from Bury St Edmunds, and the News sent a team of reporters to the disaster zone.

They came back with eyewitness accounts from the Crockford Park Estate with its smashed windows, flattened fences and slate-less roofs. In St John's Avenue 14-year-old Gary Blinston described his experienced: "My little brother said, 'The caravan is going over'. I looked out of the window and saw a tree blown into the air. My little sister locked the door and took cover", he recalled. Nearby Stewart Grainger, aged 15, was in bed when the window blew in; his bed cover was cut by glass but he escaped unhurt. He had a second lucky escape when he went into his parents' bedroom and was narrowly missed by the attic trapdoor which had blown in. At another house the roof was lifted off and then came back down again, with tiles falling through the ceiling and windows blown out by the wind.

In Duchess Drive ten houses were badly damaged when the tornado toppled trees lining the road, crushing a car. Ron Ranner from Clare Place said: "Fences were flying through the air and tiles were piling up outside. It was a most frightening experience and was really five minutes of sheer hell". Nearby Arthur Smith, a market trader, had a narrow escape when a pane of glass landed on top of the eiderdown just moments after he had got out of bed.

At the Newmarket Bloodstock Agency an executive meeting was in progress when, as Roger Booth recalled: "It got very dark. There was a funny noise and then the windows blew in. There was glass and bricks and plaster everywhere. We just dived for the floor and tried to cover our heads. It was like a bomb going off". A string of racehorses was just arriving when the storm struck; trainer Ronald Sheather was leading the first of the six animals: "I thought it was a bomb exploding in the station yard. There was a cloud of dust, bricks and bits of wood thrown around. But the horses were very good and we had no difficulty getting them into their stables".

Peter Greco was on duty at the railway signal box when the tornado hit. Virtually every pane of glass in the box was smashed as the wooden building was moved 18 inches on its base. He was sent home suffering from shock – but not in his own car - his three-wheeler vehicle had been overturned and smashed against the wall of the signal box by the wind.

The centre of nearby Ashley also found itself in the tornado's track; Colin Smith who ran the general stores had his own home damaged and a tree crashed down on two of his vans, but, with his brother, he dashed around the village to see if he could help others. He found garden walls and chimneystacks wrecked, trees blown over and roofs virtually stripped. Electric cables were brought down and there were sparks everywhere. Engineers were drafted in to restore supplies, but sixty people were without power for up to eight hours.

[Cuttings & pictures in News files; there are also pictures of demolished wall at Ashley (neg R17810) and a power cable pole snapped off like a matchstick, (neg R17821)]

A similar tornado in May 1950 hit the area around Sutton. It swept up the High Street, through Pound Lane, Church Lane & Ely Road, damaging chimneys, roofs, walls and fences. One building was shifted from its foundations and Church Lane was completely closed by trees blown down along its entire length. Then in an awesome demonstration of its power it overturned a double-decker Eastern Counties bus onto its side. Ann Hood, who then lived at 14 High Street Sutton recalled: "Our garden stretched from High Street to The Brook, We had two beautiful mature Walnut trees growing in the Orchard garden. One of these was lifted and dropped by the hurricane, so that it lay across the fence between us and our neighbour's field. One of the smaller neighbouring apple trees was also lifted and dropped back almost in the same hole. The double-decker bus on its side caused some childish smiles as we girls had just been taught in science that Double-deckers were more stable than single!" [SCAN OF OVERTURNED BUS – 87.68 - SCAN 105.09 - PAINTING OF SUTTON HIGH STREET 1946]

They were days that people will never forget – but what do you remember of it now? And do you recall others

Memories 10th August 2005 by Mike Petty

Do you remember Longstanton, I asked. Yes, replied Fred Pond from Surrey – but Surrey in British Columbia, Canada. He writes: “In 1947 I was discharged from the Army and re-united with my wife Jean and our little daughter Isabel, who was born while I was in Germany.

“They were living with my mother and father in Oakington in a very small house so Jean and I decided to rent our own. The only accommodation was the Nissen huts in Longstanton, which had no bathrooms or electricity, just an outside loo and candles. But we wanted to be together with our little daughter and so we moved in. It was there that our other daughter, Sandra, was born with the help of a local nurse”.

Later Fred decided to emigrate; he acquired a second-world-war harbour defence motor launch to make the 10,000-mile voyage to Vancouver. It was a hazardous crossing with tropical storms and engine-failure to contend with – but they made it.

Mr Frederick Mahoney of Arbury Road Cambridge also has memories of Oakington airfield. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1941, aged 19, as an electrician and was posted to 7 Squadron at Oakington after his training before moving on to other local airfields. By VJ night, at the end of the war, he was the duty electrician at RAF Mepal and was tasked to take a searchlight lorry to Cambridge to floodlight Parker’s Peace, the Catholic Church and the area around until midnight. Then he returned to Oakington before being posted to the Far East. He was de-mobbed in London in 1946 and went back to work with his old employer, the Baldry Mineral Water Company in Cambridge.

Jack Baldry began his soft drinks firm in Gold Street, off Fitzroy Street Cambridge in 1923 with one assistant and a motor cycle for deliveries. He worked from dawn to dusk, stopping at four in winter when they had no light to see by. He got his first order, for two-dozen cases of lemonade, from the old Livingstone Hotel in Petty Cury but was so keen to deliver them that he roared around Emmanuel Road so sharp that two of the bottles fell off his motorbike and broke. Then in 1925 he acquired an important contract to produce ginger beer for a local brewery. The company diversified; they began bottling cider in 1930 and in 1935 extended into confectionery, cocktail savouries, pickles and groceries.

By the time Fred Mahoney started in 1940 Baldry’s had three lorries delivering drinks, crisps and biscuits to the pubs, clubs and shops in the surrounding area. They were in competition with deliverymen for the other mineral-water companies, Barkers in Willis Road, Wadsworth in Wellington Street and Corona with their bottles which closed with a fascinating metal-clip arrangement. Should two drivers arrive at the same pub at the same time they would play darts to see which one got the order. Production depended on the result and on the weather, for a hot weekend kept the factory on overtime for the rest of the week.

When he returned after the war Fred became a representative, successfully building up new accounts including the colleges and their sports grounds. In September 1952 fire caused thousands of pounds worth of damage at the works in Gold Street, Cambridge. It broke out in the first floor of the factory where corks, labels and bottles were kept & ran the whole length of the roof of one wing, most of which was destroyed. Firemen were hampered by extremely dense smoke and by many of the mineral water bottles exploding

Mr Mahoney left the firm in 1957 and continued to tour the region on behalf of other companies. But he looks back with great affection to his days with Baldry's and treasures pictures of their first outing by a Progressive Coach to Clacton in 1948 [SCAN 105.38] and a Christmas party in 1955. [SCAN 105.37]. This was held at the Cambridge Masonic Hall in Corn Exchange Street, a building demolished for the new Lion Yard car park - which itself is now just a memory. Did you attend other dances or dinners there – and do you remember Baldry's.

He has also lent me another picture that will perhaps stimulate memories. It was given to him in Christmas 1936 by Leo Rae who played the Compton organ at the Rendezvous Cinema in Magrath Avenue (renamed the Rex in 1938). Does it hold memories for you? [SCAN 105.39]

OTHER PICTURES – SCAN 64.06 – CAMBRIDGE MARKET HILL SHOWING A BALDRY'S DELIVERY LORRY c1950

CEN SCANNED PICTURE REF SUP 0156561.JPG – BALDRY'S PRODUCTION LINE IN MAY 1969]

RESERVE STORIES TO USE IF SPACE

Stephen Brookes from Gt Shelford was in Burma in 1942 when the Japanese army invaded. His father had already retired as an army surgeon but rejoined took charge of a medical supply depot in Mandalay before evacuating the city in the face of the enemy advance. They reached China but felt there was still work to be done in Burma, so the family returned. It was not a wise decision. Soon they were making a 290-mile trek through mountainous jungle during monsoon rains, just five people amongst 40,000 refugees. When his father died of fever Stephen had to grow up fast. With his mother and crippled older brother having to be carried by porters there was a 130-day march before they arrived in India. During that time his sister kept a diary which has formed the basis for a book of their experiences, experiences that Stephen shares with fellow members of the Cambridge RAF Association and other groups. 'Through the jungle of death' by Stephen Brookes is published by John Murray at £16.99.

Mr G. Stelmaszczyk from Cambridge also has a wartime story to share. He writes: "After the fall of Monte Cassino in July 1944 there was still a small stronghold of German paratroopers left in the monastery, under the command of a German major. A British unit, together with a Polish unit in the charge of an English captain, were standing at the foot of the mountain, waiting for the surrender of the last paratroopers. Visualise the scene: the German Major approached the British Captain, and suddenly gave a yell, 'Hullo George: Long time no see'. It transpired later that they had both been undergraduates at Oxford University before the war. The Captain replied, 'I'll take you to dinner in the Officers' Mess, but then I'm afraid I must deliver you to the POW camp.' Ironic, isn't it?"

Memories 17th August 2005, by Mike Petty

The news of the arrival of the pound-a-litre gallon has brought petrol back into the headlines – but such stories have been around before

In June 1979 petrol rationing in the United States and Sheikh Yamani's latest warnings on the oil crisis were causing concern. Prices were well up and a number of petrol stations started rationing customers to five gallons as supplies fluctuated. Both Tesco (Gulf) and Sainsbury in Coldham's Lane were charging £1.04 for four star but Hallens (BP) at Victoria Road corner were 10p more. Holland's in Mill Road matched Marshall's price of £1.07, the Newmarket

Road Service Station (Phoenix), where you were served as opposed to manning the pumps yourself, charged £1.08 and the Lolworth Service Station was £1.12.

A few years earlier in January 1975 a News survey had found that the new Sainsbury's filling station in Coldham's Lane was offering the cheapest prices in Cambridge though 68p a gallon was regarded as something of an opening offer. Holland motors in Mill Road came second with 4-star at 71p a gallon whilst the dearest was Oliver Rix at 74p

By September we were in the middle of a price war with Sainsburys now down to 63p for a gallon of four-star. Holland Motors were 68p, but small garages such as the Short Street Service Station were reporting their sales had dropped by more than a third since they could not afford to drop below 73p.

There were other ways to encourage trade: in December 1975 petrol pump attendant, 64-year-old Mr Percy Bursford was singing to his customers at the Rutland Hill Motor garage Newmarket, often letting rip with a full-throated burst of light opera in his tenor voice.

But such low prices could not continue and companies began to prepare for the inevitable rises to come. In June 1976 the nightmarish possibility of petrol at a pound a gallon was being considered; it would present problems not only to the motorist but also to petrol companies. If prices were to rise to such an extent then the existing blender pumps would not be able to cope, having been deigned for prices like 33p a gallon. But National Benzole gave a demonstration of futurist forecourt equipment, including a petrol pump head which could not only cope with metric measurements – litres instead of gallons – but which was also geared up for prices of a pound a gallon or more.

When prices increased in the March 1977 budget motorists pushed and fought their way to the petrol pumps in a panic-stricken rush to fill up. As soon as news of the increase was announced on the radio Holland's garage was one of the first to be besieged. A line of traffic stretched halfway along Mill Road and motorists, jealously guarding their place in the queue, were not even letting other cars out of the garage. At Huntingdon one petrol pump attendant said motorists had appeared to have "gone berserk" at the budget news

One man shielded from the stampede was Harry Smith of Abbotsley who in December 1977 had his own petrol pump nestling among the rose bushes in his well-kept front garden. It had been there before the Second World War when petrol was just 1s.6d. a gallon and although prices had risen it was handy having a supply of petrol on tap.

It was better than the lottery of petrol shortages and strikes such as that of November 1973 when reductions in supplies began to bite and garages restricted sales to regular customers who had one of their stickers; Ted Salisbury limited petrol to four gallons a customer but despite that sales shot up 37% as a result of panic buying and they ran out of petrol.

Such shortages encouraged people to think about economising; the Cambridge Evening News Managing Director, Tony Durham led the way by cycling to work, closely followed by the Editor, Mr Nicholas Herbert. And the company lashed out by purchasing four cycles for reporters – though stressing they would not forced to use them. Police tested a gas-powered patrol car in March 1975: with gas at about 30p a gallon and the cost of conversion from petrol to gas around £140 the car should be saving taxpayers money in September. That October South Cambs District Council worked out it would save at least £1,500 a year on fuel if it converted all its mini vans to run on gas instead of petrol. Comparative costs per mile were 1.36p for petrol and 0.97p for gas.

By July 1980 it seemed the crisis was over; following recent cuts in petrol prices differences of 8p or more could be found by shopping around with Tesco at Bar Hill charging £1.32 for a gallon compared to £1.40 at Hallen's on Victoria Road corner. Four-star was the main

contender in the fight for sales and a number of garages had dropped two-star altogether. Looking back a year ago when many garages were short of petrol and 'regulars only' signs littered the forecourts, the current surplus of supply seems barely credible, the News commented. But it was most unlikely we will return to the days when they gave free gifts and trading stamps in a bid to attract business,.

Now with prices at hitherto undreamed-of levels there are plans for a new type of fuel based on crops grown by local farmers. [IS THIS CALLED BIO-ETHANOL OR SOMETHING SIMILAR – CAN SOMEBODY CHECK SINCE IT IS VERY SIMILAR TO THE NAME OF THE PETROL IN THE STORY BELOW] However similar developments have happened before as a story was back in August of 1930 demonstrates:

“‘Ethyl’, as every motorist knows, is a super motor spirit with remarkable properties. It causes engines to run more smoothly, delivers more power and eliminates the ‘knock’ without retarding the spark. A few years back it was obtainable at petrol filling stations almost everywhere and many motorists cheerfully paid the extra penny a gallon. But sinister rumours circulated that the lead tetra-ethyl it contained was injurious to health and gradually it disappeared. Now following tests it will shortly be on sale again at the Olde Castle Hotel garage in Cambridge.”

But as the amount of petrol consumed has rocketed, the places where it can be obtained have plunged dramatically. Many village petrol stations have closed and the thought of parking beside Bridge Street to fill up with petrol is one that now seems as incredible as the £1-a-litre price would have done to motorists only a few years ago.

PHOTOS ON ROZ’S DESK; REPRODUCE HEADLINES FROM LAST WEEK’S NEWS

Scan 10155 – petrol pumps at Gamlingay 1930

10436 – petrol pumps in Bridge Street 1937

T2250 – petrol pumps in Hills Road 1930s

Memories 24th August 2005, by Mike Petty

Recent scare stories about an intense heat wave now seem to have been washed away by the rain. But it is still not too late. If history does go in cycles then it is as well to recall what happened at the end of August 1930.

At the end of the month a heat wave which gripped the country. In Cambridge temperatures soared to over 90 degrees in the shade. Several deaths were reported including a Teversham man who collapsed from the heat on the railway line near Whittlesford.

The sun brought out a rash of what the News described as ‘gay parasols’ whilst fans made of materials varying from paper to black lace made a reappearance.

The river became a popular gathering point; groups of small boys naked to the waist lay recumbent under the shade of trees along the Backs whilst others emulated Rupert Brooke at Grantchester: “They bathe by day, they bathe by night’. Indeed even at midnight there were bathing parties by the banks of the Cam. [SCAN OF WOMEN SWIMMERS]

It was so hot that shoppers stayed away and the centre of town was left to office-workers some of whom abandoned their jackets and even their ties, whilst those who were less courageous fingered the tight damp bands that had once been collars and wondered whether respectability was worth while.

One group continued labouring: the workmen on building sites and road repairs. They, undaunted, carried on under the broiling sun amid the fumes of molten surfacing and the heat from weird flame-throwing devises. There was at least one sight to distract them from their labour, however momentarily, when a girl in green striped pyjamas more reminiscent of a continental seaside resort than a sedate university town was seen in one of the main thoroughfares. It was, the News commented, an extreme symptom of the heat wave that held the town in its grip. [SCAN OF BUILDERS AT WORK]

But there was something that was causing a shiver to run down certain spines, and it might have particular interest for Derek Reay from Hampshire. He has written to the Cambridgeshire Family History Society appealing for information on the Seekings' family, some of whom seem to have dropped off the tree. The name immediately rang a bell, but for a different reason: in November 1913 one Frederick Seekings became the man to be hanged at the County Gaol on Castle Hill, Cambridge. Although the hanging itself was a private affair crowds gathered to watch for the flag hoisted to mark his execution.

The old gaol was in itself the news in 1930. In the June it was opened to the public. Maids in their scanty summer frocks, flannelled youths, mothers and fathers and grandfathers queued for admission. The execution shed where Seekings met his fate was a popular rendezvous along with the condemned cell, the burial ground and padded cell. People searched for links with the past but found few. Dirt and rust had replaced whitewashed walls and polished steelwork and certain parts had become dilapidated. Then on 2nd September came the sale of the gaol materials – the cell doors, barred windows and of course the gallows themselves with their traps and a piece of thin string flapping from the top beam. Nobody was too keen to bid but eventually they were knocked down to a Littleport man for one pound, a chilling reminder of the past on a hot afternoon. [SCANS OF HEADLINES OF GALLOWS SALE, AN EXTERIOR OF THE COUNTY GAOL AND CHOICE OF TWO INTERIOR VIEWS, ALL 1930]

At least the weather would have boosted the sales at Baldry's mineral water works, recent mention of which prompted memories for various readers. Tony Miller recalls the fire there in September 1952. He writes: "I was only six years old but remember walking home along East Road on our way home to Brandon Place with my mum after she picked me up from the Brunswick infants school in Young street. There was lots of smelly smoke drifting along East Road and lots of bright red fire engines down Gold Street" He remembers the excitement he felt was tempered with concern for the firemen struggling to put the blaze out. [SCAN OF BRANDON PLACE 1960S, HOMES ON THE RIGHT NOW DEMOLISHED FOR SHELTERED HOUSING]

Louise Lawrence from the Arbury spotted her late mother, Hilary Moore (then Hilary Goodwin) on both the Baldry's photographs. On the one of the outing, she is third from the right, next to her best friend of many years, Sheila Heaton. Sheila died in 1982. On the photo of the party her Mum is pictured behind Olive and Jack Underwood, who are seated on the far right at the table: they were good friends for many years.

Also on extremes of weather Alan Beaumont from Cottenham tells me that he was caught up in the tornado at Sutton in 1950. He writes: I was a boy of 11: our family were out in my uncle's car for a drive through the fens when the sky went black, the wind blew fiercely, rain appeared and branches were blown everywhere. The windscreen was broken by a fallen

branch but we made it to a pub carpark. None of us were five were hurt, just very shook up!" But there was another memory that night: Eric Boon the boxer was in the bar at the time.

Memories August 31st 2005, by Mike Petty

Mention of the county gaol on Cambridge Castle Hill has kept the emails buzzing. Sheila Proctor writes to tell me her great-grandfather, Alfred Edwards, (1852-1929) was the Head Jailer there until it closed. Although Alfred was quite strict he bred and kept birds in his garden loft and would sit patiently feeding the babies off the end of a match, she recalls. [SCAN 9507 STAFF AT COUNTY GAOL]

Beryl Doggett also contacted me so say she is compiling a family tree part of which that concerns the Doggetts and Fordhams of Chesterton. She writes: "I understand from my husband that either a Doggett or Fordham was hanged in Chesterton for the murder of his wife, a crime committed probably in a house in Water Street. Also a James Hancock was hanged for the murder of Alfred Doggett. Does anybody have any information on this?"

It is always dangerous probing into a family's past but I thought I would just search my 'Looking Back' and 'Memories' articles for the name 'Doggett' to see what would come up.

One story from 1898 concerned Mr Frank Doggett of Rectory farm, Cherry Hinton, then in deep countryside. There was scarcely a corner of the land he did not cultivate and he let seven cottages to his workmen. Tragedy struck the family in November 1925 when his sister was amongst the Christian missionaries who suffered ill-treatment in China during the Boxer rebellion.

More sad news was reported by Mrs Doggett, of Gt Eastern Street, Cambridge, in 1900. She received a letter from her son who was a prisoner during the Boer War. It included a South African caterpillar with a rose. But on arrival the rose had disappeared and the letter was partially eaten. The caterpillar was very thin, but alive.

During the Great War F.C. Doggett played a vital role in protecting the home front in event of invasion. A handbook issued by the Local Emergency Committee for Cambridge names him as the chairman of the Grantchester area. Should 'Total Emergency' be declared he would have been responsible for ensuring that most of the stock and horses would have been requisitioned; the remainder would be slaughtered and beans, oats and hay destroyed. Any vehicles left in the parish would be rendered useless.

During the 1920s members of the family played their part in local government. Councillor Doggett reported that Coldham's Lane was a veritable slough and almost impassable. Its condition was so bad that one ratepayer proposed to sow it with potatoes! He was also fighting for motor buses to be fitted with pneumatic tyres: it was only a matter of time before solid tyred vehicles would be barred from using the roads at all as they caused so much damage.

Francis Doggett was mayor of Cambridge in 1947 when the King & Queen visited Trinity College. He came from several generations of farmers but himself worked for Cambridge Instrument Company. [SCAN OF ARTICLE ABOUT DOGGETT] During the second-world war he served as Chief Warden and came under fire again in May 1951 when he investigated complaints of a six-pounder gun being used by the Ministry of Supply for testing armour-piercing shells at Cherry Hinton lime pit. He stood within three or four feet of the weapon and was not 'disturbed' – "although it was true I had my fingers in my ears. There is really very little we can do and it wouldn't be of much use objecting", he told councillors.

Others in the news included Robert Doggett, a sandwich board man in St Andrew's Street who was featured in the News in May 1961. He had had not always been a sandwich man, he had worked in college kitchens, on building sites and as a newspaper vendor. He was fit as strapped between his boards he could walk about the town for three or four hours without feeling the least bit tired. [SCAN OF SANDWICH BOARD MAN]

Members of the family served Cambridge in a number of occupations; in 1904 they were piano teachers, labourers, coal merchants and signalmen; later one had a milkround. [SCAN OF MILKMAN]

Writing to 'Memories' Thomas Taylor from Newton reported that his grandfather, J. Doggett used to keep the Granta Inn on Newnham Road while others recalled George Henry Doggett who was company secretary to Robert Sayle until Selfridges bought the store and he was 83. He was a tall upright man with a neat white beard, who commanded respect wherever he went. Frank Doggett also worked for the firm as head of accounts until 1940 when John Lewis acquired the store.

But the late Ernie Papworth from Over recalled another branch of the family when recording his memories of the demolition of the old Boat Inn at Brown's Hill Stauch, Over in 1947. "The old building was taken down, brick by brick, mainly by two or three German P.O.W.'s. Inside the pub was an old blackboard with the words "Mind your P's and Q's", at the top. This was to remind the bargees how much they owed for their Pints and Quarts, which they would have to pay for their return journey. Then well lubricated they would sing the following: "Can ye walk along a lighter, Can ye eat fat pork, Can ye 'oller out 'Watchee Dozee', Can ye drink a quart?"

"Dozee Doggett was foreman of the lighters, the railway across the fens to Earith was called the Pork and Lard Railway, part of the platelayers wages. The new house, as it was then, was built on the other side of the Great Barrier Bank. It is no longer occupied but on dark cold winter nights it is still possible to see the faint glow from the old pub window and hear the merry voice of Bill Johnson tell Bill the landlord to chalk another one up for Dozee!" Ernie reported.

But there is another connection between the Doggetts and the criminal fraternity that dates even further back. In the early 1800s the Cambridge town gaol stood next to the Town Hall on the market place. The gaoler had a little perk: he was allowed to sell ale to the prisoners. His name was John Doggett.

Of course all of these may have no connection at all with Beryl's branch of the family – that's part of the fascination and frustration of researching your ancestors. If you can assist then email her at johnandberyl.doggett@ntlworld.com or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch.

Memories 7th September 2005, by Mike Petty

Sue Slack, who works in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge's Lion Yard Library has been delving through their thousands of old pictures to select some of her favourites for a new book.

She has chosen to devote one section to the role of women reflecting suffrage activity, women street and window-cleaners during the First War and servicemen of both sexes relaxing in the Toc H lounge during the Second. Elsewhere they appear as shopkeepers, Pye employees and washerwomen. Sue includes one particularly risqué photograph from 1900 showing university men and women in very close proximity but points out that they were only actors – such

fraternising between undergraduates would not have been permitted for real! [WOMEN AND MEN ACTORS].

But what would the women prepared to fight for their country, for the right to vote and for the right to be awarded University degrees have thought of their sons fighting for the fun of it? One intriguing picture shows a couple of lads indulging in bare-knuckle boxing about 1910. Can anybody supply details? [BOXING LADS].

One of the pictures is of a college bedmaker, ladies who continue to play an essential role in University life, as they have for centuries.

Back in 1859 an American undergraduate wrote that it was a good job: "A person once appointed to this seriously lucrative place never gives it up, although utterly superannuated, toothless and tottering. They order from the butteries every day twice as much bread and butter as a man wants and at the end of the day all that's left goes to them, by immemorial custom, as perquisites. And any meats left from a dinner, breakfast, etc, unless specially mentioned by you, go to them as perquisites. . . They form an immense body. . . grown old in the college and handing down their power to their nieces and daughters. . ."

But Frank Rutter defended them in 1901: "No sooner does a 'Fresher' make his appearance than the bedder takes him under her protective wing, combining the roles of foster-mother and maid-of-all-work. What if she does clean your teapot with paraffin, or entertain her friends to breakfast in your room? Such little perquisites are well-earned by the bedder who at her best is a motherly creature and known to stick staunchly to her 'young gentlemen' in their hour of need."

Frank Dobie, an American don, found them invaluable the 1940s: "In the college hall where I have rooms two plain women, designated as 'bed-makers,' bring in coal, make the coal fires, scrub the hearths, draw the water, draw back the black blackout curtains, make the beds, change the linen and otherwise administer to us gentlemen". [SCAN OF MERCY REYNOLDS, BEDMAKER, 1946]

But by 1969 things had changed. Enid Porter noted: "The bedmakers of today are very different from their predecessors. Many of them are young, attractive and well-dressed, whereas, until early in this century, it was customary to appoint more elderly and far from good-looking women, presumably in the interests of the undergraduates' morals. Even until shortly before the Second World War only married women could be bedders. A woman still working in one of the Colleges recalled in 1966 that when she applied for work in 1936, two months before she was going to be married, she was told that she could not be engaged by the College until after the wedding ceremony had been performed"

Bedders used to have a male equivalent: the gyp. Their role changed; from acting as valets and 'gentlemen's gentlemen' they took on other duties such as staircase-sweeping, boiler-stoking and waiting in Hall. They were the butt of many an undergraduate gibe: "most of them are either too old and worn out, or young, impudent and thievish. The whole set may be defined as leeches". Indeed their name was said to have derived from the Greek word for a vulture. Today their memory lives on in 'gyp rooms', their former pantries on college staircases where undergraduates now make themselves tea or coffee. But are there any gyps left, or does anybody have memories of this most important side of college life? [SCAN 100.18 – A GYP AND BEDDER WITH NEW UNDERGRADUATE]

'Cambridge' by Sue Slack is published by Tempus at £12.95 – ISBN 0-7524-3623-6

READERS WRITE

Kath Gray from Cambridge has memories of the County Gaol on Cambridge Castle Hill in 1930. She writes: "I remember my mother taking us three children to the open day. I was ten, my sister eleven and my brother seven. The man took us into the padded cell and shut the door. He told us they put bad boys and girls in there. I did not like it. On the way out there was a lovely lemon mint bush in the grounds. My mum took a little piece and set it in our garden. We were afraid to run up Castle Mound and look over Cambridge"

More memories of Baldry's have come in; Mr F. Dean from Stapleford worked for the firm from 1959 to 1979, starting in Gold Street before moving with them to Harvest Way and then Sawston. He has lent me a picture of one of their lorries in Arbury Road with the Manor School in the background. [SCAN OF BALDRY LORRY]. Margaret Draper, nee Hinde, was amongst those who attend the firm's Christmas party in 1955 and recognised several of her former colleagues. She worked in the office and recalls that it was a lovely friendly firm who all worked well together. Mr Baldry was a very kind and generous boss who often bought them cream cakes and they could go into the factory to help themselves to drinks off the production line. Not everybody patronised the company's products: "I remember seeing the ladies going with their jugs to the Rabbit public house to get them filled with ale and the lovely warm pies and sausage rolls from Curtis' in Burleigh Street. Happy days!"

Memories 14th September 2005 by Mike Petty

With the country gripped by the excitement of the Ashes cricket series it is timely to receive a letter from Phyllis Bowman (nee Fuller) of King's Lynn. She receives regular shipments of issues of the News and has just caught up with the March editions which had articles on the future of cricket on Parker's Piece.

It prompted her to write with her reminiscences:

"In the early 1950s I was 15 years old and worked at Hobb's Pavilion. Every Saturday and Sunday in the cricket season a large marquee was erected on the grass between Hobbs and the University Arms Hotel and we were responsible for the 'cricket teas'. What glorious afternoons they were. The teas consisted of sandwiches – Page and Sons bakers provided the bread already sliced which was quite a new thing then. The fillings were boiled bacon, grated cheese and boiled egg which we bought from Sainsbury's old shop in Sidney Street. There were cakes (nothing fancy) and Chelsea buns, Swiss rolls & scones. To drink there were urns of tea and orange squash.

"When I worked there Hobbs was managed by Len Payne and his brother-in-law, the manageress was a Miss Barnard, the main tea lady came from Six Mile Bottom and a lady called Lizzie (who was well over 70) did all the washing-up and saw to the boiled bacon. There was Janet Seagrave from Shelford and me from Burwell.

"There was a small room at the back of the pavilion where working men came – plumbers from the Gas Board, electricians or Camtax taxi drivers and they were allowed to eat their own sandwiches. Boys from the Perse School came in as did office workers, staff from the Cambridge Daily News – situated behind the New Theatre in those days. We also had actors and dancers from the theatre, even Phyllis Dixie – Jane – with Fritz her dog and many others. Tea was threepence, Camp coffee fourpence and ham rolls sixpence.

"What glorious times they were and I never remember any wet days"

The pavilion was named in honour of Jack Hobbs, one of Cambridge's famous cricketing sons. He had declared in open in March 1930 and returned that September bringing with him one of the most brilliant cricket teams that Parker's Piece has ever seen to play a Cambridge

Eleven. It included seven men who had captained England including Hobbs himself and O'Connor, both of whom learned the game in Cambridge.

The weather seemed likely to put a damper on events with heavy overnight rain, but warm sun and a strong wind contrived to make the pitch playable. By two o'clock there were at least 5,000 spectators massed three and four deep round the entire field. Others stood on the running boards of cars drawn up in Park Terrace to see the game. At the tea interval the crowd dashed across the pitch to line the entrance to the pavilion as the players entered for their break.

Then it was turn for Hobbs and Sutcliffe to open for the visitors with each of the arriving or departing batsmen being escorted to the crease by a police escort to keep excited youngsters at bay. The partnership of Hobbs and Duleepsinhji saw the 150 up on the board, passing the town's total. But that was no reason to stop and play continued until Jack Hobbs had made his century.

The result really didn't matter. What mattered was that Cambridge had seen a match that would live on in the memories of all who saw it.

SCAN OF NEWS ARTICLE AND PHOTO OF THE TEAM
NEWS PHOTO OF CRICKETERS WITH HOBBS PAVILION IN BACKGROUND
(Reserve:
SCAN OF NEW THEATRE AND CDN OFFICES
SCAN OF CROWDS OUTSIDE OLD SAINSBURY'S SIDNEY STREET 1958)

By happy coincidence this week Sheila Proctor from Fen Ditton has lent me a picture of the Camtax staff – some of whom may have taken their tea in the pavilion backroom. It was taken at a Christmas party in 1948 at the Bridge Hotel, Clayhithe, the only occasion Camtax closed for the evening. Her dad, Percy Crisp, can identify them all – apart from one. Can you fill in the name of the mystery man seated second from the left on the middle row between Harold Hunt and Jack Glasscock. And its not Gregory Peck the famous actor whose seated two further on – just a namesake.

SCAN OF CAMTAX STAFF

(CAN OMIT THIS LIST IF NECESSARY

The full list is:

(top row left to right) Joe Bilton, Harry Gallagher, Tom Kimmings, Percy Crisp, Phil Thomas, Stan Merry

2nd row – Harold Hunt – then a mystery man – Jack Glasscock, Bill Coad, Gregory Peck, Ald Twinn, Dennis Gilson, Jack Amiss, Ken Matthews, Steve Williams, Charlie Best, Bill Fordham.

Front : Bill Wisbey, Joe Jiggins, Mrs Stevenson, Dick Armstrong, Charlie Berr & Dusty Miller.)

PLEASE INCLUDE THE WIMPOLE PARK STORY IF YOU CAN

There was something like to cricket on show at Cambridge Town Football ground in June 1954. It was a new sport called American softball between a team from the US Air Force Hospital at Wimpole and another from USAF Molesworth. The game seemed to be a form of glorified rounders akin to baseball. There was 'strike one', 'ball one', 'blunt' and a host of other expressions which the News sports reporter found difficult to explain. There were incidents such as two players somersaulting as they tried to catch a ball but the thing that really stuck in the memory was the way the umpire was hustled and pushed by players disputing a decision. That was definitely not cricket!

But do you remember the American Hospital in the grounds of Wimpole Park in the 1940s and 50's? There is to be a special reunion for US medics who were based there and Arrington Parish Council is seeking photographs or memorabilia for an exhibition to be held in the village hall in October. In May 1947 some of the huts were used as Wimpole Park Teachers Training College. They had their own film society who made a record of college life – but what has happened to it? The Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library, Cambridge has four snaps but there must be more. If you can add to the record please contact Grace Everson on Cambridge 208915 or email grace.everson@btinternet.com

[SCAN OF WIMPOLE PARK HOSPITAL]

CD-ROM WITH SCANS IS WITH ROZ TOGETHER WITH THE NEWS PICTURE

Memories, 21st September 2005, by Mike Petty

Three of the county's principal educational establishments are seeking assistance in celebrating their history

It was in October 1930 that Sawston Village College was officially opened by the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VIII who was to abdicate the throne in December 1936. He came not just to open another secondary school but to set the Royal seal of approval on an ambitious scheme of rural education which had attracted world-wide attention.

The man behind the concept was Henry Morris, Chief Education Officer for Cambridgeshire since 1922. He had realised that country youngsters were moving into the big cities; villages had few amenities and people were beginning to lose their sense of identify with their own locality. He envisaged a series of 'countryman's colleges' with buildings that were open in the evenings providing education for adults as well as children. It would be a base for the county library and a meeting place the whole community.

It was to endorse this vision that the Prince arrived by aeroplane, landing at Duxford airfield before his limousine made its way to Sawston, like streams of other motorcars. People crabbed about the enormous increase in motor transport but it was the development of such transport that made the idea possible, for the new college would cater for nine villages, the Prince remarked. He continued "For the children the college would give a varied training ... with instruction in the workshops and, no less important, the opportunity of knowing how to play games". The adult wing gave the opportunity for technical and agricultural education as well as drama and music. It also provided a home for such splendid voluntary associations such as the British Legion, Women's Institutes, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides and the Infant Welfare Centre which had done so much for the welfare of rural England. It would be a centre of village social life and recreation and village local government."

Within a decade the Sawston college for country folk was welcoming London evacuees; they arrived in a red London bus (which the driver parked in the middle of the lawn) and were accommodated in the hall. Within minutes the ceiling was bespattered with blotting paper ink bombs, flicked up by rulers. Perhaps 'welcomed' was not the right word!

War could not interrupt a Sawston tradition: the election of the Rose Queen. The 'coronation' ceremony was held on the fountain court in the presence of dozens of visitors. Pearl Mann recalled how in 1942 she processed to a throne on a raised dais to the accompaniment of

music from an orchestra formed of teaching staff and was crowned by the wife of a local dignitary. There then followed a pageant which became increasingly more elaborate over the years. In 1963 the ceremony was abandoned, but it is to be revived next Saturday as part of a series of events to celebrate the college's 75th anniversary including a Big Band Ball to the music of the Joe Loss Orchestra. It will also mark the publication of a short history of the college by old-boy Bryan Howe. Copies are available from Bryan at 16 Henry Morris Road, Sawston, priced £5 plus postage.

March High School for Girls also experienced difficulties with war-time guests. They were already in over-crowded buildings when 400 children, many from Tottenham, descended on the town. Many of the girls – and boys – had to share the formerly girls-only building. One benefit was that the school got electric light. Previously on dark winter afternoons they had to send a messenger to find the caretaker to light the gas lamps, but the Londoners could not cope with such a system. School dinners were no longer served as the Tottenham children took over at one o'clock, so some of the classes were able to use the kitchen for their lessons. The winter of 1939-40 was particularly cold and the kitchen was freezing with only a few radiators and a tiled floor. But it did have gas ovens around which the girls gathered with their feet practically inside in a vain attempt to keep warm. Then without notice the Army arrived and took over the school hall forcing the girls out onto the playing field, or into the air raid trenches if it rained.

These and many more fascinating details have been gathered by Pauline Kennelly for a history of the school which will be launched at March Museum on 8th October. There will be extensive displays of class photographs and memorabilia which should ensure that this excellent museum receives even more visitors than usual. Pauline Kennelly's history of the High School for Girls March 1905-1969 is available from bookshops at £8.99 – ISBN 0-9550653-0-5 – or from Pauline on 01733 235956

Mike Good from Selwyn College Cambridge is part of a team now working on a book to celebrate their 125th anniversary in 2007. It will be a well illustrated and by no means a dry-as-dust academic history of the college which will draw upon the memories of many of its past students and dons. But he is also anxious to make contact with other people who have played their part over the years as porters, gardeners, kitchen staff or bedders. If you have memories or snaps that can be added to the college history he would love to hear from you. You can write to him at Selwyn or email msg55@sel.cam.ac.uk

READERS WRITE

My appeal for bedders' memories has brought a letter from Kath Gray of Cambridge. She writes: "My mother was a bedmaker at Jesus College in the 1930s. In those days there was a bedmaker and her help on each staircase and with eight sets of rooms it was hard work. They had start at 6.30 to get the undergraduates up and take their hot water for washing. They worked till eleven and had to go back in the afternoon to wash up and turn the beds down. The help had to do all the heavy jobs, carrying coal, cleaning fires and scrubbing stairs. In 1940 the Air Force took over the college and mother worked in the kitchens. At Christmas the college used to give them all a Christmas cake, pudding and a ten-shilling note; mother got a pension of ten-bob a week when she retired. If they were the good old days I don't want them back!"

Memories 28th September 2005, by Mike Petty

John Pearce from Great Wilbraham has sent me a postcard of Six Mile Bottom Post Office; his question is when was it taken? A few clues such as the post box and the style of dress suggest it was probably before the Great War. Miss Ellen Barton was sub postmistress and shopkeeper in 1904– but is it her outside and who were the other people? [SCAN 107.13 – SIX MILE BOTTOM POST OFFICE]

I wondered however what the message on the back of the card might have said. Did anything ever happen at Six Mile Bottom that would have been worthy of a note to a friend?

Six Mile Bottom takes its name from its distance from Newmarket racecourse and has a long sporting tradition. A large house called the Lodge was erected in 1802 which became home to the half-sister of Lord Byron, who visited it several times. By 1890 it belonged to Herbert De la Rue of the printing family who enlarged and remodelled it into the Swynford Paddocks stud. Plenty of things there for a postcard writer to speculate on.

In October 1904 Mr Pierpont Morgan, an American millionaire, leased the Six Mile Bottom estate together with the sporting rights which were said to be excellent. People speculated that in all probability large shooting parties would arrive each season, possibly even including the King who had visited regularly when Prince of Wales. Instead they got travellers when a group of two to three hundred Macedonian gypsies were escorted through the hamlet by a contingent of police who were shepherding them on to Essex and ultimately London.

Most people roar through Six Mile Bottom by road, but one motorist stopped in April 1929 when his Essex Super-six saloon burst a tyre and plunged down a bank, turning over on its side at Valley Bottom. The whole of the roof was ripped away and the occupants thrown out. They were taken by police ambulance to Addenbrooke's Hospital. But apart from the roof and windows there was little damage to the car itself, the News reported.

More excitement erupted in July 1947 when a railway truck loaded with 60 112lb American mustard gas bombs caught fire as it passed through Six Mile Bottom station. It was one of about 40 wagons transporting bombs to Barry in Wales where they were to be dumped in the sea. In scenes reminiscent of the ammunition explosion at Soham in June 1944 Driver Frederick Smart spotted the danger and Fireman Alfred Chandler jumped down from the tender to uncouple the burning wagon. They tried to pull it away from the rest but with a spectacular 'whoosh' about half the bombs exploded and a burst of flames shot fifty feet into the air. The fireman tried to subdue the flames with buckets of water as poisonous fumes spread and police sealed off the area and awaited the decontamination team. Smart and Chandler, both Cambridge men, were awarded medals to commemorate their bravery. [SCAN 86.1289 SIX MILE BOTTOM STATION 1930s]

Roger Asplin from Reach has asked about Pout Hall, an isolated spot at the junction of the Burwell and Reach Lodes. It was once the site of an old picturesque building with a thatched roof and dormer windows. Charles Lucas, a Burwell doctor who enjoyed spinning tales, said he remembered that a little old woman who lived there used to ferry herself from one bank of the lode to the other in her wash tub, using the linen prop as a punt pole. He claimed it had been built as an inn by John Peachey but he could never get a licence to serve beer as it was too remote for the police to supervise.

By the 1860s it was home to a gang of thieves and scoundrels who lurked about the fen at all times of day and night seeking what they could plunder. Sheep stealing, fowl stealing, tool stealing and every other kind of lawlessness were carried on, especially at harvest-time. In one incident four of the villains formed a gang; one pinched a sailcloth from one of the fen drainage windmills, another a pole, the third a pitchfork and the fourth some sacks. They sneaked into a cornfield where they spread the cloth on the ground, took a sheaf from a shock with the pitchfork and beat it with the pole. The corn was gathered into a sack and carried

back to Pout Hall. Once they'd got as much as they wanted it was loaded onto a boat and transported along the lode to a wharf belonging to a house in North Street, Burwell. There it was hidden in an underground granary until it was time for it to be disposed of.

he gang was finally brought to justice when Police-Sergeant Plant with one or two constables surprised them with a boatful of plunder and after a violent struggle arrested the ringleaders and sent the rest running out into the fen. Hazel Sandiford from Salford has a photograph taken by R.H. Lord in the 1880s which shows a fenland fisherman with Pout Hall in the background but as far as I am aware there are no picture-postcards of the building. Do you know different or have you more tales to tell? [SCAN 107POUT – R.H. LORD'S PHOTO WITH POUT HALL IN THE BACKGROUND]

Those seeking sites of even bloodier battle can do no better than journey deep into the fenland beyond Chatteris. Beside a lonely road from Wimblington a signpost points along a rutted track to Stonea camp, the lowest hill-fort in Britain. It was a refuge for the Iceni hidden deep in the marshy fens where they were safe from the Romans who had conquered the rest of Britain. Then came the revolt lead by Boadicea which destroyed Colchester and London and prompted a dreadful retribution by the legionaries. The battered remnants of the Iceni forces retreated to make a final defence at Stonea where they were smashed by the might of the Roman army. Later Emperor Hadrian – of Hadrian's Wall - decided to build a new administrative centre on the site to control the fenland, erecting a stone tower that dominated the area around. Yet within a century the Romans pulled down their villas and temples & moved out, leaving no trace behind them. All became forgotten until a field archaeologist, David Hall, spotted something unusual as he tramped his way around the fenland and sparked a massive series of excavations. Tim Malin, then a senior archaeologist at Cambridgeshire County Council, investigate the site in the 1990s and has now compiled a most detailed yet readable account of the area in Roman times. There is a colour postcard showing an aerial view of the camp but for a proper understanding of what was built, and lost, you should read Tim's new book 'Stonea and the Roman Fens' (Tempus £19.99 – ISBN 0-7524-28993-3). [SCAN STONEA 2 – POSTCARD OF AERIAL VIEW OF STONEA CAMP; STONEA 1 A ROMAN SOLDIER MAKES HIS WAY THROUGH THE FENS – FROM COVER OF TIM MALIN'S BOOK]

Memories, 5th October 2005, by Mike Petty

Last weekend I had the opportunity to guide an expedition into the fens – a grand name for a pleasant potter by coach from Cambridge to Earith, Wentworth, Welney and beyond.

For me one essential pausing point is at Sutton Gault, where one can get a unique appreciation of the civil engineering work of the seventeenth century that led to the creation of the Old and New Bedford Rivers, and cross the wash-land in between. Sometimes the road is completely flooded and you walk above the waves on the elevated walkway. This is not a catastrophic breakdown of the drainage system. It was always intended that the washes will flood and the people on the other side of the Bedford rivers get used to the fact that periodically their little community will have to look to Chatteris rather than Sutton for their services. [SCAN 2861 OF FLOODED ROAD AT SUTTON GAULT AND ELEVATED FOOTBRIDGE, TAKEN IN 2000]

Yet on Saturday the road was perfectly open, it was just the place itself that had disappeared. For this time I needed to dial 999 and the East Anglian Ambulance Control could not find it on their computer.

The first time I rang the controller demanded the name and number of the road. Then the phone went dead. I dialled again. For what seemed an age I endeavoured to describe just how one got there – take the road from Sutton (the one near Ely) to Earith and turn right. I was told an ambulance was on its way from Ely. By the time I rang a third time, now with the actual grid reference, the vehicle was coming from Chatteris. Before it had arrived the bus driver had phoned his wife, a nurse, and she had got to the scene, as had a relation who had been summoned from Willingham.

So its time to put Sutton Gault on the map.

When Prince Edward was making his television series on ‘Crown and Country’ he found Sutton Gault a good location for some of his filming, indeed he was photographed there for the cover of the brochure that accompanied the programmes. He took lunch at the well-known ‘Anchor’ Inn itself a product of the drainage operations that constructed the New Bedford River in the 1650s for it features in a list of public houses erected on the riverbanks to refresh drainers & travellers. The drainers also constructed a wooden bridge over their New Bedford River, later replaced with a more substantial road bridge and supplemented by the raised footbridge [SCAN OF OLD WOODEN BRIDGE ACROSS THE NEW BEDFORD RIVER AT SUTTON GAULT c1910]

Sutton Gault has even featured in the annals of Cambridgeshire aviation history for it was here that in October 1913 an advertising blimp containing the slogan ‘Give Her Bovril’ made a forced landing. Then during the Second World Wars air raid records record the dropping of high-explosive bombs in August 1940 and February 1941, when a bungalow was damaged. Fortunately they missed one of the county’s most interesting houses just up the road, the Burystead, a former manor house with an early 14th-century chapel. [SCAN 5813 OF THE ‘BOVRIL’ BLIMP 1913]

The area around Sutton Gault received worldwide attention when work began on a revolutionary hovertrain. A 12-mile long elevated test track was erected beside the Old Bedford River towards Earith. The prototype vehicle was rolled out of its hanger in November 1971 and made its first run down the one-mile track the following month. The tests saw speeds of 106 mph being recorded but the Government were unwilling fund it and everything closed down. The track was removed, though some pillars remain beside the riverbank to be discovered by those who care to explore even further off the beaten track. [SCAN 210 OF HOVERTRAIN AND PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS 1971]

None of this is earth-shattering but at least it shows that there really is a place called Sutton Gault.

Glancing through some of my ‘Looking Back’ stories I see that radio control for ambulances was in the news back in March 1950 when the innovation, which had already proved its worth with the police and fire brigade, had a successful trial with the county ambulance service. Pye Telecommunications had fitted four ambulances with radio receiver, transmitter and microphone and all vehicles were now in constant contact with the control room. [SCAN T2403 OF AMBULANCEMEN WITH RADIO 1970]

In 1921 a motor ambulance for the use of Cambridge townspeople was provided by Special Constables but was soon being used on long journeys to Ipswich and Norwich. By March 1926 it was proving of great benefit with increased demands for accidental and private cases. An additional motor ambulance had been purchased and proved of great assistance. They were available at any hour of the day or night upon application to the Central Police Station or Fire Station [SCAN T580 OF CAMBRIDGE AMBULANCE 1920S]

But not all communities could afford a proper ambulance. By September 1924 Haverhill had made arrangements to take patients to Addenbrooke’s Hospital in a motor lorry adapted as an ambulance with a stretcher secured in position by springs. But they needed something better: there were two alternatives, the purchase of a new ambulance at a cost of £160 or the possibility that one might be obtained on loan.

In July 1928 Ely Councillors also debated the advisability of obtaining a motor ambulance. Cases were frequently happening where a person was ordered off to the Hospital at once. The previous week frantic efforts had been made to find an ambulance but the only vehicle that might be termed an ambulance was being used at a funeral and they had to telephone to Cambridge for one. This was a standing disgrace to Ely. Their friends at March had purchased a first-class ambulance for £880 and Soham had one, the News reported.

In 1947 Cambridgeshire ambulance service jumped the gun to become first to carry patients free of charge before it came under the National Health Service in June 1948.

On Saturday the ambulance personnel were welcomed. But sadly they are not always appreciated, as the News reported in September 1978. Two St Neots ambulance men made a one-mile mercy dash by bicycle to treat an injured man. One had borrowed his wife's machine and the other used his own bicycle as they set off with first aid bags over their shoulders. But on arrival they were ridiculed by onlookers. They were laughed at, sworn at and generally made fun of for turning up on bikes. None of the station's ambulances had been available. Two 'emergency use' vehicle were in use, another had broken down and two 'sitting case' vehicles were also unusable, one with exhaust trouble, the other with a puncture.

At least the professionals on the ground knew the way, computer or no computer!

CHECK NEWS FILES FOR OTHER PICTURE OF SUTTON GAULT AND/OR AMBULANCE

Memories 12th October 2005, by Mike Petty

New Hall was Cambridge's third 'Foundation for Women of moderate size' when it opened in a former guesthouse called the Hermitage in Silver Street in October 1954.

The University had approved the admission of women back in 1948, opening the way for an increase in the number of female undergraduates, but the two existing women's colleges of Girton and Newnham did not wish to increase their numbers. Hence the need for a new college. But the new college had virtually no money and for the first few years the tutors had to be 'Jills of all trades' combining the roles of teachers with caretakers, doorkeepers and handymen.

The mistress, Dame Rosemary Murray, was still acting as emergency plumber at the time of the big freeze of 1963. As the river outside their walls froze the girls huddled for warmth over the feeble flames of their gas fires. People were skating on the Cam in early January and it was still frozen eight weeks later. Gill Emberson remembers: "My gas fire packed up so I had to dash into another girl's room to dress. The roadside windows gave a terrific view of the icy roads, I watched numerous cyclists falling over one morning. It was very chilly in the days before tights and we all wore tweed skirts and long knickers under our academic gowns" Nancy Eastham recalls: "All the water pipes froze solid for a week and the hot water pipes did not come back to life for a month. I would never have survived if I had not brought my electric blanket from home. I found the Cambridge voltage was different but fortunately through the Physics department I met a student from Canada who supplied me with a heavy-duty transformer so that I could keep toasty warm in bed." [SCAN OF CARTOON BY CAROLA GORDON (NEE BROTHERTON) WHO ENTERED NEW HALL IN 1961 AND IS NOW AN ARTIST IN EDINBURGH, HER WORK IS EXHIBITED AT THE COLLEGE]

Not all the women studied 'girlie' subjects; Jean Anscombe read mechanical sciences; at one time she was the only female undergraduate amongst 750 male engineers; "Lecturers were embarrassed if they told their male-only jokes when I was present – my fellow students would hiss in disapproval", she recalls.

New Hall undergraduates played their full part in University life: where else could you sing Messiah with David Willcocks, listen to Father Trevor Huddleston preach and borrow pictures by promising young artists to hang on your walls. Anne Wallis joined the Amateur Dramatic Club but after a few days of heavy sewing on the safety curtain – and fending off immoral proposals – she left it to others. During Rag Week she was one of the 'New Halle Orchestra' who toured Cambridge on the back of a lorry playing an assortment of mostly homemade instruments including a hunting horn. During her second year she went to a May Ball – "I made my own dress but cut things a bit fine and had to leave my boyfriend sewing up the hem whilst I went to have my hair done", she confesses. [SCAN OF NEWS PHOTO OF THE NEW HALLE ORCHESTRA c1962]

In 1964 New Hall left Silver Street for its new home on Huntingdon Road where it has continued to flourish. Now Pat Houghton from Foxton has helped to edit a collection of reminiscences, autobiographies and obituaries from some of the alumnae of those earlier years. It provides a unique insight into the careers of the girls who helped to pioneer a new college for ladies in what was essentially a male-dominated University. Many have gone on to take their Cambridge experiences with them around the world. They have pursued careers as diverse as their own backgrounds – as surgeons, actors, economists, teachers, engineers and mothers and all express their appreciation for being one of the New Hall 'women of moderate size'

"New Hall Lives: the Silver Street years 1954 to 1964" is available from the Alumnae Office at New Hall, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DF for £10 plus £2 postage. ISBN 0950710857 [SCAN OF COVER OF BOOK]

Various readers have had memories stirred by recent 'Memories' articles. Percy Seeby from Trumpington contacted me to say that he used to play in a jazz quartet at the United States Hospital at Wimpole Park in the 1940s. Last weekend he was invited to the reunion of American servicemen who were based there.

Mrs P. Claydon from Newmarket recognised her aunt as one of the ladies in a photograph of Six Mile Bottom post office while Bill Barton of Burwell believes the gentleman could have been his great-grandfather [SCAN OF SIX MILE BOTTOM POST OFFICE]

Amy Cockett from Bromley in Kent has just received a copy of my article on Longstanton from the 6th July. She writes: "The photo of the village post office shows my grandmother, Charlotte Day, then a widow, at the door of her cottage and one of her other daughters, Jessie is also shown. The Rignall family ran the post office for years, transferring to the new one when it was replaced. [SCAN OF LONGSTANTON POST OFFICE]

She has sent me an article by Isabel Hughes that was published in the September 1996 issue of 'Yesterday' magazine, one of those published by Family Tree Magazine of Ramsey. Isabel was appointed headteacher of Longstanton School in 1948. Her initial impressions were not good: An enormous oil lamp was suspended from a beam on a rusty chain, not showing any sign of being lit for years. There was no electricity so the children went home early in winter. One day a child saw two rats eating the orange peel in the wire waste-paper basket – which also explained the rustling sounds in the toilet situated in a wooden lean-to shed at the end of the kitchen, with its own ventilation system of holes in the roof. The rat-catcher became a regular visitor. (On reflection the problems of New Hall seem not quite so bad after all!)

Then Longstanton expanded. The RAF built married quarters and one morning twenty children were waiting to be admitted to school. Each day more and more came along. Desks and chairs ran out and when forms arrived for the children to sit on there was no where to put them. The solution was to turn two nissen huts into a new junior school. But there were no teachers until two were appointed who had completed a one-year emergency training scheme (one of the uses of the huts at Wimpole Park).

Now Longstanton is bracing itself for another population explosion with proposals for a new town to be built on the old airfield site – itself in the headlines through the discovery of wartime bombs.

Memories 19th October 2005, by Mike Petty

The discovery of wartime bombs at Oakington airfield and their subsequent detonation has special resonance for Cyril Marsters of West Dereham near King's Lynn. During the war his father was appointed stationmaster at Wilburton, one of the stops on the Grunty Fen line from Ely to St Ives.

It was not really much of a responsibility. The line had already been closed to passenger traffic and only three freight trains passed through each day. The previous porter, office boy and signalman had been dispensed with and it was virtually a one-man operation. The morning milk and parcels train arrived at eight, two hours later came a goods train bringing any freight that had been consigned to the station and in the late afternoon another would arrive to take away loaded wagons back to Ely and the main line.

There were no signals: you knew when the train was expected and kept eyes and ears opened when it approached, making sure that the crossing gates on the minor road were closed in time. Only one day it was a near thing. Cyril's father had been taken to hospital and the relief stationmaster could only get to Wilburton by train, which meant somebody had to ensure the gates were open to allow it to get there.

This was a doddle, something that could be entrusted to the bright twelve-year old lad. Each morning he got up early and did his duty. But one morning it was foggy and he could not see along the line. Any sound was muffled by the mist but he knew the train should be near and it must be time to close the gates. Cyril had shut one when he heard a clanking in the fog and could see the small locomotive – now transformed into a speedy monster – bearing down on him. If he ran he would be hit by the heavy timbers of the gate as it shattered them, there was no option but to use every ounce of strength in his body to slam the gate shut just in time. The engine driver rushed back; he had seen the gates open just in front of him and feared the lad must have been crushed. It was the last time Cyril did that job! [SCAN OF WILBURTON STATION SHOWING THE CROSSING GATES; SCAN OF LOCOMOTIVE LIKE THAT WHICH NEARLY CRUSHED CYRIL]

But it was his brother Arthur's keen hearing that prevented a greater tragedy. At breakfast one morning in the autumn of 1940 he told his mother he had heard a strange noise in the night; something had scraped across the roof of the house. But there was nothing to be seen and it was dismissed as a dream.

A few weeks later their dad was helping to load a wagon with potatoes when he spotted a light-coloured object lying in a field. It was a large piece of cloth that turned out to be a parachute. Whatever or whoever had descended on it had disappeared into the sticky mud. It could not have been a man – it must have been a mine!

Dad phoned the police, the police called the military and everybody was told to evacuate. But the afternoon train was due and it was too late to stop it. Several trains had already passed without incident but this one came and left extremely gently.

Now it was time for everybody in the vicinity to get out and Cyril and his family were to some nights in St Peter's Hall while the bomb disposal people went to work. As with Oakington the bomb would have to be detonated where it lay.

When they were allowed to return they found the roof of the station had been punctured by falling debris, ceilings had cracked and buried in their settee was a thick piece of shrapnel four inches long. The blast had left a crater that looked large enough to take two of the nearby semi-detached cottages. It remained a reminder of their close encounter with a German bomb until a year later when a gang of Italian Prisoners of War arrived to fill it in. The one British soldier in charge seemed very relaxed about it all, even strolling off leaving his rifle propped up by the gate! But who would want to escape from Grunty Fen back to war-torn Europe?

Cyril moved on to other railway positions; he was a signaller and porter at Ely for a while, then a move to Cambridge. But it's his memories as a boy on a branch line that he has now committed to print, adding a new insight into wartime Cambridgeshire.

'Boy on a branch: a King's Lynn and Isle of Ely boyhood' by Cyril Marsters is published by the Horsley Press – ISBN 0 9524493 1 5 at

What do you remember of 1968? The answer is probably not very much.

Students were revolting: there were demonstrations at visits by Enoch Powell and Dennis Healey which led to calls for a curb on student political demonstrations. The German revolutionary 'Red' Rudi Dutschke came to Cambridge for treatment to a bullet wound received in Berlin. He was offered place at the University but the Home Office refused him permission to stay. Dons protested and the Cambridge Students Union mounted its first-ever national march in London. When the Home Secretary, Reginald Maudlin came to Cambridge to discuss it nobody would provide a room except the Leys School where police mounted the biggest security exercise ever seen in Cambridge to protect him.

Other University students were amongst those fighting the proposed demolition of the Cheddars Lane Sewage Pumping station, newly redundant after the new electric Riverside pump had opened. It was later to become the Cambridge Museum of Technology.

In Cambridge City Centre plans for the Lion Yard redevelopment were stalled after the Government stopped the council borrowing money; it would be a derelict site for 120 years councillors warned. But later that year the basic outline of the present scheme was accepted & Arup Associates were commissioned to prepare it in detail. [SCAN OF THE LION YARD SITE c1968]

There was change too within the University with the opening of the new History Faculty library; it was a year late and it leaked but won major architectural awards for its innovative design. Kings College chapel reopened after a major restoration with the painting of the Adoration of the Magi now displayed in its new setting as an altarpiece.

1968 also saw the opening of the Howard Mallett youth club but for Phil Cheesmur from Linton it was the year he and his other prefect mates at Chesterton Community College posed for a group photo. He still remembers their names: back row Richard Crane, Doug Webdell, Brain Dunn, Mike Jones, Dave Thornton, Trevor Amiss, Malcolm Taylor, Robert Fell; front row John Munden, Wally Esau, Phil Cheesmur, Mark Hill-Tout and Keith Lloyd.

Now he would love to meet them again at a reunion on 12th November at the college in Gilbert Road. The building will be open from four o'clock for former pupils to look round with a disco and bar starting at 7.30pm You can phone him on Cambridge 743352 or email trebor30@tiscali.co.uk [SCAN OF CHESTERTON SCHOOL PREFECTS]

Memories 26th October 2005, by Mike Petty

There was some mild embarrassment at the Quay Mill Hotel on Friday evening where enthusiasts from around the world, including Australia, Germany, Holland and America, gathered for an International Conference of Slide-rule Collectors. For the welcoming brochure referred to the celebrations for the Battle of Trafalgar fought – according to their calculations - 250 years ago. But then who remembers how to operate slide-rules anyway!

Elsewhere this weekend it was the 200th anniversary that was marked with beacons, services and parades. But in Cambridge in October 1905 its centenary was something of a low-key affair.

True there were flags on public buildings and special sermons in Cambridge churches. The preacher at Great St Mary told his congregation that although the introduction of steam had revolutionised the art of naval warfare it still required the same qualities of pluck, grit, hardihood and determination from the fighters. But he then pointed out those very qualities had applied to the handful of Boers who had so embarrassed the British army in South Africa a few years earlier.

Nelson's final words, 'Thank God, I have done my duty' were probably echoed by the Mayor and corporation as they returned from the service. The commemoration had passed off peaceably. To have organised any large civic celebrations so near Bonfire Night would have been tantamount to inviting major disturbances from the University undergraduates and town youths.

But they were determined to grasp the occasion anyway and the police were ready for them.

Cambridge Market Hill was the traditional battle site for here there were wooden stalls that could easily be consigned to a bonfire, and it wouldn't be a rag without a bonfire. But police kept the crowds on the move so they headed off into Peas Hill and Bene't Street where an initial skirmish occurred. Then the students sneaked down King's Parade and St Mary's Passage to attack the Hill from that direction – but the police were waiting and they were driven back. Other attempts from other directions were also foiled.

Seeing which way the wind blew the mob retreated to the post office at the Sidney Street end of Petty Cury where, the News reported, 'two young men in caps and gowns – if one might hazard a guess they were Frenchmen, despite their rakish air – assumed the leadership'. They were joined by town lads who told them where to find a good supply of wood. Gathering a few kindred spirits the excited pair shouted 'Nelson' and headed off towards the Carlyle Road recreation ground. But to get there they had to cross Jesus Green footbridge and here a contingent of county police blocked their charges. [CARTOON OF AN UNDERGRADUATE ATTACK ON JESUS GREEN BRIDGE]

The students were not to be denied; two fires were started on Midsummer Common, one near Park Parade where half the houses were deprived of their railings to feed the flames. When police arrived on the scene and used their belts to beat off the undergraduates they fled towards Auckland Road and the fences of Brunswick Place. The two police constables stationed there were unable to combat so large a force of attackers and fled leaving house owners to defend their property.

Another attack was mounted on the houses surrounding Parker's Piece but the residents of Melbourn Place were used to such invasions and rallied to guard their railings. One garden seemed unprotected so the undergraduates set to work to remove its wooden fence only to beat a hasty retreat in the face of an infuriated Amazon who rushed out, swinging her broom. She then stood guard, lashing out at anybody who came within range. [CARTOON OF THE LADY WITH HER BROOM]

Her example was followed elsewhere until the mob having scoured Newmarket Road and Fitzroy Street - off which lay Nelson Street - quietly drifted away.

But the undergraduates did gain one major success; they may not have stormed a French man-of-war but they did seize a Cambridge horse tram going about its patrol in St Andrew's Street. The driver and conductor were powerless to repel an invasion by such a large number of undergraduates and soon the tram was one black mass of struggling beings. But despite it all the poor old horse did what his company expected and continued its stately plod towards the station. [CARTOON OF AN UNDERGRADUATE ATTACK ON THE TRAM]

By now however the streets were being patrolled by police reinforced by that most-feared of warriors, the University proctors and their bulldogs, and numbers of undergraduates were handed over to the authorities. The battle was over.

Next morning when the police reviewed the scene they were satisfied. By the normal scale of things this had been a comparatively sedate affair. Through their careful policy of defence-in-depth and the strategic placement of their forces they had avoided what would have been a major blow to their reputation. They had allowed the enemy roam the common to the south of the river but had denied them the ultimate prize.

By keeping them away from Victoria Bridge they had prevented a double battle of Trafalgar – this one of Trafalgar Lane and Trafalgar Road, Chesterton [SCAN OF TRAFALGAR ROAD – SEEK A BETTER ONE IN THE NEWS LIBRARY].

NOTE – THE CARTOONS ARE CAPTIONED 'NOVEMBER 5TH' BUT ACTUALLY APPLY TO THE TRAFALGAR NIGHT CELEBRATIONS

Memories 2nd November 2005, by Mike Petty

I was grateful for the presence of male members of the St John Ambulance Brigade last week. I had been invited to give a talk to a meeting organised by Norfolk Federation of Women's Institutes held in a sports hall at Wymondham College and when scanning the upturned faces of over 450 Norfolk ladies it was comforting to know that help was there if needed. In the event all passed off without the need for trained medical assistance.

Then a day or two later Ted Mudd from Cambridge shared with me his experiences of serving in the Brigade. He writes: "I joined the St. John Ambulance just before the Second World War. The Headquarters in those days was in the Falcon Yard, just beyond the Macfisheries shop and during the blackouts the smell of fish continually surrounding it night and day was a useful aid to its location. Here we worked our way through the St. John Handbook from beginning to the end, memorising every detail required to administer good First Aid. We passed our examinations and were issued with our uniforms which were second-hand, but fortunately fitted quite well.

"When the War started the St. John Ambulance continued to provide service for a variety of occasions such as cinema screenings and football matches though some other community events, such as fairs and fetes, ceased temporarily. Our training continued as before, but now many of us found ourselves required to also become involved in Civil Defence. First Aid

Posts were established around Cambridge and I was attached to the one in Auckland Road, just off Newmarket Road.

“I spent several nights each week in blue denim uniform with civilian duty gas mask and an army-type helmet. When the sirens sounded we mounted our bicycles and rode to our First Aid Post. We often slept on tubular wire mesh stretchers covered with blankets and pillows or sometimes on the operating table which could be made quite comfortable.

“We were also involved in helping evacuees arriving at the Railway Station while many civilian patients from London Hospitals arrived on stretcher in special trains who we helped get to hospitals. Blood was needed and as many donors as possible were asked to volunteer. My colleague and I spent several days helping to move blood supplies and assist where required.

“The First Aid course was deemed insufficient due to the difficult demands at the time so we took Nursing and Midwifery courses to extend our usefulness. The noise and stress of war caused premature births and miscarriages, both of which needed our help. There were also far more cases of fainting in general, due to extreme cases of shock. Some of these were in Cinemas where 'emotional' faints often occurred. At one time when Chipperfield's Circus was in Cambridge; I had to administer first aid to a ballerina who had damaged her ankle by falling from a horse and also treat an animal-keeper who was clawed by a bear.

“I worked at the Unicam factory on Arbury Road where because I had First Aid knowledge, I was called upon to give unpaid medical assistance. Many people who were working there for the first time received cuts because of the different types of machinery, sharp cutters and materials unknown to them in normal circumstances. The factory had a look-out person on the roof whose job was to sound a klaxon noise whenever enemy aircraft were heading our way. This was the signal for staff to take cover under the workbenches until the all-clear was sounded. On one particularly hot summer's day when we had many women workers of all ages in the factory the sudden alert and extreme heat caused several to faint under the benches with stress. First Aid was called for; smelling salts and care were needed for some who had injured themselves falling down in their haste to take cover.

“St. John Ambulance men and women were very much involved in many ways during the war. Very little has been published in this year's anniversary of the War and I feel their varied and considerable efforts should be recognised and not forgotten. It is still an important organisation that continues to support the community by being present at a variety of events, venues and situations”

As Ted says such groups were established in various villages and I have a picture of the combined St John Ambulance and Red Cross group that was based at Stretham post office. [SCAN OF STRETHAM RED CROSS GROUP]. Roy Chamberlain from Foxton also served in the St John Ambulance and has lent me a picture of them in action during a motorcycle scramble in the 1950s. [SCAN OF ST JOHN AMBULANCEMEN WITH STRETCHER]. If you have other memories then please share them.

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The picture of policemen on their motor bikes has brought memories for several readers. Shirley Langley, from Cambridge identifies them as Fred Boon, Harold Holden and her father, Fred (always called "Herb") Ward. The photograph was taken when they went to the Triumph factory in Coventry to collect the new red motor cycles. Her dad retired in 1948, so she reckons the photograph was taken towards the end of the war, or just after it was over. Connie Baker from Gt Shelford has good reason to remember Herb as he was the best man at her wedding on 9th August 1941. Her late husband, Chief Inspector Phil Baker rode one of the

motorcycles for a time. Roger Coleman from Cambridge does not know the men, but does know the bikes. They are Triumph 500cc 'Speed Twins' with consecutive 'FCE' Cambridge registrations dating from the end of 1946, early 1947. They incorporate features introduced just after the war and would have been a major achievement for the police to have taken delivery of such desirable machines at the time, as vehicles were so scarce. [SCAN OF PHOTO OF POLICE MOTORCYCLISTS]

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What do you remember of 1968? Phil Cheesmur, who now lives in Linton, was struggling to maintain order at Chesterton Community College in Gilbert Road. He was one of the school prefects who took time off to pose for their photograph – a copy of which he's sent me. He still remembers their names: back row Richard Crane, Doug Webdell, Brain Dunn, Mike Jones, Dave Thornton, Trevor Amiss, Malcolm Taylor, Robert Fell; front row John Munden, Wally Esau, Phil Cheesmur, Mark Hill-Tout and Keith Lloyd. Now he would love to meet them again at a reunion on 12th November at the college in Gilbert Road. The building will be open from four o'clock for former pupils to look round with a disco and bar starting at 7.30pm You can phone him on Cambridge 743352 or email trebor30@tiscali.co.uk [SCAN OF CHESTERTON SCHOOL PREFECTS]

Memories 9th November 2005, by Mike Petty

As Armistice Day approaches once more so memories of the now distant days of the Second World War are revived for many people who just cannot help remembering.

Recently I had the privilege of sharing some of the events of Cambridge during the years 1939 to 1945 with retired members of Cambridge University Engineering Department. What little I told them was more than matched by what great knowledge they themselves had.

They told me of the wartime spy who had mixed with refugees, of firewatching in Holland Street, of the bombing of Sturton Street chapel and a horrific incident in Hills Road. A man and his wife were sheltering near the Globe pub during one particular raid in January 1941 when the blast from an exploding bomb killed her and ripped his arm off.

Now Simon Brook from St Paul's church is seeking your help to add further to the details of such incidents in that parish. The memorial plaque recording the names of those who died has become illegible and the church has obtained funding to restore it. But there are several names that are just that – names and initials - and he would like to know more.

Simon says that on Thursday 16 January 1941, following troop movements on the ground, enemy aircraft launched a sudden bombing raid which left a path of destruction and loss of life in its wake. Two hundred incendiaries fell on the Gonville Place area. Some penetrated the Perse School for Boys, setting the building ablaze. At that time the school was located opposite the Catholic Church, whose clock was also hit and put out of action until the end of the war.

The bombing caused mayhem and destroyed buildings along the north end of Hills Road. Miraculously, only three people died during the raid with many bombs falling on open spaces. One bomb damaged the Blantyre Home for the Blind and shattered the windows in St Paul's Church. The east window, which depicted the crucifixion scene, was irreparably damaged.

The raid on 'An East Anglian Town' was reported in the Cambridge Daily News, although due to censorship they could not report all the details; the impact on St Paul's was mentioned

briefly: “a famous church was among other places where incendiaries fell without causing damage”

But at the time the wrecked building was a shocking sight to all who knew it in its former glory. Overnight the quietly confident mood of the local community had been transformed to one of extreme fear and insecurity. However, led by their curate, Bill Lee, the congregation was determined to continue to worship in the church - now a rather gloomy place because of the boarded-up windows and the limited supply of electricity.

The church railings were removed to be melted down for the war effort and a firewatching team was based in the church tower. Their log book from 12 September 1941 until 30 August 1943 has survived and is now in the care of the Cambridgeshire Record Office.

Amid all the activity during the clean-up, few people noticed two visitors who dropped in to an evening service shortly after the air raid. Both were Canadian Protestant chaplains, Bob Sneyd and his friend Ray McCleary, who were serving in East Anglia.

Bob was assigned to the Second Canadian Infantry Division. When on leave, he would often take the opportunity to worship in an English church. He had a passion for stained glass and would collect pieces from bomb-damaged churches. Before leaving St Paul's, he picked up several pieces of brightly coloured glass from the east window and took them away with him. But his visit was to have an even more significant and lasting meaning that would come to light only decades later.

Once the war was over, the most important matter for St Paul's was to erect a memorial to their parishioners. They decided it should be placed outside the building on the west wall of the tower, for all to see from Hills Road and in 1953 the former Curate, Bill Lee, was invited back to unveil it.

It was not until December 1958 that the War Damage Commission authorised the replacement of the wrecked east window by a new one depicting the ascended Jesus speaking to Saul, who after his conversion on the road to Damascus became St Paul. With the church and its congregation having put the war years behind them, the brief visit by the Canadian chaplain and his friend could have been forgotten forever.

But years later a Canadian television crew turned up at St Paul's unexpectedly at the end of a morning service, to enquire about the bombing of the east window. They were working on a documentary about the Canadian chaplain Bob Sneyd. Bob had taken all those salvaged pieces of broken glass back home with him where they were made up into a new stained glass window in a Toronto church. Among them was the head of a figure from the crucifixion scene in the wrecked east window from St Paul's.

That fragment had especial memories for Bob. Back in the 1940s, about twenty girls from the Cottage Home, which later became a Barnardo Home, used to worship regularly at the evening service in St Paul's Church. During his brief visit Bob met its Warden and later that year he and his wife adopted one of the girls, Joyce, then just seven years old.

In December 1941, Bob had watched Joyce sail with an escort to Canada where her new family was waiting for her. After the war Bob returned too and every time he attended that Toronto church and looked at those pieces of broken glass from a crucifixion scene it reminded him of the way wartime tragedy had brought him a daughter

If you can help add to the war record of St Paul's then please contact Simon Brook at the church or email brook215@ntlworld.com

SCANS OF THE WARTIME REPORT ON THE BOMBING FROM THE CDN 16TH
JANUARY 1941

VIEW OF ST PAUL'S CHURCH, HILLS ROAD IN MORE PEACEFUL TIMES, c1910
THERE ARE OTHER VIEWS OF ST PAUL'S IN THE NEWS LIBRARY FILES

PHOTOS OF ST PAUL'S WINDOWS, DETAIL OF THE HEAD FROM THE CHURCH IN
TORONTO, THE CANADIAN CHAPLAIN BOB SNEYD AND HIS DAUGHTER JOYCE
TO BE EMAILED TO NEWSDESK BY SIMON BROOK

Memories 16th November 2005, by Mike Petty

The commemoration services at the weekend were a poignant reminder of the impact of war on people and places. But thanks to those who fought, our county has remained free from the trauma of seeing armies storm into our village high streets to wreak havoc on our communities.

But it was not always so, as two new books on Burwell remind us. Back in the 1100s we were suffering from the ravages of a civil war between two contenders to the English throne, King Stephen and Queen Matilda. And in a period of anarchy powerful men will take the opportunity to pillage and rape. In those days the villain-in-chief was the Earl of Essex, Geoffrey de Mandeville who with an army of mercenaries seized the Island of Ely, drove the monks from Ramsey Abbey and plundered, ransacked and burnt Cambridge. Nobody was safe as he laid waste to large areas of the countryside; farmers feared to plough and sow, so famine added to the hardship. He did not hesitate to use every type of torture to extract ransom from anybody unfortunate enough to fall into his hands.

King Stephen could not get his armies through the marshy fenland so he set about to construct a ring of castles around the edge in an attempt to keep de Mandeville confined. One of these was at Burwell but before it was completed Geoffrey attacked. During the battle that followed he raised his helmet to survey the scene and an archer seized the opportunity to take aim; his arrow merely nicked Geoffrey's ear, but the wound turned septic and he died at Mildenhall. With his death peace returned to the countryside.

But then in 1851 the invaders were back, and once more Burwell people put up a struggle against them. The issue was land that villagers claimed belonged to the poor; when a court ruled differently they refused to accept the judgement. The authorities saw no option but to send in a strong body of police from Scotland Yard to impose order. News of their approach spread and the village crier called on everybody to 'come this day to do his duty'. Negotiations took place at the Fox Inn during which one villager threatened the police superintendent with a shovel and a magistrate produced his pistol, threatening to shoot unless he dropped it. Despite their efforts the police could not enforce the court's ruling and there was nothing for it but to send for the soldiers.

Hundreds of Burwell men assembled on the disputed land prepared to resist anybody – except the red-coats. Memories of earlier attacks on the poor at Littleport back in 1816 were still fresh in their minds and they knew they could not resist in the face of professional troops. The first to arrive was a contingent of the 48th Regiment of Foot to be followed by the cavalry of the 11th Hussars. Now with army backing the police could arrest the ringleaders and drag them to the Fox before conveying them by omnibus to Cambridge castle to face trial. Peace restored, the horse-soldiers galloped away but the other troops remained for month or so to ensure order.

The incident was reported at great length in the Cambridge Chronicle whose editorial hoped this would change the character of the labourers of Burwell. Hitherto the village had been

proverbial for a having a large number of idle and disorderly persons who never seemed to work but were invariably in the public house.

But the same stories go around and around. In April 1892 the paper was reporting that ruffianly gangs had taken over to the village such an extent that nobody dare give information against them. Shepherds and farm servants ran the risk of assault if they ventured to enter a protest against acts of wilful violence and it was as difficult for the Queen's writ to run in Burwell as in some of the more turbulent portions of Ireland. There was an urgent need for more police especially during Newmarket races when every available man had to be drafted in to that corner of the county, leaving the lawless elements in other parts an almost open field for their violent incursions. Given some updating of the language it could almost be a quote from a modern issue of the News.

Tracking down information on such activities is not easy. William Franklin has spent months trawling through ancient documents in the University Library and County Record Office to produce his scholarly book, 'Burwell, the history of a fen-edge village' which principally concentrates on the earlier period. It has been published by Heritage Marketing and sells for £17.95, ISBN 0 9544456 9 4.

But a team of many people have had a hand in compiling the 'Burwell Chronicle' with its stories of village life. First there were the reporters who sent their despatches to the Cambridge Chronicle's office where editors and printers produced that week's paper. Then somebody made sure that a copy of each issue was preserved and bound until eventually the massive volumes ended up in the Cambridge Cambridgeshire Collection at Lion Yard Library. In the 1970s a major project was initiated to index the news for every village in Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely between 1770 and 1899, unlocking a wealth of material never previously available. Then in the 1980s Sue Burgess sat down to laboriously copy out each Burwell story. Her notes found their way to members of the Burwell History Society for typing, checking, annotating, indexing each name, securing funding and eventually publishing. It is now on sale in the Post Office for £8.95

If you have a Burwell connection, or even if you don't, then next weekend is a good time to visit. For on Sunday 20th November the Burwell Museum Trust is staging its annual fair at the Village College from 10.30 am to raise money to continue their work in preserving the heritage of this sometimes-turbulent village

7646 - THE SITE OF BURWELL CASTLE, SCENE OF A BATTLE IN 1144
86.164 – GRANNY DOE AND HER HUSBAND WITH A STALL OUTSIDE THEIR
SHOP AT BURWELL FEAST IN 1926, ON SATURDAY THE MUSEUM TRUST ARE
HAVING THEIR ANNUAL FAIR
5507 – W. GUYATT, MINERAL WATER MANUFACTURER AT BURWELL IN THE
1960S – THE BOTTLES ARE ON DISPLAY AT THE MUSEUM

Memories 23rd November 2005, by Mike Petty

The appointment of the new High Sheriff marks a continuation of an office that is now largely ceremonial. The position dates back to before the Norman Conquest and the sheriff was once the king's representative in the country and its principal law enforcement officer

I recall being told by Geoffrey Vinter of Thriplow how he had been High Sheriff at the time when the Government was expected to announce the abolition of hanging any day. He was dining one evening when he received a phone call from the Governor of Bedford Gaol to say

that they were due to execute a prisoner next morning. Should they go ahead or delay for a day or so? Geoffrey advised delay and, as expected, the change in policy was announced and the man lived.

But not all have worked for the benefit of their citizens. In the early days sheriff of Cambridge was responsible for ensuring that the Great Bridge (Magdalene Bridge) was maintained in good repair and raised taxes for this purpose. But an enquiry in 1276 discovered that one had diverted the money to other uses with the result that the bridge became so unsafe that people had to cross by a ferry boat. This was owned by the sheriff who charged people for crossing, pocketing the additional revenue.

Cambridge being Cambridge there have been times when the Sheriff and his deputy have clashed with the University authorities. One such was in 1547 after University proctors had cracked down on 'evil persons in houses of sin' at Stourbridge Fair. They took them to the town gaol on the Market Hill, but the Mayor refused to hand over the keys to let them lock their prisoners up. So they hauled them up to Cambridge Castle where they left them in custody only for the Mayor's son to let them out again. At this the University sent letters of complaint to Archbishop Cranmer and the Mayor together with the undersheriff (who happened to be his son-in-law) were hauled before the Privy Council to answer for their actions. Subsequently sheriffs had to swear an oath to defend the peace and privileges of the University

Some light on the inner workings of the University's own rule-enforcement machinery was revealed by David Bennett, who served as one of the University Constables in 1984-85. Known by graduates and dons alike as 'Bulldogs' the constables traditionally needed to be 'fleet of foot and strong in arm' as they escorted the Proctors, the University disciplinary officers, to apprehend scholars committing misdemeanours in breach of University regulations.

But their role too was largely ceremonial. David described how in his uniform of a dark blue tailcoat, waistcoat and trousers with white shirt, black tie and top-hat, and draped in a cloak with gold buttons, he observed at first hand the various university ceremonials inside the Senate House.

But on one occasion Town and Gown came face to face, and the High Sheriff was part of the act as well.

One morning in March 1985 a University procession left the Senate House en route to the Master's Lodge at Trinity College. Here the constables waited outside together with the University Bedell and Marshall, their maces sparkling in the spring sunshine, while the Vice Chancellor and Proctors entered to meet the High Sheriff (then Major William Birkbeck) and the Circuit Judge who was to hear cases at the Assize Court in the Guildhall and traditionally lodged at Trinity.

Facing them across the courtyard were the Mayor of Cambridge, Councillor Eddie Cowell, in his full regalia together with the Sergeant at Arms, Ken Quick, resplendent in bright red overcoat and top-hat. There too were three bailiffs in long blue cloaks and the town clerk in black gown, white bib and wig and the mace-bearer with the gold mace

As the University party left the Master's Lodge so the Corporation contingent advanced towards them. This time there was no animosity as each raised their respective head-gear in a mark of respect

However the highlight of David's year of office was Sunday 17th March 1985, and a cold night he spent at the ADC Theatre, checking the tickets of those attending a performance that

attracted a large crowd of spectators in the street outside. The press were out in quantity, as were both uniformed and plain-clothed police.

There was some excitement at the arrival of Prince Edward, who turned up on foot and was later to be seen on stage apparently in an intoxicated state – though he was acting. But he was not the main attraction.

The main cheers were reserved for the arrival of a limousine containing both the Queen and Princess Margaret who were attending a Royal Gala evening in aid of charity. David came smartly to attention like a toy soldier, motionless, his eyes fixed as the royal sisters passed by to take their seats. Then he chatted to the chauffeur before the performance ended and it was time to ensure all departed safely before he could take his own farewell and journey home to his wife Linda to share his memories.

Later he set down his experiences in ‘The Office of Constable, a personal account that was distributed to friends and colleagues many of whom attended his funeral service at Comberton last year. [SCAN OF QUEEN, PRINCESS MARGARET AND PRINCE EDWARD OUTSIDE THE ADC THEATRE IN 1985 – THE ORIGINAL IS IN THE NEWS LIBRARY]
[SCAN OF DAVID BENNETT AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE SENATE HOUSE]

Vivian Drake of Cambridge has lent me photographs recalling a more significant Royal event in Cambridge in October 1955 when the Queen became the first monarch to visit the corporation in their Guildhall. The pictures show the scene in the council chamber and the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh with the Mayor, Ald E.T. Halnan, and other officials including the Recorder A. Melford Stevenson, Town Clerk Alan Swift and Chief Constable B. N. Bebbington at the entrance to the Guildhall. [SCANS OF QUEEN AND DUKE OF EDINBURGH IN GUILDHALL AND AT ENTRANCE WITH OFFICIALS AS NAMED]

SCAN OF A JUDGE’S PROCESSION AT TRINITY COLLEGE 1960S – MAY BE BETTER IN NEWS LIBRARY

Memories 30th November 2005, by Mike Petty

Christopher Tongue from Abington in Northamptonshire has been stimulated to share his memories of a childhood in Hills Road, Cambridge during the war.

He writes: “I was born at the Brunswick Nursing Home, which faced Midsummer Common, during an afternoon snowstorm in March 1937, then taken to our newly-occupied home at 6, Hills Road (now Carter Jonas). This was a three-storied elegant dwelling with steps up to the front door, high ceilings, large windows and with a semi-basement entered by more stone steps next to and below the front garden.

“My mother used the downstairs front room as a fitting room, for she was a ‘Court Dressmaker’, with a high-class clientele which included peeresses, and the wives of college dons, town businessmen and many a spinster lady. Elsewhere was a workroom with several seamstresses. My mother’s name, Constance E. Pyle, was spelt out in gold lettering across the façade of the building. The rest of the house was entirely ours and a nursery was prepared for me in the basement front room. My mother’s busy life was made easier by a daily housemaid and cook, who lived elsewhere.

“My father was employed in a merchant bank in the City of London, travelling up to the capital and back six days a week by train, which was partly the reason for living near the railway station.

“I cannot claim any unusual early memories, apart from having happy, sweet-producing meetings with my grandfather, Robert Pyle, who used to slip into our back garden unannounced by way of a door in our garage facing Union Street. He had been a chimney sweep with his own business, dislodging the soot from many of the college chimneys. Now he lived with his sister Rose and her husband Joe Fairweather who ran the ‘Oak’ public house opposite the Catholic Church.

“The outbreak of the Second World War passed me by though I do remember the blackout curtains made for the nursery windows, enlivened with stencilled scenes of Dutchmen and windmills. Apparently for a short time I was removed from the nursery to make way for my father’s sister and two children from London but they returned when enemy action failed to occur and it was restored to me. I was found a live-in full-time nursemaid who had been professionally trained for the job. She came from Oakington and has kept in touch ever since. She tells me she saw, through the window of the nursery half-way below ground, the tramping feet and legs of the careworn soldiers returning from Dunkirk.

“Next to my nursery was the dank and narrow brick-lined wine cellar, covered with flaking whitewash. Into this claustrophobic place the whole household would descend in dressing gowns, whenever there was an air-raid warning. I never really understood what was going on, but was very bored.

“My nursemaid was treated as one of the family, and slept in a box-room at the top of the house. But she was downstairs with me when the bombs fell on the night of January 16th, 1941. We were not in the wine cellar but in the nursery when the blast blew out the plate glass window of the house facing the main road, and she threw herself over my bed to protect me as shards of glass showered over us and embedded themselves in the bedclothes. Outside in the street, and in view from our house, the Perse School was burning fiercely.

“My mother became an air raid warden for the Cintra House stretch along the main road and I remember the cache of stirrup pumps and sand buckets. She got to know the publican of the ‘Globe’ quite well – a Mr Ward who was a ‘sporting man’ with a taste for horse racing (and betting), hare coursing and dogs. He left his wife to run the pub and they kept exotic parrots with mixed vocabularies, in the back room. I recall the unique beery smell he exuded, which was foreign to my experience.

“From June 1940 my father, though still working in London, had joined the Home Guard and disappeared every Sunday morning. I have bright memories of his return home in uniform for a traditional Sunday lunch, seated at the dining room table with all the cutlery and glass shining. In 1942, to his great chagrin, he was called up to the regular army.

“Mother’s workpeople often included seamstresses who had fled from Nazi Vienna when the talk I overheard included allusions to a happier life under Franz Joseph and the waltz kings. One of my mother’s ‘girls’ was killed in a Brighton hotel while on a weekend visit.

“When the time came for schooling I merely crossed over Hills Road to the Shrubbery School opposite and when on one occasion I was kept at home because of a childhood illness the headmistress personally delivered to me a jelly to cheer me up. This proved that, although she looked like a witch, wearing her black teacher’s gown on all occasions, she was well disposed to me.

“As time went on the town became full of American servicemen. On one memorable day I joined an eager group of Cambridge children for a party they organised at the ‘Bull Hotel’ in Trumpington Street, where every kind of toy and food was available for our delight. There were presents and parcels and items we had never seen before such as linen discs filled with beans, which were to be thrown about like quoits. It was so bright and colourful after all the prevailing drabness.

“In 1945 with the coming of peace my parents decided to move to a large terraced house in Bateman Street which had lain unoccupied throughout the war because the German architect tenant had been interned or fled back to Germany. We moved into our new dwelling on V.J. Day and became acquainted with our new neighbours by dancing round the bonfire which had been built in the middle of the road, regardless of traffic”

SCAN OF HILLS ROAD IN 1920S; SHOWING THE HOUSE MENTIONED – NOW
CARTER JONAS – NEAR THE CHURCH
SCAN OF AMERICANS OUTSIDE THE BULL HOTEL BESIDE KING’S COLLEGE

I WILL CALL IN TUESDAY MORNING TO SEARCH FOR OTHER PICS OF HILLS
ROAD OR THE OAK PUB, LENSFIELD ROAD

Pauline Garner from Cottenham was sorting through a box of photographs kept by her late father, Sidney Hall, when she came across a snap of the staff of King and Harper who had their garage in Hills Road. It seems to be dated February 1932 – but can anybody recognise any of the faces or share more memories of the firm. [SCAN]

Memories, 7th December 2005, by Mike Petty

With the current interest in archaeology encouraged by programmes such as ‘Time Team’ it is easy to forget that people have been investigating the buried past for generations. But although their discoveries may have been properly written up, less is known about the diggers themselves.

In 1932 a young group of amateur and professional archaeologists, geologists, botanists and geographers gathered in the Upper Parlour of Peterhouse and, like all good University scholars formed themselves into a committee. Unlike many such bodies however the Fenland Research Committee actually did things and for eight years were active in investigating early life in the inhospitable landscape of the fens, the extinct forests which had once covered large tracts of the area and the history of the formation of the North Sea.

Their work heralded a widespread change in manner of approach to archaeological problems in Britain. In addition to introducing new methods such as pollen analysis, the Committee's interdisciplinary co-operation was a forerunner of what has today become an inescapable feature of modern science.

Over time, the Committee's research became widely known and highly respected. At peak membership, 42 specialists drawn from all over England worked on this committee and fruitfully combined the resources of many disciplines.

Local people from Ely and the surrounding villages were vital participants in their activities. One of these was Major Gordon Fowler who was the transport manager for the Ely Beet-sugar Factory. Other names are less well-known: F.M. Walker was interested in Manea,

Wyman Abbott was active in the area around Peterborough and H.L. Bradfer-Lawrence was based near King's Lynn, but who knows more about them?

One of the leading members of the group was the Anglo-Saxon archaeologist, Tom Lethbridge, and before her untimely death his wife, Mrs Mina Lethbridge, gave her friend, Pamela Jane Smith, several unidentified photographs of the Committee's work.

Now Pamela would be extremely grateful if anyone could let her know anything about the some of the pictures, all of which were taken in the fenland area during the 1920s and 1930s.

One of the group's main areas of interest was Peacock's Farm at Shippea Hill where a small sandhill was emerging from the shrinking peat. Excavations revealed remarkable evidence for early occupation of this isolated spot and in the autumn of 1932 delegates to an International Congress held in London journeyed out deep into the fens to view the site. Their visit was photographed, so Pamela knows it happened, but has no further information. [SCAN OF THE VISITORS PEERING INTO A HOLE WHILE THE HARVEST CONTINUES BEHIND THEM]

Not all her pictures are of people deep in trenches; one shows a man and boy standing behind a massive Gunnera plant, but who are they and where was it taken? Another show two fenmen operating what seems like a pump [SCAN OF MAN, BOY AND GIANT PLANT] [SCAN OF TWO FEN MEN WITH WHAT SEEMS TO BE A PUMP – WHO WERE THEY AND WHAT ARE THEY DOING]

If you can help identify them then email Pamela at pjs1011@cam.ac.uk or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch.

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Various readers have identified faces in last week's picture of the staff of King and Harper's garage in Hills Road. Dot Sadler from Stretham worked there as a cashier just after the war and recognised the foreman, Billy Walton, in the white coat, Reg Golding in glasses and long overcoat on the right and Tommy Hart, an electrician. Diann Rouse spotted her dad, Jim Adams, in the centre of the back row, the shorter of the two lads wearing caps. At the time of the photograph he would have been a 16-year-old apprentice. Jim died in October of this year at the age of 89. [SCAN OF KING AND HARPER FROM LAST WEEK]

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D.A. Winter and his wife have been sorting some photographs found amongst his late brother's effects and come across several that puzzle them. They know that his wife Doris was in service with the Heffer family until she had to leave to nurse her mother about 1938 as she had an inlaid games table which they had which she said came from them, perhaps on her leaving. They believe the snaps may have been taken at 'Willowbrook', in Chaucer Road, Cambridge and include the house, the gardener, a lady and gentleman who could be servants and three females, perhaps members of the Heffer family.

'Rus in Urbe', the history of Chaucer and Latham roads, shows it was indeed home to George Heffer, a senior cashier at Barclay's Bank in Cambridge, his mother Mary and two unmarried sisters, Kate and Lucy. They were later joined by another unmarried sister, Emma, who had been matron of a nursing home in Newmarket Road. She often took her parrot along when shopping, going to the head of the queue at Fitzbillies pastry shop. But can you name the gardener? [SCAN OF WILLOWBROOK, 8 CHAUCER ROAD WITH THE HEFFER SISTERS BUT WHO IS THE GARDENER – SCAN]

Memories 14th December 2005, by Mike Petty

Violet Ryder, nee Payne, has sent me her memories of the British Red Cross during the war which also give an insight into working conditions at the Cambridge Instrument Company at that time.

She writes: "If I could have chosen a career for myself, I would have liked to have trained as a nurse. However, my mother was a widow and we could not afford to pay for the books, uniform and exams. So I started work as a housemaid in a big house near Girton College in 1940. I had just two half days off a week, working from breakfast to suppertime, for seven shillings and sixpence a week. From this I was expected to buy my own uniform, cap and apron. I was very pleased to escape this life when later on in that year I was called up for War Work and went to work at the Cambridge Scientific Instrument Company.

"I started in 'Shop K' making jam thermometers for Chivers & Robertson. The casing was either metal or silver plated and if the mercury inside escaped it attacked our gold wedding rings. When this happened we had to go to Dr Jessop to have them cleaned. Balls of mercury often rolled about on the bench, but we were ignorant of any danger they might have caused us. We also packed the thermometer sheaths in strings of asbestos, again with no knowledge of the potential danger. I later moved to the plating shop and remember one day having a lump of hair pulled out by a machine, luckily my hair was quite bushy, so the loss wasn't too obvious.

"It was while working there that I joined their first aid team led by Mr Dean, who had been in the Army Medical Corp. I also joined the British Red Cross Society and am still a member more than 60 years later. After work and on Sundays I went on Red Cross duty at Emmanuel College sick bay for RAF air men, the Leys School sick bay and the Gog Magog sick bay for London evacuees. In 1940 there was no penicillin, the wounds of the injured had nets over them to try to prevent infection by stopping the flies going on them. Another Red Cross duty at this time was helping at the blood donor sessions at the laboratories in Tennis Court Road. These were supervised by an old army doctor, who expected everyone to be brave, no matter how rough he was with them"

Violet has sent me two photos, one of the Instrument Company First Aid Detachment in February 1942 and another of some of the same people taken 50 years later. It shows Jim Laughton, Ron Ryder Bill Askham, Reg Smith, on the back row with Violet, Iris Christmas, Cyril Ryder (Violet's husband) and Dicky Luff in front. [SCAN OF THE INSTRUMENT COMPANY FIRST AID DETACHMENT FEB 1942 AND A REUNION 50 YEARS LATER, VIOLET IS SECOND FROM THE LEFT IN THE MIDDLE ROW OF THE OLD PICTURE AND ON THE LEFT FRONT ROW IN THE LATER ONE]

Old school photographs are very interesting to the people who were actually at that school at that time but many of the faces have now been forgotten, even on snaps taken in more recent years. So on first glance a picture of Ely Market Street Infants class taken 105 years ago is unlikely to mean much to anyone. Keith Moore of Hadstock found it when he bought some old photo frames in a junk shop at Saffron Walden. But what makes this one very special is that it includes not only the names of the children but also where they were living. There are so many names that are still around today including two Morris brothers from West End both of whom were killed in the Great War, C. Garner and E. Holland lived nearby in West Fen Road, E. Barwick near E. Houghton in Fore Hill, A. Lemon in Broad Street, A. Haylock in Market Street, Ted Wayman and E. King in Silver Street and C. Woodbine in Fieldside. The teachers, Miss Rickwood and Miss Burchall are on the back row. If you see any old family members and would like a copy of the picture then you can phone Keith on 01223 892704 or email keithgeraldmoore@hotmail.com [SCAN OF ELY MARKET STREET SCHOOL

INFANTS CLASS 1900] [SCAN OF FORE HILL SHOWING CHILDREN, TWO SCHOOLCHILDREN E. HOUGHTON AND E. BARWICK LIVED HERE]

Memories 21st December 2005, by Mike Petty

Reminiscences of times past have come in from three villages across the county.

Joe Newell has focussed on Holywell-cum-Needlingworth where he was born in 1921; he spent his childhood at Manor Farm, then a mixed arable and dairy farm struggling through the agricultural depression of the inter-war years. Joe has gathered together a number of photographs and paintings, some by Robert Winter who lived most of his life in the village and whose works now sell at Sotherbys and others by Arthur Anderson Fraser

Amongst the snapshots is one of Norah Tabbitt with her hoop, she was later to become a teacher at Over school, crossing the river by the ferry with her bicycle thus saving at least seven miles on the alternative road route. Fred Tabbitt was herdsman to the Holywell pigs, an acknowledged expert on the breeding programme he travelled to Europe with stock though he had no formal education. Elsewhere David Tabbitt is shown weighing up fruit in 2lb chip baskets at a time when whole families would be on the go, dawn till dusk, seven days a week to gather the crop. [SCAN OF COVER OF JOE NEWELL BOOK; SCAN OF OVERCOTE FERRY THAT NORAH TABBITT USED ON HER JOURNEY TO SCHOOL]

The nearby Houghton and Wyton Local History Society have also been busy on the publications front, though they have not produced a book. Instead they have commissioned two CD-Roms to open up the past to present researchers. One is a genealogical survey of the Goodman family who lived at Elm in the late 17th-century. It was compiled and published by Albert Goodman in 1911 in a limited typescript edition.

In almost any country village any family which may have been very numerous at one period, will be found to be almost entirely extinct, or lost sight of a hundred or so years afterwards. Albert gives one explanation. "Upon our father becoming a widower he entered into a mutual agreement with Mrs. Matthew Tebbutt, a widow to whom he had previously paid his addresses, that whichever of the two families should first become total orphans should be taken to live under the care of the other. So it was that the Goodman children took up abode with Mrs Tebbutt, her son and three daughters at her house which then had had to be enlarged by the addition at the back of a large sitting room with two bedrooms above.

Albert's sister Mary, who married a Tebbutt, always signed herself 'Mary Goodman Tebbutt', and he had several nephews and nieces with that surname who had twice as much Goodman blood in their veins as Tebbutt.

Things could go wrong, even in those days. At one wedding the minister had forgotten the certificate so Charles Tebbutt galloped on his fast brown horse to St. Ives and back to obtain it. There was no way the service could be eked out so long and so the congregation started the wedding breakfast, returning to the chapel to complete the ceremony once the paperwork had arrived.

The Tebbutts also feature on a second disk which includes notes on Potto Brown, the Huntingdonshire non-conformist who financed the building of chapels and churches in the county, together with the reminiscences of his elder son, Bateman Brown, and notes on the Union Chapel at Houghton. All were issued more than 100 years ago and have become very rare, now they can be consulted on a computer. [SCAN OF PAINTING OF HOUGHTON BY WILLIAM WATT MILNE OR FIND PICTURE OF HOUGHTON FROM NEWS LIBRARY]

But there is nothing like a book and Valerie Bloye has been encouraging Haddenham villagers to set down their reflections. There are most interesting accounts of the village brick industry, the surgery and bakery. Joyce Thulbon remembers journeying with her father to deliver bread by horse and trap around the village, from Station Road to Aldreth in the morning, Hill Row to Lode Way in the afternoon and down to Earith bridge on Saturday evenings. Sunday afternoons had to be very quiet in their house as her father took a nap before working all night to get the ovens hot and ready for baking again first thing in the morning.

This book too has a Tebbutt connection: Miss Jessie Tebbutt was very well-known and highly regarded and one of the founders of the Friends of Haddenham set up just after the War as one of the first local history / conservation groups in the county. They initiated a series of photographic displays at the Young Farmers' Shows, forming the nucleus of a fine collection of pictures now available at the village library, and organised tractor rides to show newcomers that the fens are neither flat nor boring.

Taken together the contributions paint a unique picture of a Cambridgeshire community including the wide range of organisations from amateur dramatics to men's interest group, old-time dancing, cubs and meals-on-wheels. It shows that village life – at least in Haddenham – is probably more diverse than it has ever been. [59.012 SCAN OF HADDENHAM WOMEN'S INSTITUTE LADIES VISITING NORMAN'S FRUIT FARM, 1962 – THE VILLAGE ORGANISES TRACTOR RIDES FOR NEW RESIDENTS]

'Focus on Holywell-cum-Needlingworth: images of a village' by Joe Newell costs £7.99, ISBN 0-955071909

Two CD-Roms of The Goodman Genealogical Book and Reminiscences of Potto Brown, Bateman Crown and the Union Chapel, Houghton are available from Houghton and Wyton Local History Society, Church View, Chapel Lane, Houghton, PE28 2AY at £10.50 each. 'Rural reflections' is obtainable from Valerie Bloye, 4 Lion Court, Station Road, Haddenham at £6.50 plus postage

Memories 28 Dec 2005, by Mike Petty

It is our routine in the week leading up to Christmas to forsake Cambridgeshire for the charms of the Bull Hotel in Long Melford where, snug by the big open fire we can watch the merry-makers celebrate in their way, as we do in ours. During the day there are book and antique shops to browse before pottering off to find somewhere nearby for a sandwich at lunchtime. Thus it was that we arrived at the half-timbered Bell Hotel in Clare and sought a seat by their fire where we joined another couple we had never met before. But such is the way of the world that we discovered two common interests – the Fish and Duck and Grunty Fen. [SCAN OF THE HALF-TIMBERED BELL INN AT CLARE IN OCTOBER 1986 AND THE HALF-WOODEN FISH AND DUCK AT LITTLE THETFORD AS IT WAS BEFORE 1972]

The former is not quite half-timbered, just mostly wood. It stands at Pope's Corner near Little Thetford, where the Old West and Cam join, a most attractive spot for an inn that has seen mixed fortunes since it was built in the 1820s to serve folk arriving by water. In a sale

document of 1852 it was described as a new-built brick, timber and slate house with seven rooms and stabling for twelve horses. A new road down to the pub was constructed in 1968 and it was modernised and extended in 1972. In June 1980 it was relaunched as a riverside nightclub with a discotheque, and top music personalities were booked including Radio 1 disc jockey Dave Lee Travis and disco dancers Pan's People. It was hoped to make it one of the top night spots in East Anglia. Sadly it did not achieve its aim but still attracts a good crowd on summer afternoons.

That can also be said for Grunty Fen, a low-lying area separating Wilburton and Stretham from Wentworth and Witchford, for it is home to a waste recycling tip and sundry car-breakers yards. It has in recent years achieved greater fame through the exploits of 'Dennis of Grunty Fen', that tale-telling alter-ego of Pete Sayers, who died this year. No longer will he regale audiences as he did when he gatecrashed the opening of the Cambridge Heritage Showcase in Lion Yard Library and led the assembled dignitaries in a chorus of 'Fen tigers got dewdrops on their nose, Fen tigers got webs between their toes' [SCAN OF 'DENNIS OF GRUNTY FEN']

'Dennis' was not the first to describe such anatomical features. Writing in 1930 Dr Charles Lucas of Burwell reported how he had been told by a Londoner, who had lodged in the fen, that all the girls had yellow spotted bellies and the men webbed feet. Lucas added that "he himself had known webbed fingers and webbed toes would not bother anybody". One man who knew the area well was Alfred Sulman the Wilburton village postman for many years. In order to get a delivery established he did the round for a whole year for no pay walking the village first, then the Twentypence Road before heading down Grunty Fen.

Albert Pell recalled in 1908 how he had to take a boat to visit one Grunty Fen house in rainy times and moored it to the door latch with a short piece of cord. Jeremiah Fenn went back somewhat further as he reminisced about the 1830s: "There was paths through the reeds and stuff to Wilburton and Haddenham from Winfer (Wentworth). One evening I went with father to cross the fen to see grandmother but in the afternoon a thunderstorm had beaten the reeds down over the path; we missed it and got lost. It was getting dark and father took me in his arms and laid down to sleep till it got light. Dear heart what a night that was. Owls and things came and screeched at us. I though they were ghostes, and some of these buttleebumps kept on saying 'Bump, bump, bump' all the time".

The low-lying basin was one of the last areas of fenland to be drained in the 1860s and even by the Second World War the War Agricultural Executive pressed for improvements. But this would cost £40,000 & Grunty Fen land was only worth £15 per acre. But not all the value was agricultural: a gold torque discovered by a man digging peat is on display in the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

Drainage was followed by inclosure in 1860. It was a wasteland common to seven parishes and used for pasture, anybody could turn one to a thousand sheep out there to pasture. Once enclosed each parishe was granted land for allotments. It was an expensive process but landowners benefited when a railway line was built from Ely to Stretham, Wilburton, Haddenham and Sutton, later extended as far as St Ives. [SCAN 7323 PAINTING OF GRUNTY FEN BEFORE DRAINAGE]

Eric Drake, from Sutton took a train each day to Soham Grammar School. He remembered the Station Master at Haddenham: "He was an important gentleman with navy brass-buttoned suit and braided military-style peaked cap. He met every train and blew the whistle whilst standing on the platform which allowed the guard to wave his flag to signal to the driver. Goods trains took away trucks loaded with bricks and cheese". In January 1964 the News described the diesel goods train as it made its daily run, leaving Ely at 1.15 pm and returning from Sutton, eight miles down the line, two hours later. The trip was not a speedy one for the fireman had to jump down to open and close the crossing gates

including those over the A10 at Thetford corner. [SCAN 023 CLOSING THE RAILWAY CROSSING GATES AT LT THETFORD 1964;]

Being an isolated area it was chosen in 1903 as the site for a small-pox hospital, a temporary building of wood and iron built two miles from any village. But despite its remoteness it has featured in parliament for in June 1980 the Isle of Ely Member of Parliament, Clement Freud, asked Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher whether she had plans to visit Grunty Fen where people were worried about the level of wage settlements. But she replied that the 97 residents were a very happy agricultural community with a low rate of unemployment and content under a Conservative Government. Dorothy Barker of Station Road, Grunty Fen, said: "It is nice of her to think of us"

Now Grunty Fen is home to a few farmers and a larger number of travellers whose trailers and lifestyles do bear some resemblance to that depicted by 'Dennis', though quite how it became known to my Clare acquaintance I never discovered

Memories 2006 in one sequence

Memories, 4th January 2006, by Mike Petty

The New Year arrived in our village with a bang as revellers' rockets boomed and flashed into the bedrooms of young and old who had been peacefully sleeping their way into 2006. Any annoyance they may have felt at being roused from their dreams were doubtless suppressed in the joy that others were having fun.

Such celebrations were once the traditional way to see out the old year in Cambridge

As midnight approached on December 31st 1906 streets which on 364 nights of the year were solitary and deserted after 11 o'clock were packed. Throughout the town all forms of entertainment stopped, coats and hats were donned & shoes laced. All feet were heading for Kings Parade, feet of all ages for although the young predominated the middle aged and old were also there. They paced up and down while the year hastened to its close. At a quarter to midnight the crowd in front of Deck's the chemist grew even larger. Finally the door opened and the hero of the hour emerged. [SCAN 9515 DECK'S CHEMIST SHOP, KING'S PARADE 1902]

Alderman Arthur Deck was one of the grand old men of Cambridge. He had been a town councillor for over 50 years; he was an enthusiastic balloonist - but most importantly he was the Rocket Man. The elderly gentleman was greeted by cheers as he crossed Kings Parade to the open space in front of the College and prepared for the ritual that had been started by his father in 1820. [SCAN 9514 – ALDERMAN ARTHUR DECK, THE ROCKET MAN]

As King's College clock struck the first chime of midnight a rocket whizzed up into the night sky and everybody waited for the distant explosion and the pretty coloured lights that would follow. Then before the clock had finished striking up went the second. The New Year had now officially arrived in Cambridge. It was welcomed with much shaking of hands and exchanging of good wishes before the crowds drifted away. [SCAN 9046 KING'S PARADE 1887]

Arthur Deck saw the start of 1908, but not its conclusion. His son, who had tried to expand the custom to Chesterton in 1904 by setting off rockets near the Horse Grind ferry, continued

the custom on Kings Parade until 1913. Then Dora - the Defence of the Realm Act - forbade such activities for the duration of the Great War. In December 1919 those Cambridge people looking forward to a general return to pre-war conditions at the festive season were disappointed to learn that there would be no rockets to signal the New Year.

Sometimes, Mr Deck junior explained, the falling rocket sticks caused damage and - perhaps more significantly - the crowd had become rowdy, breaking bottles in the street. So he had decided that his father's custom must not be his. It seemed a pity said the paper - "there are many losses we -could submit to with less regret than the loss of the rockets and the abandonment of a celebration which was based on good fellowship". It was the end of a chapter, but not the end of the story.

In 1922 the custom was revived in response to continued pressure. But it was thought no longer safe to use Kings Parade for the launch and the ceremony transferred to Parker's Piece. Midnight found a thousand people assembled to watch the rockets. But it was not quite the same, numbers dropped off and people found other attractions such as dances on New Year's Eve. So it was that 1929 arrived uncelebrated by any rockets and one of the most celebrated of Cambridge customs fizzled out. At last people could sleep peacefully in their beds. [SCAN 9070 – THE ROCKET CEREMONY TRANSFERRED TO PARKER'S PIECE 1922-1928]

SCAN 7327 – KING'S COLLEGE BY MOONLIGHT

How did you celebrate New Year in days gone past – write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories, 11th January 2006, by Mike Petty

Mike Barrett has emailed with memories of the Dave Gelly jazz quartet in Cambridge between 1959 and 1962. This was the resident band at 'Daddys', the only student 'Night Club' in Cambridge which was based on the top floor of the Dorothy Cafe. They also played at the University Jazz Club at the Rex Cinema Ballroom where Town and Gown got together to swing away Monday evenings and at May Balls: they did seven in one week, one year!

Guest players from London's Jazz scene were occasional visitors, and the University Big Band led by Clare College music graduate, Patrick Gowers, was a breath of fresh air in British Jazz of the late 50's and early 60's. [SCAN OF DANCING TO JAZZ AT OVERSTREAM HOUSE 1956]

Mike Barrett played piano with Dave Gelly on tenor sax. The drummer in the quartet at 'Daddy's', and in the University Big Band, was George Walden who went on to work in the Foreign Office, before becoming Conservative MP for Buckingham and Minister for Higher Education from 1985 to 87. In 1997 he gave up his seat and left the Conservative Party and politics to write witty and merciless commentaries on the State of the Nation. His memoirs, 'Lucky George', a riotous rollicking romp through life, were published in 1999.

But can anybody help track down the fourth member of the group? Mike Payne was on bass and also played with a fine rehearsal band called MC2 (MC Squared) which was in demand at Public Schools' functions. In January 1959 he appeared in the film 'Bachelor of Hearts' playing bass in the University Jazz Club in the Cellars of St. John's College. The film starred Hardy Kruger as a visiting German exchange student and Sylvia Sims [SCAN OF KRUGER AND SIMS IN FREE SCHOOL LANE 109.02]

In his day job Mike Payne worked as a photographer for Fisons Research establishment for many years. He lived in a room at the Eagle and later moved to 8a

Botolph Lane. The last time Mike Barrett met him was about 20 years ago; he says: 'he was a damn nice bloke and if he's still around, I and the rest of his jazz-playing friends would dearly love to renew contact with him'. If you can help then please tel.01277 – 352669 or email rusty.w@virgin.net [SCAN OF BENE'T STREET AND EAGLE INN, 1964]

With the success of 'Come Dancing' on tv, Geoffrey Hawes has lent me a photo of a production by pupils of the Barbara Leader School of Dancing at the Cambridge Regal Cinema in January 1946. It was promoting the forthcoming film 'Rhapsody in Blue' about George Gershwin and his music. Geoff can name most people on it including himself and his partner Roma Naylor on the left of the back row. [CHOICE OF SCANS OF THE 'RHAPSODY IN BLUE' DANCERS]

One person who has been trying to identify people from much further back and piecing together a unique picture of the past is Tobit Curteis, an international expert on wallpaintings who is based in Cambridge. He has been undertaking a large-scale conservation project on the fine examples at Willingham church, some of which date back to the 1200s and show St Etheldreda, founder and abbess of Ely. Next Wednesday, 18th January, he will be describing his findings at the church. The meeting starts at 7.30 and all are welcome, entry is free. For further details contact Alan Fawcitt on 01954 204024 [SCAN OF WALL PAINTING]

Sheila Turner from Cambridge emails following my mention of Jeremiah Fenn in Grunty Fen. Her mother was a Fenn and she is researching the family history. Some of her ancestors were 'lime burners', but what did that involve, she asks. Arthur Houghton in his 'Memories of Isleham village' described visiting the lime pits there. He recalled: "*We used to go there for lime for the toilets, also we used to get two penny-worth of slack lime for whitewashing the houses, even a 1/2d [A HALFPENNY] worth. A Mr. David Brown, who worked for Roger Robins, used to go with a load of lime to Denham, Suffolk; he also used to go to Gazeley and Witchford. Mr. Brown used to travel to these places at 5 o'clock in the morning and he would be gone all day. Mr. Norman Diver who lived in the Pits took lime once a week to Brandon and from there brought back whitening (hydrated lime) for use on ceilings and walls. They used lime on the sandy soils and also on the fens to sweeten (purify) the land. It was a slow process spreading the lime thinly on the land*". But can you add more?

Memories 18th January 2006, by Mike Petty

Sometimes headlines seem to go round and around. The stories in last week's News of the smashing of a Cambridge vice-ring were matched in January 1931 – 75 years ago – by sensational accounts of the goings-on in a Fen Ditton barn.

The story first broke in February 1930 when a respectable lady, the daughter of a lawyer who had always borne an irreproachable character was summoned for allowing a barn adjacent to her cottage near the Plough at Fen Ditton to be used for immoral purposes.

She told the court that she had bought the barn when she'd learned it was to be taken by a large family who had been evicted in Cambridge. Her son had suggested it could be converted into a bungalow for himself when he married. She put in a floor and he used it for a boxing club.

Then after a garden party in 1928 she had been approached by members of a band run by undergraduates who asked to hire it for practising; when they became more proficient they suggested it be used for tea dances. She had simply arranged dances at which undergraduates

and local girls could enjoy the music. She made nothing from the venture apart from a few shillings from teas.

The dances proved popular, numbers of people came and danced till six when the band played 'God Save the King' and the event finished. Later the undergraduates asked whether their friends might stay for coffee; she agreed – they were gentlemen after all. She had never witnessed anything improper and was horrified when she heard the police allegations.

Detectives and policewomen gave evidence of what they saw after the dances were over. Once the lights were out and the most of the dancers had departed one constable peeped through the window and observed people inside. There were two couples sitting by the fire. On another occasion girls were dancing by themselves down the centre of the room holding up their dresses; another girl got on top of the piano and danced to the music of a gramophone. Some couples sat on a swinging seat on the verandah and others went to the cottage.

Police claimed that some of the women attending were known to be of an undesirable character. The lady testified: "I did on one occasion turn a girl away. She was so frightfully made up that I would not let her in. Later I found out she was the daughter of one of the University Dons"

Since the men were mostly members of the University the University Proctor was alerted. He went to the dance room which was in darkness and by the light of his lamp could see four undergraduates, seven girls and an elderly gentleman. They said they were telling ghost stories. Later it was revealed that the man was Conan Doyle, famous creator of Sherlock Holmes, and being very keen on spiritualism he had organised a small séance.

Such was the evidence that was presented to magistrates in March 1930. It attracted a great deal of public attention but there was no actual proof of wrongdoing and the case was dismissed. The Chairman said: "If we are out to administer the moral law then no condemnation would be sufficiently strong for the shameless and wanton proceedings that have been allowed to occur. Had we been in a position to impose a fine it would have been a very heavy one. I am ashamed that a young constable should have been called upon in the course of his duty to witness the scenes described"

But it was not over; the police lodged an appeal against the dismissal which was upheld by three judges on the King's Bench and in December 1930 the case was sent back for consideration again.

Once more all the details were repeated in court and reported in the newspapers. This time magistrates concluded that the lady had deliberately inveigled young men of the University and girls into immoral courses, using the premises as a brothel.

She was fined £100, a sum she could never afford; she had to sell the cottage at a ruinous loss and leave the neighbourhood. Her son was obliged to resign his commission in the Air Force and Fen Ditton retreated into respectability once again.

[SCANS OF CROWDS LINING RIVER BANK NEAR THE PLOUGH AT FEN DITTON FOR MAY RACES – BUT WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE BAND STOPPED PLAYING AT THE TEA-DANCE?

SCAN 8113 MIGHT ACTUALLY SHOW THE COTTAGE BUT I'M NOT SURE SO CAPTION IT WITHOUT BEING SPECIFIC;

SCAN 8543 SHOWS FEN DITTON CHURCH 1965;

SCANS OF HEADLINES FROM THE NEWS REPORTING THE CASE IN FEBRUARY 1930

USE MODERN HEADLINES FROM THE CURRENT BROTHEL CASE

Pam Ladd from Sudbury recalls other dances, especially those organised on New Year's Eve by the Association of Cambridge University Assistants in the old University Examination Hall in the early 1950s when music was provided by George Freestone and the Gurston Trio. After midnight the dance became a carnival when coloured hats, streamers and lights transformed the crowded dance floor into a tapestry of colour. Pam cherishes an issue of the News for 1st January 1952 which has photos of other dances at the Rex and Guildhall, the Regal cinema had a midnight matinee and the Cambridge Scottish Society reeled the night away at the Oak Room at the Dorothy.

Memories 25th January 2006, by Mike Petty

Warnings of an invasion of rats, as cold weather seems set to hit, will have sent many people poking and probing in outbuildings and sheds. But many others will have recoiled in terror at the thought of tackling the ever-present menace.

What we need is somebody like my late granddad. He was the village rat catcher – when he wasn't trapping moles or rabbits. I went out with him on one or two occasions but never gained his skills, nor his love of ferrets.

In years gone past whole communities rallied round to defeat the rat. Enid Porter, one-time curator of the Cambridge Folk Museum, recorded how Richard Callaby, a Cambridge dog-fancier arranged rat hunts in a cellar under a house in Grantchester Meadows to demonstrate the prowess of his terriers. But there were other hunts nearer his home on Midsummer Common as the News of 18th March 1904 reported:

Ratting is a form of amusement which dates back to the dim ages. Usually this practice is carried on in out of the way places but in Cambridge ratting parties are to be seen on Midsummer Common on Sundays. The undergraduate takes a great pride in the sporting qualities of his "dawg's" pedigree, half-bred or mongrel, and certain townees feed this pride by collecting a supply of rats for the alleged sporting dogs to worry. With stout wire cages slung on their backs the dealers await the arrival of undergraduates and then offer rats at a "bob apiece". Rat after rat is released from the cage, given half a dozen yards start, and then the dogs "course" it to its death. The slaughter over, the dead rats are piled on the common to fester and rot.

[SCAN 10288 – CALLABY'S PREMISES ON MIDSUMMER COMMON, 1935]

In August 1925 the problem was acute in Ely. For weeks past allotment holders in Barton Fields had been missing produce such as peas & broad beans and had attributed the blame to two-legged thieves. But then much 'stolen' produce was found stored between a rhubarb bed & a rubbish heap, where a big rat was acting as sentry. In the evening an army of rats of all sizes was seen to emerge from an adjacent ditch & begin to remove their plunder to a spare 'storehouse', leaving tracks which were so distinct one would think that sheep had been making their way over the plots. The council debated as to whether it should do something about it. But it was not enough for one local authority to take action as the rodents would just decamp into a neighbouring district where ratepayers were less vigilant.

If councils would not take action it was up to the Boy Scouts: in November 1925 the Ministry of Agriculture organised a great rat hunt and enlisted the youngsters for this war. It did not solve the problem. By March 1926 the Cambridge University Farm had killed 5,000 rats since harvest, but they were still all over the fields; one had jumped on a student and scratched his face. The answer was to pay landowners 1d or 2d for each rat they killed.

Communities were encouraged to fight the problem on their doorstep. In November 1926 the County Agricultural Organiser gave a lecture on the destruction of rats at Lt Shelford village hall. People did not pay enough attention to the rat menace, there were far too many rats about Cambridge for his liking, he told them. If they held a Little Shelford Rat Week it would do a world of good. Everybody should kill rats whenever they got the change. If each person killed one a week it would be doing some good. [SCAN 10199 – MANOR FARM BARNES AT LT SHELFORD, SCAN 86.1267 – LT SHELFORD HIGH STREET IN 1920S WHEN RATS WERE A PROBLEM]

One community to take the matter to heart was Great Chesterford where their Rat and Sparrow Club dinner in February 1927 was told they were doing good work in keeping down the vile rat: 6,527 had been killed, a decrease of 2,000 over the previous year. All members should kill one rat for every two acres of his occupation during the year, with ten rats being the minimum contribution. Anybody not killing the requisite number would be fined a halfpenny an acre. They hoped the other side of Saffron Walden would form a club as it was hardly fair that one district should take steps to keep down the number of rats and others do nothing at all.

Yet despite all their efforts still the rat is with us. Do you have memories of rat-hunting – write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories 1st February 2006, by Mike Petty

When Britain was at bay and the enemy seemed about to invade the lads and dads came forward to form a force that would defeat the foe should he dare to set foot in their streets and lanes. At the time of Napoleon they trained to repel the French and Volunteers paraded on Cambridge commons and village greens. [SCAN OF NAPOLEONIC CAMBRIDGE VOLUNTEER]

Then when the enemy threatened in the Great War the Boy Scouts went out with their rifles to keep watched and defend bridges. They were followed in 1940 by the Local Defence Volunteers, soon to be renamed the Dads Army, or Home Guard.

One man who recalls their activities at Great Abington is Geoff Tiplady whose parents were landlords of the Green Man. He remembers how they had a HQ in The Crown and a gun point defending the bridge. Under the leadership of Colonel Foster from Hildersham they were required to be on duty one night a week from 10pm to four in the morning and had power to arrest people who would be handed over to the police. At first they carried pickaxes, crowbars, spears and dummy rifles when on duty. But in May and June 1940 several thousand rifles arrived in Cambridge. They were taken to the Corn Exchange packed in grease where an army of ladies worked for two weeks to clean them – do you know anybody who helped? [SCAN OF VIEW OF GT ABINGTON]

Once equipped the Abington defenders would often stop every car passing along the Newmarket Road, sticking their bayonet through the car window. But despite their vigilance the Home Guard could not prevent an ambush on the Linton Road. A couple of lads, Terry Lee and Jim Ollett, managed to find two old German helmets and, armed with long sticks, hid in a ditch before leaping out to try and stop a passing motorcar by pointing their 'guns' at the occupants. Both driver and children escaped. These recollection are but a smattering of those collected by Jennifer Hirsch and members of the Abington History Group for a new book of wartime memories, featuring also the recollections of those villagers who served around the world on land, air and sea.

The Home Guard was stood down at the end of the Second World War and many homes have cards of appreciation for their father's efforts. [SCAN OF A CARD ISSUED TO MEMBERS OF THE HOME GUARD]

But who remembers that they were reformed in the 1950s, rebuilding a body of men capable of defeating any invasion attempt. In June 1953 Home Guard patrols in the East Road area of Cambridge arrested five suspects; a slenderly-built, quietly dressed brunette was stopped by a patrol who found a flaw in her identity card and she was taken away in a car to Battalion H.Q. It was just an exercise but it proved that in a real emergency Cambridge people need not worry about spies wandering the streets of the city.

There was soon a shortage of manpower and in October 1953 came a Home Guard recruiting week. The appeal was directed towards middle-aged men who had previously seen service. The exceptional commitment of the Regular Army abroad made it imperative that there should be an organised body trained and ready to cope with emergencies in the event of war. It must contain people who know the local geography of their area intimately, in every parish and hamlet [SCAN OF REFORMED HOME GUARD MEN AND WOMEN WITH RECRUITING POSTER] [SCAN OF HOME GUARD FIRING BREN GUNS]

By the end of the month Cambridge citizens were shaken to hear rifle fire in the city and see groups of khaki-clad men dashing about on Jesus Green and Parker's Piece before attacking Hobbs Pavilion where the 'enemy' was wiped out. It was another exercise to keep the Home Guard in the public eye.

However the threat of war was changing. In June 1955 Officers of Cambridge Home Guard were told that Cambridgeshire had a good chance of surviving the dropping of a hydrogen bomb since it did not present a target worth the expense of such a bomb. But it would undoubtedly be cut off so it was important they had Civil Defence in addition to small arms training

By the end of January 1956 it was time to stand down again. Their last assembly in uniform was a farewell dinner. They were told they were not being disbanded but were going into reserve as tension had slackened. Should an emergency arise they were the right men to form a nucleus of a strong body which would spring into being. The battalion flag was handed into the custody of the Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Col. E.C. Parker to be guarded faithfully until once again it flew over their headquarters. [SCAN OF A HOME GUARD DINNER – NB NOT NECESSARILY THE LAST ONE]

Pictures of these forgotten warriors have been lent me by John Carter of Cambridge; but can you put a name to the faces?

Memories 8th February 2006, by Mike Petty

Memories can be wonderful things.

I received a call the other day from a German television company who had been contacted by a lady who wanted to share her recollections of Cambridge in the '50s. The 1950s!

The company had made a programme for Austrian television in which they had featured a person with a vivid memory of having lived in a particular place in the distant past. When they followed it up every detail was shown to be accurate. Afterwards they were deluged by other people with similar experiences, one of which related to Cambridge.

So on Friday I met with Frank, the researcher, to learn the story that had already been committed to film. Our lady, now called Gisela, was in those days Elizabeth, Countess of Lichfield. Her family lived in a large house not far from Cambridge with a stud where they bred Arabian horses.

Her most vivid memory was a visit she paid to Cambridge with friends when she was 18 years old, in 1854. They had punted on the Cam, visited King's College Chapel, Trinity College and St Michael's church and spent some time on the Market Hill where she remembered the wooden stalls, the men with white jackets and the women with long skirts. She recalled the bakery, teashop, books and sewing shops.

It was a remarkable tale. But was any of it true? At first I had my doubts, by Monday I was almost sure.

I could find no mention of the Lichfield family owning a large house locally. Could she have got her name wrong – perhaps she meant Leeds. This was one of the titles of the Earl of Godolphin who had a mansion at Wandlebury where there was a definite connection to the famous Godolphin Arabian racehorse. The house has been demolished but the stable block still stands which would make a good place to take her before they jetted back.

But on Monday it was to be Cambridge. They had already filmed her punt trip and the colleges before I met them on the Market Hill. Here I was able to show Gisela a photograph taken in the 1860s showing just the scene she had described: there were the stalls, there were the people and Great St Mary's church dominated the background. There was one slight snag.

On a September evening in 1849 there had been a major fire in the centre of Cambridge which destroyed a number of ancient wooden buildings that previously stood right in the middle of the present Market Square. In those days the Corporation did not move at the greatest of speed and it took a considerable time before they cleared the burnt remnants and pulled down the remaining properties. These included the Grapes and the Kings Head public houses, Emmerson's bakers, Whites the bootmakers, Peters the cutler, Sharman's toy shop and Styles' fishmongers along with milliners shops, tailors, bootmakers and a silversmiths. When the site was cleared they widened the roadways and erected a new stone-built fountain in the middle of the new Market Square to replace the old Hobson's Conduit. This reconstruction was not completed until Christmas 1855. A visitor in 1854 would have been only too aware of the work in progress. Whilst being filmed I looked across to the nearest stall; there hanging up was an engraving of the old market as it had been before the fire; the difference was obvious.

I had shared my concerns with the director before we started. He was not too worried: people often got their names wrong, the date was flexible: perhaps it had been 1844 or 1864 – such small details should not be allowed to interfere with the essential story.

So it came down to the surely most traditional of Cambridge pastimes, punting down the Cam: an unforgettable experience for any visitor. Well it would have been in 1854.

A correspondent to Cambridge Independent Press of 18th October 1873 noted that between the Coach and Horses, Newnham and the Small Bridges 44 houses drained into the river, 'in consequence a large amount of faeces constantly finds its way into the stream and the accumulation of filth is considerable'. After passing Small Bridges (now called Silver Street) it was supplemented by 16 sewers and drains including the privies or bogs of the riverside colleges making the Cam perhaps more dangerous to health than any other river. Nearer St John's there was more filth from a vinegar works, Ekins brewery, two sewers in Northampton Street and several privies. No Countess is likely to have forgotten that journey, however or whenever she made it!

But it is unlikely she made it by punt. Gwen Raverat describes ‘a kind of water-borne cart or floating wheelbarrow’ when referring to a garden punt that she used for playing pirates. But these bore little resemblance to the present slim tourist punts of today. These arrived in 1907 and proved tremendously popular. The Cambridge Daily News ‘Table Talk’ column commented how the previous year there had been hardly a punt available and before that such a thing was not known in Cambridge. Even the German television man conceded that there might be something wrong; but by then the sequence had been filmed.

I’m told the programme will be shown exclusively on a small Austrian television channel so how it all comes out will be a mystery. But at least Gisela will have her memories of an expenses-paid trip to Cambridge and her half-hour of international fame!

Do you have memories of life in the 1800s or before – contact Mike Petty at the News

SCAN OF PHOTO MARKET HILL c1860

SCAN OF MIKE AND GISELA – CAN YOU WORK YOUR MAGIC TO SUPERIMPOSE THIS PICTURE ON THE ONE OF THE MARKET

SCAN OF ENGRAVING OF THE MARKET BEFORE THE FIRE OF 1849

SCAN OF PUNTING ON THE BACKS IN THE 1950S – IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SO MUCH FUN 100 YEARS EARLIER

Memories 15th February 2006, by Mike Petty

Sometimes the oddest things happen. When compiling my ‘Looking Back’ paragraphs I search through the files of the *News* that are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library, looking for snippets I don’t remember having seen before.

I recently spotted a story about the Crown and Sceptre pub in Clarendon Street, Cambridge which was appealing for an extension to its licence in February 1931. Cambridge justices heard that the pub was only open from Monday to Saturday and closed at nine o’clock instead of ten, which was the ordinary time for licenced houses. Nor was it allowed to open at all on Sundays.

It was within easy reach of Parker’s Piece and in the summer men who had been playing cricket were anxious to get liquid refreshment on their way home afterwards. It was a comfortable house and the company was good but customers found early closing irksome and went to other pubs of which there were five within 200 yards.

The pub was adjacent to New Square which was to be turned from a grassy field to a car park and would boost trade. The National Council of Women opposed it for just that reason: the last thing we wanted near a parking place were numbers and numbers of public houses. But it was wrong to suggest that because a house is allowed to open one hour longer it would cause the people who used the car park to become indecently drunk. Having heard all the arguments the magistrates granted a full licence subject to improvement in the sanitary arrangements. [SCAN OF NEW SQUARE CAR PARK IN 1963 and AS IT WAS IN 1930]

But on the very day this snippet appeared I had an email from Gill Harrison from Dorchester asking whether we could come to the aid of a very old family friend, Peter Bevis.

Gill writes: “He is in his eighties now, and living in a village near Bolton. His mother used to have the Willow tea-rooms in our home town of Blandford, Dorset many years ago, and was famous for her home cooked cakes, especially the gingerbread, the like of which my husband has never again tasted. They were made to an old family recipe.

“When he came down for a holiday before Christmas he said that as his father had died quite

young and he knew very little about his family. In fact he gave me only this information that Thomas Bevis used to have a posh bakers shop in Cambridge. I hit into the 1881 census, and the 1901 census, and his grandparents, aunts and cousins popped up before our eyes. They had a bakers and confectioners at the Crown and Sceptre, Clarendon Street. He would love to know what happened to the bakers shop, and if any of the Bevis family still live in Cambridge”

Dan Jackson traced the story of the Crown and Sceptre in his ‘Down Your Street’ article in November 1989. He discovered that it had been one of the busiest in Cambridge during the Second World War and a popular haunt of servicemen. As well as a pub it was in the 1920s ‘The Claire’, a kennel for toy dogs and later it became a veterinary surgery. Dan confirms that in Edwardian times it had indeed been a bakers and confectioners called Coulson and Bevis. He even tracked down a photograph showing their name above the door [FIND CEN NEG 5544 89 (cutting scanned)] [SCAN OF CLARENDON STREET c1910]

But can you add to the story; if so let me know and I will put you in touch.

Several readers have responded to my mention of the whale that visited Cambridge in May 1954. Miss Susanna Fleet writes: “Yes, I saw ‘Jonah’! The poor whale in the Thames reminded me of him. I was nearly ten years old but still remember the smell of the preservative”. Mrs Christine Green from Comberton also went with her father: “I recall walking through and seeing all the ribs around me and feeling that it did not seem right to be treating a majestic beast like that. I also remember my mother buying whale meat sausages from the local butcher. They were a sort of grey colour and I can still hear mum saying ‘Never again’. I wonder if anybody else remembers them?” [SCAN OF NEWS CUTTING OF THE WHALE AT CAMBRIDGE]

Dawn Greenwood, nee Acker, from Wicken had her memories jogged by a picture of Little Shelford High Street: she once lived there. “So many times I have been up and down it to Hauxton Road to my grandmother Acker who had a sweet shop. I remember an old tyre and cane hoop running down the middle of the road, not many cars then. On the left is the farm from which you went to get milk in a can or jug – my job after getting home from school. Nellie Lichfield and her mother saw to your needs. On the right further down were the butchers and bakers – we had many a loaf first thing in the morning.” I wonder if anybody remembers the Plough inn, seen here in the 1920s when it was kept by Edward Moore. [SCAN 86.1266 - PHOTO OF LT SHELFORD HIGH STREET]

Memories, 22 February 2006, by Mike Petty

Mrs M.G. Carter from Cambridge has written to me after spotting a snippet in my ‘Looking Back’ columns relating to Rance’s Folly.

This was a Hollywood style mansion in St Andrew’s Street. It had been built in the 1850s by Henry Rance, one-time Mayor of Cambridge. It sported a magnificent dining room – so grand that council meetings were held there in 1882. There were four lifts and a roof-top tennis court.

Rance’s reputation for hospitality was lavish and he spent many thousand pounds a year entertaining. Young gentlemen of the University were especially welcomed into his home, where he offered them tuition and showed off his four hundred pictures. Perhaps a greater incentive was the superb ballroom, its floor laid by German experts, especially since Rance

had attractive granddaughters who enjoyed dancing and seldom found themselves without a partner. Many of his guests found themselves so enraptured that they failed to notice the passing hours and were locked out of their college.

Henry was a donnish Downing man who enjoyed a varied and busy life but who disliked visiting the barber. It was said that he never spent more than a shilling on a haircut and only had one every eight weeks. Nothing was the same after he left Cambridge.

For a while the Liberals used his former home for their meetings until they moved to a new club in Downing Street in 1906. The flat roofed building was soon dismissed as a "Folly". When news came of its impending demolition in 1957 as part of the redevelopment of St Andrew's Street by the Prudential group the CDN commented: "few will argue against the removal of the red brick 'giant' with its towering storeys and overblown construction".
[SCAN 9875 – RANCE'S FOLLY, ST ANDREWS STREET]

It was then being used as University offices. But what other uses was it put to? Mrs Carter believes it was a Post Office Engineering Training School in the early 1940s. She worked there for a year before being trained as a Telephonist.

Recently John Carter lent me a wonderful photograph he took of the building in its final days.
[SCAN 110.24 – JOHN CARTER'S VIEW OF REAR OF RANCE'S FOLLY]

John also has a snap that seems to show a Mayor inspecting a telephone exchange and then operating some sort of teletype machine. They were taken in the 1950s but can anybody give me further details. [SCAN 110.22 OF MAYOR AT TELEPHONE EXCHANGE AND 110.23 ON TELETYPE MACHINE]

A recent picture of the Hone Guard in the 1950s has brought a response from Jill Carter of Melbourn who spotted her father, Donald Elbourn who was platoon commander of Melbourn contingent. [SCAN 110.01 SHOWING DONALD ELBOURN - STANDING]

Details of how the Home Guard got their rifles is contained in a letter from Bob Jopling of St Bees in Cumbria. He writes: "Cambridge's rifles may well have been cleaned at the Corn Exchange, but those for the villages south and west of Cambridge were distributed still in their packing. I vividly recall the Sunday in May 1940 when two long boxes arrived at my father's house in Hauxton. At a village meeting (I think in the morning) he had been chosen to lead the local unit, and the boxes came in the afternoon. We heaved them on to the kitchen table and set to work.

"In each box were three Ross .300 rifles. They were buried in thick black grease, which had been poured over them hot. This had been done in 1919, in Canada, and the grease had protected them ever since. It took several hours, and many kettles of boiling water, to clean those rifles properly - and after that there was still the kitchen! But two rifles (with ten rounds each) accompanied Harold Board and "Pop" Hunt on their patrol that night, and two more were out early the following morning. I'm sure much the same would have been happening all over the county".

Bob will be fondly remembered as a teacher at Longstanton School and has continued his interest in local history in retirement. His 'winter project' has been to transcribe and edit the daily journal of the Hauxton Home Guard which his father kept. For a start the entries were jotted down on loose-leaf paper but when this ran out the entries were continued on the unused pages of a ledger in which the Cambridge Daily News had listed their 1930s deliveries to newsgagents – a valuable archive in itself!

Some of the entries from 1940 read:

“31st May. Military prepared weapon pits beside road block and sandbagged one half of the road. Decided to man post from sunset to after sunrise. Caps fitted. Unanimous decision that if a rifle per man is not forthcoming the detachment would close down. Agreed to fortify post on Monday 3rd June.

“1st June. Ten soldiers billeted in Mill Lane at work on fortifying the bridge. T.W.H. Jackson has not returned his rifle. Twenty-two volunteers attended for range firing. Best shots Wright, Hunt and Pressey.”

When complete, the transcript will be placed in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library. But, he wonders, is there anybody else who could make use of it? You can email Bob at jopling@colthouse.freemove.co.uk or contact me and I'll put you in touch.

Somebody else seeking wartime information is Brian Sulman of Mildenhall. He is especially interested in HMS Walpole, the destroyer adopted by the Isle of Ely who collected nearly £260,000 for it in 1942. Brian's researches suggest that HMS Walpole was a destroyer launched in February 1918 and broken up in February 1945 after she was damaged by a mine. But why hold a collection for a ship that had already been in service for 24 years?

The full story has been told by retired Lieut.Cdr. G.B. Mason. In February 1942 Walpole was engaged in torpedo attacks on the German warships Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen; she developed a mechanical fault and whilst going to Harwich for repair came under air attack. The odd thing is that the attacking aircraft was a Wellington – one of our's – and it was driven off by a German fighter! Commander Mason's detailed account – which also includes HMS Loyal, Cambridge's adopted ship - is housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection. But if you can add more then please let me know.

Memories 1st March 2006, by Mike Petty

Alastair Green has emailed me from the United States. He writes: “I lived in Cambridge until 1982 at which time I moved to the States. Perhaps I should correct this by saying that my family had lived in Maids Causeway, but moved to Harston about forty years ago. Although I make regular trips back to England, Cambridge has lost much of its charm.

“Thankfully, due to many of the wonderful buildings, it will always be a beautiful city, but the centre is not as enjoyable as it once was. I mourn the passing of Eaden Lilley's, Joshua Taylor's, Bacons, and various other shops that were once there. Also, I do not like the Grafton Centre. [SCAN 100.77 – EADEN LILLEY'S, MARKET STREET, 1964]

“I have two of the ‘Down Your Street’ books, and these provide me with some comfort. Comfort may seem to be an odd word, but the photos in the books show what I think of as my Cambridge. That is, a market town. A place in which I spent many very happy years. Perhaps these feelings of melancholy are due in part to homesickness and in part to age, but I miss enormously the Cambridge I remember. Much as I would like to move back, I feel that I am better with my memories of a town that I knew, and not a town that I don't”.

Alastair asks whether there are any books with photographs of Cambridge in the 1970s and 1980s. There's the News' ‘Memories’ magazine and my ‘Memory Lane, Cambridge’ produced for the News back in 1999 is still around in some bookshops (at a knock-down price) but its expensive to post. So I thought I'd use this column to jog his memory.

It is difficult to realise that 1982 was nearly 25 years ago. What was happening that year?

Work on the never-ending Grafton area scheme was finally under way [SCAN 104.39 FITZROY STREET 1981] but W. Thompson & son furniture shop in Fitzroy Street closed after 150 years. Traylen, one of Cambridge's first self-service grocery stores decided to concentrate on butchery business claiming the new Beehive had killed its trade and Gallyons the gunsmith shut its Sidney Street shop after 198 years.

In the city centre Boots opened its extended shop in Petty Cury but Market stallholders announced their worst month's trading for 30 years, blaming parking problems, and traders were deserting Magdalene Street in face of rent rises up to four times their existing levels.

Things were brighter on the business front. Barclays Bank estimated there were now 250-300 high-tech firms in the area, employing more people & making a growing impact on foreign markets. But the main problem was space. The Cambridge Science Park was home to 24 companies but only had 20 acres left for expansion, though St John's College was seeking planning permission for a similar development immediately opposite. An eight-acre site near Shire Hall was attracting considerable interest but a number of established companies had been forced to move out to the villages.

One entrepreneur, Clive Sinclair, was developing his plans for flat-screen televisions and opened a new space-age HQ in Willis Road in 1982, using hot water from a deep bore hole (something in the news again). Now too the government is grappling with ways to ensure electricity supplies, but that year the old generating station in Thompson's Lane was demolished, having ceased to work in the mid 1960s.[SCAN 9127 ELECTRICITY GENERATING STATION, 1966]

New technology was revolutionising transport with the opening of a new power signal box near Hills Road bridge enabling a couple of men to control every train, point and signal for miles around. In the struggle to seek solutions to Cambridge traffic problems approval was given for computer-controlled traffic lights and street calming in the Gwydir Street area [SCAN 9129 TRAFFIC CALMING IN GWYDIR STREET 1982]. But debate continued over plans to rebuild Drummer Street bus station [SCAN 109.39 – DRUMMER STREET 1978], widen East Road and move the war memorial.

The biggest news for the motorist was the reopening of Magdalene Bridge. When constructed in the 1820s the cast-iron bridge was of an extremely revolutionary design and included ornamental railings cast by the Finch foundry in Cambridge. Their strength was tested in 1929 when a motor car crashed through them and hung over the river. By then the whole bridge was carrying far more traffic than ever intended and soon planners were talking about widening the road on either side to make a new thoroughfare straight into the heart of the town. In 1953 the bridge was restricted to 12 tons but by 1967 there was a two-inch dip in the centre; buses & lorries were banned and the Government announced plans to replace it by 1971. However supporters of the old bridge forced a rethink. In 1972 came news that it was to be preserved and strengthened. It was closed to traffic with a temporary Bailey bridge erected alongside. [SCAN 109.40 MAGDALENE STREET REBUILD, 1981] When it reopened in 1982 the costs had risen from an original estimate of £50,000 to some £545,000. But for that Cambridge kept one of its architectural treasures. It remains one part of Cambridge that Alastair would recognise.

In 1982 Cambridge gained two new radio stations when BBC Radio Cambridgeshire started broadcasting from studios at Hills Road, Cambridge in competition with Saxon Radio but Cambridge Community Radio was silenced for the second time in a year and Cambridge University Radio also ceased broadcasting.

Another aspect of Cambridge life that came to an end that year was the children's film show at the ABC cinema. But do you recognise any of the faces in this snap taken in 1953. [SCAN 110.26]

Do you have especial memories of 1982 – write to Mike Petty at the News

1982 PICTURES IN THE CEN MEMORIES BOOKLET INCLUDE

PAGE 31 - 154298 – ARBURY GOOD SHEPHERD EASTER BONNET PARADE

PAGE 54 - 2275 82 20 – MIDSUMMER FAIR CROWDS

Memories 7th March 2006, by Mike Petty

The office of Mayor of Cambridge is an ancient one, dating back for many hundreds of years. Once the recipient dons the Mayoral regalia he is transformed into the city's first most important citizen.

But one day in March 1956 the Mayor of Cambridge was literally outshone. Alderman E.T. Halnan's chain of office, though polished brightly, was dull in comparison, his official robes distinctly tawdry compared to those of a visitor; a visitor moreover who usurped his traditional role of opening a new development.

The occasion was the inauguration of a flats for old people at Honey Hill, off Northampton Street and the dignitary concerned was the Lord Mayor of London, Ald C.L. Ackroyd.. He came together with the mayoress, one of the Sheriffs of London and the Swordbearer. It was the first such visit and brought a glimpse of London pageantry to Cambridge.

The Lord Mayor claimed several connections with the city; his Mayoress had been educated at Girton and had a son at Magdalene College, while he had responded generously to the appeal for funds for New Hall.

The Honey Hill development was the result of hard work on the part of Ald H.O. Langdon, chairman of the Council's Housing Committee and the Master of Magdalene College, Henry Willinck, who was also chairman of the Cambridge Preservation Society. He reviewed the background to the scheme.

On the site had stood some of the oldest houses in Cambridge, some known as The Spotted Cow Yard. In 1936 the frontage was put up for sale and it was agreed that the council would buy it with a quarter of the cost paid by Cambridge Preservation Society and Magdalene College. But the war intervened, nothing was done and the area became a blot on the landscape. During the post-war planning process came proposals that the land should be developed for industrial use or a car park, both were rejected. It was Alderman Langdon's Housing Committee that came up with a scheme for old people's homes and the Cambridge Preservation Society chipped in £100 a flat for better-quality materials. [SCAN 16165 – OLD PROPERTIES IN SPOTTED COW YARD, 1920's] [SCAN 10945 – VIEW OF THE BUILDINGS DEMOLISHED FOR THE NEW HONEY HILL FLATS] [THERE IS A VIEW OF THE HONEY HILL FLATS IN THE NEWS LIBRARY]

So in March 1956 crowds watched the liveried dignitaries present the keys to the first tenants, Mr & Mrs H.C. Rogers, though it was the Mayor of London who tuned the lock. Then it was off to the – Cambridge – Guildhall for tea. [SCAN 110.27 – VIEW AT THE OPENING CEREMONY] [SCAN 110.28 THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON OPENS THE FIRST DOOR WATCHED BY THE MAYOR OF CAMBRIDGE, ALD E.T. HALNAN AND THE TENANTS, MR & MRS H.C. ROGERS]

Reader have been quick to identify the Cambridge mayor shown visiting a Cambridge telephone exchange; Roland Gibbons recognise him as Tom Amey who worked on railway. There is another picture that seems to show the same Mayoral visit – can anybody tell me more [SCAN 110.23 – A MAYORAL VISIT – BUT WHERE IS IT?]

Margaret Coleman from Cambridge worked in Rance's Folly when part of it was occupied by the Prudential. Lindsay Davies, churchwarden of Horningsea, has more details about it. The building was designed by Thomas Jekyll in 1870 - 1872. Jekyll has been described as "one of the least understood and most tragic Aesthetic movement figures in England". In 2003 the Bard Graduate Centre for Decorative Arts in New York held an exhibition of Jekyll's work - which featured "Rance's Folly" as an example of his "best and most notorious work". The mathematical ceiling in the dining room was described as one of his finest decorative arts works. Jekyll's other works in Cambridgeshire were two college sports buildings for St John's College and the restoration of St Peter's Church, Horningsea. Only his work in Horningsea survives. He became particularly well known for his wrought iron work and Horningsea church gates are a fine example. He also designed the gates at Sandringham that were given to the Prince and Princess of Wales as a wedding present in 1863. Jekyll's other "Cambridge" connection was that he knew both Mr Rattee and Mr Kett in Norfolk as a young man and in 1851 established his architectural practice at 19 Hills Road, close to their premises. Rattee & Kett introduced him to Pugin and through that connection he became involved with du Maurier and Whistler in London. During his lifetime Jekyll was often described as being "peculiar" or "eccentric" and he died in 1881 aged 54 having spent the last four years of his life in a lunatic asylum. The exhibition in New York was accompanied by a fascinating illustrated book on the life and work of Thomas Jekyll written by Susan Weber Soros and Catherine Arbuthnott in which details and illustrations of Rance's Folly and St Peter's Church Horningsea feature.

[SCAN 110.24 OF REAR OF RANCE'S FOLLY]. [SCAN 91.72 – THE DINING ROOM AT RANCE'S FOLLY]

Mrs Gyneth Buck from Fordham tells me that she also saw the whale that was exhibited on Parker's Piece in 1954 – but she saw it in Penmaenmawr, near Conway. She says: I remember walking through and seeing all the ribs. It came to mind again when the whale entered the Thames and I spoke of it to my family, who thought I was making it up. Thank you for the proof!"

Mr A.J. Betson of Cambridge has sent me the order of service when the ensign of HMS Walpole was laid up in Ely Cathedral in June 1989. Seventeen old shipmates attended the reunion which included a dance, wreath-laying ceremony and a march to the Market Place where the salute was taken by the ship's former navigating officer, Lieut Charles Tooley

Memories 15th March 2006, by Mike Petty

When did you last see an elephant in Cambridge?

A new Animal Welfare Bill, due to have its final reading in the Parliament this week, will probably outlaw such animals in travelling circuses and, for better or worse, another tradition will be lost.

John Carter of Cambridge has lent me a photograph he took in March 1952 which shows a grand procession of elephants from Chipperfield's circus as they made their way from the Cambridge railway station to Midsummer Common. There is just so much detail; there are the

faces in the crowds, thronging Regent Street on that cold, damp day. Then what of the cars – who owned ‘GER 302’, one of those trapped in the traffic queue, and what was being conveyed in that back van, registration number VG 292? Then dominating the background is Herbert Robinson’s garage. But the elephants are the stars; there seem to be fourteen of them, walking trunk-to-tail and attracting all the attention. [SCAN OF THE 1952 PARADE]

Such shows captivated people for generations. Back in August 1898 the News reported how Cambridgeshire folk in their thousands watched a similar procession of the "greatest show on earth" when Barnum and Bailey brought their circus to town. "Before dawn Barnum-struck people could be found waiting for the arrival of the monsters and wonders of the world. And then for hours there was a steady traffic of all manner of men and beasts and creeping things. Huge elephants, endless teams of horses, lions, bears, wolves and hyenas in their cages, the keeper, calmly sitting on his stool, cynically surveying the wonder-struck lines of the town’s and country’s curious. Everyone is going to see the show. For hours the box office has been a Klondike"

In April 1947 there was another name topping the billboards: "Bertram Mills' tenting-circus is a circus-de-luxe. And as the animals are the backbone of the circus let us take a look at the Bertram Mills collection. First the horses - horses clever, horses dignified, horses graceful and all beautiful. Less graceful, but with their own beauty of their quiet grey colour were the six performing elephants, everyone a lady - but not lady-like enough to stifle the yawn with which they sat up after lying down to ‘sleep’ to the strains of dreamy music"

In 1950 they were back again The "News" reporter described the spectacle: "Have you ever seen dogs play football? Or a lion walk a double tightrope? Or elephants that do the elephantine equivalent of a handstand. It is surprising how graceful even an elephant can be when well-trained, though I hope that when they come again and see me sitting in the half-crowns they will shift me by trunk to the twelve-and-a-tanners." In April 2000 Mrs Pam Barlow of Impington shared her memories of the era when she wrote: "My husband was a police officer and always had complimentary tickets for his family. We always sat on the very first row. The elephants used to circle around, put one foot on the ring and raise the other front foot in the air. All of them had beautiful girl riders who used to be picked up by the elephant’s trunk and placed on their backs" [SCAN OF ELEPHANTS IN CIRCUS RING AT CAMBRIDGE c1962]

But on one occasion an elephant decided to pack its trunk, and say goodbye to the circus. In November 1901 while Lord John Sanger’s great show and menagerie were at Saffron Walden a keeper found that Miss Ada, one of the performing elephants had stolen away in the night. Several men were quickly in search of the missing ‘lady’. They found her battering a barn at the rear of Castle Hill where she had done a considerable amount of mischief. She dragged the gate off by the hinges and battered the doors down. She then attacked the brickwork, forcing it inwards. A great portion of the roof collapsed. But were elephants ever welcomed back there – and where did you see them?

In the early 1820s shows were performed in Cambridge on what was called Hog Hill, now disappearing under the building works for the new Grand Arcade. Posters in the Cambridgeshire Collection advertise Mr Drake and his miracles of nature. As well as ten-foot high elephants, there were onagra - like the zebra but larger, aurochos with two large horns growing from their forehead, polar sea-monsters, anaconda and panthers. But not everybody was happy to see them. Mary Ann Bones lived in a house nearby and was upset to hear the animals roaring all night. In April 1839 she signed a petition to the Vice Chancellor and Mayor trying to prohibit the ‘wild beasts’ from coming to the area. But it was not until the first Corn Exchange was built in 1842 that the animals moved to Midsummer Common. Now it seems they have gone forever. [SCAN OF POSTER FOR MR DRAKE’S CIRCUS, 1820’s]

There's another spectacle to be visited this weekend when the Riverside area of Cambridge stages a celebration featuring some of the changes over the last 1000 years, since the founding of Barnwell Priory and the Stourbridge Leper Hospital. The former brickworks, iron foundry, sewage pumping station, clay quarries, town gas works, numerous pubs have passed into history but will be recalled in exhibitions by the Folk Museum, an illustrated talk by John Durrant and guided tours by Alan Brigham between 11.20 and 1pm. The main event on the 18th will take place at Brickfields on Cheddar's Lane 1-3pm. (just off Newmarket Road, near to Tesco and the Museum of Technology).

Memories 22nd March 2006, by Mike Petty

Chris Jakes, Librarian of the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library spends his life helping people research the county's heritage. But even he gets stumped sometimes. The library has been lent a series of pictures that appear to show life in a workhouse-type environment but which one?

There were a number of such institutions including Mill Road Cambridge, Chesterton, Huntingdon, Royston, Saffron Walden and Ely – the later Tower Hospital.

Workhouse life was not an easy option: in July 1897 a casual inmate at Cambridge Workhouse was charged with refusing to do such work as was suited to his age, strength and capacity.

Fred Fordham, a porter at the Workhouse told the subsequent trial that the man was taken to a cell to do his day's work - picking 4lb of oakum. Defendant said he did not intend to do the work so Fred locked the door and left him there. Oakum picking did not need very good eyesight, and the cells were well lighted. Inmates were expected to do a day's work lasting from 7am to 5pm with stone breaking for men under 60 and oakum picking by those over. When Fred went back he found that the man had used a stone-breaking hammer to smash the door of his cell. Defendant said the cells were a disgrace, only a birdcage made of lathe and plaster. He was sent to prison for 7 days

Out at Huntingdon in May 1898 there was great excitement when it was became known that a murderous assault had been committed on an inmate of the workhouse known as "Tunkey" by another inmate alias "Curly". It appears that after dinner the men adjourned to they wood shop for the purpose of smoking their pipes when all of a sudden Curly seized an axe and dealt Tunkey a terrible blow on the head sending him to the ground. While other old men scampered away to acquit the porter, the assailant delivered other deadly blows upon the unfortunate man's skull. Curly then escaped from the back of the premises, and, crossing the common, was last seen by some boys making his way up Oxmire Lane.

In October that same year there was more tragedy, this time from Saffron Walden where the News reported a shocking murder at the workhouse. A tramp who was seen about the town soliciting alms was received into the casual ward. In the words of the time: he was conducted to the sleeping quarters and rose in the customary way in the morning and proceeded to the stone breaking quarters to break the usual eight cwt of granite. After breaking some of the stones he suddenly quitted the yard and proceeded to a section of the quadrangle where the tramp master was sweeping. Without the slightest intimidation he attacked with his hammer, and dealing him two or three blows with the weapon, felled him to the ground

No wonder people raised concerns, especially about the younger inmates. In October 1898 Cambridge Guardians considered removing children from the workhouse and placing them in one or more cottage homes. There was one family in the workhouse who had lived there almost the whole of their lives. They were firmly convinced that the workhouse was not the best place to keep children. One difficulty was in getting good foster mothers but Mr

Campkin said he knew of many instances where boys and girls went out into the world and took responsible situations which they filled with great credit to themselves. If they arranged for placing these children out at the expense of the ratepayers he failed to see how in after life there could be any practical difference with regard to the children

Authorities then had to account for every crumb: in June 1897 there were complaints of bread being wasted at Chesterton workhouse, the inmates had too much and put the uneaten pieces in their own little cupboards – elsewhere it was collected up and fed to the vagrant paupers. But from Holbech, Lincs, came complaints of government prying: the *Guardians* received a letter from the Local Government Board asking what number of currants were to be put into the children's pudding. It seems that the information is required for audit purposes. The master of a workhouse is a busy man, with no small weight of responsibility upon his shoulders. If he is to be compelled to count the currants, we fancy those tasty, but indigestible comestibles will be conspicuous by their absence. The Local Government Board is waking up - to trifles – commented the *News* in November 1897.

Nobody now will remember those distant days. It was just 50 years ago, in April 1956 that the Mr & Mrs Ditchburn retired as secretary and matron of Mill Road Maternity Hospital. They had been appointed in 1934 as matron and master when it was a 'ten-bedded' public assistance institution and, post-war, under their guidance had grown ten-fold to become one of the best maternity hospitals in the country.

Since then the old Cambridge workhouse buildings have been transformed and renamed Ditchburn Place in their memory. Others have been demolished or transformed to other uses. Now Caroline Norton is researching what became of them. If you can help then email her at chris@medlam.freeseve.co.uk or let me know and I'll put you in touch. [PHOTOS FROM CAMBS COLLECTION, MODERN PICTURE OF DITCHBURN PLACE FROM NEWS FILES]

Diana Hunt from Tilehurst near Reading writes:

"Many years ago I bought an oak cupboard with two drawers. On the back of one of the drawers was the inscription "Made by Alfred Coe Suckling. Finished July 1892. Aged 17 years". The cupboard is very ornately carved and all joints are dovetailed. The cupboard is much loved and has moved around with me over the years. I discovered that Alfred was born in Great Coggeshall, but moved to Cherry Hinton where he married Sarah Tansley in the then new St John's Church. They lived in Blinco Grove and afterwards in Rathmore Road. They had a son, Edward, in 1902, but I cannot find any further descendants. Alfred died in Fulbourn Hospital in 1939. I have not found out where he is buried as yet. I would dearly love to find a photo of Alfred and wonder if anyone in Cherry Hinton has one of him.

Joyce Pryke from Willingham is searching for a photograph showing pupils at Chesterton Senior Secondary School about 1942. The only one I have shows a group of young ladies and dates from 1953 [SCAN]. Can you help?

Memories 29th March 2006, by Mike Petty

After speaking to a meeting of the Fen Ditton Gardening Club last week I was shown a most interesting group of four photographs. They seem to have been distributed by the Ministry of Information, probably during the war, and two have a caption on the back. But these are somewhat unclear. They read:

“A modern village school. A junior school at Fen Ditton is a modern village school. There are at present 39 pupils (13 boys and 26 girls) between the ages of five and 11. They are mainly the children of agricultural workers. At eleven the children go on to a Central School, a Secondary School or a Senior School, whichever is best-suited to their ability”

But then they continue: “Another fine village school is the Junior School attached to the Village College at Bottisham. This school includes a nursery class for children less than five years old.”

One picture shows “Story acting, with a scene from Snow White and the Seven dwarfs performed in the class room”. Another is headed: “For those who need it, there is cold lever (yes that’s what it says!) oil and malt during the morning break”

A third captures a group of youngsters watching a girl setting the time on a paper clock fixed to an easel whilst a fourth, taken by Pictorial Press, shows a group of three girls, ribbons in their hair, tucking in to a school dinner.

But whether they were taken in Bottisham or Fen Ditton is unclear; can anybody identify the children or tell me why the Ministry devoted scarce resources to taking them in the first place? [SCANS OF THE MYSTERY SCHOOL PHOTOS] [SCAN 85.43 – FEN DITTON 1960S, SCAN 110.33 BOTTISHAM 1949]

The teaching aids used by the children at Fen Ditton school may have changed somewhat since those days. Today they’re probably collecting coupons for computers but back in May 1978 their ambitions were for something less technological, as the News reported:

“A fairy tale has come true for eighty children at Fen Ditton primary school. Their ancient record player is to be replaced with a brand new music centre despite none of their entries being successful in a recent *News* contest. It wasn’t for lack of trying. Every single child in the school, plus the teachers, had a go at winning something they have wanted for years. Pye Telecommunications, sponsors of the competitions were so touched by their enthusiasm they decided to contribute half the cost of a new centre and the News has chipped in the other half. ‘Everyone is thrilled and delighted about it’, said the headmaster, Mr A.M. Jones”

Now Fen Ditton villagers are anxious to capture memories of life in their community in those less frantic days before it was split in two by traffic thundering to and from the A14 junction. If you have tales to share, let me know and I’ll put you in touch.

The Leys School’s Clapham Society surveyed the village in 1961: *Fen Ditton is becoming a dormitory suburb of Cambridge but still retains the flavour of an agricultural village. There is main water and most of the houses have electricity, but there is not much main drainage and much of the drainage is thought to go into the river. Hence the river is becoming a major problem because of the offensive odour and pollution*, they found.

Despite this people liked to live beside the water: In June 1952 the Cambridge Preservation Society objected to the growth of chalets and caravans at Grassy Corner, Fen Ditton. They felt that haphazard development of individually respectable shacks had seriously spoiled this length of river. However the fifteen owners said they paid £14 a year rent for their plots and the land flooded in winter. Their gardens were well looked after and of similar layout to the “Plough” next door. Some of the chalets had been erected before the Town and Country Planning Acts came into force and if it was just the later ones that were removed the place would look like a mouth from which half the teeth have been knocked out. A gypsy encampment and rubbish dump on the opposite side of the river made it difficult to understand the Society’s objections.

READERS WRITE

Can you help Diana Hunt from Tilehurst near Reading; she writes:

"Many years ago I bought an oak cupboard with two drawers. On the back of one of the drawers was the inscription "Made by Alfred Coe Suckling. Finished July 1892. Aged 17 years". The cupboard is very ornately carved and all joints are dovetailed. The cupboard is much loved and has moved around with me over the years. I discovered that Alfred was born in Great Coggeshall, but moved to Cherry Hinton where he married Sarah Tansley in the then new St John's Church. They lived in Blinco Grove and afterwards in Rathmore Road. They had a son, Edward, in 1902, but I cannot find any further descendants. Alfred died in Fulbourn Hospital in 1939. I have not found out where he is buried as yet. I would dearly love to find a photo of Alfred and wonder if anyone in Cherry Hinton has one of him.. You can email her at dmhunt@netcomuk.co.uk or drop me a line and I'll pass it on.

Memories 5th April 2006, by Mike Petty

On Sunday motorists on the Military Road from Stretham to Wicken could have been forgiven for thinking that the end of the world was nigh.

For the skies to the west darkened as heavy clouds rolled in and the view to the east disappeared in a haze of dust as gale-force winds whipped up the fen soil and blew it across the road.

Such phenomenon are not new: there was a major blow in March 1895 and a series of them in 1929. More recently, in April 1955, the News reported: *A storm of brown dust is blowing high into the air over the Swaffham Fen area. Growing seedlings have been uprooted and plants torn from the ground by the near gale-force winds that have been raging in the past few days. It has caused serious damage to crops and important drainage ditches have been filled in. Farmers are now faced with replanting their crops.*

It was a scene repeated three times in Spring 1973 when the lighter peat soils in the Soham, Stretham and Mepal areas were carried away. But that was not as bad as in the previous year when more than 10,000 acres of sugar beet had to be replanted following a blow at roughly the same time. The winds were back in April 1976 and in May 1979 when Prickwillow, Coveney & Chatteris were buffeted, though fortunately a cloudburst dampened the fields after an hour's blowing.

The problems of the fen blow were examined by Arthur Astbury in 1958. He described how those living in the path of the clouds of fine soil secured their doors and windows as soon as the alarm was raised. But even barricaded doors and windows were not proof against the peat dust which is capable of penetrating into every nook and cranny of the house.

Those actually in the fields found work impossible because of the blinding and choking effects of the dust. Men had spent hours on their tractors preparing a fine seedbed for spring sowing, going home as black as sweeps from the dust rising from the rich peat of those days. Now they were forced to watch as the wind whipped up the newly-sown seed and blew it away

There was no option but to start all over again. It was no unusual thing for the farmers to have to plant sugar-beet seed two or even three times over, or having planted sugar-beet to harvest their neighbour's wind-sown carrots or onions, he recorded.

But there were other problems: the blown-away soil would often settle into the drainage ditches on which farmers relied for irrigation, necessitating more hours of work to clean them out again.

One answer to the problem was claying: digging down into the underlying buttery clay soil and mixing it with the lighter topsoil. This was labour-intensive work and contractors who used a dragline to bring it to the surface charged between £25 and £30 an acre for their service.

Astbury also commented on another phenomenon: the land might catch fire. When the peat soil was dry it could easily be set alight by a bonfire of unwanted straw. In 1871 the peat in Conington Fen had caught fire and burned for several weeks. At night the little hillocks of flame bursting from the surface of the burning soil gave a brilliant display which would be seen clearly by travellers on the nearby railway line.

Once such a fire had started it could spread through the peat for hundreds of feet and even with the resources of the 1950s fire brigades would take days for to put out. Left unattended they could burn for years, as at Mow Fen Drove, Littleport, where fire spread over hundreds of feet until it was stopped after nearly two years by a cross dyke. Finally the whole surface of the drove was reduced to a length of white ash.

Such fires could undermine the peat foundations of railway lines and were so common between Waterbeach and Ely that during hot spells the track was inspected regularly by fire patrols with small mobile pumps.

There were other problem: the buried trees that had been discovered as wartime farmers dug for victory, ploughing land that had not been ploughed before, could catch fire. The land also sometimes yielded buried bombs – but fortunately no peat fire had yet exploded one, he observed.

Whatever the problem to the farmer such blows are spectacular sights. Last year I was guiding a coach-load of folk through the fens on a beautifully bright day, the area was looking magnificent and seemed to have lost that reputation for boring flatness that some people ascribe to it.

But then as we left Manea the dark clouds rolled in until they almost reached down to the black soil with just a bright strip of brilliant light separating them. Then the fen started to rise up, sweeping soil across the road ahead of us. The driver turned on his lights, turned off the fresh-air intake and the atmosphere inside the coach changed as we witnessed the untamed side of fenland. At least we were in a coach, not on bicycle or on foot, as others have been when day turns to night in the middle of the afternoon.

Scans

9588: Bog oak being dug out, R.C. Parsons Farm, Pymoor 1962

109.83 : a fen blow: soil is whipped up by the wind

109.85 – and deposited in the fen dykes

R61.3 : draglines were used to clear out dykes and to dig down for the clay soil to mix with the peat-

Memories, 12th April 2006, by Mike Petty

The forgotten story of whippet racing in Cambridge has been revealed through a number of folded pieces of cards treasured by Royal Parr of Girton.

In January 1902 a rabbit coursing and whippet race meeting was held in a field near the Milton Road, Cambridge. There were some fine dogs in attendance and some good sport was witnessed. This was not the first such meeting but now people were advocating the idea of a society and the proposal was receiving considerable support.

By 1911 the Cambridge Whippet Racing Club had been established with their headquarters at the King's Head public house in Magdalene Street. When this was demolished by Magdalene College they moved first to the George Hotel in Thompson's Lane and then the Maypole in Portugal Place. The club organised an annual dinner when youngsters like Royal were invited, but not allowed to drink

The club initially offered a Challenge Cup to be competed for each year over a distance of 140 yards; soon a Puppy Cup followed over a course of 100 yards and a third 160-yard open handicap quickly followed. [SCAN OF WHIPPET CLUB MEMBERS WITH THE CUP]

Races were held on a straight track marked out in the fields on the right-hand side of Arbury Road. The lanes were designated with strings and any dog that left its designated lane was disqualified and the race rerun. At the start 'slippers' held the dogs by the collar and tail by the appropriate handicap line until the gun went off when the whippets raced to the far end of the track where their owners were calling them. There was no live bait and betting was officially banned. [SCAN OF RACE AT ARBURY ROAD]

Royal's father's dog 'Dots' came second in novice competitions on Easter Monday and Whit Monday 1911 before moving up the main competition on Boxing Day and again just being pipped for the main prize. But success came next year when it romped in first in the July open handicap. It was not their first win for another dog, 'Sonny', had taken the main prize on Easter Monday 1912. [SCAN OF CERTIFICATE, SCAN OF PROGRAMME OF RACES]

Competitions continued to be held on Arbury Road until September 1923 but by August 1925 the track had switched to Mr Grain's meadow at Station Farm near the Cambridge Cattle Market where a good crowd watched the racing on Good Friday 1928. That year a Greyhound Racing Club was formed and this heralded the decline of whippet racing. However competitions continued to be held at the Cambridge Mammoth Show and as part of the Conservative fete at Wandlebury House along with tennis, fixed-jack bowling, skittles, 'Ringing the Horse' and 'Cutting the Chicken' (whatever that was!)

Greyhound racing continued to thrive; in 1947 there were proposals for a greyhound sports stadium at Cherry Hinton; another proposal for a track on land off the Landbeach Road at Milton was lodged in spring 1951. There would be 104 evening meetings a year with floodlighting in the winter. It was opposed by the County Council who were worried it could have been developed as a speedway track. Chesterton Fen Estate was suggested as the site for a stadium in 1964 but it was 1968 when a greyhound track was laid out at the Cambridge City Football Club ground on Milton Road where meetings continued until 1984. [POSSIBLE CEN PICTURE]

But can you add to its story and do you have memories of going to the dogs?

Readers Write:

The mystery of the wartime school photographs (Memories March 29th) has been resolved. I showed a number of Ministry of Information photographs taken during the war, but was uncertain whether they showed Fen Ditton or Bottisham school. Now Mr Glenfield of Cambridge has lent me another picture which shows himself in the background at Fen Ditton school while Mary Stanbury, daughter of the then village vicar helps a classmate with his lessons in 1944 or 1945

Memories of Rattee and Kett – 19 April 2006 - Mike Petty

News of the closure of Rattee and Kett may mark the final chapter in a long history

In 2001 the dedication of a new Processional Way at Ely Cathedral marked the first major addition to that building for many centuries. It launched the Ship of the Fens into the 21st century, after much of the preceding century had been involved with the skilful restoration and repair of the original fabric. 100 years earlier another major religious building had been completed; this time the Roman Catholic church of Our Lady in Hills Road, Cambridge. One company links the two – Rattee and Kett.

George Kett was a Norfolk man who had worked on the restoration of Norwich cathedral in the 1830s, and then moved on to the new Houses of Parliament in London. Meanwhile in Cambridge another craftsman, James Rattee, had enhanced his reputation with his carving on the choir stalls at Ely Cathedral. He had also acquired a building site on the corner of ‘a little land leading to nowhere’. He chose a good spot for a few years later the railway reached Cambridge, and the lane became Station Road.

The two men struck up a partnership and a ‘Wood and Stone Carving Works’ was established. They constructed their stone and joinery works, builders yard and office beside Rattee’s house, Poplar Cottage at the end of the road. Their partnership was to be short lived, Rattee fell violently ill and died within forty-eight hours. Kett continued the business. The rest, as they say is history. Wherever there was restoration or stonework the company was there; in colleges, cathedrals, churches its craftsmen were employed. Huge blocks of stone were transported to Cambridge to be shaped and carved in the traditional way. But as the century moved on the old workshops became too small. A piece of land was bought at Purbeck Road and the stone works moved there; in the 1950s the joinery department also moved, leaving only the offices on the original site. Then they too moved.

The old house was pulled down and a modern office block, Kett House erected, with its distinctive emblem of the oak tree – a reminder of a much earlier part of the family story, the revolt of 1549 when peasant farmers had rebelled against inclosure. Kett House itself has now recently been renovated.

Meanwhile at Purbeck Road work continued. In 1963 the company was working on renovation of the Prime Minister’s residence in Downing Street and at the same time building the new Churchill College in addition to a miscellany of jobs such as tombstones, boundary stones, fountains and all manner of intricate stone and wood work. In wooden outbuildings the fine craftsmanship continued, and outside working hours the craftsmen took part in social and sporting activities, such as cricket matches. Their yard was filled with rough blocks of Purbeck and Clipsham stone offloaded by giant cranes from lorries that had negotiated the Cambridge.

Then at the end of the twentieth century Rattee and Kett were on the move again, this time to Longstanton. Their new premises did not have the quaintness of the original Station Road site but were designed for efficiency, the heavy blocks of stone transported by overhead gantries through the various processes of rough and intricate shaping. But the traditional craftsmanship remained with the ancient skill of stone carving now supplemented by men producing intricate pieces of sculpture or mouldings, but utilising a modern material, Codestone, to produce exact replicas of historic artefacts.

Rattee and Kett took their traditional skills into the Digital age, but do you remember the old days, did you work on the turrets or pinnacles of King's college; can you add some more personal memories to a history that is literally carved in stone?

SCAN FIRST PREMISES AT CORNER OF STATION ROAD

MEMORIES 23rd April 2006, by Mike Petty

A recent Memories article has triggered poignant reflections for two News readers, Veronica Asplen of Cambridge and Betty Harling of Reach.

They each wrote that photographs of the 'Fen Blow' and digging out the bog oak brought back happy memories of their wartime Land Army days in the fens.

Veronica writes: "We would go off to work in old army lorries down to Swaffham Fen, or Soham and Isleham". Betty agrees: "Our driver was Mr Arthur Thompson from Swaffham Bulbeck and another local man as our ganger, Mr Ison. There were about 11 or 15 of us in each gang. We worked on all sorts of jobs: sugar beet, setting carrots, potato picking and fruit picking (our favourite)"

They both helped to dig out the buried trees known as bog oaks. Veronica recalls: "On the days we went to dig out the bog oaks we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. It was very interesting, as we didn't know just how big the bog oak would be. When we had got it uncovered enough for the tractor men to secure it and pull it out we would all cheer". But that was just the beginning: "After they were dug out we had to saw them up into small logs, I can tell you that two of us, one each end of a two-man cross-cut saw was very hard work for two young girls", Betty adds.

Both remember the fen dust: "When the wind blew – it sure did blow. We had headscarves tightly on our heads but the black dust got in our eyes and up our nose and in the roots of our hair. When it really got too rough we got back in the lorry". "Even after having a good scrub you still didn't get rid of all that dust, it would be coming out of your eyes, ears and hair, you never seemed to get rid of it"

When work was done there was time to relax. "Some evenings we would wander into the village and visit either 'The Rose and Crown' or 'The Cock' and have a good old sing song round the piano and a half a pint of mild beer (four-pence-halfpenny a pint). They were certainly good days for me because it was in the Rose and Crown that I met this young soldier who was on demob leave and we have now been married nearly 58 years", Betty confides.

They were amongst 30 girls based at Swaffham Prior House, which had been loaned to the 'War Ag' for the duration of the war. It was large but not luxurious: "Old wooden staircases, no carpets on them and old iron baths – it was a scramble each day to get to the bathroom first. You had to look in your bed before you dare get in because the earwigs used to crawl through the windows out of the ivy", says Betty

Both ladies recall a wonderful return to their wartime home, Veronica speaks for both: In June 1985 Mr Michael Marshall and his wife gave us a very warm welcome to visit the house – we had not been back there since leaving it in 1948. We had food and champagne and were free to look all over the place again. Meeting up with all the 'girls' once more was lovely. At the time we said we would all like to meet again – but alas 21 years have now gone by. I'm 76 now and I was one of the youngest"

Betty has lent me some wartime snaps of the girls and a picture of them all at the reunion. If this sparks memories for you, then do let me know.

SCAN OF SWAFFHAM PRIOR 1930's

PHOTOS FROM BETTY HARLING

SCAN OF GROUP OF LAND ARMY GIRLS ON CRAWLER TRACTOR

SCAN OF THE GIRLS POSING WITH SAW, AXE, MILK CHURN, TEA POT, DONKEY AND A MALE OVERSEER

SCAN OF THE REUNION AT SWAFFHAM PRIOR HOUSE IN 1998

PLEASE TRY TO FIND NEWS NEGS OF THE REUNION MENTIONED – VERONICA QUOTES NO 2514 85 68 AS BEING HER FAVOURITE

Memories by Mike Petty, 3rd May 2006

In days gone by Bank Holidays often meant excursions by railway train.

Neil Lanham has fond memories of journeys on the old Stour Valley line from Cambridge to Haverhill. He recalls: "At Cambridge you went on the platform far up to the right-hand end where all the fish was kept so there was very strong smell everywhere". But it wasn't just the smell that could be unpleasant in those days of steam locomotives: "As a little boy I would cry out 'Mum I've got something in my eye'. She would get the corner of a handkerchief and pull my eyelid back to get it out. The grit that came off those trains felt like a lump of coal in your eye. [SCAN OF A SMOKEY CAMBRIDGE STATION IN THE 1950S – PHOTO BY JOHN CARTER]

"From the train corridor wherever I saw people I waved and every single person always waved back. On one occasion our carriage did not have a corridor; the next thing was 'Mum I've got to go to the toilet'. Mum duly told the guard at Linton station where the whole train was made to wait for me whilst I got off and went to the station lavatory.

"At Bartlow there would be boxes and boxes of chickens from Lydite Chicks so you were held up there while they were loaded in the guards van. These little tiny chicks were in double cardboard hayboxes and were sent right the way across the country - you could buy them for a penny each.

"When Dr Beeching finally axed the railway out of Haverhill, myself, John Alderton, Bill Dobinson, David Hartless and two others dressed in top hats and tails and performed the duty of undertakers, carrying the coffin of Haverhill station to Cambridge. The coffin came back strapped on the top of a car as this was the last train" [CHECK FOR NEWS PICTURES OF THE HAVERHILL LINE]

Neil has continued his fascination with the railway and has produced a DVD of Cliff Pearman who worked as a fireman on the steam trains out of Cambridge from 1944 to 1957. Cliff was on the footplate of the Royal Train that carried the body of King George VI from King's Lynn to King's Cross in February 1952. He will be sharing his experiences together with other old footplatemen at a meeting of the Clare Railway Circle to be held in Clare Social Club on 8th May. If you have anecdotes – or just enjoy hearing other people reminiscing - then why not go along. You can contact Neil on 01440 730414 [SCAN OF ROYAL TRAIN CARRYING COFFIN OF KING GEORGE VI] [SCAN OF CLIFF PEARMAN ON THE FOOTPLATE OF A STEAM LOCOMOTIVE]

Many readers have responded to my request for memories of Rattee and Kett, the Cambridge stonemasons

Ken Dean from Great Shelford started his apprenticeship as a carpenter and joiner in September 1947 at the age of 15. He was based at the Station Road site and worked on many beautiful buildings including, Trinity, Queens' and King's together with Eton College, the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey where he was in charge of restoration work for four years. He produced joinery for St Paul's cathedral and the organ case for Cape Town cathedral. When the Station Road yard closed everything moved to Purbeck Road where there was a large joinery machine shop as well as a joiner's shop producing high-quality woodwork. It closed in the 1990s owing to competition from other joinery firms.

The stone department continued with stone arriving by rail right into the yard. After the line closed it was brought by lorry in seven-ton blocks and was sawn and worked by the carvers and stonemasons. One of these was D.G. Goodge from Cottenham who rode his bicycle through the gates of the site in Purbeck Road in April 1962 to start his five-year apprenticeship. He spent the first three years in the workshop learning how to work stones into shape ready for fixing on to buildings, then two years actually fixing them on site. He was involved in the major restoration of King's College Chapel in 1968, first repointing the vaulted ceiling then moving outside to repair the pinnacles, parapets and string course. The old stone work was dismantled and replaced with new prepared in the workshops.

These were but two of the specialist team of skilled workmen employed at Rattee and Kett. But it wasn't just men, as Jim Charles from Gt Shelford recalls. His aunt, Gladys Brant, worked for the firm in the early 1920s; as a recording artist she had to go onto the roof of King's College Chapel to draw the details of the pinnacles to ensure the accuracy of form when the replacements were needed. Her drawings may be preserved amongst the extensive archives of the company that were transferred to the new works at Longstanton – an archive that will hopefully be preserved as record on paper of the workmanship that will live on in the magnificent structures they have helped to save

[SCANS OF GROUP OF RATTEE AND KETT WORKMEN 1986 AND WITH A VAN IN THE 1950S]

Memories 10th May 2006, by Mike Petty

John Bowers' uncle Bert had a job that many lads envied: he was a signaller at Fordham railway station. "In the early 1950's I spent many happy hour with him in the signal box", John recalls. "He let me pull the levers sometimes, he taught me the bell codes for the different classes of train. He may have been training me to become a signaller like him and in later life I did", he recalls. "When the goods train came into the sidings, shunting the yard, I used to have rides if uncle Bert knew the engine driver and firemen. I also got to know Mr Jeff Reed, the station master, a real gentleman. My father worked on the railway too: he was a head shunter at Ely".

Fordham station now is just a memory. The last passenger train on the line from Cambridge to Mildenhall ran on Saturday 16th June 1962. Freight business continued for a couple of years until the station finally closed in September 1965. Bert's signal box lasted until 1973. John Bowers' recollections are recorded in his new book 'Greetings from Fordham' which is illustrated by old photographs and postcards and sells for £3.99. [SCAN OF FORDHAM STATION 1960'S]

Memories of another signal box survive in a photograph taken by John Carter of Cambridge in the 1950s when the traditional old levers had been replaced with something more modern. But can anybody recognise which one it is or name the signalmen? [SCAN OF SIGNAL BOX]

My recent article on whippet racing stimulated memories for Bernard Wallman of Shelford. After peering intently at a picture of the Whippet Racing club members he believes he can spot his grandfather, J.H. (Jack) Wallman, an avid whippet breeder and racer on the front row. One of Jack's dogs, "Nuff Said", ran with some success in the whippet races on the track at Arbury Road in the 1920s. [SCAN OF WHIPPET RACES AT ARBURY ROAD, CAMBRIDGE 1920s]. Kathryn Spark from Sawston records the success of a more recent whippet, her own dog North 2 South. Based in Cambridge, it was runner up in the National Championship and won over twelve titles during his racing career running on the race tracks in the North. "It is such a shame the track at Cambridge did not survive", she adds.

More details of early greyhound racing in Cambridge have come from an 80-year-old correspondent from Cottenham who filled the pages of his letter so full that he did not leave space for a signature. He writes: "The track I remember most was in Coldham's Lane in the 1920s. My uncle, Jack Pollendine used to keep it in order and was 'slipper' – he used to pull the rope that opened the traps to let the dogs out to race". The process of starting was quite complicated. The hare consisted of a rugby ball covered by a rabbit skin that was attached by a rope to the back wheel of an old London taxi raised on blocks. Last minute checks had to be made before each race. "Bert Rumbelow rode a motorcycle, with me on the pillion; when we got to a bend in the track I would hop off and make sure the rope was in the groove. We'd carried on round to the traps, drop the hare off and get back to the old taxi. Bert started it up and when uncle rang a large hand bell he's put it in gear and away they'd go. We got lots of 'no races' as it was difficult to get the right speed all the time, but the crowd enjoyed it".

Michael Taylor from Cottenham recalls one of his former workmates at Rattee and Kett, Mick Brignell. He loved his work, told funny stories & sang all day. His favourite song was his own version of an old Music Hall ditty 'I'm yearning for my dear old home again'. Mick's words:

'I'm yearning for my dear old watch and chain
It's in the pawn shop at the top of Thompson's Lane
I can hear the church bells chiming,
And I know my watch wants winding,
Oh! I'm yearning for my dear old watch and chain'

Michael's lent me a snap taken on a firm's excursion to Southend in Summer 1949. It shows Reg Darley, James 'Geordie' Quale, Bill Money, 'Morry' Rawlinson, Mick Taylor and Jack Kemp. Apparently they had visited several 'watering holes' by the time the picture was taken, perhaps it shows! [SCAN OF RATTEE AND KETT OUTING TO SOUTHEND]

Patricia Cooper has written from Rushden sending photographs and extracts from the 'London John' for June 1958 showing the firm's craftsmen working on a new High Altar for St Paul's Cathedral. Her dad Frank Fortin was amongst them, as was Terry King from Witchford who has his own series of photographs of the projects that he was involved with. Derek Pugh from Stevenage adds that during the war R&K made floating Bailey bridges and moulds for the Mulberry Harbours used on D-Day.

Wartime sacrifice was remembered last Sunday with the dedication of a restored memorial at St Paul's Church in Hills Road, Cambridge. Dr Simon Brook has been part of a team researching the background to the names inscribed on it. They have discovered details of all of the people commemorated, except one. The name of 'Leslie Johnson' is recorded – but can

anybody shed any details about him and how he came to lose his life. You can contact Simon on Cambridge 564416 or email brook215@ntlworld.com

Memories 17th May 2006, by Mike Petty

Danny Kaye, the world-famous American comedian and actor entertained Cambridge audiences twice in May 1956. He was on screen at the Regal Cinema in 'The Court Jester', hailed by cinema publicists as the most lavishly-produced comedy in the history of motion pictures. In this richly-mounted VistaVision production – whatever that was – he appeared against a backdrop of medieval England complete with gallant knights in clanking armour, lovely damsels in distress, dastardly plotters and heroic rogues.

Given such publicity, and with the fame of his appearance as Hans Christian Anderson still fresh in people's minds, it was no wonder that his personal appearance at the Cambridge Guildhall saw crowds packing the Market Hill, besieging his car, seeking autographs and causing a minor riot.

During the 50 minutes he occupied the Guildhall stage he promised to 'liberate' the wives of University Dons, laid on the grand piano to display the most startling pair of shoes seen in Cambridge for many years and sang popular songs such as 'Ugly Duckling' and 'Davy Crocket'. Before long the audience were rolling in the aisles with laughter

But his visit had a more serious purpose. He was on an international tour with a camera team making a film about the children of the world for U.N.I.C.E.F. He took questions from the audience about ways of wiping out disease and its impact on world overpopulation and pointed out that a sick child in Burma looks the same as a sick child in Cambridge. Then it was back to music before it was time for him to depart for another venue, promising to return another time to bring more gaiety into the lives of Cambridge folk.

But did Danny ever return – or did you see him perform? Somebody who did was 14-year-old Jacqueline Spring, one of a group of schoolchildren on the stage who he singled out for his especial attention. After a good deal of persuasion, she kissed him on the cheek. Were you there? [SCAN 110.36 - DANNY KAYE ON THE STAGE AT THE GUILDHALL]

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Derek Stubbings from Chesterton has memories of an interesting afternoon spent in East Road in January 1978. He writes:

"Clearance of the run down east side was then well under way and amongst those properties awaiting demolition was Loker's newsagents who had been there since at least 1895. The shop stood at the corner of School House Lane; from the pavement it was an ordinary two-storey dwelling, but from the rear it was three.

"After Loker's moved out I was given an opportunity to look through the large amount of unwanted stock left in the building, so on a Saturday afternoon in January I entered the building to see what (if any) 'treasures' might be found.

"Treasure there was none but many items of use in other ways were found. The well known author Arthur Mee had produced a weekly children's' encyclopaedia in the 1930's and two large advertising boards depicting St. George fighting the Dragon were found. Both were in good order, one had been nailed to the wall to cover up loose plaster. One board went to the children's' section at the Central Library the other to the Folk Museum. A pile of Cambridge street maps, slightly out of date, was taken for the Cambridgeshire Collection for use by school parties whilst some cheap exercise books and many other items of stationery were cleared for various uses. Perhaps the most interesting, certainly the most colourful, was a large collection of birthday cards (then probably 30-40 years old) and very different in style to

cards on sale in 1978. The Saturday afternoon was well spent. [SCAN OF LOKER'S SHOP, EAST ROAD]

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Can anybody shed light on a picture taken in Mill Road in the mid 1950s. It shows the corner with Hope Street but who is the elderly gentleman peeping out from the half-open doorway of Wallman's shop; who is it waiting to cross the road on the Zebra and what did Camford Products produce. [SCAN OF MILL ROAD – 110.37]

**

David Lupson was the first to his computer to solve the mystery of a railway signal box I featured last week. He recognised it as Cambridge South signalbox which was situated at the Hills Road end of the station. David worked there in the 1970s and signalled the last train out of Cambridge South before taking duty at the new Cambridge power signalbox in October 1982 where he still works as a signalling shift manager.

The Cambridge South box had been commissioned in 1926 along with Cambridge North and Immingham. They were unusual as they had small electrically operated levers as opposed to long manual levers like those at the signalbox at Coldham Lane - which David also operated. [REPEAT SCAN 110.35 – CAMBRIDGE SOUTH SIGNAL BOX – USED LAST WEEK]

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My apologies to those readers who tried to contact John Bowers for a copy of his book 'Greetings from Fordham'. The telephone number became muddled – it is March (01354) 653585

Memories 24th May 2006, by Mike Petty

It is amazing how things come together sometimes.

Bernard Wallman's family were involved in the early days of Cambridge taxis.

He has lent me a photograph of his great grandfather Charles Wallman with his horse drawn hackney carriages and another of his grandfather, Jack, with what must have been one of the earliest motor taxis in the town, taken he believes about 1913. It may have been earlier for the first ten licences for motor taxis in Cambridge were granted in 1908 and they soon became a familiar sight. Next year a taxi driver was fined for speeding – he'd reached a terrifying 12 miles an hour.

To meet the competition the hackney-cab men had to start working on a Sunday, something they'd not done before. But anti-social hours were always part of the job. Bernard recalls: "As a young boy, I well remember Christmas family gatherings being disrupted when the menfolk went off to the station to meet and pick up passengers on the only evening train from London."

[SCAN OF PHOTO OF CHARLES WALLMAN WITH HACKNEY CARRIAGE & JACK WALLMAN WITH HIS TAXI c1913]

This rang a bell with me so I searched some of the stories I've carried in my 'Looking Back' column. I was right: There was one Christmas when the family's celebrations must have been somewhat muted. A report in the CDN of December 1930 contains the details:

‘The booking hall at Cambridge railway station was the scene on Christmas Eve of one of the most extraordinary happenings ever witnessed. As a taxicab was being driven back to the station rank its driver suffered a seizure; the vehicle careered through the booking hall entrance and crashed into the collapsible iron gates near the ticket collector’s box. An eye-witness described the scene: “I was standing on the platform, quite close to the barrier, when I heard a tremendous crash against the iron gates. There was the taxi with the front crumpled up in the framework of the barrier and the time indicator smashed. When the taxi was dragged away a front tyre deflated. It must have entered the station at 30 miles an hour. The marvel of it is that there are only a few inches to spare at the sides of the entrance. If the barrier had been wide open it would have gone right on to the track, and a train was just due.” Three people waiting for a train were slightly injured and the driver, Frederick Wallman of Cambridge Place, recovered.

Then just as I was drafting this article I had a telephone call from John Franklin of Linton and whilst chatting it transpired that his father, Bill Franklin, had been the ticket-collector on duty at the station when this happened and told them all about it when his shift finished! [SCAN OF ENTRANCE TO CAMBRIDGE STATION AT CHRISTMAS 1954]

John also mentioned that he spent his early years at Ramsey station – and that tied in with another email from Chris Barringer who is seeking details of railway services in that area. You can reach him at chris.baz@mac.com. The station features in part of the displays at the wonderful Rural Museum at Ramsey where they are planning for a 1940s weekend to be held at the former RAF base at Upwood on 19th and 20th August. It promises to be a magnificent event with military and civilian living history and vehicle displays, dancebands and much more. For details contact Abbey Antiques at 63 Great Whyte, Ramsey – phone 01487 814753

John Franklin also knows all about the Cambridge signalbox I featured a couple of weeks ago while Mrs A. Stearn from Willingham has written to identify the signalman as her late father, George Webb, who died in December 1959.

But the Wallman saga is not finished yet

Bernard was back on the email to say he saw his late father's shop at 224 Mill Road in last week's Memories. He knows all about it: “The picture was actually taken for the Danish Bacon Company who had a local depot just off Cherryhinton Road. They commissioned it for use in a promotional campaign to show them delivering to a typical High Street grocer. You can clearly see the DBC Van parked outside How's Bakery and the DBC delivery man walking into the shop with a side of bacon over his shoulder.

“The man peering out of the shop goods entrance was a local man Mr. Coote who worked for my father as a part time general storeman. Another employee also in the photo (partially obscured by the Camford van and a parked bicycle) is Herbert Frost. He drove the order delivery van and in the photo one can just about be seen him pushing a sack barrow loaded with customers orders in boxes to load the van parked round the corner in Hope Street. Herbert lived in Argyle Street and helped my father for many years”.

John Merry from Cherry Hinton emailed to say he also recognised somebody on the picture: “The lady on the zebra crossing is my Grandmother Jessie Ayres. My whole family recognised the coat and even her poise while crossing the road, unmistakably 'Jessie'. She was born in 1898 in the Brookfield's Tavern and lived in Mill road most of her life. As a young girl she worked for the Co-op which is where the photograph was taken from. Jessie married Jack who served in the great war as one of the first tank drivers. They had one daughter my mother Peggy. During the late fifties Jessie also worked in the Dorothy supermarket in the town centre. She passed away peacefully aged 104 at Bottisham in 2002. Her sharp mind would even recall the news of the sinking of Titanic when she was a young girl as well as

other family memories. Jessie was unique, her life spanned three centuries and will never be forgotten, even her coat,” he tells me

[SCAN OF REPEAT OF THE MILL ROAD PICTURE]

Memories 31st May 2006, by Mike Petty

Elaine Wheatley from Cambridge has written to recall an Anglo American Fair held in the Guildhall, in February 1958. It was to raise money for the restoration Little St Mary's church that was in dire need of repairs costing some £7,500 (approximately £100,00 in today's money).

The church contains a Memorial Tablet commemorating Godfrey Washington, thought to be the Great Uncle of George Washington, the first President of the American Republic and the family's Stars and Stripes' coat of arms.

Tony Hart the minister hit on the idea of celebrating the church's American connection by inviting local civilians and service folk to join them in a day of Americana with stalls and side shows from both sides of the Atlantic. The English stalls would be typically English and vice-versa. In the evening, there would be an original kind of soiree, with a hamburger bar and refreshments and a transatlantic exchange of entertainment.

Then he arranged for it to be opened by the wife of the American Ambassador. It meant they could arrange a guard of honour to receive her at the Guildhall and as she was known to the Royal Family the Queen wrote congratulating the organisers, the Queen Mother sent a case of dessert knives and forks and Princess Margaret gave a “delightful tea service”.

The evening saw floor shows by the ‘Footlights’ and from the ‘Broadway Revue’ consisting of various groups from the USAF stations. Sgt Leroy Rose from Corpus Christi, Texas, was caller for the Buttons and Bows, a square dance group from Alconbury, followed by the Rainbows Rhythm and Blues group all negro. Ed Masters from Cleveland, Ohio, played his accordion and then Hosea Hornbuckle from Detroit, Michigan, led the Playboys quintet in singing a song called ‘sexy ways’. Certainly, this was nothing in the usual run of church fetes and raised a massive £455.14.5 net (or about £6 to £7,000 in today's money).

Square Dances were popular: the CDN carried a photograph of one in progress at the Guildhall in February 1955 – does anybody recognise themselves or their mum? And can anybody explain another picture taken by John Carter while he was a press photographer. It shows a queue outside the Guildhall of men wearing Stetsons, but who were they and why what were they doing. [SCAN OF SQUARE DANCE IN GUILDHALL 1955 AND QUEUE OF ‘COWBOYS’ ON MARKET HILL]

There is no shortage of memories about Danny Kaye's visit to Cambridge 50 years ago (Memories May 17th. Jean Pope of Comberton remembers: “I was at the Danny Kaye afternoon in the Cambridge Guildhall. I was working as a nanny at the time and the lady I worked for knew I was a fan of his, so she got me a ticket and gave me the afternoon off to go. He was a very good speaker. It was a big thing to see a big American star in Cambridge at that time and it was a superb afternoon”. She still treasures the News cutting of the event

The man who filed that report was Peter Hoskison. He writes from his Fulbourn home:

“I well remember the visit to Cambridge during May 1956 of that great film star and entertainer Danny Kaye. I had probably the best seat in the house in the Large Hall of the Cambridge Guildhall- sitting right at the front edge of the stage at the press table!

“In those far-off days when I had all my hair and teeth (happy memories of the bygone era) I was a couple of years into a long association with the good and great in Cambridge, as a journalist with the then Cambridge Daily News, now the Evening News. I was chosen to cover Danny's visit because the news editor thought I wanted cheering up. And he was right - Danny was the perfect antidote for a dose of mid-spring Cambridge blues. I recall being asked by him in front of the whole audience of around 700 people if I was being well paid. Sitting right at the feet of the Hollywood legend, I had to say yes, because the paper's owner, the late Alderman Captain Archie Taylor was also in the audience!

“I found Danny Kaye a perfect gent to chat to after his show - far more pleasant than many of the stage and political personalities I was to meet in the following year. It's a pity we do not have a few more high-quality entertainers around like him today. Never a smutty word or innuendo - just an endless stream of funny jokes” [DANNY KAYE AND PRESS MEN – CANNOT SAY ITS PETER H.]

Albert Waldock of Fulbourn has more details of the VistaVision process used for the Danny Kaye film, Court Jester, that was being shown at the Regal. It was pioneered by Paramount and was one of the forerunners of the new ‘wide screen’ techniques without the outlay of big screens and expensive lenses. It was soon ousted by Cinemascope. Albert should know: he was a projectionist for over 30 years at the Victoria Cinema. [SCAN OF REVIEW OF KAYE FILM]

But in May 1931 another superstar was appearing at a local cinema: Cambridge professor and physicist Lord Rutherford, together with Prof E.D. Adrian and two local MPs were amongst a party of Royal Society scientists who visited Spicers of Sawston to witness a breakthrough in film technology. Less than four hours afterwards they saw themselves in natural colours on the screen. Experiments in colour movie film had been going on for two years and it was hoped that Sawston would become a complete film colony rivalling Elstree in importance. It was not to be – but what happened to that original film?

##

Paul Staniforth from near Norwich has almost completed a book on the Ely Gasworks but is trying to track down anybody with memories to share. He is particular keen to locate a man who worked as a stoker there. If you know him then please contact Paul on paulstaniforth@uk2.net or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch.

Memories 7th June 2006, by Mike Petty

Soon Midsummer Common will resound to the sound and excitement of the midsummer fair – as it has for centuries. In 1887 it was hailed as "probably best known fair in world" and much of its success was due to the roundabouts and gallopers belonging to Henry Thurston, son of Cambridge brickmaker and founder of a showland dynasty.

This year, as usual the Mayor will proceed in civic state, proclaim the fair, distribute coins to the hoards of bystanders. [SCAN OF MAYOR PETER WRIGHT PROCLAIMING THE FAIR IN 1972]

The present Mayor (ADD HIS NAME) would do well to learn the lesson of his predecessor in 1901, as the News reported:

Midsummer Fair, the delight of children and the pleasure of not a few adults was formally opened. On reaching an open space councillors in their carriages commenced throwing the

coppers. A spirit of mischief seemed to be present in the first carriage for the coins fell thickest in close proximity to the crockery-ware stalls, one or two even finding a resting place amongst plates. The children pushed and hustled with such energy that a few of the articles were damaged, much to the disgust of the proprietor

The civic party will then proceed to the amusements where the Mayor will be photographed riding the dodgems or shooting at the rifle range – or whatever happens to be the latest trend to part punters from their pennies. [SCANS: MAYORAL LIMOUSINES AT THURSTON'S ROUNDABOUT AND THE MAYOR IN A DODGEM CAR – 1950s]

The fair was a little different a century ago as this report from June 1900 emphasises: Of roundabouts there are plenty and there are two resplendent switchbacks. Half-a-dozen shows include a menagerie and cinematograph exhibition and the remainder of the fair is made up of shooting galleries, coconut shies, toy and sweet meat stalls, cheapjack wares and drinking booths. There are no less than 15 refreshment saloons, some of which serve a double purpose in supplying thirsty ones and providing accommodation for dancers.

But there was another side: the horsefair. In 1900 animals of all sizes were put through their paces on the sodden grass. Business was brisk, cart horses and nags forming the major portion of the stock. Buyers from many part of the country were at the fair and quite an average amount of buying and selling was done.

The fair was a profitable venture, in 1904 it was calculated that showmen were taking about £650 in a single evening to say nothing of the amount expended during the afternoons. But this hit locals: *Sir – every year our Midsummer Fair is visited by a number of itinerant merchants selling pots, pans, linoleum, furs, drapery and various oddments. They pay little rent and no rates and taxes and yet they take away hundreds of pounds which our to be spent in local shops. In many cases people actually pay more for the goods at these mock auctions than they would in a proper shop – Tradesman, 1905*

There were other complaints:

Sir – is it not about time that the annual Bacchanalian orgy known as Midsummer Fair was abolished? On Saturday night men, women and even children intoxicated by drink were behaving like maniacs. There were 14 tents for the supply of intoxicating liquors whilst behaviour in the dancing tents is indescribable. – A.J.L.B.

Sir – may I protest against the needless pandemonium Chesterton residents are forced to endure during the Midsummer Fair by the hideous orchestrations attached to shows and merry-go-rounds, grinding out harsh and discordant sounds which make day and night a time of torture. No sane people can find pleasure in the ear-splitting metallic sounds emanating from these machines. Such a noise, coupled with the hooting of horns and the screeching of steam whistles render rest an impossibility – Nerves

It was this noise that was one reason that in 1931 the council decided to ban the fair from Midsummer Common and send the showman to Stourbridge Common where Cambridge's other fair was held – although by then in a very insignificant manner. But there were others: council money had been spent reseeding the grass and they didn't want the heavy traction engines and other fair equipment on it. It was considered extremely thought unlikely the fair would ever return. But showmen objected and arranged a separate fair on a meadow on Newmarket Road, opposite Ditton Fields. Next year it was back on its traditional site. It was discontinued during the early years of the Second World War, reopening in 1943 and by 1953 was back in full swing: [SCAN OF THE WALL OF DEATH 1925 – WHICH ADDED TO THE NOISE]

A miniature town of tents, side-shows and enormous gaily-coloured structures housing a thousand thrills for the venturesome has made its annual appearance on Midsummer Common. But this year the Fair seems to be bigger and brighter than ever; it offers a more animated scene than in the past and there is an air of friendly gaiety, shared by showmen and their patrons which suggests the influence of Coronation year. The Fair is the biggest in the Eastern Counties and can boast no fewer than 24 roundabouts. The 'Dodgems' are a special feature, reputedly amongst the best of any fair in England.

But by 1981 its future was once more in doubt as councillors and fairmen argued over rent increases, prompting one showman to admit. "The fair is quite honestly not that good – its large, but not well-attended". It was the last fair for Cambridge's master showman, Stanley Thurston who, aged 83, had never missed a Midsummer Fair in his life. The News photographed him wearing his customary bowler hat at the ceremonial opening – [NEG 2436 81 35]. SCAN OF STANLEY THURSTON – SCAN THE ORIGINAL NEGATIVE – 2436 81 25

Despite its ups and downs the mayor will be there again to proclaim open a Cambridge tradition – but when was your first fair, and what do you remember of the rides and attractions of the past?

Memories 14th June 2006, by Mike Petty

The news that parts of Ely Cathedral may have been destroyed in an earthquake over 500 years ago has brought such ground-trembling events back into prominence.

There have been other local earthquakes over the centuries, including August 1089 which, according to ancient chronicles, made the buildings jump up and settled down again. There was another

in East Anglia in 1165 which 'overthrew them that stood upon their feete and made the bells to ring'. More followed in 1231 and 1343. Two struck in 1750, one in August the other September, and another in 1896.

Two examples in living memory came in August 1926 when earthquake shocks of unusual severity were felt on a Sunday morning. In Cambridge occupants were awakened by the rattle of windows, crockery and furniture and residents in West Road were aroused from sleep by the oscillation of their beds; a lofty wardrobe continued to shake and its contents to rattle for some time. Railwaymen on night duty said the telegraph poles rattled and the windows of signal cabins shook. Several residents of Huntingdon felt three tremors.

Then on a Sunday morning, 11th June 1931 came another. It had been a strange day in Wisbech with brilliant sunshine followed by a terrific hailstorm, the heaviest in living memory. Then in the dead of night people in the town were awakened by the rumbling of what sounded like heavy traffic passing along the streets and the sound of crashing crockery and falling pictures. March residents noticed two distinct tremors: the tower of the town clock shook violently causing the bell to ring incessantly. [SCAN OF MARCH TOWN HALL CLOCK]

At St Ives many people were so terrified they sought refuge on the Market Hill and could not be induced to return to bed. The rattling of windows, ornaments and beds was accompanied by a deafening sound, as slates, bricks and pieces of mortar clattered to the ground, and at Mr A.E. Smith's house in the Broadway tiles fell with such rapidity that the noise was likened to machine-gun fire. The complete side of one chimney stack collapsed on the Market Hill and the bricks fell through the roof of disused offices below and into a bedroom, so frightening a

young girl, Miss Cannon, that her parents had difficulty pacifying her. Bricks from the chimney of The George Inn, Bridge Street crashed to the footpath leaving a deep imprint, though John Brundell, who resided at the Globe, slept peacefully through it all. Other resident claims to have heard the railway trucks in the sidings buffeted one against the other [I WILL TRY AND FIND PIC OF ST IVES FROM NEWS LIBRARY]

Inspector Evans of Arrington had been on late duty and was awakened by a violent shaking; he thought somebody was trying to break in so he struck a match and saw the dressing table dancing about. At Comberton ten rows of slates fell off one house and a washstand was completely overturned and the ornaments damaged.

In Cambridge it was a very gentle earthquake according to the reporter's prose: "suddenly in the silence of a calm and tranquil night there came a mysterious, slow, oscillatory motion, quickening and increasing in intensity. It seemed as if a giant hand had seized the bed and was shaking it, gently but with irresistible might". [SCAN OF HEADLINE OF 12TH JUNE 1931]

Dr Balfour Gourlay of Millington Road had been reading in a downstairs arm-chair when he was aware of gentle swaying movements at about twenty-past one in the morning. He had experienced other earthquakes in South America and knew what it was. H.C. Webb of Oakington timed the quake as lasting about 50 seconds and checked his clock by wireless time signal to confirm that it struck at 1.25 am.

Mr L.W. Jones of King Street, Cambridge, was a wireless expert on the staff of Pye Radio and had a transmitting apparatus on the premises. Working only in the dim light from his valves he was amazed to feel the whole house, an old structure, tremble and shake. The walls quivered and the old stairs creaked. The apparatus on the large bench covered with 'gadgets' began to jump and a large dry battery, weighing six pounds, was thrown off the table. [SCAN OF KING STREET IN 1960S SHOWING OLD HOUSES, NOW DEMOLISHED]

At Queens' College the tremor caused the great bell to ring and at Addenbrooke's Hospital some of the beds on wheels rolled forward and nightstaff feared that some of the extensive structure alterations, then taking place, had collapsed.

The Ely district was more seriously affected, shocks were keenly felt in the west end of the city, where beds and their occupants were shaken, crockery displaced and the foundations of some houses were heard to crack. One lady thought her last day had come. But it seems the cathedral survived unscathed.

Memories 21st June 2006, by Mike Petty

Ely cathedral was packed a few nights ago for Lakenheath High School's Graduation ceremony. Hundreds of proud American parents watched as their sons and daughters processed down the aisle in ceremonial robes and beribboned caps to take their place on the stage erected beneath the Octagon. They stood for the National Anthems and listened to orations and music before it was time for the actual presentation of diplomas: a moment to be captured by numerous digital cameras and televised to those parents on duty overseas.

There were some subtle differences in academic dress that differentiated the students in a ceremony that combined dignity with delight in achievement. But there was one little tradition that went unobserved by most. As many of the students received their certificate they slipped something into the hand of the principal. He in turn pocketed it. When it was all over one side of his suit was bulging, full of multi-coloured combs – a useful present for a totally bald man! It could have been worse: last year the students had handed over golf-balls!

I had been invited to see the way Americans did things – Cambridge University does it a little differently. In the splendour of the Senate House their students kneel before the Vice Chancellor who recites a Latin formula and there is no forty-word message from recipients thanking mom and dad, sister and boy-friend such as those that enlivened the Cathedral ceremony.

These days Cambridge degree lists are posted on boards outside the Senate House, but a century ago crowds of dons and undergraduates congregated inside to learn the results. The examiners stood in the gallery and read through the names in order of merit before tossing down printed lists to be scrambled for while the friends of candidates dashed off to impart the news to those who dare not come to hear for themselves.

The names of the Senior Wranglers – those receiving the highest marks in the Mathematical tripos - made headline news around the world, especially in India when in 1906 an affiliated student from the University of Calcutta was jointly awarded the top prize. When the morning came for him to receive his degree he was greeted with applause from undergraduates packed into the Senate House.

But it was the afternoon proceedings that attracted most attention. Then it was not the highest achievers that were acknowledged but those who, not so academically gifted, had nevertheless persevered and gained a degree.

In 1906. H.R. Bell and W.Crouch, both of Selwyn, were bracketed last in the Mathematical Tripos and were each rewarded with a souvenir – a wooden spoon. In earlier times it had been a shovel with the college arms hastily painted on the bowl but by then it was a thing of beauty, a handsomely decorated trophy which would not be out of place in the most artistic study. Each was painted with the Selwyn arms together with the recipient's name and along the handle a pretty view of the college or Senate House.

The two giant spoons were suspended by strings from the galleries that were packed with raucous undergraduates shouting remarks to those below. Selwyn College degrees were awarded near the end of the list and as the moment approached so the spoons were made to jig up and down. Mr Bell was the first of the wooden spoonists to be admitted and when he arose, a full-fledged Bachelor of Arts, the token of his achievement was lowered to the floor. He was handed a pair of garden shears, decked with the college colours; with these he cut the string, bravely shouldered his spoon and marched out of the Senate House accompanied by a perfect tornado of cheers. Mr Crouch followed a minute later to a similar response.

The hullabaloo of the Senate House must have matched the whoops and cheers that echoed around Ely Cathedral as another proud institution celebrated the achievement of its students.

The wooden spoon ceremony was not to last much longer; indeed Cambridge University had already been voting on a new way of announcing the results and the last spoon was awarded to C.L. Holthouse of St John's college in 1909. But who knows, perhaps our American cousins may adopt it next year.

The spoon ceremony has been illustrated a number of times but recently one News reader, Mr S.M. Robertson of Queen Edith's Way, sent me a couple of old printing blocks dating back about 100 years. Using modern computer techniques I have been able to identify one of the views as showing the announcement of the award in the Senate House – something I do not remember seeing before. If so then it has filled another gap in the recorded history of Cambridge University

SCAN OF PROGRAMME OF LAKENHEATH HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION
CEREMONY

SCAN OF ENGRAVING OF THE WOODEN SPOON CEREMONY
SCAN FROM THE PRINTING BLOCK OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT IN THE SENATE
HOUSE
PHOTOGRAPH OF UNDERGRADUATE WITH WOODEN SPOON OUTSIDE SENATE
HOUSE.

Memories 28th June 2006, by Mike Petty

We seem to live in a world of instant communication; in streets and cafes people have mobile telephones clamped to their ears or are busy reading their messages on the move. Last week I had to learn to read such messages.

It started after somebody hijacked my email identity to send out spam. So I asked our village's computer guru, Chris and whilst he set out to remedy the problem decided to open another email account. Chris suggested one that linked to my ancient mobile phone, which seemed a good idea at the time. The only thing was that as part of the process I needed to receive a text message; when it came through neither of us knew how to read it! In the end I worked it out and set up the new account.

All was fine until I switched on the mobile phone, when it just kept ringing and ringing as email messages poured into it. Eventually I found out how to read and delete them, only to receive another batch and then more. At least it solved the mystery of what everybody else is doing on their phones – deleting spam emails!

I logged back on to the company's website to try and stop it happening. I learned lots and lots of other things, but not that. So when I was in Market Street, Cambridge I popped into the phone company's shop to seek the help of the experts there. One young gentleman told me what to do – just what I'd done before. So I asked him to show me on his computer. Twenty minutes later he'd still not managed to log in. But, fully instructed, I made my way to the computers at Lion Yard Library. After thirty frustrating minutes I decided to return to the expert. Again he could not log in.

Meanwhile the shop was busy with people, some of whom were as inept as I, seeking help to add minutes to their pay-as-you-go account, others seemingly fully apprised of all the latest gismos and gadgets who just wanted the latest handset (which had sold out!)

Can there ever have been a time like it? Well yes: in September 1898 the telephone was being hailed as one of the most marvellous inventions of Queen Victoria's reign – though not as important as the phonograph. This was described as a bit of glass in a frame, a bit of sapphire, a waxen cylinder, a machine that revolved by clockwork, and a tin horn. Result, the human voice had been caught, imprisoned and made to repeat itself again and again for all time. Like the mobile phone of today this endless source of pleasure it had a serious side. No business office was up to date with out it. It was invaluable in answering correspondence, as it could be dictated to at any time as fast as you speak.

The telephone was soon playing its part in everyday life; by January 1902 the Cambridge Volunteer Fire Brigade's new fire station in St Andrew's Street was in communication via the National Telephone Company to the three permanent salaried firemen on duty. The police too were quick to realise its potential: in December 1903 Detective Marsh was informed of the theft of a bicycle from Mr Edwards of Emmanuel Street and given the description of the suspect. He telephoned to Bishop Stortford and Hertfordshire police arrested the man near Buntingford. The prisoner told the court "If I had had another hour I should have been in London".

Farmers were pleased to learn that in February 1929 a telephone had been installed at Bartlow railway station. Many of them sent pigs to factories by road because they could not get in touch with the railway to order a truck and the railway company were losing a lot of business by not having telephones at all stations.

But what happens if there's nobody to take the call. In 1951 a Cambridge doctor came up with the answer. He coupled a recordon dictaphone, various wires, amplifiers and relays, together with other improbable odds and ends to provide the solution. If there was nobody to answer the patient heard, "Hello. This is the automatic telephone speaking. The doctor is at the hospital. Goodbye". He was now turning his inventive imagination in the direction of an apparatus which would also record an incoming message.

Not all new developments are improvements on the old: in 1929 the Post Office was working on a new handset where the mouthpiece and the earpiece were combined – you picked it up and put it to your ears and you could hear and speak whilst only using one hand. But it did not deliver the same quality of speech as the ordinary pedestal telephones. By coincidence whilst drafting this article I received a telephone call from a lady, apparently in India. She was offering me a new mobile phone – she must be joking, I've only just learned how to use the old one!

The new phones allow you to watch television – so what! In 1910 you could listen-in to plays at London West-End theatres by telephone. The system was known as the 'Electrophone' and enabled you to choose your theatre and listen to the whole evening without interruption.

Major developments have occurred in more recent years. In 1980 an entirely new kind of telephone was announced by Patcentre International of Melbourn. It used a high-frequency radio link which would 'beam up' to a microwave receiver installed on an ordinary telephone poles or high buildings. A user wanting to make a call would simply stand under one, dial and speak. The company thought it had a real future but might take a while to get accepted. At the same time there was Prestel, a specially adapted tv set connected to the telephone. A remote control keypad enabled it to dial up the local computer and access material stored in its memory which travelled down the ordinary telephone line. In the future one might use on-screen displays to teach children, exchange letters and conversations by text displays, vote in general and local elections and transmit newspaper-type material to a domestic print-out facility, the News speculated 26 years ago.

Now all I have to do is email this to the News. The only thing is that since I set up that new email address I get phone calls to see that my articles are not getting through. Time to call on Chris again!

THERE ARE PICTURES IN THE NEWS LIBRARY 'TELEPHONES' FOLDER OF THE PEDESTAL-TYPE PHONE AND AN OLD MOBILE 'BRICK' PHONE.
I ENCLOSE A SCAN OF A MODERN VARIETY

Memories 5th July 2006, by Mike Petty

Susan Mackay from Linton has responded to my request for memories of how youngsters coped with school harvest holidays in the days before television and the computer.

She writes:

"For the children of Hadstock in the 1950s, the long summer holiday posed no problems; we were country children with the fields and fresh air in our blood and we enjoyed the freedom to

roam the countryside at will. Teenage culture had not been invented – or had not penetrated our rural backwater. You were a child until you left school and started work, which for most people was at the age of fifteen. It was, therefore, a motley collection of youngsters ranging from toddlers in the care of older siblings to fourteen year olds enjoying their last six-week break, who would set off on the day's adventures.

“But there were usually jobs to be done first. Older members would be sent to the allotments to collect the day's vegetables or, carrying heavy galvanised iron buckets, they would collect the day's water supply from the stand pipes dotted round the village, frequently having their efforts frustrated by little ones trying to tip them over as soon as they were filled. Then there would be purchases to be made at the village shop with small children carrying money wrapped up in the shopping list. Sometimes there would be weeding to do or picking up potatoes which had been dug the previous evening. Harvest time meant gleaning: in the days before combine harvesters children were sent to comb the stubble fields for loose heads of corn for chicken food.

“Work completed, the rest of the day was ours. We would meet up with other youngsters and were ready for our adventures. The ‘drome’, the old Second War aerodrome, was our adventure playground; we would explore down steps into dark, dank, subterranean shelters or peer through the windows of Nissan huts where American servicemen had given children's parties. We would climb the steps to the first floor of the control tower – all the more exciting because it was forbidden territory – and the ‘heap of dirt’ a large mound which dominated the flat airfield for many years into which planes returning from bombing missions had fired their unspent ammunition.

“There were various cross-country routes along lanes which were as familiar to us as village roads. We might stop off at one of the village ponds, littered with fuel canisters that had been jettisoned by aircraft returning to their base. These torpedo-shaped capsules could be used as canoes. An opening was cut in the top, any holes were plugged with clay and they it was ready to be set afloat. As the boys climbed in we girls watched with bated breath for the inevitable moment when the vessel started to sink.

“Many a lazy, hazy summer afternoon was spent sitting on top of the bank at Back Hill, opposite ‘The White House’ where we idled away our time making daisy chains or whistles from cow-parsley stems. If the grass on the cricket meadow had been recently cut we would rearrange the bales into houses, chairs and pyramids before wandering to a low point in the hedge to watch the cattle in the adjoining field.

“Inspired by our literary heroes in ‘The Secret Seven’ or ‘Famous Five’ we made dens, spied and stalked passers by. Any ‘suspicious’ looking characters would be silently shadowed from the other side of the hedge in our attempt to uncover some dark and dastardly deed. Our only coup was when we observed the green and white Wrenn's fish and chip van pull up along the Linton road. A man alighted carrying a large wire basket of uncooked, chipped potatoes. He hopped over the bank at the side of the road and proceeded to wash the chips in the fast-flowing water of the ditch! I don't know if it made any difference to his sales in the village but we certainly related this incident at every possible opportunity.

“By late summer the hedges were laden with blackberries which were eagerly gathered to be turned into pies, crumbles, jam and jelly. Rose hips were made into syrup, crab apples into jelly and elderberries into wine. We knew the meadows where mushrooms would appear as if by magic overnight and any fallen branches would be dragged home to add to the winter wood pile.

“And so our days were filled. The fresh air and exercise gave us hearty appetites and ensured we slept soundly, dreaming of plane crashes, weird cattle and sinking canoes on village ponds.”

But what would the mother of today think of such escapades!

Other children had the excitement of a railway trip to the seaside. Terry Beaumont from Cambridge has lent me a picture of children from the Ditton Fields Sunday School on the platform at Barnwell junction for their outing to Hunstanton in 1951. Do you recognise any faces? – SCAN 119.38

I WILL LOCATE PICTURES OF HADSTOCK FROM THE NEWS LIBRARY FILES

Memories 12th July 2006, by Mike Petty

The recent funeral in our village of a lady who, with her husband, had run the local petrol station – cum – bicycle repair cum much else beside saw older residents turn out to pay their last respects. But in an ever-changing village there were relatively few people who can now remember back to the 1960s and 70s when they were in business.

Yellowing newspaper cuttings tucked away in drawers or pasted into scrapbooks are valuable aids to jogging the memories of days gone past. Last week I had the privilege of meeting a number of men and women at a Camsight meeting at Melbourn and although their vision might be now dimming their memories were bright. I shared snippets and stories that I’ve discovered whilst compiling my ‘Looking Back’ column and they remembered the incidents and people mentioned.

Now two local historians have been busy at work unlocking such stories for their community. Barbara Slade has concentrated on Hardwick, journeying to the Cambridge Central Library in Lion Yard where there are indexes to the stories reported in the Cambridge Chronicle between 1770 and 1900. She has then turned to the newspapers themselves and transcribed the entries.

There are reports of sales and fires, thefts and inquests – all the things that find their way into the papers. One man who features was John Jaggard of the Horse Shoe public house. He was returning home from Cambridge just before Christmas 1843 and when he arrived at the top of the hill before reaching Madingley turnpike gate, three men came out from a field, threw him down & filled his mouth with dirt. They then picked his left hand breeches pocket of some papers of no value to anybody but himself and some silver and halfpence. It was strange they should have chosen this particular pocket, for it was the one into which he had put money he’d just received from Mr Moore, the poulterer. But the villains were disappointed, for John had banked it before leaving town.

In their haste to escape one of the robbers left his hat behind. It was distinctive, as it had originally been a high-crowned hat but had been reduced in height and the crown fastened on again. It was a vital clue for the police – and John just happened to be father of Inspector Jaggard of the Cambridge constabulary.

Madingley turnpike gate however remained a dangerous spot. In July 1851 James Mills, the Hardwick pork butcher was returning home with his donkey and cart when he was stopped near there by two men who dragged him from his cart, threw him on the ground and robbed

him of three pounds. Barbara Slade's researches show that he was then living in the High Street and had three children, David, Arthur and Ben.

Similar stories for Elsworth have been researched by Dorothy Bienek, except that she has examined the period from 1900 to 1943. This includes the Great War and the aftermath of the Battle of the Somme in July 1916. The paper records village casualties: Corporal George Driver killed and Arthur Dawston, William Braybrooke, Harold Allgood, George Day, Herbert W Driver, Edwin Lyon and George Rolt wounded on the 1st July. The paper notes that Herbert Driver was wounded in the thumb, George had been his elder brother. Having recovered from his wounds, Herbert returned to the front; in May 1918 he was awarded the Military Medal and promoted from private to lance-corporal, before in July going on a signalling course.

There was mixed news of another local lad, John Desborough, one of a large family who lived at Cowdell End. At first it had been thought that he had been killed in action, but in May 1915 his family learned that he was a prisoner of war at Renbahn, Munster. While his family mourned the death of one brother, Herbert, in August next year and the wounding of another, at least they knew that John was safe. But then came the news he had died in captivity. At first they were told he had been injured whilst working in a foundry but then *The Times* broke the true story. John had come to the aid of a French prisoner who was being bullied by a sentry and been told to go away. As he did so the sentry shot him in the back.

Dorothy continues the chronicle of Elsworth life through the hardships of the 1920s and 1930s and on into the Second World War when once again the village names are in the headlines. Corporal Douglas Desborough married in the November of 1941, by the April of 1942 he was listed as missing. His subsequent fate must be sought elsewhere, for this selection of newspaper stories ends in July 1943.

As for Herbert Driver: he seems to have survived the trauma of the trenches for in January 1924 he was listed amongst the mourners at the funeral of Thomas Driver, his father. Fourteen years later his mother died and in December 1938 when the newspaper reported: "Mrs Lydia Driver, widow of the late Thomas and daughter of the late Webster Brand, died aged 78. Mourners were Mr & Mrs H. Driver (son and daughter in law), Miss Driver, Mrs A. Desborough, Mrs E. Dawson, Mrs G. Dear (daughters), and sons in law."

It is such small details that enable the family historian to fit another piece in their jigsaw of the past.

'Extracts from Cambridge newspapers on Hardwick' researched by Barbara Slade is published by Hardwick Community Association and available from her on 01954 211263

'The Elsworth Chronicle, 1900-1943' by Dorothy Bienek is published by Swavesey Local History Society and obtainable from the author on 01954 267278 or Ann Shepperson on 01954 230313 at £4 plus postage

Memories 19th July 2006, by Mike Petty

Where are you going for your holiday this year?

How about a holiday camp, where board and lodging for the week cost £6 for men, £5 for women, where packed lunches are provided, where sheets, blankets and pillows are supplied but you must bring your own Wellington boots and thick

gloves if coming in June or July.

That was the attraction of Friday Bridge agricultural holiday camp near Wisbech in 1968 when they expected between 400 and 500 visitors during the peak harvest season. These visitors would then recover their costs by working in the fields, picking strawberries gooseberries or raspberries and later plums, apples, beans and potatoes.

This was part of the development of the agricultural revolution that had started a century earlier when Richard Bath hired Osborne Farm near Wisbech. By 1895 he had laid down 400 acres of raspberries and strawberries together with 27 acres of currants. This meant that at the peak season there was far more work than local pickers could handle - 30 to 50 tons of fruit a day employing up to 1,300 people, many of whom travelled down from the East End of London.

By 1925 it was usual for them to come for a month – men, women and children of all ages. The campaigners were scattered around the area. The headquarters were at Leverington, with tents for recreation, canteen, medical treatment and day nursery. They lived in "bunks" - a name which covered various types of accommodation - tin huts, old stables or converted, railway carriages. Those allocated to Mr Hickman's farm found in 1914 that there was only bare earth for a carpet. They recalled: "in dry weather we were plague by dust and in the wet we waded in mud"

But, unlike at Friday Bridge in 1968 where discotheques and television, billiards and table tennis were the norm, in the 1920s there were no such distractions. It was not the farmer's duty to provide amusements for his workers and the only entertainment was in public houses. Mothers brought their children but there was nobody to look after them in the fields, and the working conditions produced a host of minor ailments such a sceptic finger - to leave it untended would be dangerous, to go to Wisbech to the doctor would mean a day off work.

To cope with this and other problems, and to preach the gospel to the poor whom they thought had been neglected by the churches in their industrial homes, the Cambridge Fruiting Campaign was launched around 1910. University dons and undergraduates gave up their time to journey into the fens. Dr Swainson from Sidney Sussex college organised the canteen at Leverington and played the organ, T.C.C.M. Moor of Trinity was lantern operator and medical man, G.H. Hewitt from Fitzwilliam Hall gave recitations and lightning sketches whilst J.W.Fisher from Trinity taught boxing.

Today the fruit pickers tend to come from Eastern Europe, not the East End of London, but this weekend reports from Herefordshire speak of people working more than 14 hours a day, seven days a week, sharing cramped caravans with no medical care. Perhaps it is time for Cambridge University staff and students to pack their cases and head out once more!

However the fruit must be harvested and the prospects of earning money by picking are still there. But the statement in the Fruit Campaigners report for 1925 is still as valid as ever – "Don't come if the mere sight of work makes you go all of a tremble, we can guarantee plenty of work and we don't want you if you don't care about doing it" [SCAN OF GOOSEBERRY PICKERS NEAR WISBECH 1930s] [SCAN OF FRIDAY BRIDGE AGRICULTURAL CAMP 1950's]

Many Cambridgeshire folk remember all about hot sticky working in the fruit fields, with wasps buzzing round. But the orchards themselves can be attractive places to visit, especially in spring time. One village that appreciates this is Haddenham where the ‘Blossoms and Bygones’ weekend attracts large crowds. The News snapped a group of ladies touring Norman’s fruit farm in 1962 – do you recognise anybody? [SCAN OF HADDENHAM LADIES]

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My mention of Dorothy Bienek’s survey of Elsworth events from 1900 to 1943 brought back memories for Hubert Desborough who was born in the village and started work as a lad with horses. He remembers many of the people mentioned and can recall the incidents described. But Hardwick researchers will need to be patient, for Barbara Slade tells me she is still working away on her transcript of their village stories. It will be well worth waiting for.

Memories 26th July 2006, by Mike Petty

The last few weeks have seen local schools celebrating the end of the academic year with educational trips. Back in July 1956 as part of the 21st anniversary celebrations of Chesterton Boy’s School 320 boys and staff travelled by special train to London. Once there they spit up: some boarded a bus to London Airport and Kew Gardens, others were shown over Westminster Hall and the Houses of Parliament by Cambridge MP, Mr Hamilton Kerr. Then it was off to the Tower of London, to South Kensington Museum, the Zoo, the International Horse Show and a river trip to the Maritime Museum at Greenwich. Memories of the outing itself have probably dimmed over the years but will be vividly reawakened by a photograph taken by the News and preserved by John Carter. It shows a number of the lads posing on the front of the locomotive, with some even standing on the track. But who can put names to the youthful faces of 50 years ago? [SCAN OF CHESTERTON BOYS SCHOOL SPECIAL TRAIN, 1956 – PLEASE USE IT AS BIG AS YOU CAN]

Life was simpler in the days before cinema or television. Cambridge had a circus of varieties in Auckland Road which presented a range of talent. Joy Adams from Trumpington writes: “Amongst such acts were gentlemen who manipulated puppets and learnt to speak without moving their lips. My maternal grandfather (real name Alfred Shearing) took the stage name ‘Trillo’ and joined up with Ven and Quist – it was they who coined the name ‘Ventriloquist’ It’s a good story, and she has a photograph of ‘Trillo’ in action. But they were not the first [SCAN OF ‘TRILLO’ PICTURE]

The Cambridge Chronicle reported how Lee Sugg was on his way to a performance in Ely, travelling in his own coach, when he met a old man by the wayside who waved him down and begged a lift. They got on well together till they got to Stretham. There were children playing about the street who ran behind and climbed on the coach so Sugg ordered his coachman to stop and reprimand them. But as soon as they set off again the brats clambered round, hanging on behind. Then as they got past the windmill and picked up speed there was a cry from underneath the coach – a child’s voice begging ‘Stop the coach ... stop the coach’. ‘Carry on driver’ called out Sugg, now most annoyed, ‘that’ll teach them to climb up on my conveyance’. This really upset his travelling companion who urged him to stop, but Sugg would have none of it. Eventually the passenger leaned out of the coach and roared at the driver to pull over, which he finally did. Jumping down he looked underneath the vehicle – but there was nobody there. Fearing the child must have fallen off he looked back up the hill towards the village – but saw nothing. Then he heard the cry again ‘Stop the coach’ coming from underneath. Back under he went, still no body...” It was then he realised why Lee Sugg was famous, yes he was a ventriloquist. The date: November 1799

Old posters preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection show that in the 1820s Cambridge enjoyed a wide range of entertainers: they included Mr Wheatley who appeared at the Wrestlers Inn, Petty Cury in the September of 1829. He could make cards walk, dance, fly or be visible or invisible at a word and took two eggs, out of one he extracted a live animal the size of a duck – and the other one danced the hornpipe! The act included ‘the extraordinary transformation of a piece of money into a child, who will sing a song and converse with any of the audience, in which several specimens of ventriloquism will be introduced’ [SCAN OF PART OF POSTER]

When Dr Seaton’s Animated Photographs and Concert Company visited Cambridge Guildhall on Boxing Day 1905 the pictures included the latest Japanese and Russian war films, “Life in Canada” and “The Kingdom of the Fairies”. But the performance also featured a high-class variety entertainment including Professor Carson, ventriloquist and mimic. In more recent times, Peter Brough the remarkable radio ventriloquist with his dummy, Archie Andrews, was a guest at the University Pentacle Club’s “Cavalcade of Magic” in February 1950. Other vents appeared regularly on the stage of the Cambridge New Theatre: Roy Chamberlain from Foxton recalls a show there in March 1955: “It was a very good do, but there were only 24 people in the audience that night. At the finish all the performers came off stage and talked or shook hands with all present”. The bill included Ken Morrison, a concert accordionist, Dudley Dale and his gang of boy singers, comedians Billy Winsor and Syd Wilton from “Workers’ Playtime” and somebody billed as “Ann Robinson, radio’s lovely soprano” together with Dennis Spicer, a ventriloquist, who was sadly killed soon afterwards in a road accident.

But there must have been other ventriloquists: were you one or who do you remember?

Memories, 2nd August 2006, by Mike Petty

Some times things just come together.

Last week I travelled across to North Walsham in Norfolk to give a lecture to members of their Civil Service Retirement Fellowship – something I do each year. This time I was talking about Cambridge during the Second World War and afterwards had time for a chat over tea. Amongst the thirty-or-so people were several with fond memories of Cambridge. Two were related to Captain Archibald Taylor, managing director of the News throughout the wartime years. They had come to see stories from the family’s newspaper. Another lady, Pamela Hudson, had been evacuated from Tottenham. She had wonderful recollections of being billeted in Fulbrooke Road with Mr & Mrs Fuller a porter at King’s College, and attending the Central School.

One other lady, Gill Brown, wanted to tell me of her wartime connection with Chivers, the fruit people. She worked in the laboratories in Huntingdon as well as at Histon, where she witnessed a bombing raid – with vivid memories of jam pulp being splattered across the cottages on the village green. I returned home to find a letter from Eleanor Whitehead of Histon describing that very incident: just before three o’clock on Easter Monday, 14th April 1941 a Junkers 88 dropped seven high-explosive bombs on Chivers’ barrel yard hurling sections of barrel and waves of fruit pulp. A small boy was slightly hurt. Did I know anything more, Eleanor asked. No, I replied – but I’ve met a lady who does! If you can help further then let me know or email eleanor.whitehead@tesco.net. [SCAN OF COVER OF CHIVERS MAGAZINE SHOWING HISTON GREEN] [SCAN OF CHIVERS LADIES c1964]

I’m also in Sheila Proctor’s good books. Her eye was caught by snippet that I featured in a ‘Looking Back’ column. It was a letter to the News published on the 14th July 1906 – one hundred years ago. It had been written by E. Peachey and described his adventures since he’d emigrated to Canada. Sheila writes: “I have been corresponding with a lady from Queensland,

Australia, about the Peachey family from Fen Ditton. Diane Carr is trying to trace her family back to the village since her great-great-great-Grandad emigrated with his brother and cousin in 1856! I responded to a letter from her printed in the Cambridge Evening News and have spent an interesting couple of hours at the Shire Hall going through the Church records tracing them back to 1786. Unfortunately there doesn't appear to be an E. Peachey - was there any other information in his letter?" Indeed there was – in fact the letter stretched for almost a column and reveals that he landed in Regina on 20th April 1903; I will forward the full article in case it helps to locate another distant branch of the family. [SCAN OF ARTICLE HEADING 1906]

I may also have solved a mystery for the parishioners of Lode. When I spoke in the church, reading some of the village extracts from 'Samuel Pickwick's Cambridge Scrapbook', my eye was caught by some tapestry panels bequeathed by the Fairhaven family. They really knew little else about them. I suspect they were made by the ladies employed at the Cambridge Tapestry Company in Thompson's Lane from which Lord Fairhaven commissioned a tapestry for Anglesey Abbey in 1934. Back in April 2000 Sylvia Clark of Cambridge, told me how the firm built up a great reputation for the production of 'period panels' and lent me pictures of the girls at the works, which closed in 1941. [SCAN OF LADIES AT THE CAMBRIDGE TAPESTRY WORKS 1936] [SCAN OF THOMPSON'S LANE 1930's]

Now I can't promise to answer everybody's questions – but I'm delighted to try and have a wonderful team of researchers amongst News readers.

For example David Jones has emailed to identify two of the ladies visiting Norman's fruit farm at Haddenham in 1962 whose picture I featured in 'Memories' on 19th July. They were members of the Arbury Townswomen's Guild, one was his mother, Muriel Jones who became Federation chairperson, and the other Vicky Parr. Sheila Turner from Cambridge agrees and adds a third name, Jean Frost.

Frankie Patterson from Lee-on-the-Solent emails about a different section of the same article: "Last week I was visited by a distant cousin (in both respects) from Oakington who happened to be in Hampshire, where I live. During the course of conversation we talked about Friday Bridge agricultural camp, where I had gone in 1960 for a cheap holiday after leaving school. It was the 60's version of a gap year, I suppose! Three or four of us went off on our adventure and the memories are still vivid today. It was a glorious summer, and the photo in the paper was really good to see. It was exactly as I remember it, and that could have been me walking down the path! It was educational, as we met people from all over the world on that holiday - French, African, Indian, as well as from all over Britain. We had a wonderful time, and I remember it with great pleasure. It was really good to see the picture"

Mrs Eileen Byrne (nee McDonald) from Sawston knows all about fruit picking in the fens. She writes: "My family and I have always worked around Wisbech. I first went with mum and dad and brother when I was about seven or eight until we left the area when I was about 14. Mum and dad went back over the years until he died and she got too old to do it any longer. There were 23 in my gran's family; some died at an early age but the others that were left still did it until they were too old, or died. They were very good times and our memories are very good ones indeed." Her cousin Carroll Golding also helped with the harvest; she was born a Thorald, a family well-known family in the Wisbech area.

During a recent visits to our Norfolk hotel hideaway the place has been busy with trainee ambulance men and women; sometimes they have been being lectured at, sometimes busy revising for forthcoming examinations and sometimes making practical use of the ambulance service themselves, following a too-vigorous game of rounders!

The role of an ambulance man came under the spotlight in the Cambridge Daily News back in 1956 when Philip Osborne conducted an in-depth study into their working day. This was his report:

Ambulance men are quiet men and the rather vigorous little collection of pin-ups they have stuck on the walls of their rest room at the Ditton Walk Headquarters seems to have been put up more for the amusement of visitors who might expect it in an all-male community.

They certainly have not much time for looking at pin-ups. A normal day brings in 60 or 70 calls and requires 1,000 miles driving in the eight ambulances and five sitting-case cars that serve Cambridgeshire. It is a point of pride that there is no office staff – everyone from Supt. A.D. Prior down to the most recent recruit is ‘operational’ and likely to be called out any moment.

They go out in pairs – driver and attendance – always working in the same couples since the business of carrying a stretcher needs perfect co-ordination between two men who know each other’s movements from long practice. It is easy to fall foul of the ambulanceman’s occupational diseases – rupture and strains – in picking up the stretcher. And see how they do it, finishing with a straight run up the steps into the ambulance without the slightest pause, and the stretcher safely locked into its place on the runner-rails on the floor of the car. “It’s a knack”, says Mr Prior and leaves it at that

There is no lack of recruits to the service. Cambridgeshire is limited to a personell strength of 24 and if only someone would retire there would be room for at least one of the 30 eligible men whose names are on the waiting list. But no one ever does, except for reasons of age. It must be the variety, or simply the promise of action and service, that they find attractive. Their jobs may vary from carrying a patient down the twisting stairs in a country cottage, to delivering a baby while the mother is on the way to hospital. About once a month, on average, one of Cambridge’s ambulance men must turn midwife. It used to happen much more often, but the modern ante-natal services make sure a mother’s time is better-judged. Yet there is one of the fleet of pale-blue ambulances which, on its first run out, was the scene of the birth of twins recently – the first baby at the Histon crossing and the second at Parkside. There are official instructions limiting the action an ambulanceman should take in such cases, but – Supt Prior lifts his hands – “You can’t just sit there. You must do something.” I got the impression that a mother could hardly be in safer care.

There is a gentleness about these men that belies their strength. They will tell you about the way they helped a mother, and of the 19-stone patient who had to be brought downstairs from his home at Willingham in the usual carrying-sheet and placed on a stretcher to be brought to Cambridge. And what distress they may have to witness significantly makes no part of their conversation.

Their training in hygiene leads them to keep the ambulances in a spotless condition. In showing me inside one Mr Prior would not even walk on its polished linoleum floor, but knelt on the crimson cushioned seat that runs down one side of the car and usually carries the attendant and the patient’s relatives. Its woodwork shone like a mirror and the metal fittings glistened with hard polishing. Inside and out it would have done credit to a French polisher’s houseproud wife. A long-distance ambulance is thoroughly stripped, cleaned and disinfected after every journey, and a short-distance one gone over thoroughly every day. There is competition between drivers too: there are few things more delectable than a spotless engine.

Three-quarters of the work consists of taking patients to hospital for treatment, either in an ambulance or in one of the dual purpose cars that sitting cases can use. And 70 per cent of the

night-time calls are maternity cases. There are malicious calls but they are very few and come in when schoolchildren are on holiday.

Most of the street accidents that need attention from Ditton Walk happen between 12.30 and two o'clock in the afternoon and five to six-thirty in the evening, 'when the cyclists are about'. Then there are cases who suffer seizures in the streets. And at this time of the year, the week-ends are the worst time for car crashes, with people going on holiday. In winter months it is rugby or soccer casualties. And in the rare moment when nothing is happening the ambulance men can watch their own television set in the rest room. But when I saw it it was covered over with a cloth.

I suspect things have changed somewhat since those days when everybody was operational with no office staff – but were you an ambulance man – or woman – with memories of the service?

Write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories by Mike Petty 16th August 2006, by Mike Petty

The recent heavy wind and rain has beaten down the crops along the lane outside our gate, just one more problem facing the farmers at this harvest time.

The late Frank Turner of Swaffham Bulbeck knew of the trials and tribulations at first hand; some twenty years ago he set down his memories:

The fields which lately stood so full of corn are quickly reduced to stubble by using today's methods. Many of the large combines devour five hundred tonnes and more of grain in a day and at least seventy acres of crops will fall every day to each of the larger machines. [SCAN 55.42 - SIX COMBINE HARVESTERS WORKING IN FIELD OPPOSITE PRIORY PARK, ST NEOTS IN 1960S]

But the harvest TODAY should be compared to that of yesteryear. I remember those of the 1930s and 1940s when all the work was done by hand and horse and the labour was hard indeed for very little pay. Full-grown men earned thirty shillings a week in those days but at harvest men worked on contract; one month's work for twelve pounds, which was double their normal pay

For the first two weeks during which the corn was cut and stooked, the day started at 6.30 in the morning and finished at 7.30 at night. There were two fifteen minutes break for morning 'docky' and tea in the afternoon and a break of an hour for lunch when all the workers bar one bicycled home to have their main meal. Only the man on the binder rode back to the farm with his team of horses, seated on one of them, so that they could be rested in the afternoon. [SCAN 12068 'DOCKY TIME' IN 1920's]

During the second fortnight the work went on an hour longer. This was the period of carting and stacking the corn. The times were the same for masters and for men &, speaking for myself, my father and brother, we worked alongside our employees and just as hard. The sweating was the same for all of us.

At the start of the harvest each field was 'opened up', which means that a path wide enough for the horses pulling the binder was mown all around the field by hand scythe. We used two teams of three horses; one started at 6.30 a.m. and rested in the afternoon, working again in the evening. The other team worked in the afternoon and again next morning and so by

reversing the order every day, each team of heavy horses did two stints every other day. [SCAN 122BIN – HORSE-DRAWN BINDER]

After the cutting by the binder the men stooked the corn and a long, hard, dusty task it was. It should be noted than far from waiting for the crops to lose moisture as we do today, so that one sees the golden fields of grain, in days gone by we always cut it on the green side otherwise the ears would shed too much of the grain. Winter oats would be the first crop to be cut and we had to leave the stooks for three Sundays clear before they were ready for carting.

We had six horses and carts to bring home the sheaves; one cart would be on the field, one would be being unloaded at the stack and two would be coming and going between the farm and the harvest field. Village lads were employed to lead the horses, walking home with the full load but riding back in the empty cart to start the task yet again. Each lad, in turn, would be in the field moving the horse and wagon forward after each stook was pitchforked onto the load. He was expected to call out to the men on the load each time the cart was moved forward to prevent the loader from falling off as the sheaves piled higher and became more unstable. The shouting youngster was called the 'Hodyea' boy – meaning 'Hold ye' or as we would say today, 'Hang on'. A good, strong man working hard, could pitch ten acres a day. [SCAN 122.93 BOY LEADING CART LOADED WITH BEANS]

The carted sheaves were stacked in the farmyard and I've seen as many as twelve great stacks in Mitchell Hall stack yard. When finished they were thatched and left to dry out and the grain to harden. Then during the winter months came the time for threshing. Off came the thatch and the stakes which had held it in place were used to put up a fine wire netting fence about a yard high and about the same distance from the sides of the stack. This was to catch the rats which had been having free board and lodging. As the sheaves were pitched down to the threshing machine out came the rodents and down came heavy sticks wielded with good will to dispatch the creatures. If any escaped the wire, a terrier or other farm dog made short work of them, but as a safety precaution, the labourers always tied their trouser legs below their knees as it was not unknown for a rat – or mouse – to run up an unguarded leg. Sometimes a leather strap was used instead of string and the straps were known as 'lallygags'. When the grain was threshed it was put onto the barn floors where it lay like a golden sand dune until it was sold.

Yes, the days were long and hard, but all trades and work in the village was manual. We were all in the same situation but we were strong and healthy, though we hadn't much spare flesh or spare cash. But we were a community of neighbours.

SCANS 122HAR – MEN AT WORK IN HARVEST FIELD, 1930'
MAN WITH SCYTHER – c1900

I WILL CHECK NEWS FILES FOR OTHER PICS

Memories 23rd August 2006, by Mike Petty

The issue of unmarried mothers is nothing new, but does anybody have memories of a special centre in Bateman Street, Cambridge. News columnist Erica Dimock reported in May 1963 how a home for unmarried mothers and their babies had been established by the Ely Diocesan Association for Social Work in the 1920s and was nearly always used to capacity. It had a matron who was a qualified midwife together with three assistants, including a trained nurse and midwife.

Most of the girls were from the local area; they entered it about six weeks before their babies were due, were taken to hospital for their confinements and then returned to the home until their babies were six weeks old, giving the mothers adequate time to plan for the future.

The home was not run as an institution but had the atmosphere of a family, each mother being responsible for the care of her own child. Family prayers were held in the chapel night and morning. Careful plans were made for the future of the babies, about 50 per cent of whom were legally adopted through one of the Registered Adoption Societies. Others went home with their mothers, into residential nurseries or were placed with foster mothers.

In many cases the mothers returned to see the Matron, Erica noted, adding that this was an indication of the happy atmosphere which prevailed at the Home, and the fulfilment of its purpose in training each mother in the care of her child and the development of her character. It closed after 50 years due to lack of demand in July 1971. Now Chris Basey from Norwich is wondering if anybody can add further information. Write to me and I'll put you in touch.

SCAN OF BABY SHOW – PROBABLY AT MILTON – IN AUGUST 1947: does anybody recognise anybody

SCAN OF PETTY CURRY IN 1950's with mother and baby in foreground – but not all families were happy

SCAN OF BATEMAN STREET 1963 – NB NOT NECESSARILY SHOWING THE MOTHER AND BABY HOME

Helen Harwood also seeks assistance: she is undertaking a dissertation about the Cambridge area in the 1930s. It is about people and how they fared in that turbulent decade and she would like to chat to both town and gown, college servants and country people with memories of local life and politics at the time. Email her at helen_harwood_uk@yahoo.co.uk or drop me a line.

For anybody trying to put that period into context there is a new book by Dr Jim Charles. It's a study of the life and times of his father between 1887 and 1932. This was a period of great strides in scientific research in Cambridge following the publication of Einstein's Theory of Relativity, when J.J. Thomson at the Cavendish Laboratory was discovering the electron and Rutherford worked on nuclear physics. J.H.V. Charles was one of a largely-unsung body of men who in spite of a meagre education went on to play an important part in the rapidly-developing scientific world as a laboratory technician. But he was also instrumental in obtaining proper employment and pension conditions for University Assistants and helped in the development of the New Museums Club. The wide-ranging book also charts his father's friendship with Clarence Howes, whose family ran the famous cycling business. Clarence served in the Machine Gun Corps Motorised Division during the Great War with a machine gun mounted on a motorbike and sidecar combination. Dr Charles himself is Emeritus Reader in Process Metallurgy and a Fellow of St John's College – the college where his great-grandfather was groom – and thus spans both town and gown. His own passion for Cambridge's history means that all proceeds from this book 'One Man's Cambridge' will go to the Cambridge Folk Museum from which copies are available at the special price of £10 (plus £3 if posted). (ISBN 0-9544818-2-8)

Recently News readers have once more proved that there is a wealth of assistance just waiting for researchers to tap into. In Memories of three weeks ago I featured a wartime raid on Chivers. Now Valda Smith from Impington has written with her memories of the bombs that fell on the factory at Histon in 1941: she recalls that all the houses in Poplar Road were covered in jam pulp – they looked as if they had been pebble-dashed. Mrs Yvonne Andreou emailed to say her grandfather Kenneth Baldwin-Smith was a designer at Cambridge Tapestry Company in the 1930's. In the late 1970's she took him round Anglesey Abbey when to her

surprise he pointed out the tapestries that he had designed. She still has two miniature folding screens painted in watercolour which were designs for tapestries made by the company.

Even more exciting is a letter from Mr Richard Bradfield of Bottisham who has knowledge of a correspondent to the old Cambridge Daily News in 1906. Back then an E. Peachey had written from Canada describing the opportunities open to prospective emigrants and I included a snippet in my 'Looking Back' column. This brought me a letter from Sheila Proctor who was researching the Peachey family on behalf of an Australian lady who had written to the News seeking help. This is where Mr Bradford comes in: his own family emigrated to Canada in the early 1900s and still farm out there. Amongst their archives are a series of diaries kept by his uncle Bowyer Bradford in which he mentions some of the famous names of North American history such as Sitting Bull and Geronimo who moved north after the battles at Wounded Knee and the Little Big Horn to seek the shelter of the 'Big White Queen', Victoria. One name that crops up is that of E. Peachey who had been head postmaster in the Regina area for some years.

Memories 30 August 2006, by Mike Petty

Two readers have written in seeking your help.

Allan Brigham, the Cambridge street sweeper and tour guide is starting to investigate the way the Romsey area of Cambridge has changed in the last 40 years. He has [some pictures of Mill Road, and a few of side streets, but none of gardens or house interiors showing how the 19th century houses have been improved and adapted to fit modern life style and modern gadgets.](#)

[Even kitchens built in the 1930s sometimes had the table-bath rather than a separate bathroom, and there was certainly no room for fridges, freezers, or washing machines. So what he's looking for are pictures of unimproved houses, pictures of modernised houses, and especially pictures of people in houses or gardens over the last 40 years. If you have something suitable Allan would love to hear from you on Cambridge 212189 or via email - \[allanbrigham@hotmail.com\]\(mailto:allanbrigham@hotmail.com\)](#)

John Carter of Cambridge has lent me two photographs taken in the 1950s that I think are just what is needed – but I'm not quite sure where they show. One shows York Street, off Sleaford Street but a second one has me stumped. I suspect it's somewhere in the vicinity – but do you recognise your old front door?

Sleaford Street was one of those featured in Sara Payne's 'Down Your Street' articles back in October 1982. She described how Co-op milk floats and petrol tankers then rumbled down it. The Co-op dairy had opened in 1927 and was soon selling 400 gallons a day soaring to 100,000 bottles daily by 1979. In earlier times the milk was then delivered in horse-drawn milk floats and Donald Nelson remembered that the horses and ponies were stabled in Sturton Street and were washed down every night. "There was a big harness room and all the horses had their names up. The dairyman wore caps and livery", he recalled.

The dairy was joined by a model bakery opened by the Co-op in 1932. It was equipped with the most modern machinery and 500 sacks of flour arrived each week from their own private railway sidings close by. But demand soon exceeded production; it was rebuilt in 1952 and was later taken over by Spillers-French. By 1977 the Sleaford Street bakery was baking about half of the bread sold in the area but closed two years later.

Sara chatted to one of the oldest residents was Mrs Hilda Sells who had been born in 1908. She could remember a field with a donkey in it that stood at the bottom of York Terrace – but

if you have memories or family snaps that capture the ambience of this part of Cambridge in more recent days then please let me know

SCAN OF PICTURE OF YORK STREET, OFF SLEAFORD STREET AND THE MYSTERY STREET

I WILL LOOK FOR A PICTURE OF THE CO-OP DAIRY USED IN 'DOWN YOUR STREET' 1982

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Jean Weston has also emailed me. Her message speaks for itself: "I always read your column and find local history very interesting. When I was passing Sainsburys in Sidney Street the other day I realised I couldn't remember what used to be there. Could you ask readers for their memories of anything previously on the site", Consider yourself asked!

C.J. Reid has responded to my request for memories of the hostel for unmarried mothers in Bateman Street. she writes: "An undergraduate at Girton 1961-64, one Sunday I joined a Sunday morning

service at Little St Mary's. I slipped into a space near the back, was passed a hymn-book, found my place, and then had time to glance at my neighbours. I was greatly startled to find the back three or four rows were filled with very pregnant friendly-looking young women of my own age-group.

Later I was told, by an obstetrician that they would have come from the establishment for unmarried mothers in the Lensfield Road area. (I now presume, that at Bateman Street.)

Those that wished to go to church on Sundays could do so, sitting at the back to avoid being stared at. I was told there were communion services at the home as well, so that those that wished could receive communion

without the risk of embarrassment that might have occurred if they had walked down the nave."

I have discovered another story of the problems of unmarried mothers that appeared in the Cambridge Daily News on 23rd August 1906. It told how a woman of about 30 years of age journeyed to Cambridge to meet the man who was the author of her 'trouble'. In the words of the time: While she was in the train alone the child was born but on arrival at the station she behaved with such extraordinary circumspection that none of the railway officials suspected anything unusual had occurred. Carrying a bundle wrapped in underlinen under her arm, this extraordinary woman walked the length of the platform, hailed a cab and asked to be driven to the Workhouse. There her strength gave way and when the Master, Mr L. Hosegood, was called to his office, he found a swooning woman on the floor with a newly-born babe beside her. The News commented: "It speaks volumes for the prompt and skilled attention she received, as well as to the remarkable vitality of the mother and child, that notwithstanding their adventures they are both doing well".

Memories 6th September 2006, by Mike Petty

It's just 25 years ago that social life in the fens changed forever with the final auction of cattle and pigs at Ely. During the previous few years business had dropped off as farmers switched from animals to more profitable arable farming, so Cheffins, Grain & Chalk, the auctioneers who ran the market the time had come to close. It was a particularly sad day for the auctioneer, Mr John Grain, the third generation of his family to be involved in the market, who had first started work at the market exactly 48 years ago to the day. It had been founded by his grandfather, Mr Arthur Trett Grain and continued under his father's guidance until he took over.

At 10.45am on 7th September 1981 Mr Grain rang the bell for the last time to summon farmers, dealers and onlookers to the final cattle sale. This time there was only one animal to be sold – a black Hereford brought along by Mr Sidney King, a Littleport farmer. It tipped the scales at 680kg and was bought by King Brothers of Holbech, Lincolnshire for 100p a kilo. Then 78-year-old Mr ‘Nibs’ Lee of Ely – a market hand for 63 years until he was forced to retire – was called to ring the bell to herald the start of the final pig sale. The bidding was brisk for the 50 pigs on offer, the last one being sold by Mr William Darby of Haddenham. Entering into the spirit of the occasion the bidders pushed the price up to 290p per kg, when it was bought by Mr Sidney King junior, of Littleport. The other part of the weekly market at Ely, the poultry, produce and furniture auctions continued for a while but then it too passed into history. [SCAN 59.392 OF THE FINAL CATTLE MARKET AT ELY – CEN NEG 3508.81.35]

The Cattle Market at Saffron Walden lasted a little longer but closed after its 121st Christmas Far Stock Show and Sale in December 1981. There had been a cattle market in the town for several centuries and in the 1960s farmers would come to market once a week to sell their stock and do their shopping. But times had changed and it was down to 40 cattle a week. CEN NEGATIVE D969 81 12 SHOWS MRS JENNY FURZE WITH HER DAUGHTER KAREN (THEN TWO) AND MRS JACQUELINE MONK WITH SON NIGEL LOOKING AT THE LAST CATTLE IN THE MARKET

But such markets were more than an agricultural convenience – they were a chance for young and old to see the animals and watch the bidding. At Ely cattle market the fat pigs were sold at 10 am, then live poultry followed by dressed poultry and produce, furniture and dead stock and more furniture. Sale by auction was a jolly bantering and time-consuming affair. When the News visited in July 1979 it reported: “The crowd are mainly old hands, but that doesn’t guarantee rock-bottom prices. Quite often they went above prices in the nearby general market. On occasions this was loudly pointed out by a member of the audience who nevertheless appeared to be tolerated as an unavoidable part of the proceedings and often started the bidding, albeit well below the auctioneer’s asking price. Bidding is usually done on the basis of the price per single cabbage or pound of strawberries and there is no obligation to take the lot. Most people take two or three items and bidding starts again for the rest.”

Besides there was always the possibility that something exciting might happen. In December 1902 the landlord of the Boot Inn, Histon, was tossed by an infuriated bullock at Cambridge Cattle Market. The animal, a Scottish beast with very long horns, was being driven into a pen when it broke away, caught Mr Vialls with its horns and threw him over the rails into one of the pens. The horns penetrated his trousers and made a scratch about seven inches long. The wild beast was eventually safely secured and sold to Mr Mills of Cambridge without being brought into the auction ring.

Sometimes animals actually ran to market as in December 1979 when a bullock destined for the slaughterhouse went on the rampage in Cambridge for several hours, terrifying pedestrians and threatening to bring rush-hour traffic to a grinding halt. Armed police were called in and combed the city looking for it until a panda car driver spotted the animal running along the road in front of him. It charged in and out of the Eastern Counties bus station in Hills Road, knocked a pensioner off his bike and attacked two pedestrians in Station Road. Then with three police cars on its tail it was cornered in a garden at Highsett but escaped by leaping over a panda car and the chase started again. A wall was partly-demolished and three police cars damaged before it was finally herded into the cattle market pen [SCAN OF CAMBRIDGE BUS DEPOT, HILLS ROAD 1954 – DO ANY READERS REMEMBER IT]

But do you have memories of the cattle market?

Readers have been quick to identify the mystery picture I featured last week. Frederick Smart from Cambridge and Bryan Foreman from Comberton called to say it's Brandon Place at the bottom of City Road and on the corner is the Free Press pub. Betty Shaw agrees: "We lived half way down by the gas light in the 1930s. City Road ran along the far end with Adam and Eve at the other". Tony Miller FROM knows the area well but he asks "Where are all the people/children who lived in Brandon Place, not even any children playing, was it taken on a Sunday when we were all at Sunday school? As kids we used to talk to the very friendly chap, on his bike with his pointed ladder over his shoulder from the Gas Company, who came to wind the clocks up in the gas lamps. Such friendly people then. Mums even used to leave their baby in their prams out in the street/front gardens. How times have changed."

Jean Weston's appeal for a reminder of what was in Sidney Street Cambridge before Sainsbury's moved in has also brought a picture from Paul Silk who emailed: "You asked what was on the site of the Sidney Street Sainsbury. Part of it was P. H. Allin & Sons radio and electrical shop. My farther Tom Silk is the tall one on the left of the picture the other person may be one of the Allins". [SCAN ALLIN – PAUL SILK'S PICTURES OF ALLINS RADIO SHOP, SIDNEY STREET] .Mrs Lesley Roper writes: "I know that along there behind the present row of shops Eaden Lilley had a furniture shop and a workshop where beds and mattresses were made. A Mr Charles Allen ran the workshop and a Mr Harley was one of the workmen and Miss Rose Haynes and Mrs Dorothy Beilby were the ladies who sewed the covers for the mattresses". Did you work there?

Memories 13th September 2006, by Mike Petty

Chris Basey's request for information on the Bateman street home for unmarried mothers has bought a response from Janet Howard of Cambridge.

She writes:

"As a young girl who grew up in Cambridge, 48 Bateman Street was a formidable place, as it was drummed into us that if we played around with boys and got pregnant that would be where we could end up. It was made to sound like a really awful place, that was enough to put us off having sex at a young age. How times have changed.

"I visited the home in the early 1960's when I was a student nursery-nurse at The College of Arts and Technology in Cambridge, now The Ruskin University in East Road. I remember the visit very clearly. The young mums were busy doing the household chores whilst their babies slept in their cots in the large communal nursery, these babies were looked after by those mums still waiting to give birth, obviously to gain some experience before having their own. I remember it being very clean and airy but sparsely furnished with bare floorboards. I felt great pity for those young mums having to care for their babies, some even breast fed for a few weeks they had with them. I couldn't have imagined bonding, caring for and loving my baby and then having to part with it.

"When I finished at college I worked as a nursery nurse at Mill Road Maternity Hospital in Cambridge, where I came into contact with mum's from Bateman Street. They generally stayed in hospital for nine days then, and part of my job was to give help and advice in caring for their babies" [SCAN OF STAFF OUTSIDE MILL ROAD MATERNITY HOSPITAL 1968]

But, unbeknown to her then, the Bateman Street home was to play a more personal part in her life, as Janet explains

“My late mother-in-law had the misfortune to become pregnant at the very young age of fifteen. She wasn't a local girl, she lived in a small Norfolk village near Mundersley called Paston and was 'sent' to Cambridge to have her baby at 48 Bateman Street. On 28th May 1935 she gave birth to a son Paul, his surname Morris. Paul was adopted and due to the circumstances of the pregnancy my Mother in law was persuaded to stay in Cambridge where she went into service.

“My husband has had, and still has a great desire to meet his half brother. His mum wanted no part in this, as she had no wish to bring back such painful memories, so he had to promise not to try until after she had died.

“Since her death in August 1998 we have obtained a copy of Paul's birth certificate, until then we didn't even know what she had named him. Unfortunately, all avenues we have been down have drawn blanks. We were told by social services that their records don't go back that far and, because we have such little information, organisations we have contacted offer very little hope of my husband ever finding Paul, as his adoptive parents may well have changed his name. We have registered with Norcap in the hope that Paul may try to look for his birth mother's family, but time is not on our side as he would now be 71 years old, ten years older than my husband. If there is anyone who knows of other avenues we could explore to help us find Paul we would certainly appreciate it”

If you think you can help then please contact me and I'll put you in touch with Janet.

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Readers were quick to recognise a 'mystery street' as Brandon Place. Now more letters have come from Mr J.D. Williamson of Cambridge who used to walk that way when attending the Central Boys School between 1935 and 1938, Mrs B. Shaw of Waterbeach used to live beside the gas lamp and remembers an air raid shelter being built at the Adam and Eve Street end during the war while D.A. Dilley has written all the way from Kilbirnie in Ayrshire with his memories of the area. Mrs Gillian Smith from Girton has conclusive proof; she has lent me a picture taken by the News in the early 1960s [SCAN OF BRANDON PLACE IN EARLY 1960S]

Meanwhile my mention of Hilda Sells and her opposition to petrol tankers trundling down Sleaford Street has sparked memories for Mrs R. Hunt who now lives in Bar Hill. She writes: “I lived a few doors from Hilda and was quite worried to see the Amoco tankers trying to negotiate the turn into York Terrace. A group of us decided to make our feelings known so attended the council meeting about this in the Guildhall. Armed with a banner which we draped over the balcony and chanting ‘Tankers Out’ we were quickly escorted out of the chamber. I am now 80 and can hardly believe that I demonstrated”

Mention of petrol tankers prompts me to seek help identifying another picture taken in the 1950s by John Carter. It shows a Mayor of Cambridge inspecting a new Esso distribution centre. But where was it, who is it in the picture and can anybody tell me more? [SCAN OF PETROL DEPOT]

Memories 20 September 2006, by Mike Petty

Now that many societies have started their autumn series of meetings I have found myself trundling back from talks at Girton, Denver, Wimbotsham and March. All too often I have

had to strain my eyes against mis-aligned oncoming headlamps, waiting for the times when I can switch to main beam and see the fenland roads more clearly.

But who remembers the important role played by Midsummer Common in the development of car headlamps. Just 55 years ago, in September 1931, representatives from the Ministry of Transport and Scotland Yard, chief constables and scientific experts joined hundreds of local folk to witness the biggest demonstration of anti-dazzle devices for motor cars ever held in this country.

Cars fitted with 100 different inventions were drawn up in line with their backs to the river and turned on their lights to illuminate white posts set in the grass in front of them. Sadly the demonstration was marred by the crowds who clamoured around, more interested in the vehicles than the posts they were supposed to be looking at.

Then the cars were driven off around a route marked off with white stakes, but again the spectators got in the way and several drivers got completely lost, ending up on the wrong side of the common! Of course, being Cambridge there had to be cyclists without lights – although for safety's sake, these were just dummies.

All-in-all the experiment, organised by the Royal Automobile Club, was deemed a success. Even though 'experts' seemed to favour a British 'dip and switch' device the Association was adamant that other systems should have an opportunity to prove their worth. What they really learnt was that it was the spectators who could not see where they were supposed to be standing - although things did improve greatly after many of the little boys present were taken off to be put to bed!

SCAN 9158 - CARS ON CAMBRIDGE MARKET HILL WITH HEADLAMPS MASKED AS A BLACK-OUT MEASURE DURING WW2
SCAN 9957 - CARS IN GARAGE – BUT WHAT COULD THEY SEE THROUGH THEIR HEADLIGHTS

Cars need fuel and Alan Purr has emailed to say he recognises last week's picture of a petrol tanker: he think it is the former Redline Oil Services Depot that was situated in Cromwell Road, Cambridge and closed in the Seventies. The site was next door to Ridgeons Builders Merchants and is now a block of flats.

My appeal for memories of cattle markets has prompted various readers to write in.

Jim Charles from Gt Shelford recalls the Cambridge cattle market. He writes: "As a boy in the 1930's I went often with my maternal grandfather, 'Jasper' (J.G.) Bryant whose whom was in Rustat Road. He was a much-lved Cambridge gents hairdresser whose saloon was above Millers Music Shop in Sidney Street. As I recall market day was Monday and livestock would arrive in a variety of vehicles but with some, mostly sheep, on foot. Fortunately traffic was light in those days! A feature of the market in later years was the increase in stalls of a non-agricultural nature such as those selling crockery from side-opening display trailers, with much banter and showmanship."

June Mitchell from Gazeley used to work for Comings' in a wooden office in the corner of the Ely cattle market. Once the hammer had fallen the successful buyers would bring the sales sheet to her and settle up. George Comings sold the pigs which were often bought by dealers on behalf of farmers. One day a foreign gentleman who had a restaurant in London journeyed down and bid £10 for a litter of eight very small pigs. Only when he came to pay did he realise that this was the prince per animal, not for the entire lot and refused to take them. George Comings was furious and tore him off a strip as the market was now closed, then passed the animals on to the bacon people. He was a real character, quite at home with the

farming community, but less so with a young lady like June. She was paid £3 a day for her work and eventually after eight years picked up the courage to ask for a rise. George pondered then declared that no – that was all the job was worth.

Miss Margaret Skempton from Coton remembers the cattle market in New Street, St Neots. It was run by S.V. Ekins and son on Thursday, the same day as the general market on the Square. She recalls: “I worked in a bank in St Neots in the ‘60s and all the farmers came into town, and the bank, on Thursdays. My brother, who was handicapped with Downs Syndrome, loved to go to see the cows and bullocks whenever anyone would take him. The buildings have now been demolished. There was also an auction market for produce further along New Street just before the common gates, run by Shaws. This may have been on a Monday afternoon. I can remember my father going and coming home with 20 or 40 lbs of cooking apples which he had bought for a few coppers. There was also an egg packing station on this site and it was possible to buy cracked eggs for much less than shop prices for sound ones. They could not be boiled (the white came out into the water) but were perfectly good for other purposes. They were a boon for my mother and others on a tight budget”

SCAN OF CAMBRIDGE CATTLE MARKET 1960S –
9819 FARMERS DISCUSS PRICES,
9789 - MARKET WORKERS TICKETING ITEMS BEFORE THE SALE,
9797 - CATTLE MARKET TRADER SELLING NYLONS

Memories 27th September 2006, by Mike Petty

There have been remarkable developments following an appeal from Janet Howard. She wrote to ‘Memories’ in response to another reader’s request for information on the Bateman Street Home for Unmarried Mothers and described how she had visited when a trainee nurse.

She then went on to say: “My late mother-in-law had the misfortune to become pregnant at the very young age of fifteen. She wasn't a local girl, she lived in a small Norfolk village near Mundersley called Paston and was 'sent' to Cambridge to have her baby at 48 Bateman Street. On 28th May 1935 she gave birth to a son Paul. Paul was adopted and due to the circumstances of the pregnancy she was persuaded to stay in Cambridge where she went into service. My husband has had, and still has a great desire to meet his half brother. His mum wanted no part in this, as she had no wish to bring back such painful memories, so he had to promise not to try until after she had died”.

Janet described the steps they’d since taken to track Paul down, without success.

John Capes from Sawston is a regular reader of ‘Memories’ but happened to miss that particular article. Luckily a neighbour brought it to his attention and John has been in touch.

Incredibly he remembers Paul: as a lad he had lived in Paston next door to a young teenage girl named Rene who suddenly disappeared from the scene. A few weeks later a new baby appeared in the home of a married couple just down the road, he was called Paul and took that family’s surname. But nobody remembered the wife being pregnant.

John went to the same school as Paul for a time and played football with him. He remembers him as a reserved boy who stayed on in the village until he did his National Service in the Royal Air Force and then got a job on the buses, moving up to Lancashire. There for the moment the search for Paul rests but there are now extra clues for Janet to follow up that she would not have discovered were it not for a News reader. And her husband Roger still treasures hopes that he might one day meet the older brother he has been searching for all his life.

Can we do something similar for a Swiss student? Lilian Dutoit from Brunnen is researching the suffragette movement and would like to hear from anybody whose family were involved in the campaign.

A Women's Suffrage Association was established in Cambridge in 1884, numbering Mrs – late Dame - Millicent Fawcett and Mrs Heitland amongst the founder members with support from the Vice-Chancellor and Mayor. Generally the struggle for the Parliamentary vote was conducted by serious political lobbying and debate, but such meetings passed largely unnoticed whilst the more extreme "Suffragettes" made the news.

Cambridge's first experience of such protestors came in 1908 when in what the male reporters described as a "very exciting incident" one struggling female had to be carried out of a meeting. They would soon find out that Cambridge was not a congenial place for this sort of activity, the News warned.

Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst, the leading militant, was greeted with hostile demonstrations when she visited in 1910 while 1911 saw women walking the streets to avoid being counted on census night and a local minister's wife being arrested during a suffragette raid on the House of Commons. In 1912 the University Men's League for Women's Suffrage was lobbying on their behalf and the Conservative Women's Franchise Association was formed but it was the militants who hit the headlines. They tried to set fire to the Varsity rugby pavilion, disrupted a garden party at Magdalene College and generally caused such mayhem that Colleges closed their gates during the Long Vacation. They even landed by boat at St John's College to paint the gates purple, green and white and daub "Votes for Women" on the stone work – or did they? Later a male student was to claim that three undergraduates had done it, deliberately leaving a woman's shoe at the scene.

But the major incident was in May 1913 when early one Saturday morning two plain-clothed policemen spotted smoke coming from a newly-built houses in Storeys Way. They called for the new motor fire engine which roared off from St Andrew's Street, followed shortly afterwards by firemen, some cycling, some running and some riding in a covered van. They were too late to save the roof of the first house but did manage to prevent serious damage to the second.

Detective Sergeant Marsh discovered somebody had broken in through the study window, poured paraffin over sawdust and packing cases and set them on fire before moving on to the adjoining premises and repeating the process. There were three clues: bloodstains from broken glass, footprints and a ladies gold watch. On Wednesday he travelled to Norwich and arrested a schoolteacher.

The suspect, an active Suffragette, admitted being in Cambridge on the evening in question and she had a fresh wound on her hand. The crucial evidence **was** the watch. It had been a present from her uncle, a Norwich policeman who recognised it and agonised about what to do before shopping his niece. She was sentenced to 18 months hard labour but went on hunger strike and was released in October.

What other tales do you have in your family archives that can add something to the struggle for the vote. Drop me a line or contact Lilian direct by email – sekretariat@theresianum.ch

SCAN OF THE STOREY'S WAY HOUSE WHICH WAS ATTACKED BY
SUFFRAGETTES

SCAN OF A SUFFRAGIST STALL ON PEAS HILL (nb Suffragists were the non-militants, Suffragettes those who protested)

Memories 4th October 2006, by Mike Petty

Dave Howchin from Hill Road Cambridge and Ian Wells from Haslingfield have written following a picture I featured of a Cambridge oil terminal; both worked there during the 1950s and 1960s.

It was a new depot in Cromwell Road, Cambridge that started operating in February 1955 and was formally opened by the Mayor, (Ald E.T. Halnan). As the News for 21st June 1955 reported: "The site as it appears today is a marked transformation of an area formerly used for allotments ... providing Cambridge with an enterprise serving a very wide area and likely to continue to expand as time goes on. The aluminium painted storage tanks have a capacity of 216,000 gallons with supplies brought from the Purfleet terminal in five vehicles working on a double-shift basis"

The dignitaries were shown around by Esso managers E. W.Hardiman, J.R.Payne and E.G.Caink with the Supervisor, C.H.Loveday pointing out some detail. The lorry was a Bedford SA tractor unit coupled to a Carrimore trailer capable of carrying 2400 gallons of petroleum spirit and driven by D.E. Cook who is standing on top. It would have been virtually brand new at the time, hence the shine on the tank. [PHOTO OF THE INSPECTION]

Ian adds: "These wagons looked particularly splendid in their deep red livery. I spent much of my childhood in the cab of a lorry looking down at motorists in their (what seemed) tiny cars. The 20 mph plate on the back of the lorry was considered a joke by most of the drivers, a far more realistic speed was 30mph laden, 40mph unladen.

"Both my father, Cyril and my Grandfather Alfred Reginald (Reg) Wells worked for Esso clocking up 78 years service between them! Granddad started at the Ely depot moving to Chatteris, then to Huntingdon where he retired. During the war years he worked for Pool Petroleum at their Buckden depot. Dad moved around as well, starting at Chatteris, moving on to Buckden, then Huntingdon, Cambridge and finally King's Lynn where he retired. The reason for all these moves was as the trucks became larger, bigger terminals were needed. Lots of changes of schools for us three children!"

"The depot at Cromwell Road was closed by Esso in 1965/6 when our family moved to King's Lynn. After that it became a depot for home heating oil delivery. When I moved back to Cambridge in 1993 it was being used by Flitwick Oils. I believe the site became vacant sometime during 1994, it is now housing"

Ian has lent me other photos of Esso lorries including one taken in the late 1940s showing Reg with a Bedford lorry. [SCAN OF REG WELLS WITH HIS LORRY]. But there's something else: an extract from the 'Esso Employee News' of April 1954 showing the launching of a new super-tanker, the 'Esso Cambridge'. What became of it?

The transport of petrol brings its dangers; October 1976 was a particularly problematic time: a petrol tanker overturned on the A11 outside Audley End House and in seconds turned into a raging inferno. Flames shot 50 ft into the air and a thick, black column of smoke could be seen miles from the scene,. Grass verges for 100 yards on either side of the tanker were scorched and a passing motorist came close to being trapped in the blaze. A ten-yard length of the flint wall was demolished and 60 square yards of the forest was destroyed by flames. It

was the second tanker disaster on the A11 in just over three years. The first had been a collision between a 6,000-gallon diesel tanker and a lorry at Quendon in March 1973, then two weeks later a tanker carrying 6,000 gallons of aviation fuel collided with a car at Audley End, but there was no fire.

Petrol is inflammable as Mildenhall discovered to its cost in September 1897 when fire broke out in the warehouses belong to Messrs Firth Bros, grocers and drapers and seven barrels of petroleum exploded. As it threatened a nearby bank the manager thought it best to remove all the cash elsewhere. Mildenhall Fire Brigade was promptly on the spot with their two manual engines and tamed the blaze after two hours hard work, but it was a narrow escape for the whole of the side of the Market Square. [PERHAPS FIND PICTURE OF MILDENHALL MARKET SQUARE IN NEWS LIBRARY]

Such concerns were uppermost in the minds of councillors when considering the erection of petrol pumps in the centre of Cambridge in 1922. The Mayor could not understand what the problem was: all other towns of any size that had them and it seemed a most extraordinary thing that an enlightened borough like Cambridge still refused to allow a pump to be put up on the footway. However a News reader enlightened him: "Memories of past Cambridge 'rags' should have convinced him of the danger. Many an 'undergrad' would simply love to tear it from the pavement and cart it in triumph to his lodgings, and when he went down to take it home and say, 'Look, mater, what I did'. No, sir, undergraduates' pranks are bad enough already and no one desires to see a flaming chariot of burning wood deposited near a petrol pump" he warned.

But another correspondent allayed his fears: "Has he ever seen a petrol pump and, if so, has he ever tried to root it up? Let a dozen or more of the strongest of these super-men try to uproot a petrol pump and its impassivity would resemble that of the celebrated and disappointing Sphinx. Let their fiery chariots smoke all around the pumps and there would be yet another proof of their immunity to fire."

Petrol pumps soon arrived, and King and Harper's filling station in Bridge Street quickly became so busy that queues of motorists started attracting the attention of the police. So In June 1925 the firm opened a new depot in Hills Road offering four different kinds of petrol and nervous drivers could wait to be filled up in comparative calm. [SCAN OF KING AND HARPER STAFF AT THE HILLS ROAD GARAGE, FOURTH FROM THE RIGHT ON THE BACK ROW IS BILL SILK WEARING THE BAG CONTAINING MONEY TAKEN AT THE PETROL PUMPS – PHOTO FROM PAULINE GARNER OF COTTENHAM]

These days the idea of cars parking beside city centre streets and taking on petrol seem incredible but do you remember them?

Memories 11th October 2006, by Mike Petty

These days there seems to be a constant fascination with cops and criminals. Almost every evening some television channel follows some upholder of the law as they track down dastardly villains. But how much of the dramatic chases and daring-dos really reflect the role of the average Bobby, and what was life like for the constable of the past.

50 years ago the Cambridge Daily News sent out a cub reporter to discover the truth of a policeman's lot. Armed only with his notebook a young man named Rodney Tibbs set off to try and make his name as a journalist. He can't have done too badly for Rodney's articles – mainly now on motoring – are still published in the News to this day.

But that of 12th October 1956 was perhaps his first: “To some he is an enemy, to others a music-hall joke but to the vast majority of the public the village constable is a familiar and reassuring figure – the man who knows what to do when things go wrong. He attracts little of the glamour usually given to the C.I.D. or the high-speed radio-controlled precision machinery of his fellow-officers, yet he remains the most important man in the police service. But although he is so often seen pedalling along a country lane, the public idea of his full duties is very scanty”, he wrote

So Rodney borrowed a bicycle and set off on patrol with one of Cambridgeshire’s most experienced beat men, PC Ebben, who was responsible for the area around Comberton, Hardwick and Toft. It hardly made headline news: The first call was on a smallholder whose pig had died, a veterinary surgeon had examined the animal but the cause of death was not yet known. PC Ebben was able to refer the farmer to a pig expert living in the village who could give valuable advice.

But sometimes things got more exciting: the constable told how he had once been called from his warm bed in the early hours of the morning and cycled several miles through bad weather to visit an elderly lady living by herself who complained she could hear noises in her bungalow. Inevitably the noises stopped as soon as he arrived, but they started again as soon as he left. Determined to spot the trouble and anxious to get a complete night’s sleep, he pulled up the floorboards and found a hedgehog beneath.

As they biked they paused at a telephone box, a convenient meeting place should anybody need to get in touch with the constable whilst on his beat. But nobody arrived and they moved on.

One evening the bobby had been cycling along when he noticed somebody walking unsteadily by the side of the road: it transpired he had taken an overdose of pills. In pouring rain PC Ebben had taken him to a shelter and arranged for a doctor to attend. Impressed by the kindness shown, the suicidal man decided not to take his life after all and now had a different job, his worries behind him.

Every policeman was fully-trained in first-aid and even his wife had to be prepared to cope with emergencies. Once Mrs Ebben had been called to the door to find a young child covered in blood – he had been kicked in the face by a horse; she made him comfortable until more experienced help could arrive.

The intrepid duo had now reached Toft church, looking picturesque and charming in the failing light. For anybody on the run, a church offertory box makes an ideal target and it was part of the policeman’s routine to check to see it had not been tampered with. He then checked business premises and private houses before continuing to Comberton cross-roads where they were met by the Sergeant who had come along to see all was well.

It was a fine evening but, PC Ebben observed: “I have been out on cycle patrol wearing extra pullovers and socks, with a flask of Bovril and a flask of coffee in my bike basket and I have still felt frozen to the marrow within two hours”

But by 1956 the days of the bobby on the bike were beginning to pass and Rodney joined him in one of the mobile patrols in a black Austin A90 driven by PC Clarke, a full-time police driver. They waited just off the built-up area of Harston watching for speeding traffic – a warmer but less appreciated form of policing.

Once back at the very smart Police House at Comberton it was clear that the constable was on duty all round the clock. Even when the normal work of the day was done there were still

such things as accident reports to be made out – and it helped if the policeman could type. His was becoming a multi-skilled role and “taken all round the public get excellent value for money”, Rodney concluded, adding he would watch out for the friendly form of the village constable next time he saw him on his rounds (not to mention the black Austin beside the road)

Rodney Tibbs will be speaking of his memories of 50 years behind the News at the ‘Fenland History on Friday’ meeting at Ely Library on 3rd November, 10.15 to noon. All are welcome.

Do you have memories of life on the beat by bike, were you a policeman’s wife or and did you ever live in a police house – write to Mike Petty at the News

SCANS

BILL LYTHELL, THE STRETHAM BOBBY WITH HIS BIKE 1963
PC EBBEN – PICTURE FROM THE NEWS ARTICLE OF OCTOBER 1956
AN EARLIER POLICEMAN ON A BIKE – BUT CAN YOU NAME HIM OR
RECOGNISE THE VILLAGE
PIGS – A PART OF THE BOBBY’S CONCERNS

Memories 18th October 2006 by Mike Petty

The Lord Nelson inn at Upware, better known as the ‘Fives Miles from Anywhere, No Hurry’ was one of the riverside pubs that once served the needs of the bargees bringing goods to Cambridge. It stood on the River Cam near the junction with the Lodes which lead down to Burwell, Wicken and Reach, a remote and peaceful area of fenland.

Not that the pub was always peaceful for in the 1850s it was home to the ‘Upware Republic Society’ a gathering of undergraduates who took advantage of the solitude to boat, shoot, skate, fish and enjoy themselves in their own vision of a sporting paradise. Its members included James Clerk Maxwell who was to later achieve fame as first director of Cambridge University’s new Cavendish Laboratory and Henry Arthur Morgan who went on to become Master of Jesus College. [SCAN OF THE OLD PUB – THERE WILL BE MODERN VERSIONS IN THE NEWS LIBRARY IF REQUIRED]

Ten years later the former site of a ‘Republic’ had a King in Richard Ramsay Fielder, an undergraduate of Jesus College who lived and lounged at the pub for many years, fighting any who disputed his self-proclaimed title. In his red waistcoat and corduroy breeches he built up his reputation for drinking, never far from an enormous brownware six-gallon jug of punch.

During the Great War the ‘No Hurry’ was the base for German prisoners, during which time the windows which had been inscribed with the names of generations of drinkers were broken, and over time the thatched roof was covered over with corrugated iron.

It remained a regular venue for boating parties such as that of the Eagle Tavern Children's Outing in September 1947 when an exciting day out was enjoyed by 70 youngsters. On arrival they sat down to an excellent sandwich lunch, and then managed to consume fruit and five gallons of ice-cream. An exciting sports programme followed in which every child received a prize, and then sat down to an excellent tea after which they sang themselves back to Cambridge

But in October 1956 the old pub was badly damaged by fire which destroyed the roof and charred timbers in the bedrooms. Charles Jolley, who had been licensee for over 30 years, told the News that by the time fire crews arrived the roof was well alight and difficult to extinguish due to the covering of corrugated iron on top of 18 inches of thatch. Earlier in the day painters had been at work on the inn. The building stood derelict for years until it was rebuilt in more modern style and still provides welcoming place to break a journey whether by boat, bike or car – or increasingly on foot as walkers trek along the Fen Rivers Way. [SCAN OF HEADLINES FROM 20TH OCTOBER 1956]

These days there may be music on the terrace but gone are the old characters such as Charlie Crisp who was recalled by James Wentworth Day. "I can see him now, ruddy-faced, mischievous-eyed with his whiskers greying, his clay pipe glowing, leaning back on the wooden settle in the bar of the "Five Miles," with his long-legged spaniel snoring at his feet, while he declared solemnly to a sucking undergraduate: "Lor' bless you, sir, that were so hard here one winter and that many geese up the river that they come over the house-top one night like a troop o'hosses. I no more to do but stuck me owd gun up the chimbley and fired her off when I heerd 'em honkin' over. Blarst, boy, when I run to the door, I couldn't git that open. Shut fast." "Snow?" inquired the innocent. "Snow! Blarst! No. Dead Geese! A cart-load on 'em. Them what I shot out o' the chimbley!"

Are there such characters with tall tales to tell – if so please share them with me.

##

Vera Campbell from Somersham has written following my appeal for memories of cattle markets. She writes: "I visited Cambridge Cattle markets during school holidays and when I worked for my father, Fred Papworth who owned cattle lorries. On the front of his lorries was painted in large white letters 'Here Comes Papworth' [SCAN OF PAPWORTH'S LORRY]

"Monday morning were an exceeding busy time for hauliers as both Cambridge and St Ives had cattle markets and there were quite a few loads to take. I remember arriving at farms and small holdings early that morning with a clean lorry full of fresh straw, collecting sheep, pigs and cattle. Sheep were loaded into the section over the top of the cab, pigs on the top and bottom deck partition, leaving half of the lorry floor for the cattle.

"Several different auctioneers had sales areas. A.T. Grain and Sons were auctioneers of cattle, Tom Chalk sold pigs. A hand bell would ring to tell buyers and sellers an auction was to begin and while the sale was in progress the lorries were being mucked out and washed down with a hosepipe. Then it was a case of waiting for the farmers, butchers and dealers to bring the sales sheets so we could load the lorry and deliver the animals to the farmers and many slaughterhouses in the area.

"There were several other hauliers making a good living in those days. At Cambridge cattle market you would see lorries carrying various names, amongst which were K. Speechley of Madingley, Wilkerson Bros of Duxford, R. Warboys of Elsworth, Warner Bros of St Neots, A.E. Cope of Buckden, F. Wilderspin of Pidley, R. Sillis of Abbotsley and Wright Bros of Stretham"

Vera continues: "After I married I started a florist's business and our delivery vans had 'Here Comes Campbell' on them, reviving happy memories of my father's lorries"

Dawn Mills has emailed following a picture I published of a baby competition in 1947. She writes: "I am the baby as was with my mother in the front left hand side. My name was then Dawn Wilkinson and I believe I was the baby who won the competition. I would like to thank

you for printing this photo as I have never seen it till now. My aunt who lives in Cambridge saw it and sent it to me as I now live in Lowestoft". The same article also contained a picture of Petty Cury and this too caught Dawn's eye for she adds: "the little girl is my aunt, so it was a double treat for us both!" [SCAN OF BABY SHOW]

Memories 25th October 2006

My Memories article of October 11 on the village bobby has prompted Marjorie Hillier from Cambridge to share her memories. She is the widow of Sergeant E Hillier who joined Cambridgeshire police in 1934 at the age of 21.

She writes: "It was a pleasant surprise to see the photograph of PC Louis 'Bill' Ebben; he was indeed a real policeman. He told us of one incident when he was stationed at Longstanton in the mid 1940s: he went to quell a reported disturbance outside the Black Bull public house where a crowd of travellers from Willingham Fen were causing trouble. He was quickly surrounded and pinned up against the pub wall.

"In those days the police had no radios or any means of summoning help so he drew his truncheon and managed to hold them off while the landlord phoned for assistance from Cambridge.

"We lived in police stations at Linton and Bottisham with their court rooms and cells and police houses at Harston and Longstanton. My husband being on call 24-hours-a-day, six days a week with one weekend off in five, I frequently found myself in charge of the station, taking telephone calls and dealing with emergencies (all unpaid of course). A telephone extension to the bedroom made sure no call went unanswered. At Bottisham there were many accidents on the main road and my husband's 'going-out' attire was frequently his pyjamas with his uniform over the top.

"Husbands and wives worked as a team and solved many domestic difficulties and other problems. It was an immensely interesting life, so many things happening, comic and tragic, something different every day. We were dealing with people, the most rewarding thing one can do."

Janet Collett, from Over, also knows all about police houses - she lived in six different ones, starting at Swavesey where she was born the daughter of PC Shanks who'd joined the force in 1930. In those days officers were moved every two to three years and they next moved to the police house attached to the magistrates' court at Caxton, where they looked after all the police dogs which were held there. Then it was on to Bassingbourn where her father became a motorcycle policeman - something quite special in those days. The next move saw him promoted to sergeant at the police headquarters on Castle Hill, Cambridge, when he would take prisoners held in the cells meals that her mother had cooked - so they ate really well. A couple of years later and it was off to the house in Station Road, Histon, then on to a brand new police unit at Now Road Impington.

Margaret Cream, from Cambridge, can solve the mystery of the unknown bobby with the bike that I published. It was Mr Poole of Trumpington outside her father's cycle repair shop. She remembers him as a very pleasant and likeable man. The old police house was on the corner until replaced by a new one facing Maris Lane in the mid 1920s.

Dawn Mills has emailed following a picture I published of a baby competition in 1947. She writes: "I am the baby as was with my mother in the front left-hand side. My name was then Dawn Wilkinson and I believe I was the baby who won the competition. I would like to thank you for printing this photo as I have never seen it till now. My aunt, who lives in Cambridge,

saw it and sent it to me as I now live in Lowestoft." The same article also contained a picture of Petty Cury and this too caught Dawn's eye for she adds: "The little girl is my aunt, so it was a double treat for us both!"

Violet Ryder, nee Payne, from Cambridge, recognised her brother, Ted - Edward Payne - among the King and Harper staff of 1932; he was apprenticed as an upholsterer for seven-and-six (38p) a week. As the family lived at Hill Farm cottages, Lolworth, he had to cycle along the Huntingdon road to work each day. The exercise came in useful for he won cups, a gramophone and a cutlery box in the cycling races at the village show. During the war he served with the R.E.M.E. in Egypt and used his upholstery skills to repair their seats and canvas bags and belts.

Do you have memories of cycle races at local sports?
Sometimes it was the slowest cyclist who won, as in this picture taken at Pye's sports in the 1940s. Do you recognise anyone?

Now we need your help: Peter Norman has a marvellous collection of old pictures of Newmarket which he shares with groups at slide shows. But he's seeking a view of the Cheapside Menswear Store that used to stand in Wellington Street, Newmarket, on the site of which is now the Pork Shop. If you have one please phone him on (01638) 663179.

Memories 1ST November 2006, by Mike Petty

Cambridge has been busy in recent weeks as the start of a new University year has seen the mass arrival of hundreds of undergraduates settling in to their college rooms.

But actually finding somewhere for them to stay has always been a problem. When the pioneer scholars fled from rioting in Oxford in 1209 their first concern was to find lodgings – and townsfolk were happy to oblige, since this brought in a useful extra income. But within 20 years there were complaints of profiteering and King Henry III ordered the Cambridge Mayor to ensure houses were inspected and that a fair rent was charged.

When in 1973 Margot Holbrook was appointed Secretary of the University Lodging House Syndicate it was part of her job to inspect accommodation and resolve any disputes. This took her into houses across the city and into contact with a remarkable group of people who were continuing the tradition of care for the young men allocated to them.

Not all potential landladies had the best interests of the students at heart; Margot visited one prospective digs in Histon Road: "It was so cold in the room - there was no means of heating. Still more, there was no furniture. An old black gas-stove stood next to an old-fashioned china sink, and had two chipped mugs and a tin kettle on its hob. Behind it a filthy uncurtained window gave on to a scruffy back- yard brown with the weeds and husks of winter. Round the walls were ranged perhaps six or seven black plastic dustbin bags stuffed with - old clothes perhaps? A few scraps of newspaper littered the bare floor. One crazy wooden chair with broken slats leaned at an angle. A box of tea-bags and a half-full milk bottle stood on the draining-board. A white shape skimmed softly past my head and then another swept in a diagonal across the room with a whirr, and as I looked up, a third and fourth fluttered in the far corner making cooing expostulations: they kept a tenuous hold on the picture-rail. 'Oh they're just our doves' the woman said carelessly, much as though everyone kept pigeons in their kitchens. 'What about this student then?'" This was not one that made its way on to the approved list.

But many undergraduates did approve of their landladies and have recorded their appreciation. Agnes Smith of St Clement's Gardens, Thompson's Lane lodged students from

the First World War until the early 1970s. She let four sets to male undergraduates at King's College but loved people to pop in for coffee and thick slices of Victoria sponge. On Sundays she always made enough food for whoever turned up & usually between five to eight people would enjoy her roast joints and caramel custards. Like all landladies she was under instructions to lock her front door at ten in the evening and keep a log of the men who came in late. But the back door was always open and as she went to bed at 9.30 she could always plead ignorance about what happened after that.

Margot has now published a book on the history of the college lodging houses and garnered many reminiscences of what one lad described as these 'uncrowned – or uncanonised – saints'. There are tales of the Lord who ate bread and dripping at night before he went to bed but had a valet who came in the morning to lay out his clothes and descriptions of lodgings in David Street off Mill Road, in Alexandra Street off Petty Cury, Grantchester Street and King Street.

But there is more, for Margot has investigated other issues connected with bedrooms, providing a detailed account of the notorious Spinning House where the University imprisoned women it suspected of prostitution. Her book fills a gap in the social history of both town and gown and makes compelling reading for anyone who has had connections with Cambridge college lodging houses, whether upstairs or downstairs literally emptying the chamber pot

Do you have memories or pictures of lodging house keepers – write to Mike Petty

"Where do you keep? Lodging the Cambridge University undergraduate" by Margot Holbrook is published by Cappella Archive at £14.50 – ISBN 1-902918-36-3

[THERE WAS A NEWS ARTICLE ON COLLEGE LANDLADIES ON 7TH MAY 1982 WHICH FEATURED A NUMBER OF LADIES – CAN THESE BE TRACKED DOWN?]

[SCANS OF CARTOON OF MEETING OF LODGING HOUSE SYNDICATE AND LANDLADIES, 1927;

SKETCH OF COLLEGE LANDLADY FROM CDN OF OCTOBER 1956

PHOTO OF SALVATION ARMY WHITE RIBBON HOSTEL DIGS 1978 – NOT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (BUT SOME OF THEIR ROOMS WERE NEARLY AS BAD)

ALEXANDRA STREET OFF PETTY CURY WHICH IS MENTIONED IN THE BOOK]

COVER OF THE BOOK

##

Albert Waldock from Fulbourn writes with his memories of the Cambridge Cattle Market: "When I was a nipper my grandfather, being in the meat trade, would take me to the Cambridge cattle market from Royston. He was a good judge of meat on the hoof so the farmers used to ask him to check cattle, and abided by his choice. They dropped him a few florins for his beer money. We would park me on the railings by the market 'train spotting' till 11 o'clock then take me into the pub for a lemonade and packet of crisps while he and the farmer did their business. Then it was back to the bottom of Brooklands Avenue to catch the old 108 bus back to Royston and granny's tea"

Doris Wright from Cambridge recalls life in the York Street area and has lent a snap showing her brother and sister outside the Co-op showing the door from which the night-watchman used to guard the gates - the smell from the bread at night was lovely. "The horse-drawn milk floats used to go out very early and when we came home to dinner they would just be

returning; we used to jump on the step at the back and have a ride”, she recalls. [SCAN OF CHILDREN OUTSIDE THE CO-OP DAIRY]

Memories 8th November 2006, by Mike Petty

Carol Reeve worked for a while a Bowes and Bowes bookshop whilst "resting" during an acting career that saw her progress from standing around in the freezing cold to roles on television. It was there that she met her husband Brian and they were married in St Edward's church between David's bookstall and the Arts Theatre (very suitable) on a Monday, because so many of the staff wanted to be present, so Saturday was out! Now Carol, the actress, has become a writer, setting down her memories of childhood at Bottisham where she was born the daughter of a village G.P., a Pole whose naturalised name was Albert Gilbert – but who everybody called Dick

In their large home, Carol's was a life of some style. She attended St Colette's Preparatory School in Cambridge which was run by two sisters, Miss Burns whom the pupils all feared and Miss Beryl whom they all loved. The school was a single-storied wooden hut with wider verandas where they took their lessons in good weather. Most of the children could read before they were six. It was here she was introduced to the stage, being chosen to be an angel in the Nativity play wearing a flimsy pink tunic with matching pink knickers for the performance at the ADC theatre – only Carol discovered that her's had been left behind and had to go on without them!

Life at home changed dramatically with the arrival of Jewish refugees from Austria. They turned up clutching brown paper parcels and carrier bags and soon dominated the household. A few days later the 'one or two things' they'd managed to bring from Vienna arrived in a large van. Amongst the crates was an over-sized kitchen cabinet containing a long row of dusty shelves, each one labelled and containing an amazing variety of herbs, spices and rice. The kitchen had to be rearranged to accommodate it. These visitors soon departed, to universal relief, but they were later to be replaced by cockney evacuees with their mother who commandeered the kitchen, wearing a scarf around her curlers and smoking a cigarette. Carol and her brother sank their own differences to declare war on these invaders who soon decided they'd sooner face Hitler on their own ground rather than in that godforsaken dump.

The next invaders came in tanks, one of which demolished their front wall as they trundled to the grounds of Bottisham Hall where they disguised themselves under camouflage netting. Later came Americans bringing oranges, chocolate and teddy bears. Soon the village children were chewing gum and saying 'gee' and 'shuck'. Older girls started wearing nylons and coach loads of 'chicks' were brought from Cambridge for Saturday-night dances. Inevitably her father became very busy as the birth-rate increased dramatically. When the Yanks went, Belgian airmen took over the camp to be replaced in turn by Polish schoolboys

Carol's own schooldays continued at Byron House School in a rambling old house on Huntingdon Road. She journeyed there in a single-decker bus whose seats had been rearranged to make more room, with people sitting around the sides facing inwards to the stifling crush of strap-hanging passengers who swung in unison as the bus swerved and accelerated. It was here that Carol made a new friend in Anna Jooss whose father, Kurt, was establishing a ballet company with a free expressive style. Carol joined in and learned how to dance – something that would stand her in good stead in her later career in entertainment. Back home life was not always easy, her parents' marriage hit a rocky patch that would end in the divorce courts and Carol left for a boarding school at Barcombe in Sussex

The Bottisham that Carol knew has changed tremendously. But when she returned in 2005 to give a talk to the Women's Institute there were still familiar sights and faces to

welcome her back and now her published memories of the distant days of wartime have added an extra dimension to the story of village life.

From Bottisham to Barcombe by Carol Reeve is published by Upfront Publishing of Peterborough – ISBN 978-184426-398- priced £7.99 or from Carol at 4 The Crescent, Porthmadog, Gwynedd LL49 9PB, North Wales (postage 60p extra)

SCAN OF BOTTISHAM HOME GUARD – CAROL’S FATHER CAPTAIN GILBERT AND SOME OF HIS MEN

SCAN OF AMERICAN SERVICEMEN (NOT AT BOTTISHAM)

BOTTISHAM STREET SCENE 1949

My appeal for reminiscences of cycle racing has brought an early response from Terry Chapman who emails: “The picture of Pye’s Sports Ground, down near the river, brings back memories. I first won the Cole Cup awarded to the novices of the then Cambridge Town and County Cycling Club in the early 1950’s. I rode in the Team Pursuit at the Anglian Rally at Attleborough with Rodney Smith and the late Bill Ives and Terry Sewell and was fortunate enough to win the shield for this race.

“Other cycle track meetings were at Rowley’s Field, Histon, Shelford, Ely, Fordham, Soham and Littleport and on the city football ground. These events were well supported and often run in conjunction with the Amateur Athletics Association. Many of your readers may remember the late Jack Woollard, Cambridge Town & County Cycling Club Starter and the late Ossy Neal, our timekeeper”

If so drop me a line.

Can anybody recognise faces in this picture of the Cambridgeshire police cricket team, taken on Parker’s Piece probably in the 1920s. It was lent to me by Debbie Mason of Witchford.
SCAN OF CRICKET TEAM

Memories 15th November 2006 by Mike Petty

Stories of growing opposition to the war in Iraq are reminiscent of reports that were appearing in the News of 50 years ago. Only then the war was over Suez. Those protests seem now to have been largely forgotten but make interesting reading:

At the start of November six hundred undergraduates demonstrated at a ‘No War on Suez’ debate in one of the rowdiest meetings ever held in the Union Debating Chamber. Every inch of space was occupied and people even piled up on the window ledges to hear two MPs, Kenneth Younger and Anthony Wedgwood Benn who were the butt of deafening ridicule, shouting, catcalling, hissing and yelling from supporters of Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden. But things got really heated a few days later.

A Suez protest rally was organised by the Cambridge Labour Party on Parker’s Piece. Eighty marchers set off from Alex Wood Hall but were met along the route by smoke bombs, water from upstairs windows and counter-cries from undergraduates. Once on the Piece the back of a lorry provided a speakers’ platform on which Geoffrey de Freitas, MP and Canon Mervyn Stockwood of Great St Mary’s church called on Cambridge people to condemn the

government's action as an act of naked aggression which endangered world peace. But the crowd of some 1,500 people could hardly hear through the constant hubbub of a group of dissenting undergraduates who carried slogans tacked on long-handled brushes saying 'Eden acts where U.N.O. fails' and 'Non-intervention is Suez-cide'.

Whatever the merits of the current war the debate is somewhat more peaceful than that of 1956! But did you take part during the Suez operation, either as a member of the armed forces, or a protestor – and what are your memories? [SCAN OF SUEZ PROTEST CUTTING]

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Recent Memories articles continue to prompt letters:

Sheelagh Neal from Gt Shelford writes: "It was nice to see my dad, Ossie Neal's, name in your Memories article on cycle racing. I can remember going with him to the '3As' sports meetings held in the City Football ground in the 1950s. They always included cycle races such as sprints and my favourite, 'Devil take the hindmost'. He would also do the timekeeping for most of the locally-held time-trials and long-distant events. We would get up at five in the morning, load the 'tea-van' so that mum could provide cups of tea for officials and make our way up to Madingley Hill which was the start for most of the races. Dad had done a lot of racing cycling in the late 1920s and 30s and won medals and certificates; he also held several tandem records for 25 and 50 mile time trials (with, I believe a Harold Grimwood). He was also well-known for his motorcycle exploits; he took part in road-racing, sprints and hill-climbs until well into his eighties and was timekeeper at the local scrambles, such as Elsworth, Arrington and Balsham. Dad died nine year ago now, but its good to know he is still remembered!" He may well have been amongst the competitors photographed by John Carter at a meeting at Elsworth in April 1955 when one of the riders lost control of his machine and crashed into spectators. St John Ambulancemen tended the injured. [SCAN OF AMBULANCEMEN TENDING INJURED RIDER]

Bernard Cornwell from Histon has lent me a number of programmes of sports meetings of the time Ossie was competing. They include one of the first horticultural show and sports meeting organised by the Cambridge Co-op Society at Arnold's Field adjoining the Town Football Ground in August 1931 and another of the Ely Flower Show and annual sports on the City Recreation Ground on August Bank Holiday 1929. They kept some events for locals, including a Tradesmen's Carrier Bicycle Race for Ely shops only. There was also a motor cycle musical chairs with a lady passenger either on the pillion or in a side car [SCAN OF NAMES AT ELY CHALLENGE CUP 1929]

Mary Hills of Cambridge enjoyed Margot Holbrook's account of College Landladies; she was one herself until she gave up in 1988 when her husband was poorly but did enjoy looking after undergraduates and has many memories of those days. Her house was at Mawson Road and she started taking students in 1961 with three lodgers from St Catharine's College. She had to sign gate bills to show whether the students had spent the night at her house. But by the time she finished the regime had changed, then they could be out until two in the morning and were more grown up – she treated them like young ladies and gentlemen.

Dr Neville Silverston from Bottisham writes: "I read with interest your piece on Carol Reeve's book, "From Bottisham to Barcombe". I took over her father, Dr Gilbert's, practice in 1958 having purchased the "large house" from him. My wife (now sadly gone) and I left the village nine years ago. I could relate many details of "Dickie" Gilbert's private life which, if made the theme of a novel or film, would be regarded as too unbelievable to be true"

Memories 22nd November 2006, by Mike Petty

Gas was a development which caused great excitement during the Victorian period. At Christmas 1868 Haddenham was looking forward to the streets being lit up for the first time. Other places had preceded them: Huntingdon saw the light by gas in 1832, the long dark and dreary streets of Soham had been metamorphosed into pleasant and safe thoroughfares in January 1849, in 1867 Littleport began to raise the £2,000 required to light their streets this way. Sutton tried to emulate their neighbours in 1870 but a lack of public support caused the newspaper to comment that “the inhabitants of Sutton will be quite safe from the horrors of gas explosions during the present century”

The worry of explosions was always present. Ely was nearly devastated by a gas explosion just before Christmas 1951. Newspaper headlines reported the heroism of a workman, Chris Lee, who noticed that fire had broken out in equipment controlling the supply of gas from the holders to the mains. Standing within a few feet of the flames he telephoned for the fire brigade and the station manager before the telephone was incinerated. The manager, Claude Staniforth leapt out of bed, clad only in pyjamas, hastily donned a coat and shoes and tore down to the works in Back Hill where firemen managed to extinguish the flames, preventing a serious explosion. Mr Lee was awarded a Rolls Razor in recognition for his devotion to duty.

The Ely gas works have now passed into history and few will remember them. One who does is the son of the last secretary and engineering manager. Claude Staniforth was appointed in 1933 and saw it through the problems of wartime and nationalisation in 1949 before ending his career in Cambridge. His memories, supplemented by much research in original records have now been published in a major addition to the literature on gas supply, ‘Can you smell gas’.

Smell indeed was one of the ways in which the presence of gas was detected. When the underground main broke – as they did frequently opposite the Lamb Hotel – the workers made holes through the tarmac at regular intervals where the smell was most prominent to try and locate the break.

But the production process was not without its aroma, nor was it quiet, as Michael Delanoy remembers. He lived opposite the works and has three vivid memories of the plant. “The unique coal tar/gas oil smell which pervaded the air completely obliterated the chlorine smell from the nearby open-air swimming pool”. (It also masked the damp pong from the river, the smell from the brewery and the pervasive aroma of the sugar beet factory, all of which combined to make the riverside area of the city somewhat less attractive than it is today). Then there was the noise, especially audible in the long night hours. Mike recalls: “The coal was taken up to the top of the building, it being a vertical retort, in an external steam driven lift which produced a ‘chugging’ sound. When this stopped there was a clatter of sliding doors and a pause before the falling of the coal made a considerable noise which would have woken anybody not used to it”. But there was some tangible benefit of living near. Saturday morning was coke-day when local residents queued to buy coke which they transported home in a variety of containers that helped keep the home fires smouldering.

Another by-product was ammoniacal gas liquor, which was toxic and difficult to dispose of. At one time it was piped to the nearby river and loaded into barges which took it to King’s Lynn where it was refined to produce a fertiliser. The same thing happened at Cambridge. But new processes rendered this obsolete. It could not just be dumped into the river or sewers – though

some did find its way into both. For a while it was spread direct on agricultural land then dumped into a very large pit in the fens out of harms way. [SCAN OF AMMONIA WATER BEING PUMPED ON TO BARGES AT CAMBRIDGE GAS WORKS]

But there were perks of being the manager. For one thing he was entitled to anything that ran on gas. Paul's childhood home was full of appliances – lights, fires, washing machines, fridges and cookers. Special cookery demonstrations of these were arranged and his father even persuaded a manufacturer to personalise two low-price models, named Ely 1 and Ely 2 which were sold for the low price of one shilling a week on hire purchase. Gas cookers revolutionised the kitchens of many homes and are now museum-pieces. [SCAN OF ENID PORTER AT CAMBRIDGE FOLK MUSEUM RECEIVING AN OLD GAS COOKER AS AN EXHIBIT – WHO ELSE IS IN THE PICTURE?]

And then there was the boardroom with its table. Around this the Directors, Horace Martin, Owen Ambrose and Lt-Col. Archer would formulate plans to cope with day-to-day issues, whilst in wartime it became a make-shift bed where Claude would sleep ready to sound the alert on the gas-factory hooter to warn citizens of an impending air-raid. But occasionally it was transformed into a ping-pong table where father and son would play in a rare moment of family-bonding.

For as Paul makes clear, life was far from idyllic, his father being a committed Methodist gave virtually all his salary to charity leaving his mother to support herself and her son through her income as history teacher at the High School. The book touches on many social issues but principally draws on reminiscences from employees as well as customers to produce a detailed account of the production and distribution problems facing a small gasworks. Other places had such facilities, very few have such a comprehensive history.

'Can you smell gas: memories of a town gasworks' by Paul and Claude Staniforth – ISBN 0-9554230-0-7 is available from Burrows Bookshop, Ely or from the author on 01508 538195, price £14.75

Paul Staniforth will be speaking on the story of Ely gas at the Fenland History on Friday meeting, Ely Library on 8th December, 10.30 am

- THIS CAN BE HELD OVER

Even though the caption was squeezed off a picture that I featured in Memories on 8th November, readers have been quick to come forward with details and to recognise faces. It was of the Bottisham Home Guard and featured Dr Dick Gilbert in the front row. A couple of ranks behind him was John Brasnett's dad, Thomas. Barry Lawrence contacted me to say that his father, Harry Lawrence, also recognised a face. I emailed him a full copy of the picture and he spotted some more. Harry was a member of the 7th Camouflage & Decoy unit which was stationed in Lincolnshire under Colonel Parker. He was involved in the making of dummy aircraft and visited the Elstree studios where they were made. Later he was sent to Belgium to man the refuelling & rearmament dumps as the air attacks were focused on Germany towards the end of the war. Harry feels sure there was a "Dummy aerodrome" near to Bottisham and some of the men in the picture manned it. [SCAN BOTTISHAM HOME GUARD]

Dozens of dummy airfields were built, as well as dummy factories, dummy towns and various other fake targets to attract enemy bombs. Some were 'day-time' dummy airfields containing replica buildings and aircraft made by the film industry, though they were quickly seen through by the Germans and as a result attracted few bombs. Then there were 'night-time'

dummy airfields consisting of arrangements of lights to simulate runways and moving aircraft. One was constructed to divert the bombers away from the marshalling yards at March with standard lamps, signal lights – even the open fire box of a steam locomotive glowing in the dark. But do you remember this or others in Cambridgeshire?

Memories 29th November 2006, by Mike Petty

Two neighbouring areas of Cambridge have come under the spotlight in two contrasting publications.

Chesterton Local History Group has worked with Cambridge City Council's Community Development team to record the memories of people who have lived in that area for some time. Well-known characters like Derek Stubbings, Pam Fry, Mo Tyrell, Marion Colthorpe and Bernice Wadsworth are amongst the contributors together with children who now attend St Andrew's Primary School.

John Impey's family came up by horse and cart from South London in the 1920s to take over the bakery in the High Street where children would call in for a freshly-baked cheese roll on their way to school. Mick Speed was born in Kendal Way and played in Brown's Field – now a youth and community centre whose opening is commemorated by this publication.

Mrs G. Stearn recalls wash day. She remembers: "When I was a girl, washday was always on a Monday, wet or fine. Mother used a wooden tub to do her chores. The clothes were boiled in an iron pan set in brick copper, with a fire under it, using coal and coke. Water came from the tap; soap was 'Sunlight' or 'Windsor', which cost about 6d. Soap powders were in the shops but too expensive for many people. We also used 'Robin' Starch, and a Dolly Blue Bag. An old wooden roller mangle in the shed outside was used to wring out most of the water. The clothes were aired on a clothes horse in front of the fire; we also had lines across the ceiling where Mother would hang the clothes over night to finish drying. The lines were not used during the day as it was thought to be unhealthy to have damp clothes in a room with people. When I married in 1936 our house had a gas copper in the outhouse, but I also used a zinc bath or our big sink. Soap flakes and powders (like 'Persil' or 'Rinso') were popular by then. An Acme wringer made that job a lot easier, and an electric iron was a wedding present. A lovely airing cupboard did the airing for me, but if clothes were still a bit damp they would be left in front of the fire. Before the war few women had washing machines. I never had one, preferring to hand wash, which I think is best.

Washday memories also feature in a study of the Romsey area by local historian, Allan Bringham. Sue, who was born in Great Eastern Street in 1959 told how her mother did all the laundry by hand, hanging it up to dry over a pulley above the coal fire in the middle room. "We didn't have a washing machine, there was a Butler sink, and my mum would get me to turn the handle on a mangle". But change was in the air: "I remember a woman down the road called Hilda, she got this little square washing machine, and that's all it was, a square washing machine, and it had a mangle, an automatic mangle on the top. I can see myself pushing this square washing machine from Hilda's to our house so that we could borrow it. And that was amazing, it had a separate spinner, so the clothes were washed, and there was this automatic mangle on the top, then you spun them out afterwards."

In the 1960's days facilities that are now taken for granted were just not there. The toilet was out the back: "It was a brick toilet, painted black and white with just a loo in it. If we went to the loo in the night we had a potty." Nor was there a bath. "The bath tub hung up on a hook out the back, and sometimes my mum used to do the sheets in it. Baths twice a week. The water was heated with an Ascot. I remember it was a big old white thing... I had two elder

brothers, so I always got the clean water, that's another thing I can remember. I always got first, because I was the girl, and they had to go in after, together. "

Allan uses such memories to chart the transformation of an area that has undergone improvements that not everybody welcomes. Jeanette and her husband moved to Romsey in 1979 because they could afford a house there. It was in a poor state, much of the flooring was rotten; there was a bathroom but it opened into the kitchen. However there were council grants that helped make it into a comfortable home in an area where council policies ensured that such properties were renovated, rather than knocked down and replaced.

But it is not all good news. Landlords bought up the relatively cheap properties: "they don't care what it looks like ... they're just in it for making money". Some are rented to students, noisy neighbours made life miserable and it no longer feels like a good place to bring up children, say some. Others appreciate a wonderful sense of community.

Allan Brigham's study was published as part of a report entitled 'Bringing it all back home: changes in housing and society 1996-2006' produced for the Chartered Institute of Housing's conference at Cambourne earlier this month. Copies are available from Mill Road bookshops or from Allan on 01223 212189 for £5. 'Memories of Chesterton' is available free from Brown's Field Youth and Community Centre off Green End Road; contact Louise Appleton on 01223 420309 for details.

SCANS OF VIEWS FROM MILL ROAD BRIDGE INTO ROMSEY c1901 and 1991
MILKMAN IN SCOTLAND ROAD CHESTERTON, 1920S

Memories 6th December 2006

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Memories 13th December 2006, by Mike Petty

Harry Bye of Ely has responded to my appeal for memories of washing days in time past.

Harry was brought up in the 1920s on a racing stud near Snailwell where his father looked after three Suffolk Punches on Lord Derby's estate. One weekend his father told the family: 'I am coming back on Monday and bringing you a new mother,. Harry recalls: "My stepmother did the washing on Mondays using the vacuum washer. This was a brass thing with a glass marble in the cylinder on a long handle. The linen was placed in the tub with the soap and you bounced it up and down and the 'boom', 'boom', 'boom' would echo through the plantation. Sometimes we had to do the bouncing in the old tub and also turn the mangle. Later on we took the sheets and blankets to a lady in Snailwell who did it for 2/6d. (12½ p) a week.

Harry went to Snailwell school where Nellie Smythe was his teacher and Miss Bilton the head. She was nice at times, but if she got into a temper would bang the lid of her desk until she cooled down. She was particularly incensed after children moved her boyfriend's motor bike that he'd parked in the school playground when he'd come courting. It was later found outside the pub.

If there was any trouble with the pupils she would inform the parson, Rev Ernest Powells, who would put things in order without sending for the policeman. The rector combined many other roles: he managed the stud which belonged to his step uncle, Lord Howard de Walden and collected rents from the tenants of his thatched cottages' he was a member of the local fire brigade, and even swept the chimneys. His best friend was Mr Downham, the landlord of the 'George and Dragon' who sang bass in the church choir. They did renovations in the church and went rabbit shooting together.

While out on his rounds one cold day the rector found a lady and her family shivering in their cottage with no fire. She told him they had no money to buy coal. On returning to the rectory Mr Powells rang a coal merchant in Newmarket and within the hour a ton of coal was delivered free of charge to the grateful lady. Later he was to visit Harry's house on a sad occasion, to christen newly-born twins in the bedroom. As anticipated they died when a few weeks old.

One day the district nurse visited and said their front door needed replacing as water was coming through. It was reported to the sanitary inspector who sent a complaint to the estate office. They responded by sending his father a month's notice.

The family packed their belongings into a large van and set off for a new life in a nine-roomed farmhouse deep in the fens on the Chivers estate at Shippea Hill. Harry recalls: On arrival my stepmother went across the road to the Plough and Duck pub cum shop cum post and telegraph office and came back with a gallon of beer". The van driver and his mate both drank a pint, and Harry had a taste – but did not like it. Instead he drink soft water or dyke water, that they boiled.

Nor was he too keen on the school to which he was conveyed in a covered horse-drawn wagon called the 'kid cart'. The head, Mr Crowther was very strict and someone had the cane most days. The tortoise coke furnace did not heat the school very well so the teacher took them outside for drill to warm them up; the schoolyard that was cinders and on windy days the children got black faces. But at heart he was a kind man. Some of the children had to walk three miles to and from their home at Golden Ball Farm. One day after a party at school one

of the boys began to cry, saying “I’m afraid to walk home to Redmere in the dark”, so Mr Crowther accompanied him on the lonely journey, carrying a stable lantern.

Harry Bye is a mine of such stories and has now been encouraged to set them down in print. His memories of ‘A life in the fens’ has now been issued in a booklet costing £4 plus postage which is available from the Littleport Society at The Barn, Main Street, Littleport, CB6 1PH Knapwell is a small village and does not have its own war memorial. But now the churchwardens would like to commemorate those men of the parish who served in the two World Wars.

The names of the fallen are known: from the first war John Hinson of the Rifle Brigade was killed in September 1918 and is commemorated on a memorial at Vis-En-Artois. Two other local lads are known to have joined up, one may have been a member of the Rolt family who served in the Machine Gun Corps and the other an Utteridge. They are thought to have survived, but what became of them afterwards?

George Desborough and Benjamin Ellis fell during the 1939-1945 conflict. George was a member of the Herts Regiment and was killed in June 1944 in Italy; Ben was a Gunner who is buried at El Alamein.

But does anybody have further details or photographs or know if there were other Knapwell men. If so can you contact Irene Abraham on 01353 740002 and help a small village fill a big gap in its history.

SCAN OF SNAILWELL ROUND-TOWERED CHURCH AND COTTAGE OPPOSITE THE SCHOOL AT SHIPPEA HILL; SCAN OF KNAPWELL VILLAGE STREET c1900

Memories 20th December 2006, by Mike Petty

One ever-present Christmas gift is something smelly. In December 1927 the News advised that “Many a charming gift can be purchased at a chemist’s shop. Ladies always find scent very acceptable and at Messrs Campkin and Sons, Rose Crescent, Cambridge, there can be obtained a choice selection of perfume. Soap and bath salts in dainty packages are suggestions that may help to solve the gift problems for those whose pockets are not very deep”.

But who remembers that Cambridge used to have its own manufacturer, the Castle Soap Company in Albert Street – later renamed Young Street – off East Road.

Few needed a map to find their way there: you could follow your noses, despite a giant chimney designed to take away the appalling smell, or follow the butchers’ carts delivering rancid fat or the fishermen flocking for tins of maggots.

The News conceded in January 1907: “The tallow manufacturing side of the business is the least attractive. There seems little affinity between the seething mass of brown liquid emitting strong, malodorous fumes from the iron receptacle in which it is being boiled and the immaculate and fragrant bars, tablets and cakes that result.”

The resulting soap was pumped into large rectangular moulds to set and then cut by wires into slabs which were placed on a machine that divided them into bars. There were various types – washing soap, carbolic soap, Brown Windsor and thirty other sorts of more elaborate toilet soap. This was not just the ordinary yellow soap with the addition of colour and perfume, but a separate product. It used finest quality ingredients and more elaborate boiling to produce a perfectly white and odourless soap which then went through a milling process during which perfume and colour were added before it was put through a machine that polished the surface.

Finally designs were imprinted by gun metal stamps. In addition Castle Soap produced a transparent variety which if boiled on January 1st would not be on the market before the following year. Even then it had to be washed before it could be sold. [SCAN T2269]

The premises were later used by Peaks Furnishers, but does anybody remember them. And if you do want an unusual local soap-related product, then turn to the internet where you can buy, if not a bar of soap, then at least a bill that the Castle Soap Company sent to the Commercial Stores at Brinkley in 1909. [CASTLE SOAP COMPANY BILL, 1909]

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A recent mystery ball picture has brought memories flooding back to Betty Tolbrigg from Comberton who has a copy of the picture in her photograph album captioned “The Youth Club Ball”. Betty is third from the left in the front row with her fiancée (later her husband) just behind. She also recognises several faces in the crowd. Frances Ison of Madingley used to ENJOY a number of similar functions and writes: “I attended the Police Balls for a number of years with a group of civilians and members of the police force, held early in January. I also went to the Firemen’s Ball held at the Dorothy Ballroom in February. I used to make my own dresses (too expensive to buy) and had to have several – you couldn’t wear the same dress when with the same people! I still have one to remember those days, cherry-red taffeta worn with black jet jewellery and black mittens. I made my own evening bags from the dress fabric. They were lovely occasions, looked forward to for months. Tickets were £4 or £6 – how times have changed. Sadly few of us are now left to remember”

John Carter has lent me another photograph of a Christmas dance, this time with a model of a Premier Travel bus which carries the name ‘County of Cambridge’ below the windscreen. The real vehicle was a Daimler double-decker coach named by the Chairman of the County Council in April 1950, so presumably this ball was at the end of that year. Thus we know the what and probably the when, but where was it taken and who does it show? [SCAN OF THE PREMIER TRAVEL PARTY. SCAN OF THE DEDICATION OF THE REAL COACH BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL, ALDERMAN FROST IN APRIL 1950]

Memories 27th December 2006, by Mike Petty

Christmas is not what it once was – but then it probably never has been.

“A good old-fashioned Christmas when the brightly-blazing Yule log, or its modern equivalent, is necessary to counteract the efforts of King Frost is as a rule so old-fashioned that it seems to have existed only in the picturesque imaginations of the novelist and pictorial artist. So also is the Christmas-card Christmas with the country covered with the white mantle of snow” – or that was what the News thought as Christmas 1906 approached.

But then the climate varied; “the mercury experienced a rapid drop on Christmas Eve, hard roads took to themselves more or less the appearance of quagmires, drizzling rain set in and all the chances seemed in favour of the familiar state of mud for the holidays. By the time, however, the carol singers had for the last time urged the Christians to awake and salute the happy morn, the frost asserted itself, and the Eastern part of England saluted a morn marked by an atmosphere just sufficiently frosty to be pleasant, and a wind which was a trifle too piecing for the fancy of all but the most robust.

“With thankful hearts the populace tripped to church or chapel, or sought enlarged appetites before the holidays concluded. Good attendances at church, each in its festive dress of winter

blooms and evergreens were one of the results of clean comfortable locomotion. As the bright sun sank behind ominous clouds in the west the thoroughfares became less and less frequented until for the most part the police patrol had Cambridge and environs to themselves.

“Then were sounds of merriment from many a family party audible in the quiet streets. Christmas was being celebrated in the good old-fashioned way in good old-fashioned weather.

“While the merry-makers were peacefully slumbering there was another variation. Many a party who had planned outdoor recreations for Boxing Day were dismayed to see the earth covered with several inches of snow, with the prospect of more to follow. Here was the Christmas-card part of Christmas. This meant the abandonment of football, walking, cycling, motoring and outdoor recreations in general, unless clearing away snow from footpaths can by any stretch of imagination be held to be a recreation. For the most part Boxing Day was an indoor Day and of the indoor public amusements ‘The Christian’ at the Theatre and the pantomime at the Guildhall were the chief.

Yet another change was experienced. “Frost returning with renewed vigour covered roads and paths into a state approaching badly-kept skating rinks. Frost, thaw, rain, frost snow and frost again, such as has been experienced during the last three days is almost a record for even the English climate. Such a Christmas as has just been experienced in Cambridge occurs but few times within a lifetime”, the News commented 100 years ago [SCAN OF TRUMPINGTON STREET CAMBRIDGE TAKEN AFTER THE SNOW OF 1906. SCAN OF ELY CATHEDRAL IN SNOW – FROM A CHRISTMAS CARD]

One Christmas tradition is to sit around the fire and tell ghostly tales. Such pastimes have been part of the local scene for centuries, as a recent translation of a very old book recalls.

Back in the 11th-century very few people could write and when they did it was in Latin. The ‘Liber Eliensis’ is an ancient history of the Isle of Ely from the seventh to twelfth centuries written by a monk who’d sat down to record the life and times within the abbey of Ely that has just been translated by Janet Fairweather.

There are many details of religious devotion, bequests and hard times, there is an eye-witness account of Hereward the Wake and what happened after William the Conqueror had finally proved successful.

But there is an amazing amount of other happenings. For the monks were sure that St Etheldreda, the twice-married virgin mother of their church, was still to be seen amongst them, even though she had been buried not once but twice – and the second time her body had been better preserved than it was in her lifetime.

She had appeared to pilgrims, to those seeking her cure for illness and to a villain named Gervase who had sought to purloin abbey land and keep it for himself. The scribe recorded how, as Gervase lay sleeping St Etheldreda appeared in his room, together with her two sainted sisters; “And she lifted the staff she was carrying and implanted its point heavily in the region of his heart, as if to pierce him through. Gervase ... with his terrible groaning and horrible screaming disturbed the whole of his household and said ‘Lady have mercy’. On hearing this the servants came running and Gervase said to them: ‘Do you not see St Etheldreda going away? How she pierced my chest with the sharp end of her staff ... And look, a second time she is returning to impale me, and now I shall die’. And with these words he breathed his last”

But it was not just saints that troubled the monks. One young man called Edwin left a service before it was over raving against everyone, making wild threats, flailing and trying to hurt some of the men who tried to constrain him, kicking with his feet and biting with his teeth. One of the monks saw someone black, like a boy, holding firmly on to his cowl and dragging him forcibly after him - it was, they believed, a spirit who had been damned.

The abbot ordered that the lad spend a night of vigil by the tomb of St Etheldreda diligently praying for her help. The chronicler recorded what happened next: "For some time he behaved in horrible way, now shouting out, now tearing his tunic with his teeth, till the approach of day he fell asleep for a while, recovered his reason and shortly afterwards, coming to his senses, gave word to the guards that he was now feeling well and had completely recovered in all other respects, except that the internal looseness of his stomach was torturing him, and was in need of evacuation in a privy.

"After being taken to the necessary place, he experienced as great an efflux as if all his bowels were being poured out and such a stink of the stomach was ejected that the air throughout all the nearest domestic buildings was scarcely bearable, as the polluted exhalation spread itself through every nook and cranny, and scarcely anyone escaped its vapour.

I hope it does not put you off your turkey! [SCAN OF ENGRAVING SHOWING THE DEATH AND INTERMENT OF ST ETHELDREDA, LATER, MONKS BELIEVED SHE APPEARED TO GERVAISE AND PRODDED HIM WITH HER STAFF] [ENGRAVING OF GRAVEYARD AT ELY CATHEDRAL]

'Liber Eliensis: a history of the Isle of Ely' translated by Janet Fairweather is published by the Boydell Press at £30 – ISBN 1843830159

Memories 2007 in one sequence

Memories 7th January 2007 by Mike Petty

WHO remembers that Cambridge used to have its own soap manufacturer, the Castle Soap Company in Albert Street - later renamed Young Street - off East Road?

Few needed a map to find their way there: you could follow your nose, despite a giant chimney designed to take away the appalling smell; or follow the butchers' carts delivering rancid fat or the fishermen flocking for tins of maggots.

The *News* conceded in January 1907: "The tallow manufacturing side of the business is the least attractive. There seems little affinity between the seething mass of brown liquid emitting strong, malodorous fumes from the iron receptacle in which it is being boiled, and the immaculate and fragrant bars, tablets and cakes that result."

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Frances Ison of Madingley used to enjoy similar functions and writes: "I attended the Police Balls for a number of years with a group of civilians and members of the police force, held early in January, I also went to the Firemen's Ball held at the Dorothy Ballroom in February. I used to make my own dresses (too expensive to buy) and had to have several - you couldn't wear the same dress when with the same people! "I still have one to remember those days, cherry-red taffeta worn with black jet jewellery and black mittens. I made my own evening bags from the dress fabric. They were lovely occasions, looked forward to for months. Tickets were £4 or £6 - how times have changed. Sadly few of us are now left to remember."

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Memories 10th January 2007, by Mike Petty

At this time of year it is traditional to look back. But sometimes its more interesting to see what people in the past considered that the future would hold.

Edward Law had emailed me about a book he recently acquired. It comprises 21 postcard-sized photographs pasted onto linen-hinged pages. They are pictures of cartoons relating to Cambridge University and are signed "Dod". They seem to date from about 1887 and one of them looks forward, being captioned 'Cambridge in 1977'.

By then, Dod anticipated, the age of admission for undergraduates would have plummeted, with men taking their degree before beginning life at Public School. On arrival they would find that women were dominant, all the tutors, lecturers and proctors would have been replaced by experienced ladies from the neighbouring University of Girton.

Perhaps he got some of his predictions wrong, but can anybody shed more light on the mysterious illustrator and his work? [DOD CARTOON OF LIFE IN 1977]

DARTS

With coverage of darts filling the television screens again, Mrs Joan Nutcombe (nee Burton) of Waterbeach, who worked in the IBM punched card office at Pye, has sent me a picture taken at their Social Club in St Andrew's Road. It shows the Pye ladies darts team final in 1959. Joan is the one in front with the bracelets – which she still has - and can remember the Christian names of some of the other girls – Laura, Jean, Betty, Ross and Veronica. But where are they now? [SCAN OF PYE DARTS LADIES]. And can anybody identify faces in another of John Carter's pictures from about the same date, this one showing a men's darts match, and where was it taken?. [MENS DART PHOTO]

FAMOUS BACKS

In the past News readers could not only identify faces, they could name people from behind. In the 1930s the Cambridge Daily News ran a regular weekly series showing the back view of a local person and invited readers to identify him. In December 1931 they featured the head porter at Addenbrooke's Hospital. Their postbag was filled to overflowing with almost everyone identifying him. They were convinced that he was the most popular man in Cambridge.

Mrs Flory of Isleham vicarage described him as 'the jolly old porter', Miss G. Hephner of Swavesey called him "Mr Bright Buttons", Miss Peters of Whittlesford "the Old General" while a fellow villager, J.W. Pryor said he had a smile and kind word for everybody adding, "I am writing this from experience as I lay for just over six months in Tipperary Ward".

G.E. Cooper of White Hart Lane Littleport asked that if his was the successful name pulled out of the hat the prize money should go to the Hospital. So did Florence Green of Saffron Walden, Gertrude Robinson of Truro House Impington and Mrs M. Gray of Derby Street who described herself as a "very grateful patient". Her daughter, Lilly commented "I saw him very often when I went to see my mummy when she was ill".

With such a response, the News decided to be generous; they quadrupled the number of five-shilling payments; two went to Lily Gray and Mrs Goldspink of the Council Houses, Fulbourn whilst the other were donated to Addenbrooke's Hospital Building Fund and the Robin Cot Fund.

The gentleman's name was William Darnell and he was the grandfather of Kathleen Collins from Cambridge who spotted a brief snippet I included in one of my 'Looking Back' columns just before Christmas. The News featured another picture of him, front view – a copy of which I have sent to Mrs Collins. [SCAN OF WILLIAM DARNELL, THE MOST POPULAR MAN IN CAMBRIDGE IN DECEMBER 1931]

SNAILWELL

Harry Bye's recent recollections of the Rev Ernest Powells at Snailwell has jogged memories for Mrs Heather Richardson of Cambridge. Her mother worked in the rectory for a number of years as a nurse to his granddaughter, Betsy, whose parents were away in India. It was a very grand life as the rectory was well-supplied with milk, eggs, butter and cream. It was there that she met her future husband when he cycled over from Burwell to be organist in Snailwell church. Heather's mother reached her 100th birthday last August and died in November. She'd kept in touch with the family and a picture of Betsy when she was presented at court was proudly displayed on her wall. She often visited her after she developed multiple sclerosis later in life and lived at the Sue Ryder Home in Ely.

Memories 17th January 2007, by Mike Petty

Joan Jackson (nee Holmes) emails from Brampton to share recollections which are echoed by other readers. They all agree my article on the Soap Company brought back some quite indelible memories.

Joan writes: "As a child I spent a great deal of my time with my grandparents, Mr and Mrs Zack Holmes who lived at 11 Staffordshire Street. Our garden ended at the wall of the soap factory". June Prime was a near neighbour whose garden also looked out on the factory.

Edmund Foulser from Cherry Hinton tells me his brother worked there; he tells of the skins that used to come by lorry and the 'juice' running from the sides. Joan vividly recalls the pungent fragrance which emanated from the soap works, and so does Barry Hobbs from Caldecote: "the appalling smell didn't go away. I presume it was the result of boiling down animal bones". It didn't however stop June playing in the old soap barrels that were stored on some waste ground.

Joan and June particularly remember the huge chimney that was supposed to remove these smells from the immediate neighbourhood. "I don't know how tall that chimney actually was, but we could see it very clearly from our back garden. There was an iron ladder which went to the very top of the chimney and every now and then a man would ascend to its summit. I was always dreading that he might fall, since he would simply crash straight to the ground & would watch him with a combination of fascination and fear", says Joan. June agrees: "I remember a man climbing up the chimney to clean it, and the day they dismantled it was something else". But when was that?

Barry adds some other details: "One morning I was on my way to school when a low-flying German aircraft came into view over East Road and began machine-gunning the Castle Soap site. When it was eventually demolished I was told that bullet holes were found in the metal chimney stack". Can anybody confirm this, he asks. Mrs J. Willis tells me her dad, Art Curry, used to be a fire-watcher for the Soap Company during the war and drove their lorry to London daily.

Joan's house was the end one of a terrace of three, and next door was a yard with stables. "But in the actual stable adjoining our house a dancing bear was kept. When lying in bed one could hear this poor animal moving up and down, his chain rubbing against our wall. It was exciting as well as frightening to see him led out and dancing in the street. This was in the 1930s". Do you remember it?

She continues: "Staffordshire Street was never one of the most salubrious streets off East Road, but there were worse! In Gas Lane there was a large rag and bone merchants' premises. My father kept rabbits, and so a nice rabbit stew or pie often formed part of our diet, and I would be despatched to Gas Lane to sell the skin! I think I was given two or three old pence. Glass jars and bottles were disposed of in the same way. The funny thing was that in those days I remember that one of my very favourite Christmas presents was a pair of fur-backed gloves - I don't suppose that I ever associated them with the rabbit skins!"

Every trade had its own specialisms; in December 1925 the News reported how Percy Wheatley a skin merchant of Staffordshire Street took two bundles of rabbit skins to a Cambridge court; one were what is known in the trade as 'fresh pulled' skins and the other 'summer rubbish'. He explained how he'd agreed to pay 4s.6d. a dozen provided they were fresh pulled off., but he found 90 per cent of the skins were 'summer rubbish'. He held up the skins for the judge's inspection, pointing out the difference and his honour agreed he'd been cheated.

But if the smell of the soap works was bad, there was worse just across the road, as Joan explains: "On the way to school (the Central School for Girls) I walked along East Road and through one of the side streets where there was a slaughterhouse. The smell was atrocious and there were vermin and flies. I was always thankful that my grandparents didn't live there. It was a rough area, and they were hard times. My five granddaughters can hardly believe the things that went on when I was young".

But in 1953 Staffordshire Street hit the headlines in a positive way when Mrs m. O'Dell was awarded a special prize of £5 for the best decorated private house in Cambridge at the

Coronation. Shortly afterwards there were plans for a drastic redevelopment of the area and now there are few reminders of the bad old days.

[A PICTURE OF THE REBUILT STAFFORDSHIRE STREET IS IN NEWS LIBRARY FILES]

SCAN 61 – MR A TAYLOR’S BAKERS SHOP, STAFFORDSHIRE STREET c1920

SCAN 84.583 FORMER ST ANDREW THE LESS PARISH WORKHOUSE, STAFFORDSHIRE GARDENS PHOTOGRAPHED IN 1911 WHICH WAS ONCE HOME TO 46 BOYS AND GIRLS

SCAN 117.55 – MAN DRESSED AS A DANCING BEAR AT STRETHAM, 1920s – BUT DO YOU REMEMBER THE CAMBRIDGE DANCING BEAR?

Memories 24th January 2007, by Mike Petty

Various researchers have appealed to Memories readers for help

Daniel Spencer is working on a television programme which will feature a vast collection of films made by the late William King that are now housed in the East Anglian Film Archive.

There are various scenes associated with Cambridge that he can identify, but there some that feature visits organised by the ‘SS Club’. This may have been connected to the Cambridge Motorists Social Services Association but he needs to know more and if possible track down the names of its members. Can you assist?

Mr King’s films were very popular in the 1950s. In March 1956 1,400 motor cycle enthusiasts attended two shows at the Guildhall. But he had been taking films long before that.

In 1956 a tattered and broken reel of film was found in a cellar at King and Harper’s garage in Bridge Street and overhauled by Mr J. Dyer, the chief projectionist at the Playhouse Cinema. It featured the firm’s depots at Hills Road, Milton Road, Thompson’s Lane and Bridge Street in about 1932 showing pedestrians wearing cloche hats, shapeless coats and furs draped round their necks while a post office telegram boy pedalled past (– whatever happened to them?).

But it was the cars that were the stars: one gentleman was shown proudly seated in the 1930’s idea of an up-to-the-minute sports model, which appeared very comical to 1950’s eyes, whilst a lady was being shown over the latest in six-seater saloons. The price ticket attached to the roof gave its price at £205 brand new!

Does anybody know what has happened to this film now – it’s not amongst those tracked down by Daniel and he’d like the opportunity of giving it a wider audience. You can contact him on 0771 4510514 or email danielspencer@curwens.wanadoo.co.uk – or through me at the News.

[SCANS OF

A Morris Oxford Isis Six Saloon which became the first car to enter the King and Harper garage at Bridge Street and leave from a new exit in Jesus Lane, March 1931.

King and Harper lubrication bay during a ‘Daimler Week’ Sep 1954 – who are the people

Milton Road corner c1925, showing the King and Harper garage]

One man with great memories of postwar motoring is Rodney Dale of Haddenham. His father enjoyed a rich variety of vintage cars including Bentleys, Rolls-Royces and Rovers. But probably the most bizarre was a Cluley that was spotted from the top of a bus. It was on the back of a lorry at Jack Branch's yard at Waterbeach. Rodney's dad bought it for £22 10s. and restored it to full working condition. The only thing was that the first time they drove it they discovered a slight mistake; for the sporty two-seater roared away with three reverse gears, and only one forward one! Rodney will be sharing such recollections at Ely Library this Friday morning at 10.30 – if you have similar tales to tell then come along or drop me a line.

Whilst to some the roar of an engine is something musical, others find enjoyment in street musicians. Cambridge has had a tradition of these over the years – Jerry Bol and the Cambridge Buskers being the most obvious. But Sheila Mann is trying to learn something about a much earlier entertainer known as the 'Gambaloney Man'. He's mentioned in a 1931 novel entitled 'Haste to the Wedding' by Aelfleda Tillyard – but its set back in the early 1800s. Now its unlikely that even News readers remember back over 200 years – but does anybody have a copy of the book tucked away on their shelves. There doesn't seem to be one in the Cambridgeshire Collection nor at the Cambridge University Library.

Another correspondent, Neil Potter from London is also on a musical quest. When his grandfather, Harry Collins died in 1926 the CDN obituary mentioned that as well as being a lay clerk member of King's College Chapel Choir he had also been one of the earlier members of the Magpie Concert Party before the Great War. But what was this, he asks

During my plod through the back files of the News for my Looking Back column I have spotted two mentions of this ensemble. In June 1923 they enlivened the Pymoor and Oxloade annual sports, supplementing the selections played by Manea Silver Band. Then in December 1956 at the closing down of the Playhouse in Mill Road Raymond Bennett, the talented comedian and theatre manager recalled that it was there he'd made his debut as a single-turn music hall artiste. In those early days it had a small orchestra and had one artiste each week with the pictures. He added, "Many readers will recall appearance of Godwin Hunt, baritone and humorous vocalist – George Gass, comedian of the 'Magpies', a concert-party run by Godwin Hunt – and Sydney Pratt, conjuror." But can anybody add more?

If you can help then contact Mike Petty at the News

Memories 31 January 2007, by Mike Petty

When Hope Skinner of West Wickham opened her copy of the News on Wednesday 17th January she found her memories sparked into life. But it was not my article that did it!

The story that she spotted was that millions of pounds were being spent transforming an historic building in Trumpington Street into a plush new Hotel du Vin with 41 bedrooms and suites, some with private gardens, as well as a bistro and champagne bar, library and private cellar dining rooms.

But Hope knew it way back during the Great War.

She writes: "I was born there in 1915. My parents moved from number 19 to 17 as they already had four children and mother was expecting twins. My father, Dr Henry Roderick, was a surgeon during the First World War – he seemed to be always delivering babies. I can remember the basement so well, the old kitchens, the old 'Donkey' - a huge range which the

maids used to light with coal which the coalman used to drop through a hole in the yard. The basement was a very frightening place with two lots of stairs to it and my father would go round late at night with a hockey stick killing the cockroaches down there. I still hate cockroaches

“The garden went down to Tennis Court Road and there were stables to the left. The first was for my father’s car, the second for Dr Budd’s car and the third for Dr Wright’s car. The fourth was for ‘Duke’, the horse, the fifth for the chauffeurs, the sixth was the apple room and the seventh a woodshed.

“We lived there until 1937 when half the garden was bought by Addenbrooke’s Hospital for building, so my father sold it for £4,000. I wonder if the huge mirrors that were in the drawing room are still there?”

Denis Frucot, general manager of the new Cambridge Hotel du Vin says they have kept all the original features and restored them, including a baker’s oven which is now a focal point in one of the suites, while two wells will be glassed over as a focal point for one of the larger rooms.

In April 1923 Speaking to Cambridge Rotary Club Dr H B Roderick compared Addenbrooke’s Hospital 50 years before with then. In 1872 the average stay in hospital was 37.87 days and in 1922 to it was 27.46 days, so that with practically the same number of beds they were able to deal with a considerable number more patients, owing to the more rapid turnover due to shortened convalescence. In 1922, 2,376 operations were performed, and 2,231 in-patients and 4523 outpatients were treated. This great increase in work naturally involved increased demands both on the medical, surgical, and nursing staffs of the hospital, as well as on its financial resources. The present operating theatre was constructed in 1897 and today it was out of date. Two theatres, on modern lines, were urgently needed in order to cope with the ever-increasing work. However much things change, some things still seem to stay the same!

Addenbrooke’s Hospital used to have a convalescent home at Hunstanton – perhaps you remember it. But can anybody shed light on a picture of what appears to be a railway promotion featuring nurses outside ‘Bowtell Station’ that appeared in the News in the 1950s? [NB BE SURE TO INCLUDE THE PICTURE]

More information has come through on William Darnell, the Addenbrooke’s Hospital porter in Dr Roderick’s time. Hilary Ritchie, the Hospital’s Archivist has been trawling through their records and discovered from the salary files that in 1908 he was paid the princely weekly sum of £1.2.1 (£1.10) with board and residence. When he retired in 1936, aged 73 and with 43 years of service behind him, the committee awarded him a pension of £1.10.0 (£1.50) a week. Ann Blunt from Cambridge has emailed me a photograph of him in uniform

Whilst on medical matters, can anybody help with any information on a private nursing home for elderly clergy at Madely Court, Hemingford Grey. It was run by Ms Marguerite Selby in the 1950s. Tom Bekers

is undertaking research and would be interested in any information on her charitable work in the village, especially a picture of her and the building she used. You can contact him by email at bekerstom@hotmail.com or drop me a line and I’ll put you in touch

David Messier also seeks your help. He emails: “Going through old letters I put away long ago, I found one from a relative in England in 1952 who said that his son was attending a day school in Cambridge called Shrewsbury. I do not know more than that. Now, almost 60 years later, I have searched for the school over the internet and made numerous inquiries, but I have

found no trace of it.” Can you assist. You can email him at dmessier2004@yahoo.com or drop me a line.

SCANS:

TRUMPINGTON STREET IN 1920S SHOWING THE HOUSE WHERE HOPE WAS BORN

MODERN PICTURE OF DENIS FRUCOT IN THE BASEMENT – FROM NEWS ARTICLE OF 17TH JAN

WILLIAM DARNELL, ADDENBROOKE'S HOSPITAL PORTER

NURSES AT ‘BOWTELL STATION’, ADDENBROOKE'S HOSPITAL, 1950s

NOTE: I HAVE CONTACTED THE HOTEL CHAIN PRESS PEOPLE ABOUT THE LETTER FROM HOPE – PERHAPS THEY’LL MAKE HER A GUEST AT THE OPENING. IF THEY RESPOND I’LL PASS THEM ON TO YOU

Memories 7th February 2007, by Mike Petty

Cambridge’s George IV Street was part of the New Town that grew up on the west side of Hills Road following the enclosure of the Barnwell open fields in 1807. It is just off Coronation Street and joined by Queen Street to Prince’s Street. The names have strong Royalist connection but need to be put in the context of the time

Before his accession George had been Prince Regent during the madness of his father, George III. He’d married Caroline of Brunswick in 1785 but their relationship was not an easy one: he accused her of adultery and left her for a Mrs Fitzherbert who he’d secretly married ten years earlier. When he succeeded to the throne in 1820 he tried to prevent Caroline from attending his Coronation at Westminster Abbey. Many Cambridge people believed ‘Queen’ Caroline had been badly treated and there were town and gown riots on Market Hill with 250 special constables sworn in to try and keep the peace. Although the University voted a loyal address they also voiced their detestation of infidelity.

The fascinating history of the development of New Town has been told by Peter Bryan and Nick Wise in the Cambridge Antiquarian Society Proceedings for 2005. Now some most interesting photographs of the area taken in the late 1950s by architectural historian, the late Tony Baggs, have been passed to me. His picture of George IV Street itself shows a number of children; can you identify them or do remember the properties in Coronation Street with St Paul’s church at the end. [SCAN OF GEORGE IV STREET AND CORONATION STREET BY TONY BAGGS]

Nigel Brown has emailed me a copy of another picture of a Cambridge street scene. Having studied it and checked copies of Cambridge Street Directories I am pretty sure it shows shops on the Cherry Hinton Road in Cambridge, between Rathmore Road and Rock Road. The 1904 Spaldings Directory lists E & C Stallan, milliners and drapers, but not Jennings whereas the 1913 Spaldings Directory lists H.E. Jennings, fishmonger, but not Stallan. Somewhere in between the two were doubtless side by side. But what was the event? Nigel thinks it may have been a non-conformist children’s procession. Does it mean anything to you? [SCAN OF PROCESSION IN CHERRY HINTON ROAD]

David Messier also seeks your help. He emails: “Going through old letters I put away long ago, I found one from a relative in England in 1952 who said that his son was attending a day school in Cambridge called Shrewsbury. I do not know more than that. Now, almost 60 years

later, I have searched for the school over the internet and made numerous inquiries, but I have found no trace of it.” Can you assist. You can email him at dmessier2004@yahoo.com or drop me a line.

George Ginn from Soham has a problem too. For many months he was a regular sight in the Cambridgeshire Collection at the Central Library, Lion Yard, where he has been plodding through back issues of the ‘Cambridge Chronicle’ newspaper, carefully copying down every reference to events in Soham in the early years of the twentieth century.

His labours have now been crowned by the publication of a booklet entitled ‘Soham Chronicle 1899-1907’ with transcripts of the everyday events, anniversaries, obituaries, marriages and accidents that were reported throughout that period. Some issues seem familiar: we’ve heard of mad cows but in October 1904 Soham had two mad bullocks. George notes: “As two bullocks, the property of Mr. Boyce of Soham, were being loaded at Soham station, one suddenly displayed symptoms of madness and escaped, rushing through Clay Street and Fordham Road where it got into the fields. A great many attempts were made to capture the animal by driving a herd of stock around it, but the tactics failed. It was ultimately shot.”

So now George knows a lot about Soham – but the mystery remains. Just who was it that originally wrote the reports that appeared in the paper. It may have been a gentleman named A. Edmunds who apparently played the cello and was secretary to the Choral and Horticultural Societies – but can anybody add further details. If so can you contact George Ginn at 7 King’s Parade, Soham. His book is available from Soham Bookshop at £3.95 or by post (50p extra) from the compiler.

[SCAN SOHAM STATION 1930’s]

Memories 14th February 2007, by Mike Petty

Last week David Messier sought assistance. He had been sorting through some letters from the 1950s one of which mentioned the ‘Shrewsbury’ school in Cambridge. Now various readers have written to suggest that this is probably a misreading of the former Shrubbery School.

Mike Dawson emails: “Having lived in Cambridge all my life, and, indeed being in the same class at the County (now Hills Road 6th Form College) as a lad called Eric Wainwright, whose father was Headmaster at the Shrubbery, I know a little about it. It was, as far as I can remember, an Independent Day-school, with lessons, of course, on Saturday mornings. I am not sure now after all these years of the average roll in the School, or indeed the precise age group it catered for, but as Eric's secondary Education took place at the County, I can only assume it catered for pupils of primary school age.”

Jean Cox recalls that the pupils wore a grey uniform while Geoff Leyshon says it was situated on the Barton Road near the Hat and Feathers pub in a three-four storey red brick building

Writing in 1963, Erica Dimock traced the school’s history. It had been founded in a private house on the Barton Road in the 1860s moving some years later to Hills Road where its Kindergarten and Junior departments were then still based. In 1942 the Rev and Mrs Living-Taylor took over the school from the late Mrs Fulton who had been Principal for about eight years and at this time there were some 60 pupils on the register.

Numbers rapidly increased and, wishing to expand the Senior Department, the Rev Living-Taylor moved into the Zion Baptist Chapel on East Road where the hall and several rooms

were made available for use. In 1947 due to a further increase in pupils it moved again, this time to 32 Barton Road.

The school was co-educational. Pupils in the Junior Department were prepared for the Secondary Schools Entrance Examination while fifth-year pupils were expected to take the Oxford and Cambridge General Certificate of Education 'O' level examinations, for which the school was a recognised centre. Several fourth-year pupils took an entrance examination for full-time preliminary courses available at the Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology.

The Shrubbery then had a flourishing parent-teacher association which had recently provided a prefabricated assembly hall, a science laboratory and various pieces of scientific equipment for the senior school together with a radio, record player and stage at the Junior. In 1962 Mrs and Mrs Wainwright took over as Principals, both having been on the staff for a number of years.

In 1984 Shrubbery School closed its door to senior pupils due to falling numbers. But were you one of its pupils and what do you remember about it [SCAN OF GIRLS HOCKEY TEAM 1920S; SCAN OF CUTTING AUGUST 1963 – IS THERE A PRINT IN THE NEWS LIBRARY, BARTON ROAD FOLDER]

Last week's picture of Coronation Street brought back memories for Jim Langford of Cambridge. He was born there in 1921, baptised at St Paul's church, attended the Institute across the road, threw fireworks in the reading room and was one of Miss Chandler's pupils at St Paul's School in Russell Street. Doud Driver tells me his great-grandfather owned no.28 Coronation Street which was a baker's shop run by the family along with 1-8 Drivers Court and nos.21 and 23 Russell Street. [SCAN OF ST PAUL'S SCHOOL 1975]

Bob Chapman and Mike Smith email to say the George IV Street photograph shows Wills & Thompson's garage. It was built, probably in the 1930s by four friends Wills, Thompson, Thorogood and Toppham. It was run by Messrs Wills & Thompson with the other two as sleeping partners until just before the war then they retired and Thorogood, & Toppham took over. During the war it was taken over by the military as a garage. Afterwards it reverted to the ownership of Thorogood & Toppham until sold to Camtax in the mid 50s.

Bob adds: "Albert Thorogood was my granddad and I spent a lot of Saturday mornings in the garage with him. One of the things he did was to charge accumulators; they had this large machine in the corner with what looked like dozens of wires coming out to accumulators and batteries. Opposite on the corner of Union Road was a blacksmith shop run by William (Bill) Chapman. In one of the houses shown on your photo lived a family who had a bakery on the opposite side of the road. They made muffins and crumpets which they took around the area on trays on their heads and ringing a bell"

This may have been Mr Albert Craske, do you remember him? [SCAN OF A CAMBRIDGE MUFFIN MAN – NOT MR CRASKE]

Memories 21st February 2007 by Mike Petty

Albert Northfield of Cambridge has been quick to respond to my mention of the Cambridge muffin man of Coronation Street. He writes: "I was one of the family that lived at 17 Coronation Street, the one you showed in your photograph. I was born in this house in 1926 and lived there for 25 years until I got married. I too went to St Paul's School with Miss

Chandler as headmistress so all the comments brought back lots of memories of that area. Mr Albert Craske, was my grandfather who had the muffin and crumpet bakery opposite”.

Albert was featured in the News back in November 1980; then Mrs Clare Driver, one of his daughters, recalled how the muffin trade was seasonal, from October to Easter. In the summer her dad who was also a talented signwriter, would work as a painter. He was also a lay preacher at the Emmanuel Road Congregational Church, a prize-winning amateur gardener and won a medal for his singing.

He'd been an apprentice to a plumber before the Great War but served as a cook. Afterwards he thought he would like to set up on his own in a small way but was soon delivering muffins to places as far afield as March and Chatteris, travelling by train. [SCAN OF MARCH RAILWAY STATION 1920s]. Later the bakery employed three or four salesmen. Clare's mother worked there helping to produce muffins and crumpets which at one time were supplied to all the Cambridge colleges as well as several cake shops. After Albert died his wife kept on the business for some years. But it was hard work; muffins were made of a dough, crumpets from batter, they were all mixed by hand which meant a very early start to the day – they had to be up at four in the morning to beat the mixture.

Another reader who shared her memories in 1980 was Mrs D. Kitching who lived in Union Road as a girl. She recalled: “I remember a well-scrubbed bench where the muffins were laid out, and the lovely baking smell of the place.” If he'd sold out then she might go on to Mr Quelch's bakery; he was a very kind person to children who baked her a bread doll with current eyes and mouth and plaited hair for a birthday treat.

##

D. Harnett from Cottenham has asked whether I'd feature pictures of the Fitzroy Street area fondly remembered as a wonderful area to have lived in with lovely shopkeepers contributing to a feeling that it was all one big family. I have one taken by the late Tony Baggs of a shop on the corner of Severn Place in the 1950s or early '60s showing a white cat that sat at the door welcoming customers – but did you shop there, or who kept it? [SCAN OF FITZROY STREET]

##

How many Wanderers were there, wonders John Green who's been researching the early days of cycling. He has two pictures, one captioned the Wanderers Bicycle Club 1900, the other “WCC 1898”. Were they the same thing? I can help a little; the earlier picture has a list of names, one of which is G. Edwards. In a report of the seventh annual dinner of the Cambridge Wanderers Cycle in December 1897 he is mentioned as being the club Captain.

In his address he conceded that not all cyclists were angels. There were men who went tearing about, whistling down the street, ringing their bells and expecting to have the whole road cleared for them. They should be prosecuted. [SCAN OF CARTOON OF SPEEDING UNDERGRADUATE ON BIKE]. But there was another class who went for a ride in the country and had a sort of liking for riding on the path. Now it was right that such a terrible practice should be cracked down on – and had the Chief Constable put a policeman in the road in proper uniform no one would have complained. But he had to go and put a man in plain clothes to capture cyclists. Mr Edwards was sure that the Chief deserved a rise in his salary for such a clever initiative! He brought the matter to the notice of the Mayor of Cambridge, Horace Darwin – who also happened to be the President of their club. Horace regretted that civic duties had prevented him joining in their wanderings recently. But, like a modern politician, he'd had used his bicycle to travel around town in all weathers. Some ideas just go round and round.

I also have another picture of what I believe to be the Wanderers taken on one of their outings on Good Friday 1902. This time they seem to have been out in strength, swamping any plain-clothed police surveillance

[SCAN OF WANDERERS CYCLISTS 1902]

Memories 28th February 2007, by Mike Petty

The People's Friend is not on my regular reading list, but I've had a letter from John Price of West Sussex who has seen a recent review they published of my book 'Vanishing Cambridgeshire', based on the photographic survey by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society.

However it was not the pictures that caught his eye; it was the mention of the game of bat and trap that was played by publicans on Parker's Piece on Good Friday and Easter Monday. John says that this is still played in a number of pubs in Kent. At present there is a considerable interest being shown by the American Baseball League in tracing the origins of their sport, which they believe originated from stoolball, rounders and bat and trap. A party, including a cameraman, are visiting England in mid June and would like to learn more about any of these sports.

Enid Porter in her wonderful 'Cambridgeshire Customs and Folklore' book noted that until 1910 the regulars of public houses within easy reach of Midsummer Common used to play Bat and Trap on Easter Monday near the lock-keepers house by Jesus Green Bridge. Barrels of beer were taken down to refresh the players. It was also a popular amusement at Sunday School treats.

The Folk Museum had a bat and trap set in its original box, dated 1860 together with hand-made traps. It consisted of a solid wooden shoe, six to seven inches long, in a central groove of which was inserted a spoon-shaped wooden trigger mounted on a pivot and with the handle extending over the toe of the shoe. The bat was a small cricket bat, about 14 inches long and flat on both sides, the ball could be any small hard one.

Any numbers of persons could play the game. The trap was placed on the ground and two boundary lines were fixed to mark the area into which the ball had to fall after it had been struck. The first player then placed the ball on the 'bowl' of the spoon-shaped trigger, hit the handle sharply with the bat and then struck the ball, as it rose, towards the boundaries. The rest of the players tried then either to catch the ball in flight or retrieve it from the ground, the one who got hold of it throwing it back towards the trap from the spot where he had caught or picked it up. The striker was 'out' and gave way to the next player if the ball was (a) caught; (b) did not fall within the boundary lines; (c) was not hit as it rose from the trap; (d) hit the trap when it was thrown back. The striker's aim was to keep 'in' until he had scored twenty hits or any other number previously agreed upon. Can you add anything to the story of this almost-forgotten game? [SCAN OF BAT AND TRAP IN FOLK MUSEUM]

But what of baseball? I know there was a game played at Fenners on 4th July 1918, the first time it had been played on the famous cricket pitch. 'To the uninitiated onlooker baseball appears to be a glorified style of rounders... but the participants and their supporters get wildly excited', the Cambridge Chronicle commented. Then in July 1954 the News reported that real American softball came to Cambridge City Football Club ground when the US Air Force Hospital Wimpole Park beat a team from USAF Molesworth. For British spectators the game was a succession of shocks. They saw an umpire hustled and pushed by players disputing a decision, two players somersaulting as they tried to catch a ball and some magnificent hits and catches that made it look like cricket. There was 'strike one', 'ball one',

‘blunt’ and a host of other expressions which were difficult to explain but easy to follow on the diamond-shaped field before the victorious team had notched up their win and were cheered again and again. John Carter took photographs of the event: were you amongst the youngsters who watched the action? [SCAN OF BASEBALL MATCH 1918 AND 1954]

Heather Squires from Cherry Hinton writes with her memories of muffin men: “My dear late husband, Thomas Squires, was the grandson of Mr Albert Squires of 27 Coronation Street. He and his wife Harriet had a small bakery at the back of the property where the muffins and crumpets were baked. Albert was given patronage by the late Prince of Wales who became Edward VII. Apparently he had sampled some of these muffins on a visit to Cambridge, liked them so much that, when he came racing, Albert sent a supply to Newmarket by bicycle! Harriet was on call to anyone in trouble, the dying, those in labour at child birth, the sick - people used to come and knock the door at all hours of the day or night asking for her help. Thomas often went with her - he remembered as a very small boy walking down Brooklands Avenue very late at night and being scared of the big trees! He attended boxing lessons for boys run at St Paul’s Institute a young man with a very Dutch/South African name - something like Fontenblaumb - does anyone else remember him, Heather asks. [SCAN OF GIANT TREES IN BROOKLANDS AVENUE c1905]

More memories of the Shrubbery School have come from Penny Duce who attended between 1956 and 1964 while Joan Carter was there at the end of the war when it moved to the Zion Baptist Chapel on East Road. She recalls that the girls’ uniform in those days was grey skirt & blazer, white blouse, red and white striped tie and grey hat in winter. Then the clothing coupons had to be saved for the summer outfit of a red and white checked dress and straw hat.

Memories, 7th March 2007, by Mike Petty

Girton has a football club with a impressive past. Fifty years ago the club could boast of winning five trophies in a single season including the Cambridge Daily News Sports Review Merit Shield. Their success was down to the floodlights they’d erected for training during the winter nights and the inspiration of F.C. Barrett, their president. The club has always prided themselves on their local players. Of these the most famous was Vic Watson who was born in the village in 1897. He was spotted by West Ham United when playing for Wellingborough in 1920, signed on for a fee of £50 and scored three goals for his new club in the first match. He went on to become their all-time champion goalscorer and played in the first Wembley Cup Final when an estimated 200,000 good-humoured spectators invaded the pitch which was eventually cleared with the help of a policeman on a white horse. He is still honoured on the Club’s website: “Vic....think most of us agree that we could do with you right now”, writes on fan concerned about their current difficulties.

Vic Watson also gained international honours, playing for England on seven occasions. After retiring in 1936 he returned to Girton where he became a market gardener and lived to be over 90 years of age. Now Girton United are planning for their centenary with a celebration dinner in April and a gala day in June. They would like to make contact with anybody who played or was connected with the club. You can email Barry.Arliss@ntlworld.com or ring Paul Crane on Cambridge 715720. [SCAN OF GIRTON FOOTBALLERS c1910 – WERE THESE VIC’S HEROES? SCAN OF VIC WATSON, THE GIRTON BOY WHO PLAYED FOR ENGLAND AND REMAINS WEST HAM’S HIGHEST GOAL SCORER]

My recent mention a Cambridge smell has reunited two old friends from across the world. Don Halls from Palm Springs California emailed “It was with great interest that I read Joan Collins’ memories of the Castle Soap Works at the foot of Young Street. I attended New

Street School as a child and well remember that awful smell, I also remember them tearing down the original brick chimney and erecting the metal chimney she speaks of. My uncle Harvey Halls kept the Wheelwrights Arms on East road and the dancing bear she speaks of was kept in his stables". I have put him in contact with Joan who emails: "I am so glad to have made contact with Don. We are the same age and went to the same primary school in Cambridge, the Morley Memorial. We also have slight family links through an uncle of his".

Gladys Clements from Girton has emailed to say she remembers the Fitzroy Street bakers shop that I featured in Memories on 21st February. It was owned by her great uncle and aunt: James and Florence Stokes; the living quarters were behind the shop and farther back was the bakery which also had an entrance from Severne Place. Next door to the bakery lived her great aunt Amy who never married, and besides her lived Gladys' maternal grandmother, Emma Edwards. On the corner of Fitzroy Street and East Road was a coffee shop owned by her great uncle and aunt, George and Annie Stokes. It was mainly used by working, or unemployed, men, who were allowed to spend hours, or even all day, in the warmth of the shop over one cup of coffee.

Daniel Spencer of Fragment Films is still preparing his 'The Way We Were' television programme on King and Harper. He is now searching for anybody who attended their company sports days. If you can help then please contact him on 0771 4510514

Can anybody help with paintings by an artist of the Edwardian era called William Matthison. William attended Birmingham School of Art before turning professional in 1875 & made his reputation as a painter of rustic and coastal subjects. His career blossomed after he was commissioned to paint views that could be reproduced as postcards to meet the booming demand at the turn of the century. He also turned his attention to Cambridge; in May 1907 over 60 of his works were exhibited at Heffer's shop in Petty Cury. They were amongst those chosen to illustrate a book on Cambridge by one of the early Newnham College students, Mildred Toker. One of the paintings of the Bridge of Sighs was sold before the exhibition opened and the pictures proved so popular that the publishers, Black, later reissued some of them in a separate booklet. As well as views of the great colleges are illustrations of Peas Hill, St Edwards Passage, Madingley windmill and Magdalene Bridge showing the Nancy, a steam tug that made regular trips from Kings Lynn. But what has happened to the original paintings – do you have one on your wall. If so then publisher John Button of Stroud would love to hear from you. You can email john@bookcraft.co.uk, or contact me and I'll put you in touch. [SCAN OF PEAS HILL OR MAGDALENE BRIDGE]

Memories 14th March 2007, by Mike Petty

Kate Turner from Swaffham Bulbeck has been transcribing some of her late husband, Frank's recollections of his days working with animals. Frank wrote:

"I was born on the 4th of September 1918 at Great Shelford, the third child of Harold and Emily Turner. Dad worked for Arthur Grain, the founder of the firm of auctioneers and estate agents. He was a groom looking after a stable of horses as his governor was a keen hunting man. Dad also ran a small farm of about sixty acres for the Grain family. "There were eight milking cows, calves and young cattle, a few sows and small pigs. His days were indeed long and busy, the work being very hard. From being a small boy, any spare time I had after school was spent around the farm and it was here that I discovered my abiding love of animals - especially horses.

"The work of this small farm was done using two horses and a mule. Consignments of mules from the army used to be sent to the firm to be auctioned. On Mondays it was the general rule that Dad and his brother Ralph attended the Cambridge cattle market to help Mr Grain with

the cattle, pigs and sheep. Once a month a special horse sale was held and it was my father's job to braid the horses' tails for the vendors who wished their beasts to be well turned out. As each horse came up for sale, it was run up and down by dad so that the prospective buyers could get a good idea of its action and how lively it was.

“After the cattle auctions finished, my dad and his brother would set off with the mule harnessed to a float (a sort of cross between a cart and a horse trap) filled with sheep and pigs which had been bought and had to be delivered to the new owners. To stop them escaping they were covered with a thick cord net. Running behind would be as many as a dozen fat cattle. All the livestock were to be delivered to several butchers in the surrounding villages as there were no abattoirs then! A good dog was a necessity to keep the following beasts in line and dad had several in his time, most of them Collies.

“The first "drop off" was at Cherry Hinton and then over Lime Kiln Hill to Shelford Bottom, on to Babraham and then Duxford to Great Shelford and home, late and very tired. On one occasion they had great excitement as they were going over Lime Kiln Hill. A young steer broke away from its fellows, jumped blindly in panic and ended up falling down the pit where now there is a caravan site. Thinking it would be dead, my father and uncle took the mule and float down into the pit in order to load the carcass onto it.

“As they approached the beast, to their amazement it came back to life and bolted in the direction of Cherry Hinton. A dear old lady, whose house was in the High Street, had her front door open and the demented animal rushed into her home, scattering tables and chairs, crockery and fire irons in all directions. It barged out again, but not before leaving its calling card. Eventually it was cornered in a farm yard. A vet was sent for and the creature was put down. This episode was unusual but things sometimes went wrong and animals escaped. The auctioneers were not best pleased; compensation had to be paid! Nor was my mother very happy. My father got home so late that night that his meal was completely spoiled!”

[SCAN: The Fulbourn artist, John Herring junior, who died in March 1907, depicted a cart returning from market – a scene probably little changed from when Frank made his journeys.

[CHOICE OF SCAN OF GT SHELFORD WHEN FRANK WAS A LAD OR HIGH STREET CHERRY HINTON WHERE THE STEER CAUSED CHAOS]

The people of Swaffham Bulbeck were incensed in March 1957 when one of their local landmarks disappeared. In a letter to the News ‘Aquarius’, later identified as Bernard Gill, wrote: “Sir - For the past one hundred years Swaffham Prior has had a fountain of pleasing and unusual design. It was circular, built of brick and crowned with a steeply pitched conical roof. Generations used it for the refreshment of men and beasts. Sheep-dogs lapped up water, wayfarers stopped to admire it. But a few days ago, with no warning, it was demolished and the materials carted away. Who is responsible for this vandalism?

The matter was aired at a packed meeting in the village when it was explained that the fountain had been erected about 1874 by the late Squire Allix to water animals using the road. The water was drawn from his own private reservoir until this was discontinued with the coming of mains water. He approached the District Council to take on the supply, but they refused. The fountain had become dangerous, neither the county council nor the Cambridge Preservation Society showed any interest, so it had been pulled down.

But some considered it ‘one of the finest pieces of Victorian architecture that should have been preserved for all time’. If so why had the parish council not taken action, and why had the villagers themselves not ensured that the hole in the roof had been repaired. And hadn’t they contributed to its neglect by seeing their children scrawling their sweetheart’s names on

the walls ... It was too late except to do anything but lament its loss. The News cartoonist, Lewis Todd, gave his slant on the story, but do you have a snap or memory of it?

[SCAN OF CARTOON PUBLISHED IN CDN MAR 1957]

Memories of the days of horse-power will be recalled in song and screen at St Andrew's Church Hall, Chesterton on Saturday evening, 24th March when Neil Lanham and the Bumpstead Boys present 'Ruby and her horses', a story the agricultural depression of the 1930s. It's part of the first Cambridge Storytelling Festival. Tickets and information from Peter Hilkin on Cambridge 709769 or from Neil on 01440 730414

Memories 21st March 2007, by Mike Petty

Recently proposals have been aired to set up holding cells in shopping malls and supermarkets where pickpockets, shoplifters and others could be incarcerated for up to four hours before transportation out to police stations.

We used to have something similar in various Cambridgeshire villages where offenders would be held before being taken to court. The most prominent surviving one is at Litlington - a brick-built building with a barred door on the green. It was last used in the 1840s when the prisoner set fire to the hay provided for his bedding. [SCAN OF LITLINGTON LOCK UP 1923]

There was a similar lock up at Wilburton, as Albert Pell recorded: Their village cage was a square, brick building, small, and arched over with brick at the top. The door was narrow but stout, adorned with auctioneers' and other posters. He recalled one incident when a delinquent was apprehended, forced into the cage and locked in. A few children loitered about the door, indicating that the cage had a tenant. Then they ran home with the message "He's been a-thumping on the door and a-swearing and says he's not a-going to be kept in any longer - you can hear him 'scratting' like a rabbit". A crowd gathered to watch the jail break and were rewarded by the sight of two hands emerging from under the foundations; after a while a head, then bare shoulders followed and when hips followed that the onlookers ran off, only then sending for the constable. But he had gone off to milk his cow in some distant field and the village was left to the mercy of the former inmate who threatened vengeance if somebody did not bring him his jerkin - which was of course still securely locked up.

There are other tales of village lock-ups, such as at Soham when one inmate badly wanted his pipe. So his mate drilled a hole through the wooden door and inserted one of the long-stemmed churchwarden's pipes; the prisoner sat inside contentedly puffing away while his friends kept the bowl well-filled. At Melbourn a drunken offender's wife turned up early in the morning with a jug of hot tea which he drank a saucerful at a time pushed between the iron bars of the cell window. Refreshed, he was taken before the magistrates, convicted and went to the taproom of the Rose Inn to drown his sorrows - only to find himself in the cage again that night. The lock-up was demolished in 1847 and the materials used to build a fire engine house in Station Road.

At Stretham the Cage made way for a Mission Hall, itself now just a memory - but at least its name lives on in the lane alongside. Duxford lockup stood on the village green. During the Great War the village lamps were taken down and stored there for safe keeping, but the door was left unlocked and the lamps broken. Then the roof fell in, leaving just the four old flint walls standing derelict, with old tins and rubbish scattered inside and out. It was an eyesore and ought to be demolished, people felt in 1935. But what happened to it?

Another form of temporary imprisonment were the stocks such as those still to be seen on the green at Meldreth. Villagers say they were last used in 1856 when a parishioner became

unruly and started shouting in church. Back in 1936 a motor coach containing sightseers on their way from London to Cambridge left the main road at Melbourn to see them. Some of the natives found very interesting the story the party's guide had to tell the visitors. He said the last legitimate occupant of the stocks was a drunken man in the year 1864 and told the old yarn of how the stockinged man's pals, hearing of his predicament, took him some beer, also some beer for themselves, and sat with him for company. When the village constable arrived to set the man free he was even more tipsy than before, and all his companions had qualified for the stocks! But what the guide did not tell the visitors – as old inhabitants were prone to relate – was that the day was a wet one and that the revellers borrowed a tarpaulin and pole and built a tent over the stocks to keep the man and themselves dry. Meldreth's ancient stocks, were damaged when struck by a car in July 1980 and left lying in pieces, but have been repaired. Will they form the model for the future? [SCAN OF MELDRETH STOCKS 1930'S] [SCAN OF SKETCH OF MAN IN STOCKS AT WHITTLESFORD 1860S]

Memories 28th March 2007 by Mike Petty

Last weeks Memories had hardly hit the doormats before I had a phone call from Michael Waggett of Milton who'd spotted a mistake.

He pointed out that one of the pictures captioned as Meldreth stocks showed Melbourn church in the background. Melbourn did have stocks in the old days, they stood beside the cage on the village green and were used for vagrants, shopkeepers who gave short weight and landlords who sold more water than ale – as well as those who drank too much. But the cage had been demolished in 1847 and however hard I sought I could find no other picture of the stocks.

The more I studied the more something did not seem right. So I emailed a copy of the photograph to Colin Limming of the Melbourn Local History Society, publisher of a wonderful book of old photographs of that village.

He has replied: "There is an old saying 'the camera cannot lie'. Sadly, and probably for many years, this has not been true! The picture **is** of Meldreth stocks but superimposed on a Melbourn view. If you look carefully you will see that it was taken from outside what is now the Co-op stores and there could never have been a tree there. There is a tree by Meldreth stocks so you partially got it right calling it Meldreth stocks.

"It was probably the work of Percy Salmon who was a Melbourn man and a very accomplished photographer who mocked up the picture for his own amusement. Sorry for the confusion but blame Percy and I am sure the picture has fooled a great many other people"

And all this on the week leading up to April 1st!

So what do we know of the mischievous photographer

Percy R Salmon was a photographic prodigy. The son of a Cambridge policeman he started photography as a hobby as a lad of 12 and in 1891 won the Cambridge Camera club cup for the best set of five photographs taken in and around the town.

Later he studied in Paris and went on to travel the world with his camera, meeting Kings, Queens, Emperors and Statesmen and contributing to nearly all the English and American newspapers and magazines. He used his camera so skilfully and artistically that in all he won 16 medals for photographic studies mainly scenes of country life. He also maintained his contact with his home town through a series of articles in the Cambridge Daily News which recorded his journeys abroad.

Percy received many awards including a Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society in 1898. They elected him an Honorary Member in 1947, 20 years after he had retired to live in Melbourn. There his journalist skills continued to be exercised as village correspondent for the "Cambridge Independent Press" and "Royston Crow". His pathos and humour, and his faithful recording of village happenings, caused his weekly column to be looked upon as a leading feature with readers.

His interest in photography continued. He was a contributor to the Cambridge Antiquarian Society's 'Cambridgeshire Photographic Record' and gave many lantern lectures illustrated by his views. Years later I discovered dozens of his glass slides in the basement of Botolph House, headquarters of the Workers' Educational Association who deposited them in the Cambridgeshire Collection

Percy Salmon died in August 1959 at the age of 87 but the importance of his photographs continue to grow as the years pass, and his skill in the darkroom 70 years ago managed to fool me – but not eagle-eyed Mr Waggett.

Do you have examples of faked photographs from the days before digital technology?

SCAN OF THE STOCKS ON MELDRETH GREEN TOGETHER WITH PERCY SALMON'S DOCTORED VIEW SHOWING THEM AT MELBOURN

FRUIT CART AT MELBOURN
FIRE HOOKS IN MELDRETH CHURCH

Memories 4th April 2007, by Mike Petty

Anne Page is researching the history of Christ's Pieces. She knows the land was owned by Jesus College who sold it to the Borough Council in 1888, with a restrictive covenant that it should be kept for ever as a public space. What she cannot find is any information about the planting of the trees, or early photographs showing it as a public park.

Ena Mitchell was a passionate defender of Cambridge's commons and open spaces who produced two detailed summaries of stories relating to Parker's Piece and four Cambridge commons. Sadly she did not publish her notes on Christ's Pieces but I have searched my own files for various snippets that Anne might consider as she continues her research. Perhaps you can add to them

For years there was a bandstand with an interesting story. It had been constructed for the Royal Show held on Midsummer Common in 1894, then moved a few hundred yards to Christ's Pieces where it became the centre for much entertainment. Robert Austin remembered in 1956 how he had performed there as band boy, bandsman and conductor for over 45 years. He recalled the various local bands that had competed for public acclaim including the Volunteers Band forerunner of the Territorials, the bands of the Cambridge University Rifle Volunteers, Borough Police and the Cambridge Town Band, between all of whom there was intense rivalry.

In the early days the bandstand was illuminated by naked gas jets that usually blew out and had to be relit several times during a performance. There was no enclosure of any kind and often a noisy crowd of shouting children and young hooligans would mingle right up to the edge of the enclosure leaving the audience well on the outskirts. "It is high time that the foul-mouthed youths of the town received a caution, for there is a 'riff-raff' element among the youthful residents whose speeches could only be reported in an expurgated edition. Last

Sunday evening was heard language from youngsters not in their teens that would have materially enriched the vocabulary of a London cabby. There is an undoubted feeling among hobbledahoys of the rougher grade that the utterance of profane speeches stamps them with the seal of manhood” a correspondent to the News complained in August 1897 in sentiments that continue to be echoed by each generation.

Popular concerts were very well supported: in 1910 a series attracted an average audience of 740 people which made a substantial profit, even at only one penny admission. More serious music by contrast traditionally fared badly and the following year an attempt to promote a series of symphony concerts featuring such names as Henry Wood Edward Elgar and Thomas Beecham flopped badly. The largest audience attracted to the bandstand was in the late 1930s when the Cambridge Band, an amalgamation of the Town and Albion Bands, performed there only a few hours after being “on the air” at Broadcasting House in London. It continued to be used during the Second World War with an underground shelter constructed in case of air raids; it was here that a suspected German spy was found shot dead in April of 1941.

However in April 1956 the bandstand was removed and no longer would its festoon of coloured lights compete with a lavish decoration of flowers to see which could out-rival the sunset whilst the band played at Cambridge's favourite outdoor venue.

But there have various other suggestions for the use of the Pieces. In 1903 M.A. Hyman felt it would be an ideal site for public baths: “ Vast number of undergraduates are at present unable to obtain the very necessary hot bath, as only a small proportion of licensed lodgings have fixed baths with hot water supply and few of the colleges are sufficiently equipped in this respect for those in residence. Country people of both sexes would also make use of the baths in the daytime”, he wrote.

Part of the ground was taken for a bowls green which opened in 1911 though plans drawn up by the Cambridge Sidewalk Surfers for a skate park on the site of the old bandstand in 1977 met with less support. It would have cost less than £1,500 and charge 10p a session - just high enough to make a profit but no so expensive as to keep people away.

But the biggest battles have come over plans to cut down trees for a car park and bus station in Drummer Street which were aired in 1925 and 1978, plans to drive an Inner Relief Road across it in the 1950s and an underground car park in the 1960s. Who knows what the future may bring, but what are your memories of its past.

You can email Anne at annepage@ntlworld.com or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch

[SCANS OF CHRISTS PIECES 1966, SHOWING TREES FELLED IN NOVEMBER 1998, PLAYING BOWLS IN 1930S AND A POSTCARD FROM c1905

Memories 11th April 2007, by Mike Petty

This week one hundred house historians are touring Cambridgeshire visiting some of the most interesting examples of Vernacular Architecture, those houses which are typical of the area. They range from grand half-timbered buildings to cosy cottages whose brick Victorian skin conceals a much older structure.

Ena Wesley of Grantchester has personal experience of a childhood in one such old house, sadly not on the itinerary. She recalls:

“Merton Cottage at Grantchester, or Chapel House as it is now called, was originally a large farmhouse. Every room seemed to have its own roof, some tiled, some slated. It had at

sometime been divided into two dwellings, simply by locking two doors! We lived in half of this house, which when it was all one contained five bedrooms, an ante room, a box room, a long passageway, a separate toilet and a dovecote upstairs. There were two staircases, an entrance hall, four living rooms, a dairy-cum-larder and a small passageway downstairs where most of the windows still had wooden shutters on them.

The first entrance door led into the main hall with its little carved wooden heads over the doors and a spooky little cupboard under the stairs. In those days a lectern, with a lamp over it, stood in the hall, a reminder that bible readings for the people of the village once took place there every week.

The second entrance door was a heavy solid oak one with handmade nails, bolts and latch. This led into a smaller passage with three doors leading off of it, all with lovely brass knobs. One of them, in our time a locked door connecting to the other part of the house, one into our living room and the third into the larder which ran the full length of the house.

The larder, (which had been a dairy), had great meat hooks on the beams from which the farmers had hung their hams and sides of bacon. The walls in here were made of clay bats and clunch, so entry by mice and the occasional rat was easy and often, and trails of young ivy grew through too! The whole room was kept cool with a brick floor, stone shelves and two lead pipes running the full length of the room. The wind used to whistle through these pipes with eerie sounds, especially in the winter.

Our living room, with its low beams and crooked doors, housed an old 'Kitchener' range. Fuelled by coal it had an oven on one side and a water boiler, (cracked in our time), on the other. Above it was a rack for warming plates or airing the washing. It must have been a splendid affair when new with its brass taps and fender. Black beetles, spiders and once even a cricket, lived behind this range, but what delicious meals mother used to cook on it. On the other side of this room was a built-in wooden dresser. Everything was kept in here, toys and books, polish and dusters, old shoes, pegs, papers, the lot. At the other end we kept all our food!

There were three fireplaces in the scullery, one an old bread oven with a firebox underneath, one an open fire with a 'spit and jack' over it and the other one the copperhole. It was so lovely and warm on a Monday if they were all alight, probably the only time we were warm in winter!

There was a tiny window halfway up our winding staircase where we would look out and watch the people in Chapel singing hymns. Our 'best room' was upstairs, decorated with rose wallpaper and what would have been fashionable again today: green, bobble trimmed, velvet curtains hanging from a mahogany pole at the sash cord window. The box room, that originally used to be the dovecote, led off to the right of this room. Down two steps and you were into mum's bedroom with its squeaky uneven floor and the ceiling all cracked. At the far end was a defunct loo, broken before our time but it must have been a grand affair when it was new. It had a wall-to-wall mahogany seat and a blue and white china flowered bowl, a pump to one side and a lead water tank above. Every bedroom had louvered panels over the doors and a cast iron fireplace. What bliss to have alight when we were not well, we never gave a thought to mum having to carry all that coal and ashes up and down the stairs. Among the many signs of better times were the remains of an old bell system, with wires going to every room.

Ena's description brings the house to life, something the house historians will be doing for themselves as they visit other properties in the next few days

SCAN OF MERTON COTTAGE GRANTCHESTER

SCAN OF FRONT OF CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Memories 18th April 2007, by Mike Petty

One of the most famous names in Cambridge retailing is Peak's. There were shops in King Street and Fitzroy Street but although they carried the same name above the door they were rivals, competing for the same customers. Relations between them were not always cordial: in October 1955 their arguments spilled over into the High Court after a customer ordered a refrigerator from one shop and paid for it in the other.

Recently Keith Peak, from Impington, has sent me his memories of a lifetime in the furnishing trade.

He describes how after a very unhappy time in business with his brother, H.W. Peak, Mr. Frederick George Peak decided to strike out into business on his own account. Plans were made very quietly, carefully and thoroughly and the left hand hardly knew what the right hand was doing. The prolonged search for premises came to a head early in 1936 when a shop at number 1 Fitzroy Street became available after the two former tenants, in grocery and ladies fashion, had gone bust.

After carefully checking the potential customer flow and noting the close proximity of New Square car park, Mr. Peak decided to lease these premises. The shop opened in March 1936 as Peak's Furnishers selling furniture, upholstery and bedding. In those early days it was possible to furnish a house completely for £100. A dining-room suite could be purchased for about £7.10s (7.50), stair carpet for 4.11d (25p) a yard, and linoleum for 1.9d (9p) a sq. yd.

As an opening offer to attract customers an easy chair was given away with every order of £10 or more. Special exhibitions were held in the Cosmopolitan Hall in Market Passage and the Old Post Office in Petty Cury. At one of these shows a three piece suite was available for £2.10s and twenty-two were sold. These exhibitions and vans, which were highly decorated, did a great deal in putting the company on the map.

Extra units were subsequently leased and exchanged until eventually there was one large shop on the corner of Fitzroy Street. It had an excellent frontage with large windows for display purposes and the exterior was illuminated with elaborate neon signs which lit up the street and could be seen well across New Square.

There were other sides to the family's business empire when Keith joined his father in the company in 1949 to be followed by his brothers.

The early 1960s saw expansion with the addition of a Sturton's shop at 19/21 Fitzroy Street, whose ground floor showroom was used purely for a large range of carpets and floor coverings in support of the furniture store only a few doors away. They also struck out into the city centre by leasing a very large shop in the newly developed Bradwell's Court. This offered a wide range of furniture, upholstery, bedding, fabrics and two new departments of nursery goods and toys. It was officially opened by the local Sea Cadets with trumpets blowing and flags flying and continued until 1971 when the lease was sold to Maples.

Peak's always placed great importance on local advertising and spent many thousands of pounds in the local press. Keith believes they were the first company to take a full page in the then "Cambridge Daily News" followed later by spot and full colour spreads. For special events such as the opening of the Bradwell's Court shop, anniversaries and shopping events supplements of several pages were taken in city and county newspapers.

Ever aware of changing trends they sought planning permission for a large "Out-of-town" super-store on Newmarket Road. But frustrated by planners and with the continued changes in the Fitzroy Street as the result of the Grafton Centre redevelopment the company moved all its activities to the Old Maltings in Ditton Walk

In 1971 the illuminated Peak's name above the shops in Fitzroy Street and Bradwell's Court were turned off and for the first time in over half-a-century there was no Peak retail furniture shop in Cambridge.

But did you furnish your first home from either of the Peaks shops. Eva Wesley has an old bill from the 'other' one in King Street – can you supply one for the Fitzroy Street store?

SCAN OF PEAK'S SHOP IN FITZROY STREET 1950's
SCAN OF NEWS REPORT OF COURT ACTION OCTOBER 1955

SCAN OF BILL HEAD FROM THE KING STREET STORE
SCAN OF ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE RIVAL PEAK'S IN KING STREET, 1951

Memories 25th April 2007, by Mike Petty

Two readers are seeking information on plane crashes during the second world war.

Ted Sedgwick would like details of a Stirling bomber that came down at Oakington on 14th March 1943 at nine in the evening. Ralph Warboys has memories of that village during the period. He recalls two incidents. On one occasion a Stirling taking off towards Westwick caught a railway loading gauge on its undercarriage as it crossed the railway line and crashed, knocking the bedrooms off a farmhouse and demolishing a substantial dove house. But it was on a Sunday evening – just at the time specified – that he heard a crashing rendering noise and rushed down Coles Lane to where a plane was burning fiercely opposite New Close Farm. Ralph and his brother helped to carry cans of foam that they squirted onto the wreckage although ammunition was going off all around them. All the crew died except the rear gunner as the tail had broken off with him inside it. You can contact Ted by email at Tedsedg@aol.com or write to me and I'll forward the message. [SCAN OF STIRLING AT OAKINGTON 1944] [SCAN OF OAKINGTON RAILWAY STATION]

But can you supply similar details on a Lancaster bomber that crashed at Stretham, near Ely "as a result of the dinghy coming out of its compartment and fouling the tailplane". This was possibly Lancaster ND553 which crashed 30 April 1944 as a result of such a mishap. Amongst the six fatalities from that aircraft, was a Flying Officer B. Jagger who had flown as a crew member on the "Dambuster" raid. John Beynon tells me a friend has acquired some small pieces of the plane and would welcome further information. You can contact John by email at 0956djbeynon@amservice.com. or write to me at the News

Jim Laney from Wokingham in Berkshire has written following my article on the village lockup at Litlington. He has been investigating the family tree and has established that one of his wife's ancestors, John Randall, hanged himself in the belfry of Litlington church on 21 January 1860. John was church clerk, obviously a man of some position in the community, but his young daughter had married in December the previous year and was to have a baby just a month after his death. The inquest verdict was that he was "in a state of temporary insanity". Jim is seeking further details but there seems to be no report in the local newspapers of the time. If you have any clues then please ring him on 0118 9894875 or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch. [SCAN OF LITLINGTON CHURCH]

Another distant reader is Mrs V. Barrett from near Stockport in Cheshire. She writes following a recent Memories article on Staffordshire Street. "How lovely it was; it brought tears to my eyes because I was a young girl in Staffordshire Street called Violet O'Dell and Boey O'Dell was my granddad. I knew the Gas Lane well, where we took the rabbit skins - my gran had skinned the rabbits for our meal - and the rags too. He had a big yard behind the house with goats, chickens and pigeons. There were 16 in that family. The Man in the Moon was my grandad's pub, he played skittles. I could go on and on, but it would take forever. My son still lives in Burwell and visits me, bringing the papers to read. I never forget my home. I'm 80 now so time is passing, but thank you for printing that page. I shall keep it now and read it often"

Skittles were in the news back in April 1932 when Mr E.C. Green told the annual dinner of the Cambridge League that he remembered it used to be played in a barn converted into an indoor skittle alley. Both the pins and balls were made of India rubber with the sides of the room padded so there should be no noise. After a time the game died out but had been revived with a Cambridge League started in August 1929. It met the requirements of local people and what a should be more natural than they should go to the poor man's club - the local inn where publicans went out of their way to provide every amusement such as darts, dominoes and shove ha'penny.

A different version of the game was flourishing in February 1977 when reporter Alan Kersey took himself off to a match at the Burleigh Arms on Newmarket Road, Cambridge. By then it was a macho game where teams of eight would hurl, toss or spin a flat, flying saucer-shaped cheese at a table resembling a large, sparsely padded armchair upon which were spaced nine wooden pins. The object was to knock as many down as you could in as few throws as possible. Get them all down in one go and you had notched up a "floozer". Hit the front and there was a derisive groan: a "tacker". Each player had a maximum of four throws then it was time for their opponents to respond. If at the end the score was tied it was down to each player having one final throw, most down wins.

In the old days coachloads of players used to arrive long before the game to limber up but by 1977 many of the pubs had closed and in others the game was in danger of disappearing. Landlords had thrown skittles out because it was too noisy, drowning even the noise of the jukebox. Perhaps they should have learned from the past and reverted to the rubber ones.

Memories 2nd May 2007, by Mike Petty

Two subjects vie for top billing this week; so what should it be: the Mayor of Cambridge or the Queen of Grantchester?

The former has been around for a much longer period, indeed the position dates back 800 years to a charter awarded by King John on 8th May 1207. So to celebrate there is an exhibition in the Folk Museum and next Tuesday church bells will be rung in the City Centre at lunchtime with a concert in the Guildhall in the evening. Then - great excitement - it will be open day at the Guildhall on Wednesday, 9th May with a Blue Plaque unveiled 12.30 pm and there will be free, specially-themed guided tours from the Tourist Information Centre in Wheeler Street. But if you can't manage to get the day off work to attend, do not despair. On Saturday 12th the tours and Guildhall opening will be repeated.

The Mayor is the personification of Cambridge, his presence is sought for many functions, each made the more important by his attendance. It is an onerous role that he will always remember. Some Mayors get invited to Coronations, other perform them.

In 1925 the civic head journeyed to the Central Girls' School for the coronation of Queen Effie Few who succeeded the abdicated Queen Gwendoline Marshal. The school was tastefully decorated with bluebells, cowslips, buttercups and violets while the girls, attired in white dresses, sang songs of spring as the Mayor proclaimed the new May Queen. After her enthronement the new Queen's subjects paid homage by placing flowers at her feet.

It was a ceremony by then well established. At the Eden Street Higher Grade the school's queen of 1900, Elsie Fisher, was sketched by the Cambridge Graphic. The school had made a special effort: teachers and girls transformed their room into a perfect garden of flowers, with a Royal dais, covered with a green carpet. The retiring Queen wearing a crown of pansies stood down at the end of a very happy reign and the new Queen, who'd been elected by her schoolmates, appeared to the strains of a stately march preceded by her bodyguard bearing garlands of flowers. [SCAN OF EDEN STREET MAY QUEEN 1900]

I have copies of pictures showing similar ceremonies at Melbourn Place in 1942, the Milton Road majesty of 1952 and the 1954 Queen's procession – though of which school I'm not sure, perhaps you can tell me. [SCAN OF MYSTERY PROCESSION FROM 1954]

It was not something confined to Cambridge. Eva Westley has been telling me how her sister Edie was proclaimed as Grantchester's May Queen in 1937. May Day was one of great excitement in those days. "Hoops, tennis rackets, sticks and baskets would all be decorated with wild flowers. King cups, buttercups, daisies, cowslips, cuckoo flowers and violets all gathered from the profusion that grew in the meadows, hedges and ditches at that time. After the crowning of the May Queen, by the Vicar on the Village Green, we would go all round the village singing our little songs and dancing on the lawns of the larger houses. Edie had a crown specially made by the boys in school, though Canon Hicken put it on backwards! [SCAN OF GRANTCHESTER MAY QUEEN 1937]

The children appreciated the beauty of the countryside around them at every season, as Eva remembers: "Spring was the time to seek out birds nests, pick flowers and skip in the road, usually with someone's mother's long washing line - so several of us could skip at once while we chanted all sorts of sayings and songs.

"The Summer meant picnics over the meadows and swimming in the river. There were always adults there to help us but if you could not swim by the time you were seven the boys would throw you in, you soon learnt then, you had no choice! We climbed the trees and rolled down the dips in the grass, we looked for tadpoles to take home, fished for tiddlers with a net and jam jar and tried to see how many sorts of dragonflies and butterflies we could spot. We played at the pond behind manor farm and the one in the Bridleway, with games like Robin Hood, where our bows were green sticks and string and our arrows were reeds pulled from the thatch on the barn roof when the bailiff was not looking. We played with whips and tops, which we coloured with chalk and games of hopscotch and marbles took place on the road. Autumn was a great feast time because you could gather blackberries, walnuts and beech mast or mushrooms to take home to cook. Then there were conkers to gather and string up for a conker fight and we would get bits of wool off the barbed wire fences, from the sheep, to take home and make soft little pillows for our dolls. Sometimes we would play all day in the stackyard, with its lovely smell of new hay, or in the cart hovels. In Winter of course there was always sliding, (skating we called it), on the ice, snowballing and playing in the drifts. On fine days bowling hoops made of wood or even old bicycle wheels but the best bit of all was carol singing around the village. We sometimes ended up with ten pence, or a shilling, (a shilling was twelve pence), wealth indeed until we had to give it to the Spitfire fund.

Were you ever a May Queen – or a Cambridge Mayor – and what are your special memories?

Memories 9th May 2007, by Mike Petty

In this week of celebrations of the 800th anniversary of Cambridge's charter, Sue Reeve from Sawston has lent me a picture of a Cambridge Mayor encouraging National Savings during an exhibition at the Guildhall in the 1950s. Amongst the people behind the table is Joan Searle who was one of the first women to serve on the counter at Cambridge Post Office in 1940. But what other faces can you name. [SCAN OF MAYOR]

Last week I had the opportunity to inspect a remarkable series of albums that record something of the history of West Wrating.

Its most distinctive house is West Wrating Park which about 1880 became home to a 'cram' school where tutors prepared about fifty students for army, air force, navy and all university entrance examinations. They included the writer Lawrence Durrell, who, despite individual attention, failed to meet the usual high standards and continued to fluff his Cambridge entrance examinations. Sport played an important part in the school life with cricket matches, football, golf, tennis, hockey and – in winter – skating on the moat at Scarlets Farm. The school closed around 1930 after which it was owned by a member of a shipping line, a Brigadier and then the London County Council who put in evacuees for the duration of the second world war. It later passed back into private ownership. Did you ever visit it? [SCAN OF WRATING PARK CRICKET TEAM c1890]

The village also boasts a windmill that became famous for a few years just as the school was closing. In 1932 Philippa Burrell came upon it by chance and bought it for £600 - including a cottage, granary and 20 acres of good farming land. High & isolated she found it a little paradise but worried about the mill with its broken sails, rotten windows and the rain going in. A millwright gave her an estimate of £100 for repair so to raise the money she made date cakes which she sold from an old pram on Cambridge market with a picture of the mill fixed to the side. It proved an immediate sensation and soon she was selling teas to hundreds of people who journeyed to see the mill, sitting contentedly on rustic tables in the orchard. After two seasons she closed the business – the mill was restored. It was not the end of the story for she wrote a play "The wind and the mill", a copy of the programme for which features in the West Wrating albums. [SCAN OF WEST WRATING MILL]

But do you have any other information about the village that could be added to their records. If so let me know and I'll put you in touch.

Readers have been able to assist John Beynon with his enquiries into a Lancaster bomber thought to have crashed near Stretham during WWII. Bob Giddens from Denny Abbey has shown me a copy of 'Beware of the Dog at War'. It reports that the plane was taking part in a trial of a new form of radar operated gun turret, codenamed 'Village Inn' as part of which it was subjected to a mock attack by a friendly fighter. During the bomber's vigorous evasive action its dinghy accidentally started to inflate and burst from its stowage hold in the starboard wing. It blew back covering one fin, causing the aircraft to flip onto its back. The pilot's immediate reaction was to haul back on the control column in an attempt to complete a full loop, but with insufficient height the plane smashed into the ground. Terry Beaumont has added more information but John is still seeking the actual location.

He has in turn been able to supply information on a Stirling aircraft which crashed at Oakington on 14th March 1943. This was Short Stirling N6086 "MacRobert's Reply", of 1651 Heavy Conversion Unit at RAF Oakington, which came down shortly after take-off on a night-flying exercise. Of the crew of seven three were killed and the remaining four injured. Terry Beaumont adds that the plane suffered an engine failure. All this is of great interest to

Ted Sedge, who wrote to me, since one of the dead airmen, Tommy Davis was his wife's uncle.

Mr G.P. Caley from Cottenham has his own memories of wartime tragedy. He writes : "I was stationed at RAF Oakington on the crash tender with the ambulance standing by when we saw a plane taking off towards Oakington and trying to get airborne. But alas he could not get height, clipped a farmhouse and came down in the orchard, hitting a dovecote. We could see he was not going to make it so we rushed over to the scene where we found the crashed bomber on fire with the bullets going up and the poor doves flying round. We saw six of our comrades were killed but the tail of the bomber had broken off and we rescued the air gunner and put him in the ambulance. This was one of our worst crashed aircraft we attended to. I have a photo of the crew and crash tender that attended this fateful night."

Memories 16th May 2007, by Mike Petty

Tony Claydon, an Assistant District Commissioner of Cambridge Scouts, was sorting through a pack of memorabilia when he came across a picture of a group of scouts on Cambridge Railway Station. It shows participants at the World Scout Jamboree held at Sutton Coldfield and originally appeared in the Cambridge Daily News of 14th August 1957.

About 35,000 youngsters journeyed from across the world to be present including a group of Cambridgeshire lads. They established a camp with a decorated gateway surmounted by an effigy of an undergraduate in a tattered gown mounted on a bicycle (belonging to R. Gooby of Littleport) which pedalled furiously when the gate was opened. They were joined by 400 other local scouters who travelled on a train calling at Ely and March stations before returning that evening.

Then when the Jamboree was over some 400 scouts from 84 countries made their way to Cambridge for the 17th International Conference of the Association. They were welcomed by Mayor in the Guildhall where their uniforms presented a colourful sight. The bright blue caps from Finland, the flowing white kaffiyeh (a squarish scarf folded over into a triangle) from Lebanon, broad hats from Morocco and turbans from the Sudan mingled with green kilts from Ireland, grey-blue coats of Liechtenstein and red jackets of the USA. Amongst dignitaries present was the Chief Scout, Lord Rowallan. Working sessions were held at the Arts School in Bene't Street before the conference concluded with an address by the wife of the movement's founder, Elaine, Lady Baden Powell. [SCAN OF NEWS REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE, AUGUST 1957].

But Tony's photograph shows none of these. His lads were scouts from South Africa who paused in Cambridge for a week where they were guests of local families. They were taken on tours of the colleges, industrial visits and journeys to Newmarket and Wisbech before they made the long voyage home. [SCAN OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCOUTERS FROM CDN 14th AUG 1957]

Now this July Cambridge is hosting a reunion for people who attended that 1957 World Scout Jamboree, perhaps including some of the South African contingent. Tony would like to arrange a reunion with those who hosted them 50 years ago. If you can help then please contact him on 01223 248226.

Richard Bigg from Chelmsford has sent me a photograph of his dad, Walter (Wally) Bigg in a sports car registration number RX 8303, probably about 1930. He was an apprentice at King and Harper's where he worked until 1960 but whether it's their Bridge Street or Thompson's Lane garage Richard is not sure. Can anybody shed more light on it. If so email richard.bigg@virgin.net or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch. And do you know anything of Wills and Thomson the motor engineers of George IV Street; John Bull from

Kedington has sent me copies of a couple of bills they raised for work in 1936. [SCAN OF WALLY BIGG IN SPORTS CAR c1930, SCAN OF BILL FROM WILLS AND THOMPSON 1936]

Memories of Peak's furnishers have been pouring in. Mrs J. Jenner of Bourn recalls a shopping trip to King Street. She writes: "My late husband spend three months in Sudan in 1953, returning home in time for Christmas. In early 1954 his money came through and we furnished a two-bedroomed house with it from Peaks. Lino, beds, dressing tables, tables and chairs together with other furniture added up to £400. But because we paid cash there was a discount that paid for a single wardrobe". What was more the firm gave them a cup of tea and biscuits while they totalled up the bill. Some of those items are still in use. Ian Hopkins from St Ives has a copy of a hire purchase agreement from February 1959 when he bought a dressing chest, table and chairs from the Fitzroy Street shop, paying it off with 23 monthly instalments of £3 18s 0d. He doesn't mention getting a discount!

Memories 23 May 2007, by Mike Petty

Elspeth Cattermole from Buckden has recorded her memories of childhood in the Tenison Road area of Cambridge in verse. In one poem entitled 'Lie in the Dark and Listen' she remembers:

The war years brought excitement
To us children,
Though fear and instability to our elders.
Digging an air raid shelter in the garden
Was not unlike the making of a tent.
The seriousness of the situation
Was lost upon us.
And, like children everywhere,
We accepted things as they were.
My parents did not have a shelter,
So like millions of others,
We made for the area underneath the stairs
When the wailing siren went.

Here we would sit
Listening to the droning
Of the enemy bomber overhead,
Fearing the random bombs
The pilots frequently unloaded
Before they returned to base.
We were never bombed
But many were less fortunate.

As the world had drifted to war the Government ordered the construction of shelters and bunkers where people could take refuge from the perils of bombing.

By December 1939 a News reporter found work well under way with nine refuges ready for use. They included a shelter for 400 people in the cellars under Peas Hill, a trench on Midsummer Common would take 300 more while 50 could seek safety under Christ's Pieces. Basements were also pressed into use at Headley and Edwards' premises in Corn Exchange Street (200 people), Potts Brewery on Castle Hill (100) with another two at Robinson's

Garage in Regent Street (100 in each). Another hundred could seek refuge under Hills Road Methodist Chapel while if you were caught in a raid in Trumpington Street then 200 people could run to the basement of Scroope House – but not during office hours.

Many other followed, some of which still exist. Zoë Svendsen found an air raid shelter in the garden of her home in Cambridge and has become fascinated by such spaces, now largely ignored and forgotten. Who went down there? What did they think about?

Now she is part of a Lottery-funded Bunker Project, organised by a Cambridge-based creative group, METIS. It aims to record the memories and experiences of local people and share them with the wider public through a website, a DVD, an exhibition, and ultimately a theatre production. METIS is working with a local theatre production company, SCAMP, and are also recruiting volunteers to conduct interviews and research on this fascinating aspect of our recent history – training in research and oral history interviewing techniques will be given.

The group is keen to hear from anyone who went into an air raid shelter at home or at work, anyone who owns or knows of such a building or was involved in building them or who was a member of Civil Defence.

Bunkers were revived during the period of the Cold War. A 1960's-built top secret nuclear bunker that was to be the HQ for regional government in the event of a nuclear strike was constructed just off Cambridge's Brooklands Avenue. Elsewhere Royal Observer Corps volunteers, local government officers – and even librarians – took part in exercises to learn what to do in the aftermath of a nuclear attack. But how many would really choose to abandon wife and family to hide in a shelter in the company of people one had to be paid to work with? If you were one then METIS would like to hear from you. Please contact admin@scamptheatre.com, or write to SCAMP, 44 Church Lane, Arlesey, Bedfordshire SG156UX (Telephone 01462 734843) or see the website www.metisarts.co.uk

SCANS

George Dethridge, an evacuee, with his brother and sisters outside air raid shelter in Gwydir Street

The CDN reports on the construction of shelters, December 1939

5814 – Stan Barnes at the Oakington Observer Corps bunker 1976

HOLD THESE OVER IF NECESSARY

Dorothy Creek (nee Glasscock) from Barrington was delighted to see Ena Wesley's picture of the Grantchester May Queen as she recognised her sisters Margaret and Betty who have lived in New Zealand and the USA for many years. It jogged a host of memories for her – of taking a spoon to the Orchard Tea Gardens for free home made strawberry ice cream and collecting eggs from households to take to the children's ward at Addenbrooke's Hospital for Easter day breakfast. Then there was the annual concert by school children, the Christmas tea parties given by the British Legion – always with a conjuror and ventriloquist and the entertainments in the Cambridge Guildhall for Robins and Goodfellows. Dorothy also remembers the great R101 flying over the village, and the day Grantchester mill burnt down. People then were content with what they had, children more inventive and imaginative in their play; treats and outings were infrequent but what better than to have a picnic and your weekly comic in the meadows by the river?

Joan Clark (nee Stubbings) of Sheringham has occasion to remember May Queens – she was the Central School queen in 1940 when Miss Irvine was headmistress and has a photo taken at Stearns of Bridge Street to prove it.

Valda Smith from Impington believes my picture of the 1954 celebrations was taken in the field of the former Histon Junior School, since demolished for road improvements. The celebrations were the highlight of the school year. She was a Maid of Honour in 1937 when the event took place in the grounds of Homefields, the home of Mr & Mrs Stanley Chivers. After the house was taken down it was held in the school field, but was not the same.

Memories 30th May 2007, by Mike Petty

As the digital tv switchover nears so we are being encouraged to invest in set-top boxes to receive the wonder of multi-channel television and numerous digital radio broadcasts. The only thing is that you will probably need a new aerial. It has been a problem faced by generations of radio and television viewers.

When I was a lad I had a Saturday and holiday job helping out at Jack Edward's electrical shop in Stretham. Part of my role was to hold the ladder as Tony Badcock connected the brackets to the chimneystack then carry up the new aerial, trying not to overbalance and send one of the aluminium rods through a window. Some chimneys were trickier than others, but we never resorted to using a bow and arrow!

But H.W. Peak of King Street did in January 1952, as the News reported: "How to put an aerial above your roof in three not-so-easy stages. 1: call the Fire Brigade. 2: Ask the Chief Fire Officer (Mr Tom Knowles) to fire a rocket attached to a rope over a T.V. aerial crossbar. 3: Use a bow and arrow". All three methods were employed in an attempt to bracket a V.H.F. aerial to their existing array. But the Fire brigade's turntable ladder was a foot short & the rocket missed its mark. Then an arrow from the bow of John Ridgeon (leader of the Cambridge Bowmen) went over the top. Attached to it was the rope with the new aerial which was then hauled up.

By October 1952 Cambridge television viewers were being promised enhanced reception once a new 50-foot-high aerial was erected on the Gogs. They would receive an almost unmarred signal well in time for the Coronation and the large "H" aerial on chimney-pots would no longer be necessary; instead a small rod could be hung from the bedroom window, engineers claimed. Ten years later in August 1962 the new-built Arbury area got cable TV thanks to a 170 foot-high mast in King's Hedges road.

Today shops are full of the latest flat screen gizmos but in the past not all promised improvements were what they seemed. In 1954 viewers were being warned that new multi channel convertors being incorporated in some makes of set could well be outdated and unserviceable by the time Cambridge came within range of the proposed new stations. To buy a set with a convertor meant paying 5-7 guineas more for what was likely to be a useless article, they were cautioned.

Earlier it had been wireless-enthusiasts who'd had the problems. In September 1922 set owners who were not also house owner-occupiers were discovering that landlords objected to the putting up of aerials. They were recommended to wait until it became certain how broadcasting would develop. "It is not making such rapid progress as people expected and those who wait a little will probably save money. By all accounts it will not be necessary to have aerials at all. Any ordinary electric light installations will provide all that is necessary for an efficient wireless aerial. If there is neither electric light or bells, gaspipes can be used, or failing this a wire garden fence, or it may be that nothing more than a pair of knitting needles will be essential", the News advised.

Music on the move presented other challenges. In 1923 passers-by in the vicinity of Newmarket Road were somewhat surprised by the appearance of a saloon car carrying a wireless outfit. The aerial was comparatively large, and was suspended from two poles at either end of the roof. The sight was sufficiently rare to cause much curiosity but, the News commented, “it is easy to foresee that in a few years, far from being a novelty, no car will be complete without its wireless installation”

In May 1953 there was another vehicle sporting an array of aerials on its roof. It was a Post Office Television Detector van that was touring Cambridge as part of an intensive ‘comb’ to find illicit television receivers. It could pinpoint houses containing working televisions even when the van was moving down a street while portable equipment allowed for detection of receivers in blocks of flats, viewers were warned

Now the news is of equipment-loaded vehicles cruising streets seeking to hijack wi-fi computer connections! So the world changes.

Do you have memories of the early days of tv and radio – write to Mike Petty at the News

SCAN OF TELEVISION DETECTOR VAN c1953
TELEVISION AERIALS IN MILL ROAD, c1963

Memories 6th June 2007, by Mike Petty

The heroism of railwaymen who risked and lost their own lives to save those of others was recalled at Soham on Saturday with the unveiling of a plaque in the shadow of the war memorial.

Later in St Andrew’s Church the actions of the driver, fireman, guard and signalman were described. The congregation heard the now-familiar story of how in the early hours of June 2nd 1944 fire had been spotted in one wagon of an ammunition train. Driver Benjamin Gimbert of March and his fireman James Nightall of Littleport had uncoupled the blazing truck and started to shunt it away from the rest of the load while Guard Herbert Clarke and Signalman Frank Bridges tried to sound the warning. When the single wagon exploded Soham station was completely wiped out and Nightall and Bridges were killed.

It was a commemoration that echoed that of 1947 when a brass tablet had been erected on the match-boarded wall of a prefabricated hut been erected to serve as booking office, waiting room and control centre of the wrecked station.

But that year a similar incident had occurred a few miles away. In July 1947 a train of 40 open wagons carrying 112 lb American mustard gas bombs was passing through Six Mile Bottom when the stationmaster saw that a truck was ablaze. The burning wagon, this time the third from the engine, was uncoupled and the locomotive started to pull it away from the others.

“It was a spectacular sight. About fifty per cent of the bombs exploded with a ‘whoosh’ and a burst of flame which shot fifty feet into the air”, an eyewitness told the News. Poisonous fumes spread over fifty or sixty yards. Railway drivers, Frederick Smart and William Thorburn, together with firemen, Joseph Westland and Alfred Chandler, all of Cambridge, tried to subdue the fire with buckets of water fully aware of the dangerous nature of the contents of the wagon. They were presented with the L.N.E.R. Medal in recognition of their bravery.

Then in January 1950 two more Cambridge railwaymen, driver John Collingwood and guard Alfred Palmer were awarded the “Daily Herald” Order of Industrial Heroism, known as the “Workers VC” for an incident at the Air Ministry’s private siding at Lord’s Bridge. Coming round a blind corner their goods train had collided with a RAF motor lorry loaded with bombs. The lorry driver was knocked unconscious and trapped in his cab; the petrol tank was smashed and petrol splashed onto the bonnet which was smoking fiercely. Several bombs fell off the lorry and rolled towards a pool of petrol. Despite the danger the railwaymen released the driver, lifted him out of the cab and carried him to safety

Five years later in January 1955 there was an explosion at Lord’s Bridge station when fire broke out in a hanger containing mustard gas which was being used for experimental purposes. An area was cordoned off and fire tenders were quickly in attendance. Royal Air Force fireman, Corporal John Saunders went into the midst of an inferno of toxic smoke searching for casualties and preventing the spread of poison gas over a wide area. He, like the Soham driver and fireman, was awarded the George Cross for his bravery.

These events were reported at the time. But it was not until November 1979 that an American newspaper, the ‘Omaha World-Herald’ broke the story of how after a B-47 bomber crashed at Lakenheath RAF station in 1956 flaming fuel pouring from the ruptured tanks had engulfed a building containing three nuclear bombs. If they had exploded radioactive material would have been showered over a large area. A major accident had been averted when the base Fire Chief ignored the burning bomber and its four-man crew and concentrated on dousing the flames surrounding the nuclear storage building. The incident was kept secret at the time, the paper claimed, as the British people had not been told that nuclear bombs were being kept in the U.K. For the second time in twelve years Soham had escaped total devastation

Memories 13th June 2007, by Mike Petty

Cambridge may gain a new attraction if plans for a hot-air balloon to be based on Parker’s Piece come to fruition. It would give both visitors and locals the chance to see the city from an unusual vantage point.

The first people to glimpse Cambridge from a balloon were two undergraduates, Mr Poole and J. Armstrong who went up from Trinity Hall in 1785; later in July 1811 a Mr Sadler launched from the Great Court of Trinity College. Soon people were paying to watch men ascend into the sky. One of the pioneers was Charles Green who in May 1829 made his 115th aerial voyage from a field off Newmarket Road. He did not go alone – he went up on his trusty aeronautical pony. As they drifted over the countryside people dashed out to see a flying horse. His son meanwhile was more daring – he took his wife with him in the gondola!

If horses and women could fly then others could too. In 1830 Mr Green gave a ride to two undergraduates and soon such ascents were happening regularly.

But what was it like to actually go up in a balloon. In August 1902 Alphonso Smith, a bootmaker, described an trip from Parker’s Piece as part of the celebrations of the coronation of King Edward VII. The actual ascent was smooth, with the earth dropping away until they were up in the clouds – just how high he could not say as the pilot, Percival Spencer, had left the aerometer behind. It seems he also forgot the map as they were soon lost. He thought they passed over Fulbourn since he could see a large building which was probably the Asylum. After a while they came down over a village – “Where are we” they cried, but the rustics just gaped, too scared to answer. Fortunately a couple of cyclists were able to tell them they were en route for Linton. They finally landing in the middle of the coronation celebrations at Great

Yeldham where the policeman promptly ordered all pipes and cigarettes to be extinguished for fear of explosion.

It's the landing bit that can prove problematical. Alphonso described how they dropped a grappling iron which missed a tree, then dragged along the ground for some distance before finally hooking in a ditch, bringing them down in a succession of heavy bumps.

There was another way: people jumped out. Parachute drops from balloons were an attraction as part of the Mammoth Show, held on Midsummer Common before the Great War. Miss Ena Spencer described her first jump: "I narrowly missed a ducking by landing on the towing path of the river Cam, but my brother had a prickly time by dropping in a blackberry hedge"

In 1955 Cambridge University Airborne Club organised a parachute jump from a balloon on the Pemberton Estate. In the first cage for jumping, which took place from the usual height of 800 feet, were four regular soldiers; they were followed by 28 members of the Airborne Club in drops of five, all of whom were attached to regiments of the 16th Parachute Division, Territorial Army. The wind was quite sharp and gusty and most of those who landed were dragged yards by their inflated canopies. Quite a crowd of spectators gathered to watch the descents with many cars and lorries drawn up on the Trumpington Road.

But the most frightening incident came in October 1965 after a wartime barrage balloon containing weather instruments broke free from its mooring at RAF Cardington dragging its wire rope thirty miles across country before it became hooked on scaffolding at St Johns College. Magdalene College was evacuated for fear that the hydrogen-filled canopy might be pierced and cause an explosion. It all passed peacefully.

But the idea of a tethered balloon as a permanent feature has been aired before. In the 1820s there was a huge expansion in the number of young men seeking to study at the University and even Trinity College was experiencing difficulties in accommodating them all. One solution that was canvassed was to moor houseboats along the river at the back of the college, another was to float a balloon and allow the students to sleep in the sky. That idea did not find support – only time will tell if history repeats itself.

Do you have memories of balloon trips – share them with Mike Petty at the News

SCANS OF

MR GREEN AND WIFE IN HIS BALLOON 1830

CHOICE OF VIEWS OF VICTORIA'S CORONATION CELEBRATIONS ON PARKER'S
PIECE 1838 SHOWING BALLOON

SKETCH OF BALLOON PASSING OVER CAMBRIDGE TOWN GAOL, GONVILLE
PLACE, 1838

1955 PARACHUTE JUMP FROM BALLOON

1965 RUNAWAY WEATHER BALLOON OVER MAGDALENE COLLEGE

Memories 20th June 2007, by Mike Petty

Bryan Manning from Cambridge has responded to my request for memories of tv aerials.

In 1952 his father Rupert, who was a builder with a long ladder, saw an opportunity of diversifying into the new boom industry of erecting television aerials. Soon he was working for small television shops as well as big companies like Wards, Millers and H.W. Peak whose boss, John Peak came up with a bright idea.

He had his own light aeroplane and flew over different housing estates in Cambridge dropping leaflets saying that anybody who took one to his shop in King Street could have a television fitted free for two weeks in time for the Coronation.

Soon Bryan and his brother Malcolm were heroes to children in street after street as they climbed up to the roof with their new aeralis. A fortnight later they went back to take them down again – the offer was over. But there weren't many to take down – the children saw to that as Bryan recalls. "They asked their friends 'Are you keeping yours', and when they said 'yes' went crying to mum or dad saying 'My friend is keeping their television'. What could mum or dad do! Only say ok, we'll keep it" [SCAN OF CORONATION PARTY for children in the Petersfield and Bradmore Street area of CAMBRIDGE – CHILDREN WERE EQUALLY DELIGHTED WHEN THEY LEARNED THEY COULD KEEP THEIR TELLIES]

James Craig has emailed seeking your assistance in solving a family mystery. He has an old photo taken by Starr & Rignall, the Cambridge photographer, showing a number of service personnel, both officers and other ranks. Amongst them is his relative, Andy McCoubrey. Andy was transferred from the Royal Artillery to the Intelligence Corps and for a time served at Bletchley Park where his Commanding Officer was a Captain (later Major) Hugh Skillen. But what was Andy doing in Cambridge – where was the picture taken and who are the other men. Can anybody help. You can email James at just.jimmy@btinternet.com or let me know [WARTIME PICTURE PROBABLY TAKEN IN CAMBRIDGE – BUT WHO AND WHERE IS IT]

Dennis Merry from Teversham has called with more information on the Soham explosion. He was one of the brave railwaymen who drove the ammunition trains on their long, slow overnight journeys from the Whitemoor Yard at March. Some nights they carried ammunition, other nights aviation fuel, both potent loads. Dennis was at the railway sidings near Brooklands Avenue when he heard the bang and initially thought a bomber had crashed. He still can't understand what caused the bombs to explode; had it been a hotbox – wheel bearing – that overheated it would not have actually caught fire unless something had leaked, similarly any stray sparks from the locomotive would have needed something to spread the flame. Railwaymen at the time speculated on the possibility of sabotage. It may never be known. But Dennis has more reason to remember it than many, for he was the Fireman on the train that was sent to drag away the tangled wreckage of the locomotive that had been blown apart by the explosion which claimed the life of his colleagues.

Margaret Reeve from Newnham had her own memories of the trauma of war. In 1937 she'd applied to train as a nurse at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Trumpington Street but the Matron would not take local girls as there'd be too many distractions from their studies. Undaunted she started at a cottage hospital in Wisbech where she had much more responsibility and got on well. After a year she transferred to Cambridge where she commenced her working day by polishing the brass name plates and door knobs of the doctors' rooms in the Outpatient's Hall. After war broke out she moved to a hospital in Bournemouth where she became a night-sister working twelve-hour shifts with constant air-raids during the day. One night they got a call to prepare as many beds as possible for an influx of soldiers from Dunkirk. Soon the hospital was bursting with exhausted, dirty, hungry men who'd been saved from the beaches. One of Margaret's lasting memories was of seeing a row of men sitting in beds with their chests in plaster casts where they'd jumped from the cliffs and broken their spines. Later she moved back to Addenbrooke's Hospital gaining a Sister's post on Goode Ward where she nursed until her retirement in 1976. Margaret was a founder-member of the Addenbrooke's League of Nurses, many of whom were present at her funeral, and an active member of Emmanuel United Reformed Church where a thanksgiving service to celebrate her life will be held on 27th June.

Richard Bigg emails to thank News readers for their help in identifying a picture of his father taken at King and Harper's garage. He writes: "It has really struck gold. I had two people in Cambridge who knew dad get in touch, then I had an E-mail from Palm Springs California !! A chap there knew Cambridge and K and H and had a little story to tell me about the firm. We exchanged a number of E-mails then, to cut a long story short, it transpired he was the brother of the wife of one of Dad's brothers. He knew a lot about the Bigg family and eventually he rang me and we had a long chat"

If you have a Cambridgeshire query then share it with News readers

Memories 27th June 2007, by Mike Petty

Gordon Jackson has taken some time to catch up with one of my articles – but he does have an excuse – he's in New South Wales. He emails:

"I recently was sent a copy of Evening News, dated February 4th 2000 by friends in Cambridge. They thought that I might be interested in your report and pictures of "Street Party for Victory" and Richmond Road School. I was very interested. Firstly the Richmond Road and Oxford Road VE party. I can remember the day very clearly. Looking down the length of the table, I was the first boy at the top of the table. On my left was my Sister, who at the time was only three years of age. I attended Richmond Road School and can remember Miss Chandler very well. Some years ago I made a trip back to my hometown of Cambridge when I went down memory lane, and visited many places of my childhood including a walk down Oxford Road and Richmond Road (which is where I was born). I also spent some time looking at the Richmond Road School. Apart from a fresh coat of paint, it still looked exactly the same. I thought the above comments might be of some interest to you." Indeed they are – and I'm sure Gordon would be keen to share his memories with other school chums. You can email him at geajackson@bigpond.com or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch. [SCAN OF THE STREET PARTY]

Ann Haslop has also been remembering times past: She writes: "My husband's family were bootmakers in the 1800s and originated in Trumpington (though I think earlier they were from Northampton). In 1871 they lived at 57 Fitzroy Street, we do not know whether it was a shop or just their dwelling, it would be wonderful to see a photo of Fitzroy Street taken at this date. His grandfather who lived in Priory Road, was at first a greengrocer in the Fitzroy Street area, then a Hansom cab owner and later a taxi driver operating from Priory Road". [SCAN OF FITZROY STREET c1903 or of CARTWRIGHT'S HAIRDRESSER'S SHOP FITZROY STREET c1900]

The story of such trades-people is one that is seldom told, but every community had its bakers and butchers, saddlers and shoemakers, general stores and newsagents. Many have passed into history, others continue to serve. One such is Bonnett's who have been baking in Somersham for over 200 years. In the 1950s the business was run by Bessie Bonnett whose head baker was a man called Billie Barlow. Older villagers still remember the chant: 'Bessie Bonnett's best-baked brown bread, baked by Billie Barlow, builds bonny babies'. The firm delivered door-to-door; starting with a horse and cart they moved on to motor vans but still keep one of their old three-wheeled delivery bikes that they use for special deliveries and sales of hot-cross buns on Good Friday. [SCAN OF A TYPICAL BAKER'S DELIVERY MAN – NOT SOMERSHAM]

Bank holidays are a day of rest for most tradesmen – but not Burrows of Ely who have been supplying people with their newspapers and magazines since 1899. Their working day starts

around four in the morning when the papers are received, sorting them into rounds so they are ready for the boys and girls who deliver them to homes throughout the ever-expanding city. But it is not just papers and magazines, they also have a bookshop which stocks a wide range of local publications, in one of which they themselves feature. For Rex Sly has charted the story of traders in places like Murrow, Benwick, Gedney Hill and Gorefield, a tribute to the hardworking fenland folk who continue to serve their localities. (Fenland Families by Rex Sly, Sutton Publishing, ISBN 978-0-7509-4327-7 £14.99) [SCAN OF SWAVESEY BUTCHER'S VAN – TYPICAL OF THE DELIVERY VANS (not in book)]

Ken Isaacson remembers when Soham had thirteen butchers, nine drapers, six cycle dealers and twenty-eight shops selling groceries, sweets and cigarettes. Then there was Henry Munns' ironmongers which was managed by his diminutive daughter, Dot. She would open up the shop in the early morning and display her wares out on to the pavement. "There were spades, shovels, draining tools and forks for all jobs such as digging, muck spreading etc. Hoes, scythes, sickles, hedging hooks, darnells, mattocks, copper bowls, buckets, scuttles, carborundum stones, hammers and all hand tools. Rolls of chicken wire, sheets of galvanised iron, pig and chicken feeders and troughs, rat and mouse traps, rabbit snares and a lot more. Inside the shop she sold kettles, saucepans, frying pans, washing boards, knife cleaning and sharpening boards, crockery, sticky fly papers, rat poison and all kinds of nails and screws which she weighed out on the scales on the counter. There were many other items to choose from in the shop, she also sold cartridges and 'Brocks' fireworks for November 5th", Ken recalls. Now his memories "Home Sweet Soham" are available from another local tradesmen, Fuller's undertakers of 23 Hall Street Soham for £6.75 – plus £2.25 postage

Memories 4th July 2007 by Mike Petty

Tobacco advertising has been banned for years. But on the corner of Rose Crescent and Market Hill in the centre of Cambridge there's praise for a tobacconist, even though the shop has been closed for nearly 25 years.

Bacons supplied smokers in Cambridge from about 1813 until 1983. Their ledgers recorded the names of famous customers including the Prince of Wales – the future King Edward VII - when at Trinity, Charles Kingsley – author of 'Hereward the Wake' and Alfred (Lord) Tennyson whose statue in the Trinity College chapel shows him with a pipe. But the most famous was a now largely-forgotten Victorian poet named Charles Stuart Calverley.

He had a varied academic career, being sent down from Oxford for what was described as 'desultory and idle habits' – mainly smoking and staying out late. So he switched to Christ's College Cambridge where he flourished – and not only for his studies; he once jumped over a horse and cart in Green Street and stole the inn sign from the Green Man, Trumpington.

But all of this would now be forgotten were it not for his addition to smoking. He wrote an 'Ode to Tobacco' in which he named his favourite shop. Bacons, who produced various brands of their own, realised the advertising potential and promptly brought out 'Calverley Cigarettes' bearing his picture on the packet. Then when their old shop on the corner of Rose Crescent was knocked down and rebuilt in the mid 1930s the famous poem was fixed to the wall. [SCAN OF CALVERLEY CIGARETTE PACKET, SCAN OF BACON'S OLD SHOP ON CORNER OF ROSE CRESCENT]

But even then there was concern about the impact of smoking on health; part of the poem reads

I have a liking old

For thee, though manifold
Stories, I know, are told
Not to thy credit:

How they who use fusees
All grow by slow degrees
Brainless as chimpanzees,
Meagre as lizards.

(Fusees were long-burning matches, ideal for lighting cigars in rough weather)

But while rich undergraduates would pay any price in reason for the tobacco which appealed most to their palate, people in Mill Road liked a lot for their money and in 1902 were buying cheap cigarettes in packets containing showy photographs. Even this was too expensive for many. In 1904 a Waterbeach schoolboy who'd become hooked on tobacco purloined a silver watch which he sold to fund his habit. Later when automatic cigarette vending machines were introduced three Somersham lads were convicted of filing down farthings so they would fit in the slots - a packet of ten Player's cigarettes cost 6d.

Undergraduates were not allowed to smoke in academic dress; in February 1920 the Duke of York, later King George VI was stopped by a Bulldog – University policeman – outside the Union Building and fined six shillings and eightpence. Some years later the King recalled the incident and referred to the cigarette as the most expensive one he ever smoked! Other Proctors sympathised, having made the lad snub his cigar out one offered a finer specimen out of his own case, provided it was smoked in the privacy of the student's room. [SCAN OF UNDERGRADUATE BEING STOPPED FOR SMOKING]

Smoking in the street caused concern in December 1925 - "I should not advise anyone, particularly a young lady, in search of fresh air, to visit Petty Cury on a Saturday night - for the atmosphere is 'too blue' to be healthy, and reeks of cheap cigarette smoking, indulged in by ill-bred youths and flappers alike", a correspondent complained.

The issue of whether people should smoke at work was also being hotly debated in December 1922. It had been suggested that Cambridge dustmen men should be allowed to smoke on duty - but the men had to go through people's houses to collect their bins and this would bring the unwelcome smell of tobacco in place of the stench of refuse. One councillor was realistic; Councillor Lunn told his colleagues, "The men do smoke in any case, so you might as well realise it as shut your eyes to it!" Now of course it is the other way round – tenants are being asked not to smoke in their own homes in case it pollutes the atmosphere for visiting council officials.

By November 1978 a Cambridge Evening News survey showed that at the Guildhall, County Hall and Fisons workers could smoke freely and even health-conscious Cambridge United players were at liberty to clog their lungs up at work. CCAT students – now Anglia Ruskin University - were free to smoke during classes, but only if a majority of them vote to do so at the beginning of a session.

But reaction was even then setting in; at Jesus College undergraduates had voted to remove ash-trays from their library and United Taxis banned passengers and drivers from smoking in their vehicles. Now it is banned in pubs. It's enough to drive a smoker to drink!

Cigarettes were a regular gift in Hospitals at Christmas – at Addenbrooke's Hospital in 1903 the patients of the men's surgical and accident wards had a present of cigars pipes, tobacco or cigarettes, which were greatly appreciated.

In 1927 Jul 30 A young man, fashionably attired in a brand new plus-four suit paused at the cigarette machine outside the New Theatre, Cambridge, and inserting a sixpence drew forth a packet of cigarettes. Instead of shutting the drawer in the orthodox manner he turned his back on the machine and applied pressure by a retrograde movement. "Snap" went the drawer, taking with it about six inches of the seat of the young man's voluminous "bags". Finding himself held captive he appealed for sixpences to release the drawer but none would do the trick. "Debagging" was out of the question and the prisoner would not hear of being "cut away". After twenty minutes one bright person tried the very obvious idea of pulling the handle of the drawer and he was released amid loud cheers.

Smoking at the New Theatre posed problems in 1901 – there was no smoking in the auditorium or public passage so extra smoking rooms were constructed for the men to smoke between acts

1984 Colin Lunn tobacconist, opened 1899, 50 years ago
Cambridge boasted 40 tobacconists, with demise Bacons
this only one [8.9]

1899 rowing : 99 Boat club formed by YMCA members barred for
smoking [1.17]

Tramps preferred what they called 'hard-up' – cigarette ends which they picked up from the pavements. They had to surrender them when they went into Mill Road workhouse – so 'Weary Willie' concealed his stumpy pipe in a toe of one of his big boots with his matches and kerbstone mixture' in the other. At Christmas it was the custom to give workhouse or hospital inmates gifts of tobacco and snuff - it aided digestion and was one of the pleasures they enjoyed. But non-smokers complained they received nothing equivalent to the tobacco received by smokers.

Memories 11th July 2007, by Mike Petty

In last week's Memories I mentioned a complaint from 1925 about youngsters congregating in Petty Cury on Saturday nights: "The atmosphere is 'too blue' to be healthy, and reeks of cheap cigarette smoking, indulged in by ill-bred youths and flappers alike", a correspondent lamented.

But Victor and Muriel Challis from Cambridge recollect that they too did something similar a decade later

"An event, which took place mostly in Autumn and Winter, was known, colloquially, as the 'Monkey Parade'. On Sunday afternoon and evening flocks of teenage folk would descend upon the city centre (then known as 'down the town'), and circumnavigate the square formed

by Petty Cuff, Market Hill, Market Street, and Sidney Street. The boys, well behaved and smartly dressed, would try to walk in the opposite direction to that taken by the girls. The girls, in turn, would look beautiful and shy, and usually 'hunted' in pairs. Many a lasting romance was formed by the good-natured banter and modest 'putting on the style' thereby”.

Much of the route that Victor and Muriel took would be unrecognisable to the youth of today as both Petty Cury and Market Street have changed out of all recognition since the 1930s. [SCANS OF PETTY CURY, SIDNEY STREET AND MARKET HILL IN THE 1930's]

Like youngsters of today, they had a love of music, but again fashions have changed.

“On Summer Sunday evenings, a different venue was used for the 'Circumvating parade' and its romantic outcomes. A very elegant bandstand stood central on Christ's Pieces. It was enclosed by a good sized area fenced in by hedging and railings. Underfoot was a tarmac floor and there were mixed coloured lights on the roof of the building. This venue was universally known as 'On the Prom'. On Sunday evenings there would appear, from far and near, a military-type Band. Its members clad in brilliant uniforms, all toting shining beautiful brass or silver-coated instruments, always a big drum, lots of small cornets, larger euphoniums, larger still double bass 'Goliaths'. A programme was of stirring lovely music, a march by Alford, extracts from Gilbert and Sullivan, Viennese waltzes, or from the Shows. Entry to the hallowed area and a seat cost the princely sum of three pence. The other alternative, apart from sitting on the grass, was the circular gyrating round the outside of the enclosure in the hope of getting to know a member of the other gender.

“There was no vandalism, no 'Hoodies', no fights, and a good understanding of it being the Sabbath. On some weekday evenings, there would be a dance held in the enclosure, again for a very small entrance fee. A band of some four or five musicians would supply the dance music. One certainty was the quickness of worn out shoes due to the asphalt surface! In those peaceful days there was seldom a thought of what was to come later in 1939,” Victor recalls

Villagers too used to know how to enjoy themselves, especially on Feast day.

“I can remember lots of very wide eyed children who could hardly take in what had happened to their village street, but who were determined to be in on the fun, waving, jumping up and down with excitement, or chasing the balloons which occasionally broke loose. The mixed sounds of the jazz band, cheering, choruses, and steam whistles seemed to echo the blend of relaxation, worship and work which make up village life. Thousands of people thronged the stall, tents and the arena. They bought and sold, listened and learned. Strolled and sat in the sun and, over and above everything else, had a jolly good afternoon.”

But this is not something from the 1930s – that was a description of the Cherry Hinton festival of 1985. I had the pleasure of attending last year's fair and have booked my diary for September 8th this year too. It really is a good old-fashioned community event. If you've any connection with Cherry Hinton – or even if you haven't - you should really not miss it. Contact Karoline Sparkes - [karoline.clive@ntlworld.com] for more details. [SCAN OF CHERRY HINTON FESTIVAL 2006]

Memories 18 July 2007 by Mike Petty

Gavin Holman from Harrogate seeks your help. He is carrying out research on the history of brass bands in local communities, and asks if you know of any information about extinct bands in this area.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries were the "golden age" for these bands numbering, it is said, up to 40,000 distinct bands at their peak. Many of these were associated with local

industries, often being a "works" band. Others provided a musical focus for many small towns and villages in the days before the gramophone and the wireless. Today only some 1,500 or so are left active in the UK. Sadly many of the bands left little in the way of information about their existence, and what does exist is widely scattered with individuals, local archives and national collections.

Part of Gavin's task is to identify these lost bands and collect together material to provide a central database. So any information you can provide would be gratefully received. Even knowing that a particular band existed is significant to him.

Much of the information he's collected is available online, as a freely available resource, at <http://www.ibew.co.uk>. I've browsed his files. In it there are references to the Cambridge Salvation Army, City of Cambridge and Cambridge University Brass Bands, though with little of their history. There's also March Brass 2000 which was formed in 1891 when the town boasted the largest railway marshalling and storage yard in Europe. It was known as the March Railway Silver Band until they changed their name to mark the new millennium.

Gavin has notes on Littleport Brass Band who were started about 1880 with Teddy Dring as the first bandmaster while Chatteris Town Band can trace its history back to 1882 and Wicken first came together to celebrate the Coronation of King George V in 1911.

But do you know more about these or other bands that no longer exist.

To start the ball rolling I've checked for mentions of brass bands that I've carried in my 'Looking Back' column over the last decade. They include reference to a Saffron Walden Brass Band who played for the town's proclamation of King Edward VII in 1901, and for the Rev Latimer Neville's jubilee as rector of Heydon – he was also Master of Magdalene College at the time.

Sawston Brass Band – looking remarkably smart in their new uniforms – welcomed returning soldiers from the Boer War at Linton in July 1901 – and headed their village Friendly Society parade in July 1902. That month Haverhill Old Brass Band played at a Sunday School treat – when 1,500 children were attired in their summer dresses – while in August Newmarket Town Band entertained the King of Barotseland when he visited Dalham

In July 1904 the News reported: "Isleham band furnishes a striking example of what can be accomplished by steady and determined work. It was only formed a year ago but has become an important and appreciated institution. Its members have had to work hard and faced their first public performance on the occasion of the Harvest Festival last October with trepidation. Recently they have given short open-air sacred concerts on the green on Sunday evenings after the services at the various places of worship. It is to be hoped that their success will stir up the inhabitants of other villages". But what happened to them?

The Cambridgeshire Collection's files include photographs of Burwell and Soham Excelsior, Fordham, Fulbourn, Haddenham, Ickleton and Manea bands from the pre Great-War period.

In July 1923 Ely City military band held its first annual dinner when the Chairman referred to the earlier Volunteer and the Cambridgeshire militia bands. It was greatly to the advantage of the town that they had been able to form such an excellent band as they had now. That was a thing that every citizen in Ely could congratulate himself on, he said. The Band continues to flourish.

In 1927 the Cambridge Albion and Cambridge Town Bands amalgamated to form the Cambridge Silver Band. They decided to buy a complete set of new triple silver-plated instruments made by Messrs Hawkes of London including the famous 'Profundo' basses as

played by the St Hilda Colliery Band. This would greatly improve the tonal qualities of the band and there was not another in the eastern counties with such instruments

Neither of them had taken part in a Brass Band Contest held in Cambridge Guildhall two years earlier. In fact the Cambridge Railway Silver Band was the only local competitor – but they won it to great excitement. “There was a furore of applause from the large audience present, and the bandsmen themselves momentarily lost their heads in their enthusiasm. The dignity of the large hall, which had rung for well nigh two hours with the blare of brass instruments was quite forgotten. Hats were thrown high into the air and trombones and cornets waved to delighted friends among the audience” the News commented.

But when in November 1980 there was a local brass band championship it was Soham Comrades’ Band who won, snatching the title from Littleport with Chatteris Town Band third. In the contest for small bands Waterbeach took the first prize, Wicken was second, followed by Cottenham, Haddenham and Burwell.

Now all this is doubtless very patchy – but its over to you to fill in some of the gaps and ensure our musicians are not forgotten.

Please let me know at the News but also tell Gavin so that he can add it to his files. You can email him at gavin@ibew.co.uk or drop me a line and I’ll put you in touch

SCAN OF BAND LEADING MEMBERS OF THE ALBION ANGLING SOCIETY TO
CAMBRIDGE STATION, 1910

SCAN OF CAMBRIDGE CITY BAND PLAYING CAROLS 1954

SCAN OF FORDHAM MISSION BRASS BAND c1910

Memories 25th July 2007, by Mike Petty

The monsoon summer has brought floods to many areas of the country. It may be unusual but it is not unique. There was a spate of flooding in 1968 when St Neots was inundated in July, Broughton was cut off in August and Newmarket, Linton and Sawston were amongst the places that suffered in September after torrential rain brought renewed chaos. More recently on 7th August 1981 the region was counting the cost following storms that saw at least five homes in Cambridge damaged by lightning together with two at Abington and water eight inches deep in houses in Eaton Socon. Then last year a cloudburst saw water flowing dramatically down village streets.

But in August 1912 there were only five rainless days throughout the whole of the month – though April had seen a record drought. Things came to a climax on Monday 26th when a tropical downpour lasting twelve hours produced six inches of rain before mid-afternoon. Rivers could not cope with the deluge, the banks gave way on the Little Ouse and crops were abandoned. At Yaxley the Black Horse river burst its banks and water spread as far as Holme woods where the great Whittlesey mere – drained in the 1850s - re-emerged. Smoke hung over the fen as the coal-fired pumping stations worked at full pressure to try and keep pace with the rush of water through the breached banks. Corn shocks floated, hay fields were ruined and many root crops had to be left to rot. It was the worst flooding within living memory.

Although Cambridge itself escaped it organised collections for people in Norwich who experienced something of the trauma currently being witnessed again. [SCAN OF HARVESTING BY BOAT AT RAMSEY 1912]

Another issue currently in the headlines has been the proposals to charge motorists to enter and leave Cambridge at peak times. This again is not a new suggestion. Cambridge Town Council used to charge a toll for all carts crossing Silver Street bridge (though people came in early and left late to avoid paying) until it was challenged by local businessmen in 1824 and the charges pronounced illegal. The council claimed the money went to maintain the roads, but they had previously been so inefficient that a new body – the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners – had been given the responsibility instead.

But there were other charges. In the 1700's turnpike trusts were set up with tollgates where travellers had to pay to pass. In 1730 Cambridge residents petitioned parliament after a gate was erected at Trumpington which meant they had to pay to leave Cambridge, even if they were only going to water their cattle. A turnpike road notice still stands in Castle Street, [SCAN OF TURNPIKE NOTICE, CASTLE STREET] with former toll houses on Newmarket Road and Chesterton Lane. This latter continued until 1852 when as Town Clerk, Charles Henry Cooper recorded 'the Turnpike Gate which had long been obnoxious to the inhabitants of the Town was entirely removed'. Most tollgates were removed within the next 30 years although one continued between Burwell and Fordham until December 1905 and another on the road from Chatteris to St Ives until the 1920s. [PHOTO OF CAR AT BURWELL TURNPIKE GATE DEC 1905 - THERE IS A PICTURE OF THE NEWMARKET ROAD TOLL HOUSE IN NEWS LIBRARY]

But communications are the lifeblood of a town, as St Ives discovered back in the 1820s. It was a major centre of the cattle trade with cows from Scotland, Ireland and the North of England driven down to be rested and fattened on the commons before being sold at their market and taken on to Smithfield in London. It was also an important distribution point for goods brought by river and a major hub of road communications with links to Huntingdon, Somersham and Earith on the north side of the river and to Cambridge and Godmanchester to the south. However traffic was frequently held up due to flooding of the Great Ouse washes so a new causeway was constructed to carry travellers to the historic chapel bridge. But when they tried to raise extra tolls to pay for the work people boycotted St Ives and started going to Huntingdon instead. When they were abolished in 1833 a great crowd assembled to watch the tollgate taken off its hinges; the town band turned out, the church bells rang and there was a brilliant display of fireworks.

Perhaps if the Cambridge charges come in it will be their turn to benefit. [SCAN OF CROWDS ON THE HISTORIC CHAPEL BRIDGE AT ST IVES (NOT THE CAUSEWAY BRIDGE THAT LEADS UP TO IT)]

Memories August 1st 2007, by Mike Petty

Recent news headlines have been of people queuing for water in the flood-stricken areas of the country.

But queuing for water has been a concern here too. During an 11-month drought in 1976 the taps in various parts of the county did little but gurgle and gasp as supplies ran out and standpipes were erected in village streets. They returned during the water-workers strike of 1983. [SCAN OF SHELFORD STAND PIPE 1976]

Just fifty years ago, in July 1957 the News sent their – then young – reporter Colin Moule [LATER EDITOR OF THE CAMBRIDGE WEEKLY NEWS] to investigate the situation in Duxford. "In the village water is at present like gold: like an oasis in a vast desert", he found.

There were 63 known wells in the village, the previous year 40 had dried up and 13 others were unsatisfactory. Dr J. York Moore of Sawston, who had been monitoring the situation for

some time, told him that wells had been drying up earlier each year - in August 1955, in July 1956 and June 1957. One had stopped working in June 1956 and had not been used since.

Miss Harriett Hewitt, then 74-years-old, lived in a four-roomed cottage in Ickleton Road. The well she shared with some of her neighbours had dried up and she had to go once a day to a pump about 250 yards away to fetch water. "If I want extra water, then I have to go twice", she declared. "I think it is terrible". Mrs Pamela Jones, a housewife with two small children who lived in St John's Street, obtained her water from a pump about 200 yards from her home. "I have to go about three or four times a day", she said.

Villagers criticised the delay by South Cambs RDC in not going ahead with a comprehensive scheme for piped water from Dotterell Hall. The council promised Duxford would get water in 'about a years time'. Lewis Todd, the News' cartoonist came up with his own interpretation of the situation. [SCAN OF NEWS REPORT AND CARTOON]

But they were not alone. In 1945 an official county council report showed that less than half of rural homes had piped water, the others had to work for every drop at the pump or well. Often this meant a considerable walk, one in five households were over 100 yards away from a pump, and on arrival there might be a queue.

Even if you had the luxury of a pump opposite your front door it was a mixed blessing as from six o'clock in the morning onwards there was an almost incessant squeaking and rattling as people came for water. It took fourteen full strokes to fill an average size bucket, remembered Miss E.M. Barraud of Lt Eversden, who could judge it to the half-inch even in complete darkness. Not that she went to the pump after dark, except in an emergency - only amateurs or natives afflicted with town visitors given to endless ablutions went to the pump at night. At least pumping was a sociable business; in just half-an-hour you could see almost everybody, hear all the news and more than all the scandal. [SCAN OF PUMP AT STAPLEFORD]

But plans for piped water were resisted by many parish councils. When in 1922 Ely Rural District Council announced that it intended to go ahead with a scheme the Stretham representative voiced his opposition claiming the natural supply was good and ample. However Mr Savidge the village baker disagreed. Half the population, he said, used one pump and that was subject to contamination from the roads. Whenever it rained the water supply was muddy. "I cannot drink it, nor can I get other people to eat it" he complained, adding "I dare not go to the Parish Council meeting for fear they crucified me, because everybody there was against it. Everybody in Stretham would like good water, but they don't want to pay for it". It was 1931 before piped water finally came.

Even in go-ahead places like Littleport water was not always on tap. In 1921 as temperatures rose ever higher the water supply dried up and lorries had to be brought in from Ely, with men women and children queuing for water at a half-penny a bucket. [SCAN OF PUMP AT LITTLEPORT 1905 – NB THIS DOES NOT SHOW THEM QUEUING TO BUY WATER]

Today one can buy bottled water with added flavours such as apple, lime or elderflower. This too was something our forefathers knew all about – only it was somewhat different. In 1889 one correspondent to the Cambridge Daily News described his village's water as '*covered with a green, slimy substance, and full of living creatures and to add to its high flavour most of the liquids from the adjoining farmyard closets and pig sties are drained into it*'

And – some old timers will claim - "It never did me no harm!"

Do you have memories of queuing for water – share them with Mike Petty

SCANS – PLEASE TAKE CARE WITH CAPTIONS

LEWIS TODD’S CARTOON VIEW OF THE WATER PROBLEMS IN DUXFORD IN 1957

THE NEWS REPORT FROM JULY 1957 SHOWING MISS HARRIETT HEWITT AT THE PUMP

CHILDREN AT A STAND PIPE IN HINTON WAY, GT SHELFORD IN 1976

PEOPLE AROUND THE PUMP IN BAR LANE, STAPLEFORD 1920’S

PUMP AT LITTLEPORT 1905

Memories 8th August 2007, by Mike Petty

Cambridge is a city that seems constantly to be changing. People making their way down St Andrew’s Street recently cannot have been unaware of the disappearance of Bradwell’s Court.

In its day it was seen as pioneer in city centre shopping – Cambridge’s first shopping arcade. It brought an additional 20 new shops and showrooms in a continuous covered walkway from Drummer Street bus station to the city centre. There was a courtyard in the centre that would get sunshine all the year round while a three-story block facing Drummer Street would provide a waiting room for bus passengers with offices on the upper floors. There would even be a basement car park for 21 cars and over 100 cycles.

The Court had been a joint venture between two colleges - Jesus and Christ’s - and Ravenscroft Properties and was designed by the Cambridge architects, Hughes and Bicknell who took special care that the scheme harmonised with the adjoining college buildings.

While Cambridge gained up-to-date shopping it had lost two old areas. One was Bradwell’s Yard which had included cottages as Paul Griffin, one-time head of Cambridge Anglo-World Language Centre recalled in the News back in September 1987. His recollections will jog many other memories.

“It was 1946 and my wife and I, newly-married, had to find somewhere to live in Cambridge. Everything was in short supply and the best we could discover was a very thin cottage sandwiched in a row of buildings in Bradwell’s Yard. The cottage was used by Mr Roe, an antiques dealer for storing furniture but he agreed to store it somewhere else and put in an electric supply. There were only three small rooms occupying the same number of floors. There was no bath, no washbasin, an open-air lavatory across the yard shared with the next cottage and the only source of water was a tap over a sink. But it became home. We were happy in that little cottage, but thank goodness it is in the past now”, he concluded.

The Bradwell family were builders. One had worked on Clare College in the 1660s and another is commemorated on a tombstone against the wall of St Andrew the Great church just across the road. He was David Bradwell who designed the Victoria Homes almshouses in Victoria Road in 1837 while a namesake occupied the yard until it was demolished for the arcade in 1958

The new redevelopment also saw the end of Christ’s Lane which had linked St Andrew’s and Drummer Streets. It could get muddy, as a correspondent to the News complained back in 1897: “During the last two years it has been a veritable quagmire, I came through last evening

and the mud was several inches thick through the lane. When is Christ's Lane to be paved in such a manner that that it shall be as pleasant to walk through as it is walking across Christ's Pieces? ”

Nor was it always a quick route as Mrs J. Jenner of Bourn recalled in June 1999: “There was a toll bar about half way up which was always open, except for Rag Day. Then the students held it shut and put sludge around it about an inch thick and ten inches long. This meant that people passing had to give them something to walk through the small gap in the sludge. The opening was only wide enough for one person at a time to pass. They gave mums with prams a helping hand by lifting the pram over the barrier”.

The barrier had put been there to deter traffic though in June 1924 a Spanish student was killed when he swung his motor cycle into the lane at speed and ran into it.

The City Council wanted the barrier removed in May 1952 so that the Lane could be opened out as a thoroughfare to be used by buses. This would alleviate congestion and provide relief for Emmanuel Street. – something that never happened.

But for many the main memory will be of the man who looked after people's bags. Jim Wooders sat by the wall near Milton's Walk to watch the parcels and sometimes cases, when people had a long wait for coaches. He charged according to the length of time parcels were there. Those to be collected before noon were placed on his right, between then and two p.m. were in front, and two to four or five on his left. He charged 1/- a parcel for each period of time. Each customer was greeted by 'Good Morning' or 'Good Afternoon' and he touched his cap to lady customers.”

Whatever happens in the new development, that is one facility that would be appreciated.

Find scan of - JIM WOODERS
THE BAG WATCHER - CEN SCAN 158580 –

SCAN 9868 – BRADWELL'S COURT FROM ST ANDREW'S STREET DURING
CONSTRUCTION 1961

SCAN 9108 – CHRIST'S LANE 1935

SCAN 113.18 - BRADWELL'S COURT APRIL 1975

Memories 13th August 2007, by Mike Petty

Longstowe is a small seemingly insignificant village of around 300 inhabitants, spread out sparingly along two roads, the A1198 and the B1046 just south of Caxton. It has no facilities except a fairly decrepit village hall.

To its community however, it is home, to some a lifetime's home. In common with many villages, it consists of newcomers and 'old village', but the 'old village' is fast disappearing as young people move out and the elderly pass on. Now a number of residents have set themselves the task of capturing and distilling what is left of living memory, as Jane Bowden has written to tell me

Her own research into village history began with the home she first rented. St John's Farmhouse had once belonged to St John's College Cambridge whose archivist, Malcolm Underwood, was able to show her masses of documents. They included diaries recording the Bursar's annual visits to the farm which describe how he took the train from Cambridge to Longstowe (a station closed by Beeching in the 1960's) and walked the eight mile walk back at the end of the day. They are laced with local gossip and character descriptions of the family who lived and worked the land between 1838 and 1897. By good chance, Jane also

met a lovely lady who was in service at the farm during the 1930's, and after a search of the internet tracked down the family of a former tenant of the farm in 1623.

However history is not just old documents. When mains drainage arrived various interesting domestic objects turned up in the trenches dug to connect the house to the sewer, including an old flat iron, tethering rings, and a lot of nice old bottles and bits of pot. General maintenance one summer meant that the front of the house was removed to reveal the internal wooden frame structure, which she took photographs of.

Since then Jane has moved down the road to Glebe House, the original part of which was probably built in the mid 1600's. She's come across the will of a Rev John Crosse 1729 in which he bequeathed the house to the church. But there was also an extended Crosse family living in Longstowe at that time, which has set her off on another quest.

In fact she has become hooked on the history of the whole village, spending hours in the County Record Office working through the parish registers. Then there are books to read, the internet to search – but they may be there another day. People's memories may not.

Dick Murden, one of the 'old' villagers, has over the years become a custodian of village photographs, artefacts, maps and a fund of knowledge. Lately, he has been particularly keen to get down on paper as much of his treasure trove of information as possible, trawling his own and other people's memories for anecdotes and family stories.

Dick was educated at Longstowe School, which closed in 1961, and he was there during the war years which gives his account of school life an extra dimension. And just a few years ago, as if by miracle, the school Log Book from 1920-1961 turned up in a neighbouring village, in the back shed of a house once occupied by the late headmistress.

After school Dick went to work on the farms. He remembers in detail the rhythm of the seasons' work, and the day-to-day labour on the land, vividly recalling the constant activity and sounds which were a part of every farmyard. The farms have now largely disappeared, and those remaining have changed beyond recognition.

If you have similar memories that can help the village record more of its past then email Jane - jane@ftls.co.uk - or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch.

And If you are researching your own village or area of Cambridge I'd love to hear from you – perhaps other readers can help

NOT FOR PUBLICATION - Jane Bowden Glebe House, Park Lane, Longstowe, CB23 2UJ

SCAN OF

10205 - MIDDLE FARM 1928

10206 - COTTAGES SOUTH OF RAILWAY 1928

86.946 - CHURCH c1900 –

133.21 – LONGSTOWE STATION c1905 – IT WAS CLOSED BY Dr BEECHING

PICTURES FROM THE NEWS' OWN FILES:

133.19 – A PROUD DAY – LONGSTOWE IS AWARDED THE ‘BEST KEPT VILLAGE’ ACCOLADE IN AUGUST 1976 – CAN YOU NAME THE FACES

133.22 - LONGSTOWE SCHOOL DURING CONVERSION TO PRIVATE HOUSE, SEPT 1968

Memories 20th August 2007, by Mike Petty

Wander through the centre of Cambridge in August and the air is full of the sound of every language under the sun. French, German, Italian, Spanish – and a host of others. It can present problems for the police to whom they sometimes look for assistance.

But 100 years ago the problem, though magnified by an influx of 1,400 people from across the globe, was simpler. For many of them were all speaking the same language, Esperanto.

In August 1907 Cambridge was hosting the third International Congress of the artificial language that had been created during the period 1877-1885 by a Pole, Dr Ludovik L. Zamenhof. He'd intended that it should become the second language of all the different-speaking peoples of the world

The News was not slow to welcome the visitors for the concept had seized Cambridge like a raging fever. “Genuine and spurious Esperanto fills the air as the autolycus of the gutter shouts unintelligent jargon to a street comrade and calls it Esperanto. But when a picturesque figure from the Swiss Canton appeared in the street the impudence of the street Arab was silenced. He was impressed by the tight green breeches and head capped by genuine Alpine hat. A Turk and Indians in national costume add considerably to the effect of this new kind of circus”, it reported.

The newspaper covered the events in great detail with one article actually in Esperanto. Even a sermon by the Rev J.C. Rust, Vicar of Soham, vice-president of the British Esperanto Association, was reported virtually word for word. It was the first to have been preached in the new language and was enthusiastically received by a packed congregation at Great St Mary's. A similar address was given to the Catholic delegates at Our Lady's church.

The Rev Rust had been one of the supporters when a society for the promotion of Esperanto within the University and Town was set up in October 1905. They had met in the home of Dr George Cunningham on Kings Parade when Alex Wood had been amongst those advocating classes for teaching the language. One of the early converts was Miss Mary Start, a remarkable lady: though blind from birth she was a professional masseuse, played chess and had read practically every book published in Braille.

The University gave a formal welcome to delegates at the Fitzwilliam Museum and there was a reception in the Fellows' Garden of King's College. But hopes that of an honorary degree being bestowed upon the language's inventor were disappointed. Various senior academics participated. The Professor of Latin, J.E.B. Mayor, gave a speech but he was upstaged by one of Cambridge's greatest 'characters', Oscar Browning of King's College. He dressed up in a green swallow-tail coat to take the part of Samuel Pickwick in an adaptation of the trial scene from 'Pickwick Papers' at the New Theatre.

There was a military display on Midsummer Common – though it was somewhat embarrassing that the band played the wrong national anthem – and many Esperantists attended the sports organised by Cambridge Police Athletic Society. There Dr Zamenhof presented an Esperanto Cup for the policeman who had performed the most efficient

ambulance work. It went to Sergeant Gates for his action in saving the life of a man who had taken poison.

But this was not the first contact the policeman had established with the group. For he had been on duty as the delegates from around the world had made their way to the Guildhall at the start of their meeting. They had been keen to try out their newly-acquired linguistic skills. One word they were successful with was 'policano', though some had problems with the pronunciation. Here Sergeant Gates had been able to help, for he was an Esperantist with a better understanding of the language than many members of the Congress.

Perhaps this was first example of Cambridge police demonstrating the language skills that officers on patrol in the city centre need to exercise every day.

Scan

68.51 a stall on Cambridge market selling souvenirs to the Esperanto Congress visitors

65.73 Frank Keene, a Cambridge cartoonist, depicted policemen being instructed in Esperanto – but Sergeant Gates knew more than most of those attending

69.87 View looking across a decorated Market Hill to Cambridge Guildhall showing some of the youngsters who gathered to stare at the various costume of the delegates. The old Guildhall was demolished in the 1930s.

Programme of the Cambridge Police Athletic Sports at which Sergeant Gates was presented with an Esperanto Cup

Invitation – in Esperanto - to reception at King's College

Cambridge Daily News report from August 1907 – in Esperanto

Memories 27th August 2007 by Mike Petty

The problems of commuting to Cambridge on the A14 continue to dominate the headlines. One answer for at least some people may be the Guided Bus route that is now being constructed.

It is an idea that has been going the rounds since at least May 1981 when ecologists proposed a bus which could run on railway lines as the solution to transport problems in local villages. It would travel from Cambridge city centre to Huntingdon using British Rail's tracks, with stops at Mill Road, Chesterton and North Arbury as well as the former stations en route to Swavesey. From that point the lines had already been removed but it would run along the trackbed to St Ives and the Hemingfords. Time may tell whether the idea will prove successful.

But David Hurry remembers back to 1966 when he started work at the Hills Road depot of Eastern Counties and travelled in on the company's prestige Route 151. This linked Peterborough, Huntingdon and Cambridge and was always worked by the newest buses. He recalls:

"Journey time from Huntingdon to Cambridge was scheduled to be 50 minutes along the old A604, diverting only into Fenstanton. The road was then a three lane single carriageway. There were proper bus stops at the turns to both the Hemingfords, Land Settlement Turn,

Conington & Fen Drayton Turn, Boxworth & Swavesey Turn (Trinity Foot), Lolworth Turn and Dry Drayton Turn. Some had bus shelters but others did not, so they were very windswept, the road being rather exposed. Stopping at these points would be unthinkable on the present-day A14, yet there were also unofficial custom-and- practice stops at just about every farm gate.

“Service 151 was always worked by 'country' crews, so passengers saw familiar faces. George Goult and Lydia South were the best crew, Lydia always calling out every stop very precisely as it was being approached, then giving George two bells to continue, or one to stop, long before he needed to start slowing down. They really did get the best out of their bus and always made up any lost time. There was another driver, Ernie Garlick, an American, who often sang to himself as he was driving along. It was not unusual for him to swing the steering wheel from side to side in time with what he was singing. The front of the bus would noticeably keep changing direction, even on a perfectly straight road, but it never caused any problems.”

One of the long-serving drivers for Premier Travel was Fred ‘Smudger’ Smith who remembers some of the coaches he drove on the London run in the 1950’s. “GV 5160 was a good one but BAJ 161 used to kick you like a donkey when you swung the handle to start it. With the Daimlers you had to watch that gearchange pedal or it would knock your foot back. The AEC Regal (BGV 401) was a lovely vehicle but a rum 'un to drive! It had a high speed back axle and low speed steering. The heater was very good and the cab was always nice and warm. I drove it back from London one night when the smog was really bad. It took me 7 hours and 20 minutes to get from King's Cross to Haverhill. (The official journey time was 2 hours and 53 minutes.) My conductor, Jimmy Farrar, walked in front as far as Whipps Cross and I don't think I changed up a gear until I got to Bishop's Stortford. I went for a wash at the Acme Cafe at Stortford and I was yellow!”

There were other hazards too in the days before flashing indicators. In July 1955 bus driver Patrick Conway told Cambridge magistrates he’d been travelling along Newmarket Road, intending to turn right. He gave a hand signal and pulled into the centre of the road. As he did so a car behind began to overtake forcing a motorcyclist to swerve. The motorist said he thought the bus had stopped for passengers. One answer would be for conductors in Cambridge to give hand signals from the rear of the bus to supplement those of the driver, as they did in London. But quite how would one indicate a right turn from the back of a bus? And do you remember hand signals anyway?

The conductors were the people who had most contact with passengers. Amongst them were Frances Jeffrey who worked the Cambridge buses together with her driver-husband Jeff for fourteen years until March 1984, though probably the best-known of all was Gladys Hughes who was a conductress with Eastern Counties for 42 years, issuing ‘billions of tickets’ before retiring in December 1983.

Now Paul Carter has researched the story of all Cambridgeshire’s bus and coach operators in the postwar period for his new book ‘Cambridge 2’ in the ‘Super Prestige’ series by Venture Publications. (ISBN 978 1905 304 158 £17.95). It includes many small operators including Jennings of Haslingfield, Percivals, Progressive and Fordham and District who on one occasion sent a 32-seater to take Lode cricket team to Harston. They found that almost everybody in the village wanted to go to support them. The coach eventually left with around 65 passengers on board, including the local policeman!

Do you have other such memories of life on the buses – write to Mike Petty

SCAN

107.02 an Eastern Counties bus takes on passengers on Peas Hill, 1962

100.76 Eastern Counties bus garage, Hills Road, 1954

63.78 line of buses on Cambridge Market Hill, held up by obstruction in Market Street, 1965

there are plenty of other bus photos in the News library

Memories 30th August 2007 by Mike Petty

Life on the buses is not just a matter of driving and conducting: there is the essential back-room work too, as David Hurry recalls in a new book.

I joined Eastern Counties at their Cambridge depot in 1966 as Office Junior, General Dogsbody and Teaboy, although my official title was Depot Trainee. I soon gained experience in the enquiry office (attached to the garage), cash office, operations office, private hire department and stores.

The main business at Hills Road was operations. The cash office employed four staff who just counted cash. Uniforms for crews were delivered as required from a central store. New staff did not always get new clothes! Maintenance was done mainly at the Newmarket Road workshops.

The prestige route was the 151 to Peterborough which was always worked by the newest buses and was the one David used each morning get in from Huntingdon. It was a much easier ride in those days.

“Journey time from Huntingdon to Cambridge was scheduled to be 50 minutes along the old A604, diverting only into Fenstanton. The road was then a three lane single carriageway. There were proper bus stops at the turns to both the Hemingfords, Land Settlement Turn, Conington & Fen Drayton Turn, Boxworth & Swavesey Turn (Trinity Foot), Lolworth Turn and Dry Drayton Turn. Some had bus shelters but others did not, so they were very windswept, the road being rather exposed. Stopping at these points would be unthinkable on the present-day A14, yet there were also unofficial custom-and- practice stops at just about every farm gate.

“Service 151 was always worked by 'country' crews, so passengers saw familiar faces. George Goult and Lydia South were the best crew, Lydia always calling out every stop very precisely as it was being approached, then giving George two bells to continue, or one to stop, long before he needed to start slowing down. They really did get the best out of their bus and always made up any lost time. There was another driver, Ernie Garlick, an American, who often sang to himself as he was driving along. It was not unusual for him to swing the steering wheel from side to side in time with what he was singing. The front of the bus would noticeably keep changing direction, even on a perfectly straight road, but it never caused any problems.”

One of the long-serving drivers for Premier Travel was Fred ‘Smudger’ Smith who recalls his memories of some of the coaches he drove on the London run. “GV 5160 was a good one but BAJ 161 used to kick you like a donkey when you swung the handle to start it. With the Daimlers you had to watch that gearchange pedal or it would knock your foot back. The AEC Regal [BGV 401] was a lovely vehicle but a rum 'un to drive! It had a high speed back axle and low speed steering. The heater was very good and the cab was always nice and warm. I drove it back from London one night when the smog was really bad. It took me 7 hours and 20 minutes to get from King's Cross to Haverhill. (The official journey time was 2 hours and 53 minutes.) My conductor, Jimmy Farrar, walked in front as far as Whipps Cross and I don't

think I changed up a gear until I got to Bishop's Stortford. I went for a wash at the Acme Cafe at Stortford and I was yellow!"

In the 1950s there were other operators. Fordham and District bought a new coach in 1953, but the roof leaked and soaked the local cricket team. On one occasion they sent a 32-seater to take Lode cricket team to Harston but found that almost everybody in the village wanted to go to support them. The coach eventually left with around 65 passengers on board, including the local policeman!

But it's the conductors that most people remember including Frances Jeffrey who worked the Cambridge buses together with her driver-husband Jeff for fourteen years until March 1984. Probably the best-known of all was Gladys Hughes who was a conductress with Eastern Counties for 42 years, issuing 'billions of tickets' before retiring in December 1983.

Do you have memories of life on the buses – write to Mike Petty

Paul Carter has researched the story of all Cambridgeshire's bus and coach operators in the postwar period for his new book 'Cambridge 2' in the 'Super Prestige' series by Venture Publications. ISBN 978 1905 304 158 £17.95

SCAN

107.02 an Eastern Counties bus takes on passengers on Peas Hill, 1962

100.87 Eastern Counties personnel 1956 including Peter Holmes who worked at Newmarket Road as sign writer

100.76 Eastern Counties bus garage, Hills Road, 1954

63.78 line of buses on Cambridge Market Hill, held up by obstruction in Market Street, 1965

Memories by Mike Petty 3rd September 2007

This Saturday it's Cherry Hinton Festival when the Recreation Ground in the High Street will be filled with fairground amusements, stalls, pat dogs, skateboards, Morris Dancers, Samba bands, folk music and a variety of entertainment. It's an occasion for Cherry Hinton folk, old and new, to celebrate their community, but they also welcome 'outsiders' too.

A stranger can often appreciate things that residents take for granted as Chester Jones reflected when he visited Cherry Hinton in March 1927. "There is something highly delightful in strolling through a village looking for attractive houses and cottages and other architectural fragments which may remain. The hideousness of more recent buildings often makes the search a difficult one."

Amongst the items he singled out was the parish church of St Andrew which still stands much as he saw it. Then he continued his exploration: "the charming Red Lion with its tiny window panes is presided over by a tall and stately fir tree. Opposite are two old semi-detached cottages whose plastered walls are a colourful orange. Close to them is perhaps the ugliest house in Cherry Hinton, but we need not dwell on it. Further down the lane, if we can get through the mud, we shall see some more old houses and a great barn on which innumerable persons have cut their names and initials."

He was concerned that steps should be taken to preserve what had survived: "Several cottages are in a sorry condition and should be repaired at once; judicious restoration can do much to make tumbled-down dwellings once more safe and comfortable to live in. Near to the Red Lion is an old house of red brick, delightful in its simplicity. Its sound state of preservation is

in striking contrast to the group of ghostly cottages near the railway crossing which are now in a sad state within and after every high wind are less and less like human habitations. To repair them is now beyond the realms of possibility. On the other side of the railway, at Church End, are several thatched cottages and one with a pleasant mansard roof."

Even 80 years ago people were lamenting the changes. "The discerning stranger notices the incongruity of new houses, the hideousness of garage signs and those monstrosities which our happy-go-lucky methods have allowed to spoil the character".

But all was not lost: "The straggling and untidy appearance of Cherry Hinton is partly due to the yellow brick erections of the last century, but a great deal could be done to improve it. The pleasing red colour wash on the walls of the Hall Farm is a step in the right direction. Among other things, grass might be persuaded to grown neatly in the proper places and the pond, pleasant as it is with a background of big trees, could be much improved."

Cherry Hinton had one redeeming feature: "there is a surrounding belt of agricultural and park land isolating the village from the neighbouring inhabited areas. The greatest care should be taken to protect this from building".

Reflecting how beautiful England must have been a hundred years before, Chester lamented that man cannot have loved the countryside for he had done little to beautify it and a great deal to spoil it. He concluded: "There is enormous scope for improvement and recovery if there can be aroused sufficient public understanding and enthusiasm to suppress the activities of pernicious persons and gradually wipe out all evidence of their energies".

The buildings may have changed, the old times passed away, but the Cherry Hinton festival captures something of the atmosphere of olden days, making it well worth a visit. And if you are interested in days gone by then come along to the History Marquee where you'll find Michelle Bullivant from the Cherry Hinton Local History Society, Bernard Amps who'll help you trace your family history, the Cambridge Preservation Society, displays from the Cambridge Folk and Soham Community Museum, along with antiquarians, archivists, archaeologists and others who have a passion for the past and a joy in sharing it with you.

And while you're there see what survives of the Cherry Hinton that Chester Jones sketched 80 years ago.

Cherry Hinton Festival on the High Street Recreation Ground will be held Saturday 8th September from 11 to 6pm with a grand opening by a Dalek at noon

SCAN OF SKETCHES OF OLD CHERRY HINTON PRODUCED BY CHESTER JONES
IN MARCH 1927 – 80 YEARS AGO

Memories 10th September 2007, by Mike Petty

Judy Wilson is seeking memories of Matthew's, the grocery store and café in Trinity Street, as she's writing the history of the firm and the family. In particular she's trying to track down details of a tragedy.

In her research, Judy has come across two brief mentions of a fire above the shop when a girl was burnt to death. She has a copy of a page of the Cambridge Daily News of May 26th 1948, when an old newspaper seller was recalling his memories. He reports that he was selling papers when this tragedy happened, about 50 years before. Someone she's met in Impington also has a recollection of being told the story. It could have been at the very end of the 19th century or early 20th century. Does anyone know any more about this incident?

What is known is that in 1829, David Matthew, aged just 20, travelled from London to Cambridge. Only three years later he established the business of what became Matthew & Son at 19-21 Trinity Street in the premises where Heffers Bookshop is now. David was the first of just five members of the Matthew family, over just three generations, who were to run the grocery and wine business for the next 130 years.

Deliveries were made three times a day, in 1913 still largely by eleven horse-drawn vehicles though by 1922 they had moved on to motor vans. Orders could be made by telephone (Cambridge 15) and the firm had two telephone lines. Their staff also called to take orders personally, daily at the Colleges and twice a week at customers' homes in the town.

Cambridge residents and former members of staff who remember Matthew and Son always mention the smell of coffee. A large coffee roaster stood in the window and beans were freshly ground for each customer. But tea was also a feature of the shop, "specially blended to suit the water of the district". By 1936, their catalogue listed 40 blends of tea compared to 18 blends in 1913. [SCAN 105.97 PAINTING OF TRINITY STREET SHOWING MATTHEW'S SHOP IN THE FOREGROUND; SCAN 134 TRI – MATTHEWS SHOP OPPOSITE TRINITY COLLEGE c1885; SCAN VAN – A MATTHEW'S VAN c1920; SCAN 101.21 INTERIOR OF MATTHEW'S SHOP 1950's; SCAN ADVERT – ADVERT FOR THEIR TEA ROOM 1922]

You can email judy.wilson3@ntlworld.com or write to her c/o Mike Petty at the News.

Whether you preferred coffee or tea you had to have milk – and that was delivered straight to your door. There were a number of dairies who used horse-drawn milk floats but do you remember when it came direct from the cow? David Swann from Scotland Road tells me that he's heard that milk used to be delivered to Trinity Hall on the hoof – the cow was driven up to the college and milked on the spot. But do you remember this happening – and does anyone have a photo. [5682 - SCAN OF MILKMAN IN SCOTLAND ROAD 1920's]

Other readers have contacted me following recent articles.

Paul Griffin has emailed from Southwold with his memories of Bradwell's Yard where he lived in a cottage owned by Stanley Woolston, who was the soul of kindness to an impoverished post-war couple. Stanley was an antique dealer who numbered Queen Mary amongst his clients. She would occasionally appear at the entrance to the yard or at a window of the shop and look out on the chaos of bicycles and washing amongst the mean dwellings. Paul asks to see a picture of it before it was swept away for Bradwell's Court. [SCAN 6814 – BRADWELL'S YARD 1930's]

Mrs S. Bristow from Cambridge has fond memories of Longstowe, the village in which both her parents were born about 1910. Her father, George Webb, ran a coal firm with his family while her mum, born Margaret Franklin, came from a large family of nine children. Most of her brothers emigrated to Canada and fought with the Canadian army during the First World War, another joined up under age and was killed in the front line shortly after landing in France. Many of her family lie at rest in the village churchyard.

Memories 17th September 2007, by Mike Petty

Last week the News broke the story of the proposal for an outdoor ice skating rink on Parker's Piece. It would, said the organisers be the first time the city had had hosted such an attraction. But we've had them before.

The first three months of 1895 were bitterly cold: frosts of 15 to 20 degrees every night froze vast areas of ice and led to skating matches in the fens. At Newnham a Mr Bartholomew flooded four fields and waited for nature to do her bit. Then he installed a floodlight generator and with good ice, a bright moon and music by the University Volunteer Band who sat 'enclosed in walls of snow', an enjoyable time was had by all until half-past ten. The *Cambridge Express* described the scene: the ground was 'brilliantly lighted with powerful arc lamps and had been enclosed with canvas which was studded with myriads of Chinese lanterns'. His 'ice carnivals' attracted several hundred people who flocked to skate – many in fancy dress. There were crowds of cooks, clowns, proctors, bulldogs and clergymen. Not all were what they seemed.

Enid Porter, the late curator of the Cambridge Folk Museum, recorded a Tale from the Fens told by Chafer Legge who lived near the Ship Inn at Brandon Creek. It was there that he met a University Professor and they got talking about fen skating. Then Chafer got a letter from Mrs Henry Sidgwick, the Principal of Newnham College, who invited him to travel to Cambridge and teach her students to skate. It was an adventure not to be missed.

Chafer recalled: "We walked down to the river with a crowd of happy young women following us, and what a time they had, and so did I. I never expected to have so many pretty wenches throwing their arms round my neck to keep themselves from falling over. A lot of college chaps were soon on the spot, wanting to lend a helping hand, but they were chased away by a couple of 'Vice Principals' – thin as harnsters (herons) and looking as happy as dying ducks in a thunderstorm".

One thing he noticed was that there seemed to be a lot of parsons – including five archdeacons and two bishops - skating and talking to the girls, so he asked one of the college chaps about it. The undergraduate said that only parsons and curates were allowed in Newnham College – a women-only college - but you could hire the outfits for five bob from a little shop in Petty Cury. Those clothes had been in Newnham College so many times that they could find their way there without anyone inside them!

The skating in 1895 proved so popular that a concert by Marie Lloyd due to be held in the Arcade Music Hall had to be cancelled and the venue closed down. The Arcade had been opened by Ernie Hayward, an enterprising local concert promoter, in the original Corn Exchange building on the corner of Downing Street. It had previously been used as a shopping mall until 1884. Now the new Grand Arcade shopping centre is being built nearby

It was probably there that an indoor skating rink opened in January 1876 though it did not last long. More recently plans for a skating rink in Barnwell Road in 1980 came to nothing while in April 1981 Cambridge City Football Club announced that it hoped to set up a rink at their Milton Road ground using synthetic ice. It would be housed in a semi-permanent aluminium and heavy-duty PVC structure which could also be used for five-a-side football, tennis and exhibitions. They hoped it would prove a licence to print money. But like many such schemes it failed to prosper. Perhaps the new one will prove more successful.

None of this was on Parker's Piece – but it has been used for skating before. In the hard winter of February 1963 the Piece became covered with packed ice & snow which was swept away to provide a rink on which many demonstrated their skills. Do you remember it?

SCAN OF SKATING ON PARKER'S PIECE, FEBRUARY 1963
SCAN OF SKETCH FROM 'THE GRANTA' OF SKATING AT NEWNHAM 1895
PAINTING OF NEWNHAM COLLEGE BY WILLIAM MATTHISON, 1907
SCAN OF THE OLD CORN EXCHANGE ON THE CORNER OF DOWNING STREET
AND CORN EXCHANGE STREET – IT WAS USED AS A CONCERT HALL AND
INDOOR SKATING RINK

THE NEWS ARTICLE APPEARED ON MONDAY 10TH SEPT

Memories 24th September 2007, by Mike Petty

Recent Memories articles have encouraged readers to add their own recollections. A picture of an air-raid shelter in Gwydir Street brought back memories for Colin Moule of Chesterton. [COLIN WAS A LONG-TIME CEN REPORTER AND EDITOR OF THE CAMBRIDGE WEEKLY NEWS]

He writes:

I grew up during the war years (I am now 71) and lived the whole of that time at 6, Ainsworth Street in Cambridge. My earliest memory is of sitting under the table with my sister Kathleen (she was originally an evacuee but stayed on with us and grew up with our family after her mother died in London) when a stray bomb hit Vicarage Terrace and killed a number of people early in the war. I can still hear the crump of the bomb and I was then only about five years old!

For a time we used an air raid shelter in the garden of our neighbours (Parren the milkman at No 8) and again I vividly remember scrambling with my family down their garden path in the light of the flares dropped by the German bombers as they tried to hit the railway behind our houses. I remember being quite scared. Soon afterwards my father Percy built an elaborate air raid shelter in our garden. It was an Anderson, sunk well into the soil and covered in earth on which we grew flowers and vegetables. You entered by concrete steps protected by a solid concrete blast wall.

Inside the shelter we had an oil lamp and a couple of seats as well as a bunk bed. We were well prepared! Of this shelter I recall the dank, earthy smell that you sometimes pick up in the bowels of multi-storey car parks. The table in our living room stood in as a shelter during a sudden daylight attack when a bomber came along the railway line and hit some houses beside Mill Road bridge. My grandmother was looking after us that particular afternoon and ordered my sister and I under the table.

My father was an air raid warden and used to stand during air raids just outside our passageway on one side, with Mr Parren on the other. One night we were taken by surprise when the air raid siren sounded immediately after a bomb hit the Methodist Church in nearby Sturton Street. Many windows were broken by the blast and, because he was late getting outside, my father was inside the house when the bomb struck. When he got outside, my father found a red-hot piece of shrapnel in the wall where he normally stood. My brother Robin still has that piece of shrapnel.

Of air raid shelters in general I remember we had one at the top of our street and another outside our school (St Matthew's Junior) at the top end of York Street. My classmates and I dashed into this on one occasion, complete with gas masks, during a sudden daylight raid.

There was also another shelter at the rear of houses in York Street along a dirt roadway that bordered the Co-operative Wholesale Society's slaughterhouse (later to become the Beehive Centre). I remember that a group my friends and I used to play in this one. On St Matthew's Piece at the end of Sturton Street there were a number of earth-covered shelters on which my schoolfriends and I used to play during the lunch break. I distinctly remember sliding down one of these with my friend Tony Frohock from Ditton Fields on June 6, 1944 - D-Day. He had been home to lunch and told me that a thousand ships had gone across to France!

Other shelters I recall were those on Christ's Pieces and what was known as Donkey Common at the Mill Road-Gonville Place junction. As you will now realise, shelters played a big part in our lives during the Second World War! Some still exist: at Castle Street Methodist church we still have a blue You May Shelter Here sign - housed in the underground boiler room which, we think, may have been used as a shelter.

Colin's memories have formed part of 'The Bunker Project' a Heritage Lottery-funded initiative recording the experiences of the people who lived and worked in Cambridge's hidden war spaces. Now the results of their work will be presented at a display and performance at The Junction on Clifton Road, Cambridge next Friday night, September 28 at 8pm. All are welcome, but be warned: small children may find some of the material as disturbing as the small children who lived through those turbulent times.

And if you were one of those, and have memories to share they'd love to meet you – tickets are free from the box office on Cambridge 511511 or you can contact SCAMP, 44 Church Lane, Arlesey, Bedfordshire SG156UX (Telephone 01462 734843).

There's more wartime memorabilia on show at West Wratting village hall on Sunday September 30th, from 10-00am to 6-00pm. Amongst the fascinating photographs and documents will be a display of the history of the RAF airfield at Wratting Common which was operational from 1943 to the end of the war. It will make a good venue for a Sunday excursion.

SCANS – PLEASE ACKNOWLEDGE THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE COLLECTION

THE DEVASTATION CAUSED IN VICARAGE TERRACE, OFF EAST ROAD, WHEN IT WAS HIT BY A BOMB IN 1940

SOME OF CAMBRIDGE'S SHELTERS BEING CONSTRUCTED – A PICTURE FROM THE NEWS IN 1939

A CHILD OUTSIDE AN AIR RAID SHELTER IN ABBEY WALK, 1942

Memories 24th September 2007 - A run on the bank:, by Mike Petty

Last Monday I joined hundreds of prudent people queuing in Sidney Street in an attempt to withdraw their own money from one of the country's leading banks. Many had made long journeys to get there, taken time off work or disrupted their schedules to spend hours and hours standing in a line. One lady had queued more than once, having even got inside the bank itself before being turned away. She was due to be disappointed again as a Manager explained that the doors would be closed long before she reached them. They had every position manned – all two of them – and were processing eight people every hour!

People wondered how in this age of automated banking a simple transaction could take so long. They criticised the management, the government, the system – but there was little criticism of the bank staff on the front line who were working extra-long shifts in the face of a never-ending demand. They were probably the reason why people resignedly walked away and may possibly be the only reason they will ever want to go back once the present crisis has been sorted.

It was all very reminiscent of the run on the banks in December 1825. Then the problem had arisen after many of the small provincial banks had started issuing their own banknotes, leading to criminality and fraud.

In 1819 three parcels of notes from various of the Cambridge banks – including Mortlock, Hollick and Skrine - had been stolen from the greatcoat of James Eccles, the man employed to transport them to and from London, whilst he was refreshing himself in the bar of the Flower Pot public house in Bishopsgate Street, London. Then in 1822 there'd been a number of forgeries of Foster's banknotes in circulation and the bank had issued a reward of £100. This had proved effective, a parcel of 159 forged notes was found dumped beside the road from Saffron Walden to Audley End.

Similar things were happening throughout the country and it got so bad that in 1825 London bankers decided it was time for drastic action. They withdrew all their one and two-pound notes in circulation, substituting gold sovereigns and refused to honour other banks' paper promises.

Everywhere those with banknotes rushed to swap them for gold, which led to banking chaos. In Yorkshire the bank of Wentworth and Co suddenly stopped payment & soon a hundred other country bankers fell victim to the panic, the Peterborough bank of Simpson and White amongst them.

All of this impacted on banks who held notes the others had issued. In Cambridge Thomas Fisher, John Mortlock, Hollick and Foster stopped payment. University colleges and graduates beat a path to the bankers' doors – not to withdraw money but to offer it, tendering large sums of cash if that would help avert collapse. But this help was turned down – it had no prospect of working

John Eaden was a Royston banker who saw it from the other side of the counter. On 15th December his depositors started to demand their money and soon their small stock of gold & coins ran out. His partner, Mr Barker set off for London for a supply, returning laden with £5000 and on opening the bank was beset by an immense crowd: they had to send for constables to keep the rabble from rushing in. The crowds continued on Saturday – 'but we observed they were people of the lowest class - scarcely a respectable man among them'. When Hollick & Company's Bank suspended payments it added to the general panic. There were so many people that the constables guarding the doors were hard pressed to maintain order.

Inside the bank the supply of gold sovereigns was rapidly dwindling so Barker went down for more money. He was gone two days while the queues continued. By the time he returned the crisis seemed to have peaked - most people had already taken their money out. Then came relief – it was Christmas Day.

It had proved a trying period for the Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. They urged the Bank of England to reintroduce one and two-pound notes and instructed the Mint to produce more gold sovereigns. By getting their men to work overtime and pushing their new machinery to the limit they were able to produce some 700,000 sovereigns a week. The crisis was averted and the financial world breathed again.

John Eaden penned an account of the run on his bank which concludes: "We learned a severe lesson. The painful anxiety I underwent during this Flood of Adversity, far exceeded any thing of the sort I was ever before called upon to endure. I was indebted much to the members of my Family for their sympathy, activity & energy by every one displayed and the unexampled kindness of our friends. May such a calamity never over-take me again, nor any one that belongs to me."

This may well be sentiments being expressed by Northern Rock cashiers this week!

SCANS OF SOME OF THE CAMBRIDGE BANKS

FOSTER'S BANK IN TRINITY STREET
MORTLOCK'S BANK ON PEA'S HILL
FISHER'S BANK IN PETTY CURY

ALSO A SELECTION OF PICTURES OF ROYSTON INCLUDING A VIEW OF
CROWDS IN THE HIGH STREET – THIS WAS TAKEN IN 1897 (NOT 1825)
THERE IS ALSO A SKETCH SHOWING ROYSTON WORTHIES READING A
NEWSPAPER – ABOUT THE RIGHT PERIOD

THE NEWS LIBRARY MIGHT HAVE PHOTOS OF BANK NOTES ISSUED BY
CAMBRIDGE BANKS; THERE ARE CERTAINLY SOME IN THE Cambridgeshire
Collection

Memories 1st October 2007, by Mike Petty

Eric Squires started singing when he was seventy. But before that he'd played a wide range of instruments from piano – he bought a baby grand that was too large for his lounge and had to demolished a wall to get it in – to guitar, keyboard and saxophone.

But then he'd plenty of time to practice, for Eric's musical career started at Cherry Hinton British Legion hall in 1936 and went on from there. Just think of a Cambridge dance band and he probably played with them – The Stirlingaires, Chick Asplin, George Freestone, Bob Kidman, the Norman Shepherd Sound, Ken Stevens and of course Reg Cottage's Orchestra, a name forever associated with the Dorothy Ballroom.

Eric played there – but also at The Rex, Cambridge Guildhall, Cambridge colleges, American bases, Royston Town Hall – where the stage sloped so much that they had to put a wedge under the piano to stop it sliding off. – and a vast number of others. Not all were equally well-equipped; one night he turned up to perform for a wedding at Waterbeach only to find that the piano was so battered that it was totally unplayable. So they phoned another band with a accordionist – he came to Waterbeach, Eric took his place at the Dot piano.

There was a camaraderie about the music scene in those days, musicians played for many different bands. All it took was a telephone call and that was enough to set up a new combination.

There was a dress code – it was a bow tie, black jacket and trousers and white shirt – sometimes worn over pyjamas when the weather was cold and with mittens for the sax players

Eric was out night after night – he never missed a gig. He travelled in a variety of motor vehicles; one broke down in Mill Road when the wheel fell off. Then there was the Ford Consul which had space for the drums in the boot but the double bass had to be strapped on top and tied to the front and back bumpers. On occasions it was so foggy that one of the group had to walk in front to show the way. But there was not much traffic about late at night then – in fact when playing at a Police Ball one CID officer told him they kept an eye on cars out in the early hours and had often logged his red Wartburg estate.

That was worrying for if there was one thing Eric knew better than dance halls in was bars. In the days before breathalysers musicians played at their best after a drink or five; the Live and Let Live in Mawson Road was one of his favourite haunts but there were very many others.

Eric drank – and played – with dozens of other musicians including Percy Seeby, Sandy Sandfield, Sid Barret, Andy ‘Tubby’ Talbot, Charlie Wynn, Jeff Grundy, Bill Smee. But he appreciated the talents of many others, visiting the Cambridge Corn Exchange in November 2002 to see ‘Status Quo’ when he was the oldest person in the room, aged 81. “Very good”, he commented, “After a quarter of an hour my ears adjusted and I could hear them fine”.

Unlike the ‘Quo’ Eric never made many records but his son, Russ, resolved to ensure that a professional-quality CD was produced, hiring the ‘Zig Zag Studios’ in Hilton for a session with Eric on keyboard, Russ on bass and John Richardson on drums. They played the music Eric loved – quicksteps, rumbas, waltzes and foxtrots but with a blues jam to warm up with.

It was enough to persuade Eric not to retire after all; despite suffering a stroke he took more bookings whilst still in hospital. He recovered to play ten tea dances – each of three hours – which took great strength and dedication. Eric played his last gig on 4th December 2003 – just one of over 10,000 in a career spanning eight decades. He was still writing music and practising on his keyboard the day before he went into hospital for the last time. The final score was left open: it was ‘I Got Rhythm’. He still had a lot of music in him. He wasn’t ready to go.

Now Russ Squires had compiled a tribute. “One lifetime’s not enough” is not just an account of his dad, it’s a record of many of the other Cambridge music men whose talents brought immense pleasure to generations..

If you ever danced the night away to the sound of a live band, or if your dad was one of those up on stage, then you must get a copy. Its on sale at Heffers or other bookshops at £11.50 (ISBN 0-9554481-0-7) or available direct from Russ Squires, PO Box 577, Cambridge CB1 0FA who still has a few of that CD ‘Long Overdue’ still available for £10.

SCANS

SQUIRES 1 – Eric Squires rehearsing for his CD, May 2003

SQUIRES 2 – Eric (right foreground) jamming at USAF Lakenheath mid 1950s

SQUIRES 3 – Reg Cottages band at the Dorothy, August 1955 – Eric right foreground

SQUIRES 4 – The Stirlingaires relaxing in The Wagon and Horses, Bassingbourn, April 1952 – Eric on the right

SQUIRES 5 – a montage of Cambridge musicians, Eric in centre

Memories 8th October 2007, by Mike Petty

The arrival of large numbers of economic migrants into a rural community was traumatic. They brought a different culture, different values, spoke a language locals could hardly understand, took village houses and jobs and their children swamped the village school.

Its not the Cambridgeshire of today – it’s the Cambridgeshire of the 1930s.

It is hard to comprehend the extent of the misery of people’s lives during the years that followed the Great War. In autumn 1932 local farmers complained that prices were down by 25 per cent and agriculture was bankrupt. Land was going out of production as farmers could

not afford to crop it yet we allowed foreign food to come in with wheat was being imported from Germany.

However farming was not the only area of hardship. There had been great disputes in the shipyards and coal mining industry with two-and-a-half million men were unemployed. Desperate men like Tim Foster got on his bike and cycled from Durham to Derbyshire in search of work. He returned home with his tyres punctured and, with no money for repair materials, had to ride the last 23 miles with the tyre stuffed with grass.

Then the Government came up with a great idea. They would set up a 'Land Settlement Association' to buy up agricultural land to create smallholdings, then offer them to the unemployed men from the north.

One of the estates to come on to the market was that of John Evison of Fen Drayton. It was sold prior to auction and in November 1935 the first ten settlers arrived from County Durham. They were based at Drayton House as they trained for new career. Others followed

Their arrival transformed the village; they spoke with strange thick northern accents and were soon housed in newly-built cottages, far superior to the dilapidated homes of some of the old villagers. They packed the local Methodist chapel, filling it with their singing; their children boosted school attendance – and filled the non-flushing lavatories.

There were benefits: extra people meant more buses, providing everybody with new transport links to St Ives, and the Land Settlement brought extra work for village folk too with local farmers being contracted for jobs such as ploughing and combine-harvesting.

But not everyone welcomed the northerners – they were a race apart, some found them 'cocky'. The children were vociferous and noisy, many had never done an honest day's school work in their lives and were clever only in dodging school work, the teacher complained. The adults visited the pub on Sundays and inevitably there was the call 'Go Home You Miners'.

Those pioneers, brought from their homes to an area so different from their own had to undertake hard, boring work outside in all weathers – all weather had been the same in the underground mines. They faced crop diseases, potato blight and fowl pest; they suffered throughout the Second World War when husbands were called up with Land Girls and Prisoners of War drafted in. They faced the challenges of a post-war world of Government rules and restrictions when the prospect of a quick profit by selling outside the Association's markets was denied them. There was the growth of more and more greenhouses, once more altering the appearance of the area, the coming of the Common Market and then in December 1982 the news that the Land Settlement Association scheme would be ended.

But by now they had become an integral part of Fen Drayton. As the outbuildings were razed, the hustle and bustle of farm and delivery vehicles and supermarket lorries disappeared and the community changed once more. In came high-density houses – in came more strangers.

The story of Fen Drayton and its Land Settlement Association has now been recorded by Pam Dearlove in a new book 'Go Home You Miners!' (ISBN 978-0-9556678-0-0 price £8.95) Its available from the Norris Museum, Fenstanton Post Office and bookshops or from Pam via her website www.gohomeyouminers.com

If you have memories of the Land Settlement either at Fen Drayton or Abington then I'd love to hear from you. Contact Mike Petty at the News

SCAN

PRAM RACE DECEMBER 1965 organised by a newly-formed Social Club with money going towards a New Years Day party for all the village children

BLEAK SCENE: Doris Scutt with her baby in COOTES LANE, FEN DRAYON IN 1947; marrows are growing in the foreground

THE FIRST TRAINEE SETTLERS packing lettuces for the maiden voyage of the Queen Mary in May 1936; their new houses are being erected in background.

TWO PICTURES OF FEN DRAYTON BEFORE THE SETTLERS ARRIVED IN THE 1930S

MANOR FARM WITH CHILDREN IN THE STREET

COTTAGE OPPOSITE CHURCH WITH INSCRIPTION OVER THE DOOR WHICH ROUGHLY TRANSLATES AS 'NOTHING WITHOUT LABOUR' – AN APPROPRIATE MOTTO FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO WERE TO MAKE A NEW LIFE ON THE LAND

Memories 15 October 2007 by Mike Petty

Last week I had the pleasure of escorting a number of American teachers around part of Cambridge, which is how I found myself in Little St Mary's Lane. They admired the church and its garden, but it was the houses on the other side that caught my attention.

For while researching for my 'Looking Back' articles I had just come across an advertisement for the sale of one of these, the former Half Moon inn, in October 1957. Originally the pub stood on the corner of Trumpington Street but moved when its site was acquired for the Emmanuel Congregational Church. In its new home it became very popular with soldiers camped on Coe Fen during the Great War – indeed it seems their bad behaviour may have been one of the reasons that the licence was withdrawn in 1917! [SCAN OF LITTLE ST MARY'S LANE AND AUCTION DETAILS OF THE HALF MOON IN OCTOBER 1957]

On the way home I popped into the News where I found a letter written by Tony Chapman from Cambridge who remembers when the Half Moon was still a pub with Annie Twinn as its landlady.

Annie later moved to the Spotted Cow in Northampton Street which was owned by Hudson's Brewery of Pampisford. In 1907 it was serving about 27 gallons of beer a week together with five dozen bottles of beer or stout – not bad considering there were eight other public houses within a radius of 160 yards. The Spotted Cow was divided into two compartments with a kitchen and two bedrooms and it was here that Mr Chapman's parents lived in two rooms until the pub was pulled down. It had closed by March of 1931

Tony continues: "Annie Twinn moved into Gentle's Yard, off Northampton Street, and my father sat with her every weekend while she looked after the bikes of the village boys from Madingley, Coton and Girton who cycled in for the evening. Dad was an invalid and she would give him a shilling or two for his evening's work".

Tony has many memories of Northampton Street and Catter's Yard (the modern day Kettle's Yard) where he lived until 1932 when he moved to the (in those days) lovely estate of Darwin Drive, off Histon Road. [SCAN OF NORTHAMPTON STREET SHOWING SPOTTED COW PUB, SCAN OF YOUNGSTERS BESIDE THE SPOTTED COW 1930S, SCAN OF DARWIN DRIVE 1982]

Other readers have been in touch following recently Memories and Looking Back articles.

Margaret French from Stapleford spotted a snippet in 'Looking Back' which mentioned the Rector of Stiffkey being seen in Cambridge in September 1932. She writes: "I was very interested in this because my mother always told us of the time she met him on the station. She was with a friend when she spotted him and said 'It's the rector of Stiffkey'. He heard her, thanked her for recognising him and shook her hand. She said she was very embarrassed!"

She had every reason to be, for at that time the Rev Harold Davidson was the centre of much attention. For he'd lead a double life: as well as his congregation in Norfolk, he'd commuted to Soho where he ministered to a rather different flock of down-and-outs and prostitutes. His secret came out after he was late arriving back from Soho for the annual Remembrance Day service and the Bishop of Norwich hired a private detective agency. When he went to trial his face, his life and his family were plastered across every newspaper in the country from February to October when he finally became one of the rare priests to be unfrocked. Following his conviction Harold tried to raise money for an appeal by exhibiting himself in a barrel at Blackpool – the incident referred to in the News report. Later he joined a fair to preach from the lion's den but trod on the lion's tail, which was how he met his end. [SCAN OF CAMBRIDGE STATION IN THE 1930S, COPY OF NEWS ARTICLE FROM 16 SEPT 1932]

Harold Davidson, the Rector of Stiffkey in Norfolk was perhaps better known as the Prostitutes' Padre. He was thrown out of the Church for immoral behaviour in the 1930s. For he lead a double life: as well as his congregation in Stiffkey, he commuted to Soho where he ministered to a rather different flock- down-and-outs and prostitutes, who he had helped for years.

His secret came out after he was late arriving back from Soho for the annual Remembrance Day service. The Bishop of Norwich hired a private detective agency and when the matter went to trial he was convicted of immoral behaviour. Following his banishment from the Church Harold tried to raise money for an appeal by exhibiting himself in a barrel at Blackpool. Then he joined a fair to preach from the lion's den but trod on the lion's tail, which was how he met his end.

here were few people living in England in 1932 who did not know the name of the Rector of Stiffkey. His name, his face, his life and his family were plastered across every newspaper in the country from February, when his impending trial was announced, to October when he finally became one of the rare priests to be unfrocked. People followed him wherever he went. They descended on his parishes by train, car, coach, bicycle – any means of transport they could find to see him in person, to shake his hand or to hear him speak. They continued to follow him till his death.

It was the media trial to end all media trials as the prosecution peeled his life to pieces in their attempt to accuse him of Immorality. It was the last Consistory court trial to be held in England under the old Immorality Laws of the Church. The Laws were repealed in the wake of it.

The press had a field day. The Chancellor of the diocese of Norwich who was to sit in judgement on the case, allowed the prosecution's request to have the trial transferred to London with reporting restrictions lifted. They could report whatever they wished. The actual proceedings were printed in every newspaper and avidly read by those who couldn't attend.

Counsels sparred against each other day after day, over the way the trial was being conducted. The controversy between them was such that they refused to sit in the restaurant at the same time during meal breaks and they glared at each other in the corridors. Each side became fiercely determined to win.

People queued from early morning to get a seat in the public gallery to watch the action. Crowds lined the streets 4 deep around Church House and later the Law Courts. Nothing like it had been seen before. It ignited public opinion right across the divides.

As the trial progressed enormous public sympathy began to extend to this tiny 57-year-old cleric who was so valiantly defending what he believed in. People pressed money into his hands for his defence if they saw him walking in the street; taxis gave him rides in London without charge. He was described in the press as having “the look of an intellectual and the gait of a man of the world.” He came out of it to a world largely convinced of his innocence but with a guilty tag tied to his name.

For the remainder of his life he continued to fight for the repeal of the laws under which he had been tried and for the reform of Consistory courts bringing them in line with courts of law; to ensure what had been done to him could never happen again and so that in future an accused priest had the right to due process.

He died 5 years later after being mauled by a lion. He was buried in Stiffkey at the request of the villagers who called him the only real priest they ever knew. They’ve cared for his grave ever since.

Over the last 70 years, books and documentaries have attempted to relate the story of this extraordinary enigmatic clergyman. Now for the first time his family have come forward to write the real story of his life and to bring out the truth behind the sensation.

Did any of your family meet a notorious character – write to Mike Petty at the News

Mr J. Gawthrop of St Ives has written to say that the milkman shown in Scotland Road (Memories 10th September) could well be Mr Arthur Jacobs who used to farm at Long Reach in Chesterton Fen. He had two other horses that he and his daughter would ride along the towpath at the Cambridge town bumping races.

Memories 22nd October 2007, by Mike Petty

Last week Cambridgeshire police visited more than 60 garages across the county to establish a new Forecourt Watch group. It was intended to crack down on motorists who fill up with petrol and then drive off – a crime known as “bilking”.

By one of those curious coincidences I recently carried just such a story in my Looking Back column – it came from 75 years ago. On rechecking the cutting I see that even then it was known as ‘bilking’

The Oxford English Dictionary gives various definitions for the word; one is “To ‘do a person out’ of his due; to cheat, defraud; to evade payment of a debt” with an example recorded from

1672. Another is “To elude, evade, escape from, ‘give the slip’ to” which also dates back to the 1600’s

That being so the victim back in 1932 was ‘bilked’ twice.

This is the story as it was reported in the Cambridge Independent Press on 21st October 1932:

‘A Cambridgeshire garage man’s amazing ride on the running board of a stolen car, whose occupants had tried to bilk him of the price of a quantity of petrol, has just come to light. The garage man was Mr Butler, who owns a filling station on the main Cambridge-Ely road, near the outskirts of the village of Milton

To a ‘Press and News’ representative he stated: “Two men drove up to my filling station in a large Talbot saloon car. They were both quite well dressed, and one of them asked me to put ten gallons of petrol in the tank. Just as I was screwing on the cap after filling up, I noticed the car begin to move. I jumped on the running board as they drove out into the road. They said they had not finished, and drove into the draw-up again.

“Instead of paying me, however, one of them used abusive language, and the car drove off at a high speed out of the garage and down the road towards Ely. I managed to get my head in the window and cling on. To try and throw me off they drove on to the grass verge and tried to knock me off against the telegraph poles. I tried to get hold of the wheel, but there was a man between me and the driver, and he got in the way

“They drove off the grass verge again and went on very fast through the village, and kept telling me to get off. I said I could not at the speed they were doing. They slowed down a little and I prepared to jump. Just as I had got one foot off the running board the man nearest me gave me a push. I went over and over in the road, and was picked up by a lorry driver. Completely dazed. When I came to the car had vanished”.

The car was later seen at Clayhithe where two men inquired the way to the Newmarket Road. It was later traced as one stolen in the London area.

SCAN OF PICTURES OF MILTON 1930S AND 1949

I HAVE ASKED THE Cambridgeshire Collection FOR A SCAN OF A PICTURE OF MILTON GARAGE IN 1940; IF IT COMES THROUGH I WILL FORWARD IT

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Steve Wilkinson from Histon writes: “The article about ice-skating on Parker’s Piece (Memories 17th September) brought back long term memories for me! Way back in late ‘40’s, I was a Choirboy at St. Andrew’s Church, Old Chesterton, and I remember ice-skating on ‘The Willows’ at the end of Cam Road. The land belonged to Herbert Charles Banham who was a well-known boat builder. I seem to remember a model railway going round it as well but each winter a great part of the garden was allowed to flood and if deemed safe, ice-skating was allowed. Coloured fairy lights were placed around the garden and music was played on a gramophone and relayed via a tannoy system. I seem to remember when Mr Banham died, flooding, hence ice skating, ceased and the land and bungalow were subsequently sold for development. I also remember ice skating on the Sewage Farm along Milton Road when the powers that be turned the proverbial blind eye.” [SCAN OF CAM ROAD – NOW ELIZABETH WAY – WHERE BANHAM HAD HIS HOME]

The sewage farm at Milton was a popular venue in the winter of 1925-1926 when the News reported that skating was continued with safety and there were quite a number of people, chiefly Varsitymen, making gay while the ice held. The council tried to crack down with notices of ‘keep off the ice’,

barbed wire entanglements, and a policeman on skates taking the names of trespassers. Despite this there were hundreds taking the risk of being prosecuted rather than miss the opportunity of such splendid sport. As the freeze continued there were some 500 people on the ice on a January Sunday in 1926. I also have a note that the skating championship of the fens was held at the Cambridge Sewage Farm in February 1954. Does anybody remember or have snaps they took at the time?

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Mr J. Gawthrop of St Ives has written to say that the milkman shown in Scotland Road (Memories 10th September) could well be Mr Arthur Jacobs who used to farm at Long Reach in Chesterton Fen. He had two other horses that he and his daughter would ride along the towpath at the Cambridge town bumping races. [SCAN OF MILKMAN]

Memories 29th October 2007 by Mike Petty

MARGARET SHEPHARD from Longstanton has responded to my plea for memories of the Land Settlement at Great Abington

She writes: "It was in spring 1949 that we came to the Great Abington Land Settlement Estate, looking for a new life.

"We had a young family, were optimistic, not afraid of hard work, probably foolish and with very little money But we wanted to be independent and to farm. The Land Settlement offered us a start.

"Our holding was comprised of 22 acres of land, a two-bedroomed house, a 60-foot greenhouse, a poultry house and a general purpose building for storage and livestock. We were delighted with our kingdom. There was a living room, a tiny dining room, a kitchen, where the bath was, and a separate loo halfway up the stairs. The bath had a wooden cover which made a very useful worktop, when not in use.

"There were 60 holdings on the estate and apart from the central management area there was a propagation centre, a machinery pool with staff to work the land and experts to advise on horticulture and livestock management. The office marketed the produce and bought all livestock, and all plants were bought from 'The Prop'.

"We were there for seven years, growing lettuce, tomatoes and cucumbers under glass, together with mushrooms and outdoor crops, including asparagus with a few acres of cereal or sugar beet at the bottom of the holding. The salad crops were cut or picked three times a week, packed into trays or boxes and collected from the side of the road. They were taken to 'The Office' where they were graded and despatched to the markets - usually Covent Garden. Eggs were similarly dealt with once a week - we had a flock of 100 laying birds which ranged freely together with three or four sows whose progeny were reared to bacon weight and Gwennie the goat.

"It was hard work, with not many days off in the year. We were often on the job by six in the morning or earlier to have the produce ready for collection. Tenants could grow what they wished, but mostly we grew what paid the best! We paid a monthly rent with a day of settlement at the end of each month, and if sometimes the monthly cash flow was not all it might have been, then the management was understanding. It was a good time we spent there, a happy time where we made good friends. When we came there were still some of the original Durham mining families working holdings but mostly the tenants were incomers such as ourselves, all keen for a life in agriculture and eternally grateful to the Land Settlement Association for a foot on the first rung of the farming ladder."

Don Unwin from Histon has shared with me his memories of skating at Banham's meadow "As a young boy I was taken by my Dad and taught how to skate on both that flooded meadow and the sewage farm at Milton in the late 1920s. Dad was a typical fen skater, he used to skate around the sewage farm at a frightening speed, wearing long Norwegian runners. I used Mum's normal skates, she used to go skating with him before I was born. The meadow Mr Banham used to flood was between his bungalow and the river.

"The model railway was not on that meadow but on a piece of rough ground on the other side of Cutter Ferry Path near Banham's boat yard.

"H C Banham was President of the Cambridge Model Engineering Society, and he and his wife were great friends and benefactors of the society He let us have the use of the land free and allowed us to use a load of old concrete air raid shelters as beams for the track. We started work there about 1950. I did the surveying and the layout of the large oval track with 21/2 inch and 31/2 inch gauge rails."

Don has sent me a photo taken in 1955 of a happy train load of children behind a loco built by the driver. He was Bert Jeavons, H C B's engineering workshop foreman.

The Model Engineers moved to a new track in Fulbrooke Road in 1959, where they still have public running days with trains giving rides.

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Memories 5th November 2007, by Mike Petty

Reminiscing in the News is nothing new. Those olden days, we are led to believe, were more peaceful with none of the mugging or gun-crime we worry about now – but not according to John Bailey who in November 1932 recalled the Fen Ditton area as he'd known it in the 1880s. It was not a pleasant place:

"I knew Fen Ditton when there was no railway and no bridges. I see the constant stream of horses and carriages through the village street to the Paddock at Ditton Corner during 'May Week'. This was the village lads' harvest and sometimes we picked up a pound each during that week. In those days Tom Tuddenham kept The Plough, Jack Turner the King's Head, and Joe Sargent the Blue Boar, three excellent landlords.

I wonder how many can recall our school days when Miss Fothergate was the mistress and Miss Green and Miss Peachey were the teachers. We had to take twopence every Monday to pay for our schooling. Then there came a day when my mother told me that there would not be any more money to pay for school. I went to school that morning fearing I should be sent back home to fetch the usual fee – I was not old enough to understand anything about the law – and I was surprised when the mistress did not ask for it, nor did she get her book to put it down. That fact remains very vivid in my memory.

Where are those boyish pals of mine who went to the school with me? There were Few, Hayhow, Gunting, Pamphlin, Harry Newman and many others. We were just mischievous boys, up to any boyish prank, often to our own discomfort.

I think Newman was the leader in the really harmless tricks we used to play, but Pamphlin was the force that held us together, for he was the master of the school and held his own more than once when it came to a 'set-to' with another scholar. We used to settle our little differences in the spinney in the evening down Long Lane, where the railway bridge now

stands. They were quite harmless little scraps, and George Pamphlin always remained the cock-of-the-walk. But George was a king-hearted lad. I am sure he would give his last copper to a beggar on the road. He was the best fighter among us, and he knew it, but he never sought trouble: it had to be forced upon him before he threw his jacket on the ground and rolled up his shirtsleeves, I believe he joined the army. Harry Newman was more of a thinker. Mr Frederick Bailey had him bound apprentice to a carpenter in Cambridge and he became an excellent craftsman and a power in his native village. He was a strong churchman and remained in the choir until he died. I understand a brass plate has been placed above the seat he occupied for so many years. Hayhow is, I believe, engaged in one of the colleges at the present time.

The old Ditton Lane was very lonely in those days. There was not a house in it and at one time a deep pit existed from which coprolites had been dug, that was partly filled with water. That was a real danger. Halfway down the lane was a grass lane leading to the holts, called Cut-throat Lane, and many people had a holy fear of it after dark because of the tales that were told concerning its history. Its reputation was made worse by the schoolmistress, Miss Fothergale, being struck from behind with some hard object, which rendered her unconscious, by some unknown person, who robbed her and left her. Fred Plumb found and assisted her home. That lane is now incorporated in the field.

For seven years and nine months I walked along that lane, night and morning, after the above event until November 1887 but I went armed. Once I was stopped at the same spot. I stepped into the road and at the same time I fired a shot into the air. This had the desired effect. I called after a retreating figure, "I've got five more barrels and, by gosh, I'll use them if you come any of your Fothergale tricks with me". I spoke to no-one of this. I waited. Afterwards the village policeman one day said to me, "Do you ever see anyone hanging about the lane at night". I asked him why? He surprised me by saying "I thought you did, as you carry firearms". I asked him to tell me who told him, and he did. I told him only one person knew I carried a pistol and that was the man who stopped me in the lane a few weeks ago.

In those days there were no houses after the Globe Inn on the Newmarket Road until you came to the toll-house at the corner of Ditton Long Lane, with the exception of Elfleda House. This was Ditton as I knew it.

SCANS

104.97 Fen Ditton church – a peaceful scene but the village was not always peaceful, 1914

7306 – down by the river – 1880

Globe – the Globe Inn on Newmarket Road 1914 – recalled by John Bailey

86.527 – children on their bikes and mothers with prams beside Fen Ditton Church, 1920s

Memories 12th November 2007, by Mike Petty

Once more the centre of Cambridge is undergoing transformation with the opening of the new John Lewis store with a postal address of 10 Downing Street. But who remembers another business that used to operate from that part of the street.

For about 150 years it was the home of Runcimans veterinary surgeons. Just before they left in the mid 1970s the News sent its reporter Deryck Harvey to interview the principal, James Runciman.

He could trace the firm's history back 150 years. His grandfather had started a practice at Ely and five of his sons qualified as veterinary surgeons. It could be a dangerous job: in April 1905 James's father met with a serious accident while driving his trap along the Mildenhall

Road towards Littleport. His horse shied on meeting a motor and plunged headfirst into a deep ditch, breaking its neck. Mr Runciman had been thrown after it and the trap overturned on top of him. He managed to extricate himself and was taken to the house of Mr Glover, a farmer, where he was treated with the greatest kindness.

He survived and three years later moved to Downing Street to provide cover for an eminent veterinary surgeon named Banham who wanted a few days break. He never left. The Cambridge surgery was based in the stables of the old Bird Bolt Hotel, an ancient hostelry that had made way for a handsome new headquarters for the Norwich Union Insurance Company with its ornamental white stone façade that opened in 1906.

Banham had remodelled the inn yard with a long room in which he used to give lectures in elementary veterinary science to undergraduates who were taking agricultural courses. There was a forge with three fires and six men with stabling for 20 horses together with a set of horse stocks – the blacksmith used to put awkward animals into them for shoeing. The stables opened out onto the pavement in Downing Street. When the horses had their heads out over the bottom halves of the doors people had to step out into the street to get past.

At the turn of the century horse were an important part of the Cambridge scene. There were various livery stables around the town: 100 horses were stabled in Hopkin's Yard, Trumpington Street. Captain Cooper had 50 in King Street, the Lion Yard had room for another 70.

It made work for various veterinary surgeons including Harry Hills who had premises in the University Arms Hotel yard and Dr Waterhouse in Silver Street. About 1910 they amalgamated with the Downing Street practice.

The head groom at the beginning of the century was Jack Midgeley who lived in King Street. He was quite a short tubby, thick-set man with bow legs and a forthright manner. Everyone called him John Bull, James recalled. "He would not let anything go out of the yard if it wasn't turned out properly. The horse had to have his mane and tail combed and water-brushed and his hooves oiled. If I was going out riding he would inspect me too, probably taking a rubber out of his pocket to dust my boots. If you weren't turned out in proper order, you wouldn't go out of the yard, never mind whether you were the boss or not"

James recalled that in his younger days there was so much work that the vets would walk to their work – it wasn't worth putting a horse to a gig or getting a car out. But times had changed: "As I first remember it, if anybody had a sick dog or cat, as a general rule they would have it destroyed and start with a fresh one".

The surgery ceased when the old Norwich Union building was redeveloped. Its replacement at 10 Downing Street was topped out in September 1975. Now another firm trades from that address.

But do you remember when it was Runcimans?

Memories 19th November 2007, by Mike Petty

Studying local history is one of the best ways for a relative newcomer to feel part of the community and

Bridget Smith has taken a special interest in the village of Hemingford Grey. She soon found there was a lot to learn.

Soon after coming to the area in the 1970s she was walking across the meadow to St Ives after the hay had been cut and spotted what some ancient ditches, dating perhaps from

prehistoric times, she thought. She mentioned this to one of her older neighbours who quickly put her right! They were not ancient at all, in fact, as a boy, he had been part of the group who, at the beginning of the second world war, had been given the task of digging a network of ditches across the meadow to prevent enemy planes from landing!

Going back earlier than living memory Bridget was fascinated to contrast the rather solemn language of the Parish Council minutes with the more racy newspaper reports - such as when the leading Non-conformist Liberal councillor clashed with his opposite number from the Church of England Conservative side over whether to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee by building a Reading Room or erecting a lych gate to the new cemetery. The Reading Room won but 20 years later the cemetery got its pretty gate too.

Old photographs were invaluable, she found, although people rarely snapped the mundane things that she now wanted to see. For example the Hemingford local history society has been searching, so far in vain, for a picture of the village pond that was filled in in the 1950s. But stories about it abound. One tells how a rather pompous village lady dropped off to sleep as she drove back from St Ives in her horse and trap only to wake up marooned in the pond, taken there by her independently minded horse.

The Hemingford regatta is the oldest village regatta in the country, and is still going strong. Bridget has lent me a photo taken in 1955 which shows the crews racing towards Hemingford Grey Church in the final of the Vicar's Sculls trophy event where bells and fireworks from the tower proclaim the winner.

Her photo shows the boathouse (built about 1906) which had a purpose-built artist's studio upstairs. It was demolished in the mid 1970s. If you have any memories of this she would be very interested to hear them as her latest project is researching the artist colony that lived and worked in the villages of Houghton, Hemingfords, St Ives and Holywell between 1880-1930.

Bridget's giving a talk in St Ives Library on 27th Nov at 7.30 p.m. and would be delighted to see you there. A few days later, on Saturday December 1st the Hemingfords' Local History Society will be hosting a drop-in day, entitled 'Writers of the Hemingfords', at The Reading Room, High Street, Hemingford Grey from 10.00am to 3.00pm. Members who have published books on local history will be present, there will be displays of photographs and books for sale – but most of all they'd love to hear your reminiscences or see your snaps.

You can email Bridget Smith at tobridget@hotmail.com or write to me and I'll put you in touch

**BRIDGET'S PHOTO OF THE REGATTA – AND A PICTURE OF THE RIVER,
SHOWING THE CHURCH, TAKEN BY THE NEWS IN THE MID 1970'S**

**A PAINTING OF HEMINGFORD BY HENRY H. PARKER – DO YOU KNOW
ANYTHING ABOUT HIM?**

Last week's mention of Runciman, the vets who practised in Downing Street, Cambridge, has brought back interesting memories. Miss Daphne Foreman of Cambridge remembers hearing the clang of the anvil when walking along Downing Street and of something bizarre: a tiny horse head suspended by its neck that hung in the vet's waiting room. It was only about two inches but had a perfectly-shaped horse's hoof and just four points where the legs would have developed. It was labelled 'Willnot Winalot', she recalls.

Mr R.T. Norman of Waterbeach tells me how, as a lad, he used to go with a lorry to clear out the Downing Street stables – it was a very regular and unpleasant job. The muck was taken to

be burnt on the steeplechase course at Cottenham that they owned. The Runciman family lived in a large house in Howes Close – Mr Norman went and cut the lawn and made hay in the garden. But as well as curing animals the vet also culled them. Rabbits were a very great pest and it was his son who brought breeding fleas from Australia which he introduced into a field to bring myxomatosis into the rabbit population.

In 1953 outbreaks of the disease killed 99 per cent of the rabbits but they recovered quickly. It was a distressing sight to see the stricken animals, Major Harry Legge-Bourke, the Isle of Ely MP told Parliament in June 1956. He'd gone shooting in Norfolk at the height of an outbreak: "There was more mercy-killing that day, than the shooting of game. I was truly horrified by the effect", he confessed. The rabbit had a food value and a manufacturing value, it was of use to the economy of the country and for export. Now because of a lack of rabbits, foxes were feeding on animals they had never troubled before. Whenever man tried to upset the balance of nature he created as many troubles as he solved. People had also attempted to exterminate the grey squirrel, which ate pigeons' eggs. The result was a great increase in pigeons, which were a pest, the Major told members, 50 years ago.

Memories 26th November 2007, by Mike Petty

Michael Reynolds grew up beside the Cam in the 1920s. He remembered how residents of the cottages along Granta Place were allowed to dry their washing on Laundress Green – and how at one time the council hired out washing lines. It was here too that they would beat their carpets – there were no vacuum cleaners then – and also had right to fill their buckets from dipping holes for drinking purposes. Courting couples used to canoodle beside the buttresses of Peterhouse wall along Coe Fen and Michael used to ride along path on bicycles and throw banger fireworks against the wall!

Nearby was Bunker's Hill Island which was annexed by John Hodson and became known as Hodson's Garden. He built a summer-house with his coat of arms on it where he supervised the fish hatchery he constructed. He invested his money in the railways but lost it when a speculator fled to America, forcing him to sell the land which was bought by the Dale brewing family. They used it to entertain their friends to tea by the river

Later Michael Reynold's mother turned it into a riverside tea garden to cater for the passing boat trade. She got permission to have a punt fitted with an outboard motor so she could transport food and drinks from the Belle Vue Hotel that they owned.

The Belle Vue was the first in Cambridge to have central heating and hot and cold running water. It also boasted a pleasant drawing room, card room, spacious lounge and loggia. In 1930s it acquired an 18-hole crazy-golf course with hazards such as a howitzer gun and a water jump. There was a dovecote on the lawn which was home to fantail pigeons until it became overcrowded. When the pigeons started laying eggs on hotel beds they had to go.

Guests were summoned to meals by a large and loud eighteen-inch gong which was beaten twice before a meal by Alice the waitress. They could enjoy wines, sherry and port – but beer had to be fetched by waiters from the Mill pub as the liquor licence issued by the Vice Chancellor of the University did not cover spirits or beer.

Michael sometimes accompanied his mother as she went shopping for fresh food. She bought from the fish market in Peas Hill, vegetables from Horace Simpkins a Cottenham farmer, fruit from Whitehead's stall, and groceries from Matthews in Trinity Street and Eaden Lilley of Market Street

Afternoon teas were popular with a choice of three or four different types of sandwiches, buttered brown and white bread with jam, a selection of 'dipped' French fancy cakes and a rich fruitcake. As the number of guests increased they ran out of tables, chairs, and lawn space. So they doubled the price. But numbers still increased.

By then the Belle Vue had become the Garden House Hotel and established its reputation as Cambridge's finest. It was a reputation that Michael worked to enhance once he took over after the Second World War. They welcomed notable guests, including Diana Dors in 1950 and Jack Cohen who stayed while preparing for the opening of Cambridge's first Tesco in St Andrew's Street

They hosted weddings, receptions and dinners, including one to promote holidays in Greece in 1970. However a number of academics and others felt this was endorsing an 'illegal' Greek regime and organised a demonstration that escalated into a riot during which guests were attacked, policemen injured and part of the hotel trashed. The resultant trial made headlines around the world and caused Michael much trauma. Worse was to follow. In April 1972 the hotel was swept by a disastrous fire in which two women guests lost their lives.

Michael and his management team moved to the other hotel he had established, the Royal Cambridge, where he planned a new first-class hotel, building on the reputation of the old. It was rapturously received, bookings flooded in and everybody was supportive – apart from the bank. When they refused to honour an agreement they'd made Michael arrived at work to find the Official Receiver sitting at his desk. His connection with the Garden House was abruptly ended and a nightmare period ensued. But he refused to give up, as those attending his funeral today will be told.

Michael Reynolds battled cancer and compiled his memories of Growing up with The Garden House. They were sent to the printers only hours before his death.

Now copies of his remarkable account of a remarkable life can be obtained from his son, David, at dmichaelreynolds@hotmail.co.uk. There is no charge though a £10 donation to Hospitality Action at 62 Britton Street, London, EC1M 5UY would be appreciated. Michael never called on them for help, but others in his most hard-working profession do.

SCANS

RIOT AT THE GARDEN HOUSE HOTEL

FIRE AT GARDEN HOUSE HOTEL

THE HOTEL FROM A 1932 BROCHURE

DIANA DORS STAYED AT THE HOTEL IN 1950

SKETCH OF THE FISH MARKET ON PEAS HILL

Memories 3rd December 2007 by Mike Petty

Three readers have been in touch with musical items.

Linda Gipp would like further details about the Cambridge Railway Silver Band. Her grandfather, John William Johnson played the big drum and was an engine driver. His son, also John William Johnson - but known as Jack – also played. She has a photograph of the band taken about 1930, posed in front of a locomotive, and another with a shield taken in the mid 1920s. But what did they win it for? Let me know if you can help, or if you recognise anybody in the picture. [SCAN OF BAND IN FRONT OF LOCO; SCAN OF THE SHIELD]
Email Linda at stuartcam@ntlworld.com

George Gould has an original sketch by Ronald Searle, who was the News cartoonist for some years. It shows the Magpies Concert Party. The pianist is Cyril Gould, the lady next to him is his wife Dorothy (Doll) Gould, but the other four people he's not so sure about. Can anybody identify them? The names George recalls in association with the 'Magpies' are Godwin Hunt, George Gass, Dolly Hunt and Alice Reynolds. If you can help then email ggould@totalise.co.uk or drop me a line at the News

[SCAN OF SEARLE SKETCH OF THE MAGPIES CONCERT PARTY]

Mrs T.A. Harrall from Willingham has sent me a photo of the Ken Stevens Orchestra when the line-up was Barry Mason (trumpet), Bertie Smith (baritone sax), Don Jenkins (alto), Mike Waller, (tenor), Bernie Stubbings (drums), Ken Stevens (piano) and Ken Southee (double bass). [SCAN OF THE KEN STEVENS ORCHESTRA]

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My mention of Runciman's, the vets in Downing Street has brought further details from Dr P.G. Jackson of Over. He has researched the family in some detail, tracing them back to Thomas Runciman senior who set up in Ely in 1890 where he remained until his death in 1930. Four of his five sons qualified as veterinary surgeons of whom James G Runciman took the Downing Street practice in 1907 where he was joined by his son, James P.G.

Dr Jackson recalls:

"As a boy I often walked past the practice premises in Downing Street and barking dogs could often be heard. JG and JPG Runciman were always dapper and mostly wore trilby hats. One or both could often be seen working as veterinary inspectors at Cambridge Cattle Market on Mondays. I came in contact with them when I helped out at the dairy at Home Farm, Babraham in my school holidays. They had many interesting remedies including 'Runciman's Red drink' and 'Runciman's Yellow drink' and had the RCVS coat of arms on their medicine bottles. On one memorable day I helped JPG Runciman deliver twin calves at Babraham and was even more determined then to train as a veterinary surgeon myself"

He would love to hear more about the family. You can email him at pggj2@cam.ac.uk or write to me and I'll put you in touch.

Don Unwin has sent more memories of Banhams boatyard; he writes:

"Banhams used to build their own hire boats on the site whilst the rowing 4s and 8s were built in the "long room", a long timber workshop constructed over a wet dock nearer to Victoria bridge. The Cambridge 8s for the Oxford & Cambridge boat race were built in this workshop. In the dock underneath steam launches were often moored. When floods were expected all the electric motors and other gear likely to be affected were unbolted and lifted up onto the benches. On one occasion Mr Leach's steam launch was moored in there when the river level rose unexpectedly one night and the funnel pushed the floor boards of the workshop above up!

"Life in the workshop on Saturday mornings were hectic, hire boats came in early, hopefully before 10am and had to be serviced before the first hirers arrived about 12 noon. Apart from cleaning and refuelling this sometimes involved an engine change or other repair work. It was a case of everybody being pressed into help and on occasions I used to go and give a hand. If a hire boat broke down whilst away from the yard this involved sending a rescue party either by road or in another boat. Although very rare, gas explosions due to ignition of leaking Calor gas, which is heavier than air, laying in the bilges were not unknown. They also

ran trip boats on the river, the Viscountess Bury and the Enchantress were the two large ones.”

Another reader, Michael Pittcock wonders if anybody has any information about the Viscountess Bury which used to operate cruises between Cambridge and Ely? It was to be refitted in the mid 1980s, but where is it now, he wonders. You can email

mikep_cb1@msn.com

[SCAN OF VISCOUNTESS BURY WITH CAM CONSERVATORS ON BOARD, 1964]

Memories 10th December 2007, by Mike Petty

Many older residents can recall when their town or village had a dozen or more pubs. But few people can list as many as Patrick Ashton who has been researching the story of Ely Inns. He has tracked down about 80, most of which have now ceased trading

They included the Red Lion in the High Street that closed in 1911. It was already an inn by Christmas Day 1636 when two Ely labourers were charged with burglary. While the landlady, Mary Smythe and all the rest of the household were at divine service, one of them "did beate downe a Baye which he did cutt with a morespade, a hammer and a paire of pynsers; dyd breake open two lockes, the one of a trunke and the other of a chest wherein her money did lye. And took out x pounds in gould, twenty in silver and xxx tie single pence". The Red Lion was obviously a hospitable place: sixty years later Elizabeth Stoughton of Bottisham told how she was awoken from her slumbers by a cider merchant of Downham Market trying to get into bed with her. She fought him off and went back to sleep, only to be disturbed a second time, this time by a Newmarket innkeeper.

This is only one: there was the Bell, the Club, Cromwell Arms, Elephant and Castle, George and Dragon, Maid's head, Queen's Head and the Tinker of Ely. Not to mention the Royal Standard (which was once a tearoom and private museum), Windmill, Woolpack and Globe.

But what others do you remember. To jog your memories see Patrick's new book "Ely Inns" which has just been launched – with wine rather than beer – by the Ely Society. (ISBN 0-903616-23-8 £7.99)

Michael Reynolds, who died recently, knew more than anybody else about one Cambridge hotel: the Garden House. It started life as the Belle Vue when it was the first to have central heating and hot and cold running water. It also boasted a pleasant drawing room, card room, spacious lounge and loggia. In 1930s it acquired an 18-hole crazy-golf course with hazards such as a howitzer gun and a water jump. There was a dovecote on the lawn that was home to fantail pigeons until they started laying eggs on hotel beds!

Guests were summoned to meals by a large and loud eighteen-inch gong which was beaten twice before a meal by Alice the waitress. They could enjoy wines, sherry and port – but beer had to be fetched by waiters from the Mill pub as the liquor licence issued by the University Vice Chancellor did not cover spirits or beer. Michael sometimes accompanied his mother as she went shopping for fresh food. She bought from the fish market in Peas Hill, vegetables from Horace Simpkins a Cottenham farmer, fruit from Whitehead's stall, and groceries from Matthews in Trinity Street and Eaden Lilley of Market Street

Afternoon teas were popular with a chose of three or four different types of sandwiches, buttered brown and white bread with jam, a selection of 'dipped' French fancy cakes and a

rich fruitcake. As the number of guests increased they ran out of tables, chairs, and lawn space. So they doubled the price. But numbers still increased.

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They hosted weddings, receptions and dinners, including one to promote holidays in Greece in 1970. However a number of academics and others felt this was endorsing an 'illegal' Greek regime and organised a demonstration that escalated into a riot during which guests were attacked, policemen injured and part of the hotel trashed. The resultant trial made headlines around the world and caused Michael much trauma. Worse was to follow. In April 1972 the hotel was swept by a disastrous fire in which two women guests lost their lives.

Michael and his management team moved to the other hotel he had established, the Royal Cambridge, where he planned a new first-class hotel, building on the reputation of the old. But when his bank refused to honour an agreement they'd made Michael arrived at work to find the Official Receiver sitting at his desk. His connection with the Garden House was abruptly ended and a nightmare period ensued. But he refused to give up. Now copies of his remarkable account of a remarkable life can be obtained from his son, David, at dmichaelreynolds@hotmail.co.uk. There is no charge though a £10 donation to Hospitality Action at 62 Britton Street, London, EC1M 5UY would be appreciated.

SCANS OF ELY PUBS – NAMED

SCAN OF THE BELLE VUE, DIANA DORS WHEN SHE VISITED CAMBRIDGE AND OF THE FIRE AT THE GARDEN HOUSE IN 1972

Memories 17th December 2007, by Mike Petty

At this time of year people traditionally like to look back on the 'Good old Days'. Seventy-five years ago, on 23rd December 1932, the News reflected on 'Christmas Memories': "The grocers and wine merchants handed out gaily coloured almanacs as 'Christmas Boxes' and butchers made a sucking pig, decorated with gold and silver tinsel and holly berries, and having an orange in its mouth, a feature of their shop window display", they wrote

Eric Isaacson from Soham recalls how his father, a butcher, was featuring the same sort of display back in the 1930s. He also recollects how his dad travelled down to the Angel Hall, Islington and bought four big cattle that were shipped up to the village. Then on the Saturday night they were tethered in front of the shop, standing in the gutter with a bay of hay. When the old men came out of the fen for their weekly shave they would strut up and down before making their selection: 'I'll have a stone off that one, Ernie'. But, as Eric observes, once the animals had been slaughtered who could tell just what joint had come from which?

F.C. Coldspink of Burwell did things differently in the 1920s: his joints were labelled with the name of the farmer who had reared them, including Sir Ernest Cassel and R. Moore from Fulbourn. However it is now some years since Cambridge had a city-centre butcher such as MacFisheries to display their wares, seen here in 1974

Years ago some butchers had a Christmas club with families saving a penny a week so they could afford what would be their only piece of red meat – butcher's meat – a year. It was

usually geese and ducks that they reared themselves, a couple of wild rabbits or a hare – perhaps a brace of poached pheasants or a nine or ten pounder cockerel fattened up for Christmas.

Turkeys were practically unknown in Soham before the war, says Eric. But Pam Blakeman has lent me a photograph showing Christmas time at Archie Haylock's farm yard in Market Street, Ely in 1931. He kept his cows in the Dean's field, next the park, and either milked in the field or drove them up the Gallery to Market Street to be milked. But at Christmas time turkeys were his main enterprise. They were purchased at the Attleborough trade fair, in Norfolk, then taken to the railway station and put on a train to Ely. On arrival they were driven up Back Hill and waddled along the Gallery to Market Street, which was their last resting place.

Our seasonable fare had changed, the News of 1932 lamented. Curious dishes as roast swans and peacocks sewn up in their feathers once appeared on lordly tables at Christmastide but in humbler homes the plum pudding of today was a 'hash' of brown bread, raisins and allspice; mince pieces were known as coffin or manger pies from the shape of the crust and were filled with chopped mutton.

Many a Cambridgeshire housewife baked an extra batch of bread on Christmas Eve, in the belief that it would never go mouldy, while at midnight the pixies and fairies visited the houses of those who were good to them and left gifts on the doorsteps. Christmas morning brought the children to the doors, singing their greetings. Some of the girls carried dolls resting on decorated boxes, to represent the child Jesus in the manger; other bore 'wassail boughs' of holly, mistletoe and coloured ribbons. Only occasionally nowadays (the News wrote in 1932) is this pretty custom observed, though we do look for a 'fair man' to 'let in' Christmas and brings us luck.

Sybil Marshall remembered one very memorable Christmas present she received – a wonderful dolly with jointed arms, eyes that shut and a veil over its face. She waited impatiently for her friend to visit from across the fen, anxious to show it off. "What did he bring you" Sybil enquired, only to learn that Santa had not managed to find his way to their isolated house. In truth the family were too poor to afford such luxuries. But Sybil's mother had suspected as much: "Well bless my soul, I quite forgot to tell you. When I cleared away that mince pie you'd left for Father Christmas I found a note from him – he said he'd not been able to find their house down the drove, so he'd left Molly's present here." And from the cupboard under the stairs came an identical doll – only it didn't have a veil.

But children need not worry – Santa will find them somehow, as John Carter discovered when he snapped him in action in Cambridge in 1954. Were you amongst the lucky recipients – and what did he bring you?

Sybil and Eric's recollections have been recorded by Lester Milbank along with a number of wonderful tales of other fenland folk. They are now issued on a CD of Fenland Memories which also incorporates some of the songs and humour of a generation who will be fondly recalled in many a house at this festive time. They are available from the Ely Cathedral Shop and Burrows or Toppings Ely bookshops for £8.99

SCAN OF COLDSPINK BUTCHER, BURWELL WITH LABELLED MEAT
SCAN OF TURKEYS OUTSIDE HAYLOCKS, MARKET STREET, ELY
SCAN OF MacFISHERIES MEAT DISPLAY 1974

"WHAT DID HE BRING YOU" – FATHER CHRISTMAS VISITS CAMBRIDGE
CHILDREN IN 1954

Memories 24th December 2007, by Mike Petty

This Christmas Eve many eyes will be scanning the rooftops and chimneypots, seeking for a glimpse of a red-coated figure and perhaps a string of reindeers. But in Cambridge the roofs could be alive after dark at any time.

Colleges had strict rules. Their gates closed at ten o'clock and at midnight the college porter took to his bed; after that nobody could enter without a late pass. There was a penalty of a few pence to be paid as gate money for coming back between ten and twelve so students considered the option of climbing in. The obvious ways were guarded by revolving spikes, designed to spin under the drunkard's foot and drive into his thigh. Sometimes a hansom cab was hired, backed up to a wall to give a platform from which to shin over. Otherwise they turned to drainpipes. However they got in it was something to be repeated only in necessity

But others took to the rooftops in the cause of sport. In the 1920s membership of the Cambridge Alpine Society was only open to those who had climbed into every college after the gate had closed. Trinity Hall was really difficult but could be entered by swarming up the angle of a twenty-foot brick wall in Garret Hostel Lane before manoeuvring over spikes and a bone-shaking drop on the other side. Shane Leslie managed it in 1907 as he recorded in his book 'The Film of Memory' in 1938

Other exploits are less well recorded. In 1927 three well-known Cambridge sportsmen decided to spend part of one Saturday night in the grounds of each of the women's colleges. So at midnight they climbed into Newnham, taking with them a tent which they pitched in full view. They were not discovered until they were all snug in "bed", when they commenced community singing. Newnham dons became alarmed and phoned for the police, who turned them out. They then motored to Girton, scaled a twelve-foot wall and again set up camp. They were not noticed until the early hours of the morning when the porter came on duty.

There was another outbreak of 'night climbing' in 1932 when two parties of undergraduates, including several well-known athletes, climbed to the roof of King's College chapel and tied an umbrella to the lightning conductor. They reported that the stone had become so soft that it crumbled away in their hands and fragments of masonry fell to the ground. A few nights later it was the turn of Emmanuel College when buckets were placed on top of prominent pinnacles. They were quickly removed by college workmen.

Some details of such secret activity was recorded in a book entitled 'The Night climbers of Cambridge' first published in 1937 by 'Whipplesnaith', now revealed as the pen-name of Noel H. Symington. He gave accounts of routes and hazards, providing an unusual insight into college architecture. His classic work was reissued in 1952 and has just been republished by Oleander Press (ISBN 978-0906672-83-9, £16.95)

But such activity continued after he left Cambridge, indeed in 1943 'official' photographs of students climbing into Peterhouse were taken to be published in a Russian magazine. Then once the war was over many of the young men who came to the University had been fighting for king and country and were not amenable to college regulations about staying out late. 'Climbing in' became the rule and to stop them the Master of Trinity Hall – already one of the most difficult – decreed that barbed wire should be fixed along the tops of the college walls. Contractors worked long and hard but next morning the newly-erected barbed wire was neatly rolled up in front of the college – the new undergraduates were proving they had escaped from far more secure accommodation than that!

In more recent times 'Peace in Vietnam' banners and a variety of other items have continued to be strung overnight on prominent places. But many other exploits have remained secret. Perhaps you can add a tale or two. Especially if you travel by reindeer sleigh.

SCANS

choice of FATHER CHRISTMAS BESIDE CHIMNEYS OF ADDENBROOKE'S HOSPITAL **OR** FATHER CHRISTMAS WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE BACKGROUND

SELECTION OF NIGHT CLIMBING PICTURES BY 'WHIPPLESNAITH'

– UNDERGRADUATE CLIMBERS POSING ON A ROOF WITH THEIR EQUIPMENT, CLIMBING OVER THE REVOLVING SPIKES WHICH COULD PIERCE A LEG, UNDERGRADUATE CLIMBERS POSING ON THE EAGLE ON THE GATE OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE

Memories 31st December 2007, by Mike Petty

A new book claims that a woman's work was never done But just what did they do?

Professor Margaret Spufford, who has contributed the introduction, says the core of a married woman's work was the upkeep of the home – cleaning, scrubbing, washing, shopping, cooking and trying to make ends meet. Often that meant going out to work, but little has been recorded about this side of their duties.

"Holly Leaves" magazine for Christmas 1956 included an article on fenland life 50 years earlier. It featured a picture of women and children in the harvest fields captioned: "The harvesting of crops like mustard and hemp was often left to women using their old-fashioned toothed sickles. They looked gay in their cotton sunbonnets which gave excellent protection against sun and dust. For the children the harvest was a prolonged picnic party". It forgot to mention the hard nature of the work for the grown-ups.

But Joyce Thulbon (nee Salmon) remembers how in the 1960's many women were still working on the land:

"There were many farmers within this region and these needed flower pickers and fruit pickers. Other ladies picked up potatoes, hoed out sugar beat and pulled up carrots. They came home suffering with back strain or aching muscles that they didn't even know they had. Indeed the first time I picked up potatoes, I did not know how to get out of bed the next morning. I was lucky up to a point that my husband had his own smallholding, so I did not have too far to travel to my work.

"When my children were very young I only worked when the weather allowed me to take the children with me as in those days there were no nurseries or play schools in rural areas. Other mothers, who really wanted to work, took their young families with them, spending time sheltering from spring and summer showers in garden sheds and barns. Women who regularly worked the land sometimes formed themselves into gangs and moved together around the various smallholdings helping wherever needed. It was fun though, as every one joined together to make the work enjoyable

"Juggling this with housework, washing, cooking and caring for three small children was not an easy task in those days as there were not the modern conveniences of today. Plus there were no packets of ready meals, it was good old-fashioned food prepared by the lady of the house"

Joyce's reminiscences were tape recorded by the Haddenham Farmland Museum in the 1970s and have featured on BBC Radio programmes. Now Lorna Delanoy has edited a selection for a booklet "Women's Work is Never Done" which is available for £6 with profits going to Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital. Email lorna@delanoy.co. or phone 01353 777691

Several readers have contacted me following Memories articles. They too recall women's work.

Eddie Holden emails to say his wife Mary worked in the Wines and Spirit department at the Ely Brewery, under Herbert Roythorne. Her job was to break down the raw spirit with distilled water to the correct volume content, and then colour it to the brewery's colour, as raw spirit is clear. In the late forties she used to go around Ely Pubs on a Thursday and collect the extra licensing fees for opening all day during the Thursday market.

William Aubury's mother worked at Runciman's the vets in Downing Street, Cambridge. He recalls: "She started work there in September 1945 as a Veterinary Nurse and left late 1958. As I was born in 1947 and there was no such thing as child care, my mother was allowed to take me with her. I can remember 'helping' Mr Austin shoeing horses and also making the horseshoes. I also helped mum by washing various size bottles before animal medicine was put into them and taking labels off animal eye ointment so they could put the Runciman's labels onto them before they were dispensed. I also helped her walk the dogs and clean the cat and dog kennels out. The two rooms I was not allowed into were the waiting room and the consultation room. But I watched some of the operations on the animals"

Do you have stories of women's work in days gone by – write to Mike Petty at the News

PHOTO OF WOMEN'S WORK WITH CAPTION, FROM HOLLY TREES MAGAZINE
1956, LOOKING BACK TO THE EARLY 1900S
WOMEN HOEING PEAS AT STARTLING'S FARM, LITTLEPORT, 1965

Memories 2008 in one sequence

Memories 7th January 2008, by Mike Petty

News of the fire at the Royal Marsden Hospital reminds me that our own Addenbrooke's Hospital suffered in much the same way in the early 1900s.

In January 1906, fire broke out in the roof of the Hospital in Trumpington Street. A laundry maid saw wreaths of smoke above the roof of the operating theatre and raised the alarm. The Hatton and Victoria wards nearest the seat of the fire contained women who on the whole behaved with surprising calmness. Patients were carried down the emergency staircase on stretchers or led to safety by staff.

Meanwhile, the hospital fire hose was brought into action together with another from the Fitzwilliam Museum, until the Fire Brigade arrived. There was plenty of water, but their pumps did not possess the power to raise it high enough. Hoses were laid up staircases and with dripping skirts the nurses assisted to drag them into position.

A large number of slates had to be removed from the roof to enable the firemen to get at the seat of the blaze, and one fireman had a narrow escape when he fell through the charred remains of the roof but was caught by Fireman Wing.

Had the outbreak taken place at the front of the building with a high wind it is doubtful the building could have been saved.

There was an urgent need for a steam fire engine, people said.

But they had said the same thing four years earlier in October 1902 when fire broke out in the women's ward at the top of the left wing of the hospital. In a very short time the flames secured a firm hold, burst through the roof and worked towards the centre of the building. Nurses and probationers heroically entered the wards and led their patients to a place of safety with several old men brought to the lawn in the front of the burning building.

The News reported how "Bed after bed, each with its living freight, was carefully lifted with stalwart arms and borne steadily to the quarters assigned to it in neighbouring houses."

In the meantime the clouds of smoke rolling skywards from the hospital gradually grew less in volume. The ceaseless exertions of the firemen were telling their tale, and soon water pouring in a cascade down the staircase adjoining the blazing wing made it clear the building was flooded to the extent that rendered the further spread of the fire improbable.

Despite all the efforts, the roof and contents of Victoria Ward were destroyed along with beds, bedding, linen, tables, chairs and other furniture. The cause was judged to be the actual construction of the building itself, where joints extended into the chimneys. It was a miracle it had not happened before.

In 1977, the *News* carried photographs of nurses once more evacuating patients; fortunately this time it was just an exercise. Did you take part?

Memories 14th January 2008, by Mike Petty

A recent article has brought a response from Neil Lanham. He writes: "I read your Memories piece about women's work and wondered if my mother Ruby's story might be of interest.

“She did everything there was on the land - when they bought an International junior tractor for her to drive in 1921 she literally ploughed from morn to night without leaving the tractor seat (having a packed dokey!!) and then often into the night with a hurricane lamp set at either end of the furrow. When the tractor packed up she then had to take the head off and decarbonise the engine herself - which she did often and alone. When the depression really set in her only pleasure was in taking a quarter-bred Shire horse out of its ploughing traces to have a day's hunting on.”

Ruby recorded her own memories of the hard times of the mid 1930s in her own words: “We were in everybody's debt. We couldn't buy anything, we couldn't pay for anything, we were as poor as church mice”, she recalled. “It was no good thinking that when you threshed a stack out you could sell the corn. Just as likely the corn merchant would hear that you were threshing and he'd send his wagons up for the corn because we were up to our neck in hock with him. We were well in his ribs. The bailiffs came up and put stickers on the furniture and you had to sit and eat at a table and chairs with bailiffs stockers on them saying that if such and such money for the rates had not been paid within so many days they'd be taken away and sold.”.

She was philosophical about it: “It was a time when you could walk on land from Cambridge to Clacton that nobody would take. A time when it was driving honest to goodness hard working farmers shany and they were being turned out of their homes and committed to the workhouse. But if you did not have anything you were lucky because you did not have the worry of it”

But even then there was time for fun: “One night I had some Carol Singers come to the door. They were boys from the village after a few pence. I knew that one was Tom Skinner. I went upstairs with a bag of flour and gently dropped some out of the window on the boy Skinner. ‘Blast that snaw’ he said. So I dropped a bit more, then a whole lot more, on his head and he looked up and said: ‘That's yer b... Ruby!’. So I asked them in and gave 'em a mince pie each after that.”

But hard as it was, Ruby's mother had it even worse. In later years she came to live with Ruby and Neil at Newmarket. Neil recalls:

“In her final bedridden days a mouse got into the bedroom. They tried to catch it but had failed. Emily at this time was surviving on a few biscuits which she would munch when she felt like it and this the mouse knew. It would crawl up the bedpost and over the eiderdown and nibble the crumbs whilst she was dozing off to sleep. One time whilst she had a little piece of biscuit in her hand and was dozing she noticed out of the corner of her eye the mouse appearing and coming over the eiderdown. Although her hands were eaten up with rheumatism and her joints as big as footballs and she had a piece gone off finger in a rat trap and the joint off another squashed where it had gone in a mangle, she still had enough nip left in her hand to kill that mouse when it got close enough. I think this story shows the necessity of the times that Ruby and her mother had been through”

Now Neil Lanham has edited some of Ruby's remarkable memories into a book “There's a story that my mother told”, (ISBN 978 0 9666947-0-0) is available from him at Ivy Todd, Helions Bumpstead, Haverhill CB9 7AT for £11.95

SCANS:

CHOICE OF VIEWS OF RUBY LANHAM ON HORSES

RUBY DRIVING AN INTERNATIONAL JUNIOR TRACTOR PULLING A COCKSHUT KID KANGAROO PLOUGH

Memories 21 January 2008, by Mike Petty

When Nick Harrison went to Oakington Primary School in the 70's he heard talk about 'the first aeroplane in the world being built in Oakington'. Of course it wasn't, but there was some truth in the rumour. Then in 1998 he discovered some hand written notes based on an article published in the Cambridge Chronicle in September 1909. After reading them Nick was hooked and decided to find out more about the famous plane and its makers, Grose and Feary – then just names to him.

Since then he has amassed piles of information but has one last piece to add to the jigsaw.

His researches show that Alfred M Grose was born at Newington, London in 1879 and in the 1901 census was described as a 'motor engineer articled pupil'. He later travelled extensively throughout England, America & India, in the motor trade, and was reputed to have had the first motor driver's license.

His partner was a local lad: Neville Alexander Thomas Nix Feary who was born in 1884 in Earith near St Ives. His father Neville was a farmer and his mother Lucy sadly died the year he was born. By 1901 Neville Alexander or Alec as he was referred to, was staying as a 'Visitor' with William Nix (his uncle) in, Sevenoaks, Kent.

In 1909 both lads were apprentices at the Windham Detachable Motor Body Co. A car owner only had to buy one powerful chassis, to which various bodies could be fitted, slid into place on channels fitted to the frame. But Windham was also interested in aviation and he engaged Grose & Feary in the design and manufacture of a glider.

By this time Britain had fallen well behind in the aeronautical world, whilst the Americans and French were mastering the skies. In attempt to redress the balance, Lord Northcliffe of the Daily Mail announced a competition in 1909 for the first all British aircraft to fly a circular mile, piloted by a Briton. This was enough for Grose & Feary to set about designing their entrant. It was based on the successful lines of the Bleriot and Antoinette monoplanes of the day. The fuselage & wings were built at Windham's factory, the propeller came from Handley Page but the undercarriage was built by a Cambridge bicycle builder, Herbert Vincent Quinsee of East Road.

The components were brought together for final assembly in a barn at Manor Farm Oakington where Feary's uncle, Thomas Cooke, was the tenant farmer. It was an ideal site with its large barns, quiet location and the large flat fields that surrounded it. Here Grose & Feary worked on their monoplane which was finally finished it in April 1910.

But would it fly? The plane was tethered to a tree for its initial trial, but when it came to the big day to attempt flight, a dispute ensued. Grose argued that as he had a widowed mother to support Feary should be first to pilot the machine. Feary was of the opinion that as he was a father it was Grose who should be the guinea pig. It was not reported as to who finally agreed to jump into the hot seat, but all did not go well. Trials continued through 1910 but the monoplane refused to become airborne, other than when it hit a bump.

Later that year Grose & Feary called it a day and gave up on the project. The monoplane was exhibited in marquee in a field in Oakington, admission 6d. It was then dismantled and apparently taken to De-Havilland's factory.

Alick Feary went on to become a designer for Frederick Sage & Co. of Peterborough who were shop fitters, but built Avro aircraft during the First World War. He died in 1957 in Westminster, aged 72.

But what happened to Alfred Grose?

If you can answer this puzzle or have more information on early aviation in Cambridge then Nick would love to hear from you. You can email nick.harrison@oakingtonplane.co.uk or drop me a line at the News. And if you'd like to know more visit his website: www.oakingtonplane.co.uk

scan of Feary seated in the plane with Grose standing by, the wings have been replaced giving a good view of the chassis built by a Cambridge bicycle maker.
Second scan of the plane

Do you remember the Cambridge of the 1950s? In 1958 a film crew turned up in the city to make a movie entitled 'Bachelor of Hearts', starring Hardy Kruger and Sylvia Syms. It was based around student life and contained a number of location shots. David Jakes remembers seeing it being made and now looks forward to watching the complete film again. For the Cambridge U3A film group have arranged a screening at the Arts Picture House on Tuesday 29th January at 1.30pm. It promises to be a treat not to be missed. All are welcome – contact the Arts Picture House or email redjakes@aol.com for more details.

scan of scene from the film
scan of Hardy Kruger and Sylvia Syms in Free School Lane

Memories 28 Jan TO FIND

Man Loaded with Mischief – scanned as PFD, cutting in file
Ken Roe, Sylvia McCann on Arbury Road
King George V jubilee
Martyn Northfield – Henry Twinn, Mill Road
A. Brown circus act, Rancho Kid

Memories 4th February Mike Petty

News of the death of Jeremy Beadle has brought sadness to the millions of people to whom he brought laughter. But over the years other people have caused consternation yet left a smile in their wake.

One of these was William Horace De Vere Cole, hailed as the world champion hoaxer, who died from heart failure in France at the age of 53 in February 1936. Amongst the most famous of his practical jokes were when he dressed as a navvy and roped off a large area of Piccadilly and disguised as the 'Prince of Abyssinia' to inspect the British battleship, 'Dreadnought'

He first came to prominence when, while at University, he posed as the Sultan of Zanzibar whose imminent arrival at Cambridge station in March 1905 was intended to fool academic and civic authorities into giving him an official welcome and a tour of the colleges. In this he was partially successful but he failed to hoodwink the Mayor, Alderman Campkin, since the Cambridge Daily News had a few days earlier recalled a very similar hoax visit from the 'Shah of Persia' which had indeed been a triumph. Nevertheless this copy-cat performance launched Cole's career as a successful joker.

It was not his only Cambridge escapade. On one occasion he jumped on to the line at the station and, holding up his hands, stopped a train. When asked why he did so he replied "Because the lines are dirty". On another he walked into a confectioner's shop on King's Parade and with his stick knocked every cake off the stands for a bet. He then calmly proceeded to make a cheque out to cover the damage.

But there have been other attempts to fool Cambridge folk that are less well remembered, as these snippets from past issues demonstrate:

May 1822

An advertisement in the Cambridge Chronicle announced: Zachariah Whitmore of Philadelphia, N. America, begs to inform the inhabitants of Cambridge that he intends starting from Lynn on his water velocipede at 12 o'clock and will arrive at Cambridge between 6 and 7 o'clock in the evening on Whit Monday next. Accordingly on the day about 2000 persons assembled who, after several hours, found they had been hoaxed.

April 1904

A few days before Christmas a young man arrived in Bristol absolutely penniless but soon learned from a firm of solicitors that he was the son of the late Rev E.A. Stephens of Cambridge and entitled to a huge fortune. However the News smelled a rat and did some digging. They discovered clergymen who have seen long service did not remember him, his name did not appear in any University calendar and even members of the police force who have proverbial long memories did not recall him. Instead the story recalled a hoax played on a drayman who lived in Cambridge. He'd been informed that an uncle had died and left him a fortune so he threw up his position and went to Portsmouth to conclude the formalities, only to learn that the fabulous fortune was a myth and he had been cruelly hoaxed.

November 1921

Hoardings in Cambridge displayed posters announcing that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would lecture in the Guildhall on 'Sex Equality After Death' and would completely vindicate the theory of materialisation. At the time indicated the Guildhall was crowded, but no lecturer appeared. Suddenly a white-robed figure came forward from the rear of the platform, bearing a banner inscribed with the words 'Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Failed to Materialise'. Pandemonium arose as the audience realised that it had been hoaxed

October 1952

If some bright young first-year Freshman had not done some checking up, 1,200 Cambridge undergraduates might be on the carpet for trampling on the Senate House lawn. New undergraduates found in their room a printed notice inviting them to hear an address by the "University Chamberlain" – but it was a hoax, there is no such office. The University Registry was besieged with telephone inquiries and ordered the closing of the gates. Hundreds gathered around the Senate House curious to see what would happen but two hefty specimens of City Police proceeded to keep the sight-seers moving. Thus fizzled out the Freshman's Hoax, 1952 version.

There must be more recent ones – what do you remember, or what hoaxes did you perpetrate?

SCAN OF CARTOON CARD ABOUT THE SULTAN OF ZANZIBAR HOAX, 1905
CUTTING OF VERSE ON THE SHAH OF PERSIA HOAX OF 1873
CHOICE OF SCANS OF CAMBRIDGE GUILDHALL WHERE CONAN DOYLE FAILED TO MATERIALISE

Memories 11th February 2008, by Mike Petty

As Valentine's Day approaches I feature a love story sent in by Ann Garwood. Ann writes:

"On 31st December 2007 you showed a picture of women hoeing peas at Starlings Farm, Littleport in 1965. One of those women was my mother. The names of the women were, from left to right, Alma Heaps, Tressa Rolfe, my mother Mabel Clift, Joyce Brown, Mabel's sister Elizabeth Oxborough and Rose Crowe.

"Mabel was born 19th January 1916 at Suspension Bridge, Welney. Her father was a shepherd and wildfowler and her mother was the local 'midwife' and 'layer-outer', that is to say that when someone was giving birth they called for her to attend and when someone died she went to wash and prepare the body for the undertaker. Life was not too bad even though her parents went on to have five more children including a set of identical twin girls. Her father owned two cows and sold the milk and butter, they also had chickens and pigs at various times.

"Mabel went to school just up the road from her home until it was time to find work. Her sister Lizzie said that she was not strong enough for land work and that she would have to go into 'service'. She found employment with a local landowner and shopkeeper, Mr. & Mrs Jackson as a domestic servant. When she was 16 years old she met a boy named Reg Clift. She thought he was rather nice but the family kept saying that she should not get serious as he had 'consumption' which later they found to be asthma. They had lots of laughs.

"Later she found another post as a domestic servant with the Norman family but the job was in Littleport. By now Reg was her boyfriend and he would meet her in Littleport when she had time off. Life was looking good but Reg did not like her being left alone in the house whilst her employers were out so she looked for another job which she found working in the house, cooking and cleaning, for the Jones family who owned the Heygates Drapery Store in Littleport.

"Reg and Mabel spent as much time together as possible. One day Reg gave her a box and asked her to marry him and of course she said yes. They were married on Wednesday, 23rd November 1938 at Welney Parish Church. The weather was very windy and someone remarked it was the best wedding they had ever been too as not only did they see what the bridesmaids wore on the top but they also got to see what they wore underneath as well. Someone lost their hat and it floated away down the river.

"They went to live in a little black wooden bungalow a few doors away from Reg's parents. In the spring after they were married a farmer asked Mabel if she would do some sugar beet singling, she replied that she has never done anything like that but would try. She continued her working life doing farm work. In 1940 Reg got job on a farm owned by Claude Starling and a 'tied cottage' went with the job but they were not able to move into it until 1941 as evacuees had been housed there and it was in a mess, so Mr Starling has it cleaned for them. It was at Northfield Farm, Hundred Foot Bank, Pymoor where they lived continue to live until April 1967.

"Mabel and Reg had a little girl while the Second World War was in progress. They named me Ann. There was a big searchlight on the next door farm and Mabel and Reg were walking home pushing their baby in her pram and saw the bombers making their way to bomb Coventry. Reg had joined the Home Guard with Claude Starling and his brother-in-law Albert Oxborough. So life went on until I met my future husband, Alan, and Mabel started to plan the wedding. When I told them that they were to be grandparents Mabel was delighted. They bought a house and had it modernised and in April 1967 they moved to Littleport and put farm work behind them. Reg went to work at Standen's in Ely and Mabel went to work for Pye's in Cambridge on the assembly line where she made many new friends."

"My father is now aged 92 and lives in sheltered accommodation with 3 of his sisters, aged 84, 88 and 94. Unfortunately my mother, who is 92 years old, has Alzheimer's but I have written an account of her life as best I know."

SCANS

WOMEN AT STARTLING'S FARM, LITTLEPORT – ANN NAMES EACH LADY
LITTLEPORT SHOWING HEYGATE'S DRAPERY STORE, OWNED BY THE JONES
FAMILY FOR WHOM MABEL WORKED
SUSPENSION BRIDGE, WELNEY WHERE MABEL WAS BORN

Memories 18th February 2008, by Mike Petty

Pauline Anderson has written from Cherry Hinton Road after she read an article in the News that the Brunswick School is being pulled down for flats. She writes: "My friend (Mrs Brenda Davis) and I both remember the time it was built, 1928/29 and Brenda still has a copy of the little booklet we were given at the time telling us all about it when it was officially opened in 1929.

"However we both started school at the old Brunswick in Auckland Road, off Newmarket Road. It was an old Victorian school with heating from open fires with fireguards round them where sometimes things were hung out to dry. The classroom sloped upwards and there were steps up to the back so everyone could be seen by the teacher. In the playground was an old brick toilet which did not flush. Altogether it was a dreary place. The school was also next door to a brewery and we could always smell the beer being brewed"

The Brunswick had started as a British School in Eden Walk in the 1840s before it moved to Auckland Road about 1900. However it was not to remain there very long.

In 1922 the Cambridge Education Committee received a report from the Borough Surveyor which said that the rooms at the north end of the building were no longer safe for occupation and would have to be pulled down. He could not be responsible for the safety of the children if that portion of the school were opened after the holiday, he told them. Councillors inspected the building and found that the foundations were slipping, the bricks in many cases were loose and breaking away. The buildings had been a source of trouble and anxiety for some time but there was no need for the alarming reports that had been spread - one that a portion of the school had fallen down and some children had been injured.

First they pulled down the Boys' School and later the Girls' School suffered a similar fate. In 1927 the foundation stone was laid of a new Brunswick School in Walnut Tree Avenue to provide accommodation for nearly 1,100 children. At the opening the Mayor said it was unfortunate, perhaps, that the other School fell down but this was a better building. When they compelled children to go to school there was an obligation to see the building provided as much fresh air and sunlight as possible.

Pauline certainly approved; she remembers: "One day as we were breaking up for the Summer holidays the Headmistress (Miss Duke) came to tell us that we should not be coming back to Auckland Road any more as a new school had been built for us in Walnut Tree Avenue. What a lovely change it was after what we had had before. We all loved it – central heating, proper desks with lids and proper toilets, and last but not least, a lovely lawn sloping down from the playground from where we could see Midsummer Common and the river. In June we could also see the fair and sometimes some of the fairground children would attend the school"

In July 1929 councillors agreed that the school could accommodate 320 boys, 320 girls and 210 infants but by 1982 falling rolls and cash cutbacks saw its as an ordinary 5 to 11 years school and it became part of Cambridge Regional College. Pauline and Brenda went to an open day and toured the classrooms, looking at photos of times past and recognising some of the people in them. Now they lament its passing.

Do you have memories of the Brunswick?

Scan of picture of pupils at the old Brunswick school, Auckland Road, 1925 – lent by J.D. Williamson, of Romsey in October 1999

Scan of Walnut Tree Avenue in the 1960s – the houses were demolished for the approach to Elizabeth Bridge

Scan of opening of Midsummer Fair in the mid 1950s – the children could see it from the school

Please find picture of Brunswick School from News Library

Memories 25th February 2008, by Mike Petty

Readers have been recording recollections of Cambridge's war-time shelters. The Bunker Project, a unique Heritage Lottery-funded venture which began in summer 2007, was the brainchild of Zoë Svendsen. When she found a well-preserved wartime shelter in her Cambridge back garden she began wondering what it had been like for citizens using such bunkers and shelters during the Second World War and the Cold War which followed it.

Zoë and her performing arts company METIS began researching with the help of volunteers who were given training in the skills of recording oral history. Many people came forward to recount their stories.

They tell of the excitement, fear, discomfort and uncertainties of wartime. For some shelters were places they played in as “war babies”, others say they still find the dank smell of a concrete building takes them back to the days when they sheltered underground from enemy attack.

Monica Smith remembers: “I lived a few yard from the shelter in Gwydir Street but I never used it because my father, being a builder, built his own shelter in our garden and the neighbours used to shelter in it when there was an air raid, about 10 of us. As a child at school, we had a shelter in the grounds of the Roman Catholic Church on Hills Road, which was used quite often, and I remember there was always a tin of sweets given round when we had to go in the shelter.”

Pat Jones was still a young boy in 1939, and attended Brunswick School. He recalls the bad smell of the air-raid shelters in the school grounds which were used for lots of practice drills, though there were few real attacks. At home his family sheltered under the stairs during air-raid warnings, and they built a special miniature shelter for their cat in a suitcase, complete with a blast tunnel, cushion, and electric light!

Stephen Falkner talks of the “musty smell and the smell of paraffin lamps” in his family's suburban Anderson shelter. His neighbourhood showed the signs of war: a cuboid brick-built shelter stood near his home, and a static water tank to supply water for dealing with

incendiary bombs stood at a junction in the area. Aged four, he was taken by his father to see a German plane that had made a pancake landing on allotments in Chesterton.

Maurice Rolph was three years old when the war started. He lived with his parents and elder sister on Histon Road and went to St Luke's Infants and Juniors then Chesterton Secondary Modern. He remembers an air raid shelter in his back garden as well as one at St Luke's.

Jack Parsley describes a substantial air raid shelter built c.1940 at the bottom of a garden in Greville Road by his parents and relatives. The shelter was almost completely sunk into the ground and fitted with seats and children's bunks. It still survives, having since served as a garden store and wine cellar. Jack also provides interesting background colour to life in those times; from the strong character of his mother as she organises the family, to the men working as air raid wardens and to the disturbance of routines by sirens and bombs. He contrasts the relative safety of Cambridge with London, visible to the south as "a red glow on the clouds" from the fires. This led the children at least to adopt a blasé attitude to bombing risks, once rudely shaken when a bomber attacked Mill Road forcing them to run to the School's air raid shelter.

Shelters continued long after the Second World war was over.

Brian Waygood served in the Royal Observer Corps at Linton, rising from being an ordinary observer to become a Leading Observer and Troop Observer. Posts like his were staffed by 10 people, including the occasional woman. The post was underground with a firmly secured lid. A shaft gave access to the monitor room which was kitted out with Tilley lamps, Primus stoves, ration packs and five-gallon cans of water. Observers could take their own supplies, and Brian and his men insulated their post with polystyrene tiles. Sometimes they had to do test recordings for monitoring nuclear fallout. Once, one of Brian's demonstration readings was mistaken for the real thing, giving the impression that there had been fallout at Linton (but nowhere else). Fortunately the error was laughed off afterwards. He proved himself expert at identifying enemy aircraft, aided by films of aircraft that were screened for them at the Doric Cinema in Newmarket.

David Swainston also joined the Observers but a lack of openings in aircraft recognition led him to working with the Centre Team plotting aircraft movements. Later, changing national priorities led to a voluntary post at Oakington Airfield. Here he practised with his team, first identifying the position and strength of nuclear explosions from an underground observation post and then feeding the radiation measurements back to the Centre

These and other memories feature in an exhibition at Milton Road library until Saturday, March 1 before going on tour at the city's four other branch libraries until the end of May. There is also a free DVD which is available from Cambridge branch libraries or you can log on to www.bunkerproject.info to see the edited interviews and research gathered in the course of the project.

scans:

David Swainston and men of the 15 Group (Cambridge) Royal Observer Corps, who served at Oakington Airfield.

Maurice Rolph with his family beside their air raid shelter as it was demolished after the war

Air raid shelter in Gwydir Street, in , Monica Smith's back garden

Memories 25th February 2008, by Mike Petty

Cambridge folk have been recording recollections of life underground for a remarkable new DCD and website. Now youngsters – who seem to be able to use the new technology that has others of us grappling with the instruction book – can appreciate just what it was like to be a child during the years of the Second World War.

The Bunker Project, a unique Heritage Lottery-funded venture which began in summer 2007, was the brainchild of Zoë Svendsen. After she found a well-preserved wartime shelter in her Cambridge back garden she began wondering what it had been like to have to use them. So as part of the work volunteers went out to interview and film people who did just that.

They tell of the excitement, fear, discomfort and uncertainties of wartime. For some shelters were places they played in as “war babies”, others say they still find the dank smell of a concrete building takes them back to the days when they sheltered underground from enemy attack.

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Other shelters continued long after the Second World War was over.

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These and other memories feature in an exhibition at Milton Road library until 1st March before going on to Rock Road and three other branch libraries until the end of May. There is also a free DVD which is available from Cambridge branch libraries or you can log on to www.bunkerproject.info to see the edited interviews and research gathered in the course of the project.

Timetable for the exhibition at Cambridge libraries

Milton Road Library - 13th Feb-1st March
Rock Road Library - 3rd March-29th March
Barnwell Road Library 31st March- 19th April
Cherry Hinton Library - 21st April-10th May
Arbury Court Library 12th May-31st May.

scans:

David Swainston and men of the 15 Group (Cambridge) Royal Observer Corps, who served at Oakington Airfield. –

or

Picture of Observers at work at Oakington

Maurice Rolph with his family beside their air raid shelter as it was demolished after the war

Air raid shelter in Gwydir Street, in Monica Smith's back garden
and the public air raid shelter in Gwydir Street showing George Dethridge, an evacuee, with his brother and sisters outside

A News article on the construction of the shelters in 1939

Cover of the DVD showing some of the people interviewed
advert for firm constructing air raid shelters – complete with lights

Memories 3rd March 2008, by Mike Petty

Sometimes strange co-incidences happen.

Within the last week I have received an email from Janet Mancuso who writes: "My sister and I are putting together a family history and have come unstuck with where my mother went to nursery school. She went at the age of 3 (1927) to Auckland Road Nursery School

and no matter how hard I try I have been unable to find anything under this name. As she was so young she doesn't know if it was anything to do with the Brunswick School where she went on to at the age of five but her and her two school friends who also attended the school are convinced it was called Auckland Road. Did this go on to be the Brunswick school which is now CRC beside Elizabeth Way bridge”

Indeed it did – as News readers have been describing.

Last week more ex pupils have sent in memories including Ron Ryder who even has a photo that may show Janet's mother!

Both Ron and Sid Hunt from Bar Hill started at Auckland Road and moved to the new Brunswick when it opened. Ron recalls “Our headmaster was Mr Points, Mr Thompson was science teacher, Mr Leach had an old motor bicycle and a steam boat on the River Cam, Mr Hughes was senior teacher and Mr Roy Burrell the PT instructor. Mr Thomson, in the science class, produced a revolving switch to control traffic lights – not bad for 1932.”

There were had two lady teachers, one was a Miss Ashby (who, Mike Bowyer remembers, was very keen to ensure that whenever her pupils wrote that the pen pointed over the right-hand shoulder). Another was a Miss Knights, recalls Sid, who can add Mr Garner's name to the staff list

Ron remembers it as a happy school that was kept clean and tidy by caretaker Mr Clarke and Mr Mallions. Mike Bowyer tells me how Mr Clarke was called up during the war and sent down to London in the National Fire Service. Sadly he had a fear of ladders, which for a fireman was a great drawback!

Brunswick wasn't fully equipped at the time Ron was there so he went to St George's school on Broad Street, East Road for metal work lessons. He still has some of the pieces he made, including a steel hinge and key-hole plate. It obviously stood him in good stead for Ron went on to work for the Cambridge Instrument Company.

Another emailer has asked for information on a building just across the road from the old Brunswick School.

Abbey House stands off Newmarket Road and a few yards from the roar of the traffic along Elizabeth Way. It was built in the 1670s on the site of an Augustinian Priory and was once claimed to be the most haunted house in all England with a ghostly squire, a white nun, a spectral hare, a disembodied head, a clanking chain and a poltergeist.

There was talk of a figure in nun's robes who passed through one room and vanished into the panelled wall. This may have been the ghost of the White Nun who was supposed to come by an underground tunnel from St Radegund's nunnery, which is now Jesus College, to visit her lover, who was a Monk in the old Priory of Barnwell. When her sin was discovered she was walled up alive.

Children of the family living there in 1904 became quite used to seeing her and were not much frightened but in the 1960s a resident recalled: When my daughter came here seven or eight years ago, the place was undoubtedly haunted. Night after night the dog rushed to the panelling in that corner over there, hair on end, and barked furiously.

In the end two clergymen exorcised the place with prayers and holy water. After they had done their best the children of the tenant who lived at the other end of the house lamented that they were no longer tucked up in bed by the kind lady!

But it is just talk – or can you add anything to the tale, did you live or work there or have you researched its story. If so then let me know.

Pictures

Scans of Abbey House in 1880 – from rear and c1915 – from front

Auckland Road school class photo that may show Janet Mancuso's mother; Ron Ryder is second left, centre.

Brunswick School which opened in 1929

Memories 10th March 2008, by Mike Petty

Jim Langford from the Arbury has been prompted to write after he saw a picture of Cambridge's Coronation Street in a recent copy of the *News*. The photograph showed a view looking towards St Paul's church where he was christened. Jim was born in the street in September 1921 and spent many happy years of his early life there.

"I would often be sent to the snug at the Ship pub to fetch my grandmother a jug of ale", he recalls. Across the road stood St Paul's Institute, which he used to attend and where he threw fireworks in the reading room. The street was lit with gas lamps: "I would wait eagerly for the gas man to come and light them. When he arrived on his bicycle he would use a long steel pole which he poked through a flap under the lamp at its base and light the mantle above. If I was lucky or near enough I was allowed to operate the trigger and do the job for him", he remembers.

"On the same side of the street there were various shops: Daisly and Stubbs, general stores, Maskels the barber, Gillingham who sold hardware, firelighters and coal, Barbers joinery and undertakers. At the top of the street on Hill Road stood Harold S. Driver, the stationers. I could write much more but I am sure it would bore the pants off you", he adds. Not so – more memories please. Only residents know what an area was like.

In February 1983, 25 years ago, Coronation Street was in the *News* when reporter Jane Spence compared it with its famous soap namesake, which was then embroiled in the story of an affair between Ken and Deirdre – perhaps you remember it?

Residents of our Coronation Street had their own Jug and Bottle at the Panton Arms where a tight knot of locals were wont to congregate in deep discussion, she found. Though quite what it was they were talking about they were unwilling to share with a *News* reporter.

She did find two of the older residents willing to chat. From their house at no.61 Frederick Christian and his wife Alice had seen many changes. They recalled when it used to be a real community with two breweries, three pubs, a general store, hardware shop, tailor's and a greengrocer's. Small houses with pretty cottage gardens lined the street and the inhabitants knew each other's business in the nicest possible way.

"It was all families in those days – some with two, three, four or five children. We knew everybody. You really did know people, although we were not in and out of each others' houses much. You knew about people even if you did not know their names", Mr Christian told her.

Change came when the council pulled down a line of old homes and rehoused many streeters in new blocks of flats. More work bulldozed the Victorian streetscape into the twentieth

century and by 1983 it was one of the most modern-looking in Cambridge, clean and possibly rather sterile.

But although Jane found no scandal, she should have reflected on the very name of the street.

It was part of the New Town that grew up on the west side of Hills Road following the enclosure of the Barnwell open fields in 1807. Near to Coronation Street are George IV Street, Queen Street and Prince's Street. The names have strong Royalist connection but need to be put in the context of the time

Before his accession George IV had been Prince Regent during the madness of his father, George III (hence Regent Street). He'd married Caroline of Brunswick in 1785 but their relationship was not an easy one: he accused her of adultery and left her for a Mrs Fitzherbert who he'd secretly married ten years earlier. When he succeeded to the throne in 1820 he tried to prevent Caroline from attending his Coronation at Westminster Abbey and the newspapers of the day commented fully.

Many Cambridge people believed 'Queen' Caroline had been badly treated and there were town and gown riots on Market Hill with 250 special constables sworn in to try and keep the peace. Although the University voted a loyal address they also voiced their detestation of infidelity.

It was all much juicier tale than any soap writer dare invent!

SCANS

- 139.26 – Coronation Street 1972 showing new flats with St Paul's church in background
- 139.25 – Ship Inn, Coronation Street 1964 – Jim Langford would fetch beer for his gran
- 139.32 – derelict shops in Coronation Street 1964
- 139.34 – Coronation Street , April 1964

Memories 17th March 2008, by Mike Petty

At noon next Friday, 21st March, Cambridge & County Folk Museum will be reintroducing a traditional Cambridge custom: that of skipping on Parkers Piece on Good Friday. The day will open with a demonstration of traditional skipping by Girl Guides and the afternoon will be interspersed with singing, dancing and sports skipping.

It was an annual Easter event regularly reported in the News: in April 1905 the paper commented "One of the features in Cambridge is the way in which a crowd indulges in skipping upon Parker's Piece and the congregation of young people there is reminiscent of the survival of a pagan spring festival"

On Good Friday 1922 Parker's Piece had its traditional skipping devotees, and the first ice cream vendor of the year was in attendance together with sweet sellers and a barrow with balloons, ticklers and paper toys without which no public holiday would be complete. Even the damp weather of Easter 1925 could not spoil the fun: in accordance with custom many people produced skipping ropes and skipped away to their hearts' content. Old men & maidens, young men & children – likewise grand dames – jumped up and down to "Salt, mustard, vinegar, pepper" and similar meaningless jungles.

When people were tired of skipping they sat down on the grass and ate their picnics, supplemented with lemonade and ginger beer bought from the many stalls that lined the Piece. The hawkers of balloons, ices, fruit and sweets did good business, the *News* reported.

In 2004 Peggy Pink from Cambridge told *Memories* she remembered how in 1937 whole families went together on Good Friday for the traditional skipping and the Piece was packed with stalls set up along Parkside selling trinkets, candyfloss and balls on elastic.

As a regular event it seems to have stopped during the Second World War. In 1948 there were only about three groups of people and the stalls had dwindled to just one selling tinsel-covered balls on elastic. He came back next year and had the Piece virtually to himself: of skippers there were none. The tradition had been lost, although it was briefly revived by News columnist, Christopher South a few years ago.

But why did it happen? In 1927 an old man of 83 said he remembered skipping there as a boy of five or six and his father apparently did so before him. His version was that Good Friday used to be the publican's "day out" and they used to repair to the Piece for a game of bat and trap, while their youngsters amused themselves with a skipping rope. More recently one elderly lady confided to me that in her youth she enjoyed the event. It attracted boys who came to watch and she always ensured she wore her prettiest frilly underwear as she skipped up and down

However it may have happened elsewhere in Cambridgeshire too. In 1954 Dr. Margaret Murray, President of the Folk Lore Society, referred to the custom of skipping on Good Friday as surviving at the Bartlow Hills "until well into this century". When quizzed residents in Linton and Hildersham could not remember skipping but did recall how "old Morley and his daughters had a winkle stall at Bartlow Hills on Good Friday" and that there was dancing afterwards. Alice Kerr of Bartlow told how "we used to have a rare old time skipping on Good Friday " but it turned out she was referring to her childhood in Bow, London. However her invalid aunt of eighty-four could remember "skipping at Bartlow in my mother's time ".

Bartlow Hills are a series of high man-made mounds whose origins are shrouded in mystery. If you've not visited them yet then it would make a marvellous family excursion. Take the Haverhill Road past Linton, then turn right to Bartlow. Discover the round-towered church, then follow the footpath signs and be prepared to be amazed.

##

Did you live in the Riverside area of Cambridge? Caroline Biggs who is based at the Ross Street Community Centre has already produced a booklet on the Abbey area and now wants to expand it. She's looking for memories and photos so if you could help please give her a call on Cambridge 471674

Scan of archaeologists on Bartlow Hills in 1920s
Scans of Good Friday Skipping on Parker's Piece in 1930s.
There are pictures of revived Good Friday skipping in News files.

March 24th – EASTER MONDAY, no article

Memories 31st March 2008, by Mike Petty

Cambridge has a major new retail experience with the opening of a new, grand, Arcade. But that's a story that has made headlines before.

Shopping in Cambridge has been constantly evolving. At the end of the 19th century the town centre was dominated by shops such as W. Eaden Lilley, Joshua Taylor and Robert Sayle. Competition came when Hallack and Bond built a large grocery store on the corner of Market

Hill and Petty Cury in 1889 to give themselves what was regarded as the finest block in Cambridge.

But for three months of the year trade dwindled to just a trickle when the undergraduates went down.

Something had to be done and after the Great War came a period of massive expansion in retailing. Old buildings on the east side of Sidney Street were ripped down to make way for Sainsbury's in 1925 followed by Woolworths and then Marks and Spencer in 1934. Across the road came a new Boots emporium to provide an attractive shopping centre for patrons of all classes.

The arrival of such large stores attracted shoppers into the centre of town, their numbers swelled by an advertising campaign and the creation of a new large bus station in Drummer Street so they could actually get there.

But by the 1950s planners were concerned about the viability of the Cambridge shopping scene and proposing a new development. It came in 1960 with the opening of Bradwell's Court, claimed to be the city's first shopping arcade. However something bigger was being planned. The question was should it be in the Fitzroy Street or Petty Cury areas?

For years the debate rumbled on until the decision was finally made in favour of the town centre where ancient buildings and lanes were razed for the Lion Yard precinct which opened in 1974. It brought more nationally-known names into Cambridge as well as providing space for local fashion shops such as the Alley Boutique, Cambridge's answer to Carnaby Street.

But many small traders were soon in difficulties as the three Rs – rents, rates and recession – took their toll. Several of the older-established firms such as Bacons the tobacconists, Pigotts tools, Barretts china and others closed or moved away to be replaced by Building Societies.

However the planners had not finished. Now one centre was complete they turned their eyes back to the East Road area where many of the properties were in poor condition. For years the arguments raged as two large locally-based shops Laurie and McConnell and the Co-op expanded and modernised. But with no firm plans the area deteriorated, parking restrictions were introduced and finally Laurie could wait no longer. In 1977 they announced their closure blaming indecision over the Kite redevelopment. Almost immediately plans for the Grafton centre were confirmed. In recent years this has been expanded but the Co-op has closed. Its site was chosen by Robert Sayle as a temporary home whilst their old site was redeveloped.

For concern had been voiced again about the viability of the city centre shopping where Eaden Lilley, Joshua Taylor and Woolworth's had moved away. Now in a new leap of faith comes a new development which includes the area of the old Robert Sayle store, now known as John Lewis.

It is called the Grand Arcade. But that is an old name, and one linked to Robert Sayle.

For after Cambridge had gained a new Corn Exchange in 1875 then it had to do something with the old one, which faced Downing Street. Robert Sayle had the answer: in 1879 he converted it into the Arcade covered market with butchers, florists and confectioners. But it did not prove a success and also developed structural problems with the roof which provided the lighting for the central corridor. It leaked badly, admitting rain in great quantities.

Later Ernie Hayward, a concert promoter, transformed it into a music hall called the Arcadia. It opened in January 1894 offering 'Grand Variety Entertainments' and flourished until the long frost between Christmas 1894 and March 1895. As temperatures plummeted an outdoor

skating rink was created at Newnham lit by electric light. This novelty attraction emptied the theatre and not even a proposed visit by the great Marie Lloyd could revive its fortunes. It later became a garage until finally being demolished to make a private car parking space for workers in nearby businesses.

Now it is buried under the site of the Crowne Plaza Hotel whose website features its proximity to both King's College Chapel and the new Grand Arcade.

Time will tell which of these proves the more durable of Cambridge's attractions.

scans

Bradwells court 1975

aerial view over site of new 'Grand Arcade' 1950s – Downing Street is in foreground, the back of the Lion Hotel and buildings along the south side of Petty Cury are in the middle with the roof of the present Corn Exchange and Guildhall on the left

the old Corn Exchange 1939 – which was for a time the original arcade shopping centre

please add view of the new Grand Arcade and perhaps Lion Yard soon after it opened

Memories, 7th April 2008, by Mike Petty

This is the time of year when the chairman of Parish Councils start to get concerned. Soon it will be the Annual Parish Meeting when they will have to report to the local people about what they have been doing and why they have decided to increase the parish precept.

When I did the job for more than 20 years I had three worries. One was that nobody would turn up and another was that somebody would actually come and ask something. But the most frightening was that there would be a reporter!

So what must the chairman of Milton Parish Council have been thinking 75 years ago?

In March 1933 Milton school was packed for the largest meeting ever held in the village. And the main issue revolved around the old parish pond – what one councillor called a 'stink hole in the middle of the road'. It stood on the main Cambridge-Ely Road near the war memorial. They had been complaining of it since at least 1928 when the Clerk described it as a cess-pool and a menace to the health of the village. Being on a bend in the road was a danger to traffic on dark or foggy nights, he claimed.

Beyond the old pond stood 'The Willows', the large residence of Dr Roland M. Woodman, a botanist at the Cambridge School of Agriculture. The site had originally comprised not only the house but a cottage with a drive between. When it was sold the drive was included with the cottage and The Willows was provided with a gateway opening on the far side of the house. There was no way in at the front as it looked across the pond.

The pond finally disappeared after the County Council widened the road. The parish council claimed the site was public ground and could become very valuable in the course of time, with Cambridge continually expanding. So they arranged for three seats to be placed on it. This was duly done, as agreed.

The only thing is that the doctor had got in first and opened a new gateway at the front of his house giving him access over the newly dry ground. When one of the seats was erected – where planned – it was immediately in front of this new entrance and nothing larger than a pedal cycle could get past

For a while things continued with the doctor's visitors walking around the seat. But then the council wrote asking him to stop using the way across the ground. A load of wood arrived on a Saturday morning and was placed in a neighbour's garden – who promptly moved it out into the road way. On the Tuesday a contractor arrived and proceeded to erect a six-foot close-boarded fence at the back of the site and in front of the doctor's new gate. Now the only way in was by climbing the fence and dropping down on to a flower bed. A window cleaner had problems – he managed to get one of his ladders over the fence, but the other became stuck and it was some time before he could go either backwards or forwards. A large crowd of villagers gathered and encouraged him with their cheers.

Then Dr Woodman took matters into his own hands. Watched by a number of villagers, he pulled down the whole of the fencing and sawed it in half. Then, in persistent rain, the seat across his gateway was dug out from its foundation of solid concrete and placed on one side without harm.

The Council put it back. They reiterated that it was public land and should not be given away. It did look odd that they'd put a seat up in front of the gateway or that tradesmen should have to climb over the fence, but it was better than the council climbing down. The situation had not altered: when the doctor bought the house in 1930 the agents had made another gateway on the other side. It was still there. Previously he was held in by the water, now he was bounded by boards.

But whatever the rights and wrongs, people thought the council had not acted reasonably. This was a peaceful resident who was being victimised, they claimed. So a petition was organised calling for a meeting.

It was very 'lively' affair with cat-calls, boos and other vocal demonstrations, though all agreed that the chairman kept it well in hand. It broke up quite amicably with a resolution demanding the resignation of the whole of the Parish Council. As to what happened next – well we must all keep an eye on my future 'Looking Back' columns!

Dr Woodman subsequently became chairman of Milton Parish Council between 1936 and 1947 and now has a street, Woodman Way, named after him. The Willows, the house at the centre of the dispute, is commemorated by Willow Crescent

But can you fill in any of the details – or do you recall other Council meetings that have been as exciting!

scan of

1950s photograph showing Milton war memorial near the site of the dispute

1920s view showing the pond on the right in the background

Memories 14th April 2008, by Mike Petty

Occupation Road, which links East Road and Newmarket Road, was never one of the city's most picturesque streets. Indeed back in 1966 the News published a picture of an abandoned car there in a series entitled 'Crumbling Cambridge'.

It came into prominence at a meeting at Haslingfield recently when one of the audience asked why it was so named. As in many such cases I did not know but said I would try and find out. Back home I turned to a book on Cambridge street names by Ronald Gray and Derek Stubbings. Their research indicates that an 'occupation road' was a private road for the use of the occupiers of adjacent land and that the name had survived.

More details of the early history of the area have come to light through the research of Prof Mary Hesse recently published in the Cambridge Antiquarian Society's Proceedings for 2007. In a detailed article she traces the ancient fields to the east of 'Old Mill Way' – the early name for our present East Road. Occupation Road formed part of the West Balk that bisected Bradmore Field quite near Maggots Close.

But what jobs did people do who lived there in the past? Cambridge Street Directory for 1904 lists a mixture of occupations: William Langley was a bricklayer, Henry Fordham a carpenter and George Clements earned his living as a groom and gardener. Nearby was charwoman Harriet Chandler, Harriet Baker a needlewoman and Alderman Edward Young, JP, a grocer.

There was also an Infant's School which was condemned by an Inspector in 1929 – it was not fit to teach children in and an absolutely cruelty to children to make them go there. In fact Occupation Road was really unsanitary, he recorded.

One of my regular correspondents, Miss Daphne Foreman, knew that building in the late 1940s. "I was asked to play the piano on Sunday afternoons at a Sunday School run by two ladies from St Paul's church, Miss Maltby and Miss Atkinson", Daphne told me in 2002. "Their idea being to get off the streets on Sunday afternoons the many children who lived in Occupation Road, Gas Lane and the other small roads in that area. We sang simple hymns and choruses with prayers and bible readings by the ladies".

By 1974 the old school building was home to Cambridge Bookbinding Company and was in very poor condition, with buckets catching the drips from the roof.

One of the darkest period in the street's history was in January 1837, when the bodies of a mother aged 86 and her daughter, 57, were found dead in their beds. An inquest learned that the daughter, Ann, used to go out in the fields and work for the farmers. On the Sunday night she went into John Daffen's shop for a pint of ale, a pennyworth of turf, a rush light and a halfpenny worth of sedge. She was a good customer who used to come in regularly for her laudanum, always about a pennyworth. It was needed, she said, for her poor old mother who was bed-ridden with a pain in her back and could not rest without the opium. She never gave her much, because she knew it was poison.

Next morning John noticed the shutters of her house were still closed at 11 o'clock. At four in the afternoon the house was still shut up so he got a ladder and broke in through an upper window. On going downstairs he found Ann lying in her bed. She was dead and stiff. Her mother, Elizabeth, was partly on and partly off the bed - and she was dead too. The word went round that they'd starved to death but the relieving officer of the Chesterton Union showed they got enough to keep them in what little food they needed.

While the surgeon was doing his investigating the rumours started up that the two ladies were being cut up for anatomical purposes and a crowd of people gathered to protest. The inquest jury decided they'd been found dead with no marks of violence - but the discovery of a small bottle of laudanum in the room was thought to be a cause of their demise.

But what are your memories of this patch of the city?

[PICTURES OF OCCUPATION ROAD 1966 – derelict car – and 1978 - shows the former school mentioned, then Cambridge Bookbinding

Memories 21st April 2008, by Mike Petty

Tony Day, the fenland artist, writes following last week's article:

Your piece on Occupation Road stirred a grim memory of my arrival in the corner of the city in 1938.

Two-and-a-half years earlier, on my leaving school, my grandfather had released his farm to my father who had slaved for him all his life. But he was soon a sick and dying man who wanted me away from farm life. I was at the mercy of my mother's choice of cheap residence based on sheer poverty.

We moved from a ten-roomed farmhouse within our own blissful green pastures on the corner of the Upware Road, near Wicken and travelled to Cambridge with our chattels in one of the Wright brothers' cattle floats. Our destination shrank to Occupation Road, then, worse, the old part of New Street. I felt suffocation as never before or since. It was typical of my mother to choose the cheapest hovel she could find. Happily that dirty grey terrace vanished long ago. We were not there long but the next move was not much better, the war trapping us there." Tony has now returned to his native village.

One man who was active in the East Road area was Alex Wood who is commemorated by the Labour Party Hall, a road on the Arbury Estate and by a residential home of the Cambridge Housing Society. His story has been researched by Ronald Speirs and published in the Cambridgeshire Association for Local History's Review for 2007.

On his arrival at Cambridge in the early 1900s Wood attended St Columba's Presbyterian Church in Downing Street where he met two wealthy ladies, Mrs Agnes Lewis and Mrs Margaret Gibson. They were concerned about the conditions in poor areas such as Occupation Road and bought the old York Street Mission – now commemorated by a new GP practice known as Lewis-Gibson House.

Alex Wood volunteered to be a Sunday School teacher there. He became its superintendent in 1914 and remained for thirty years, conducting services most Sunday evenings. He joined the Cambridge Labour Party in 1918 and, stimulated his first-hand knowledge of the conditions in the St Matthew's area, stood for election to the Borough Council. He won the ward on his second attempt and served as councillor until 1950. In 1923 the council passed a resolution that "the slums of Cambridge are a disgrace and steps should be taken to demolish them".

One of Alex Wood's initiatives was to set up a Boys' Club (which admitted girls), organising speakers and first-aid courses with something on most evenings. The importance of such facilities is described by 'Pimbo', writer Fred Unwin in his book, 'A Cambridge Childhood Revisited', who attended a boys' club run by students in Occupation Road.

There was a similar club across East Road in Wellington Street. It was run entirely by voluntary effort and attracted a membership of 100 boys from 14 to 18 years of age with a programme is designed to create a balance in their physical, spiritual and mental development. In 1955 Councillor Burkitt described how the first time he visited the noise was terrific, there was not a single pane of glass left unbroken and the club was very disorderly. But it established a tradition of decent behaviour and loyalty; the boys taking pride in making it a credit to the community.

When News reporter Colin Moule visited in February 1958 it was flourishing under the leadership of Chris Silcock. Despite the volume of noise the youngsters were not idle. In well-equipped workshops they were taught woodwork and metalwork while the more artistic received instruction in modelling and painting. There was table tennis, P.T. and boxing along with photography, chess, talks and trips abroad. Parents attended on open nights when the fun was shared by all.

Membership decreased and it closed in 1960 when John Ewen, a theology student at Ridley Hall, established a Freebooters Coffee Bar & club which attracted 400 members with rock around the clock, 25-hour, jiving competitions, table tennis, a juke box and television room. They also organised film shows and debated taboo subjects – such as birth control, keeping teenagers off the streets and out of trouble until it closed in December 1962

Can you add more details – or do you remember something similar from your younger days

Copies of the CALH Review are obtainable from the Editor at f@fashburner.com or phone 01223 811703.

choice of scans of

Freebooters coffee club 1961

Wicken village – Tony Day left Wicken as a lad but has now returned to his native village

New Street – Tony Day moved into this area

Wellington Street – site of the boys club

Wellington Street article, Feb 1958

East Road in 1950s

Memories 28th April 2008, by Mike Petty

The recent discovery of a wartime bomb off Felixstowe and the subsequent difficulty experienced with its destruction, has brought the work of the bomb disposal squads once more into prominence.

But it was not until I read a review of a book in the Cambridge Daily News in June 1958 that I realised that I knew little of what happened locally. So I visited the University Library and tracked down a copy of “A cold-hearted business”, the reminiscences of Squadron Leader Alec E. Haarer.

In it he describes his training and the complexities of the various types of bombs and fuses. Alec was based in Lincolnshire for the early part of his career but in 1943 was promoted to command the East Anglian Bomb Disposal Squadron and told to report to RAF Station, Waterbeach. There he found the Station Commander knew nothing of him and certainly didn't want his men cluttering up the airfield. So he had to find somewhere else to go.

He learned of a building at Milton that was due to be de-requisitioned and went to investigate. He found an old Georgian property standing in its own grounds with an overgrown garden. The outhouses were mouldering into decay and when they opened the front doors they discovered that the topmost plaster ceiling had fallen three stories down the great well of the winding staircase into the hall. It seemed an ideal base. Decorators were sent in to distemper it throughout and paint the woodwork Air Force blue.

Soon all the officers had bedrooms and offices and the large rooms on the ground floor were devoted to storing their special equipment. A large number of red-winged motor vehicles were parked in the yard and once the telephones were installed and the walls covered by maps, they were ready for action.

They also needed dart-boards, footballs and other sporting gear together with reading matter to while away the long hours of boredom between jobs. But they had no money to buy them. Then, hidden away amongst the overgrown undergrowth they found masses of oyster shells. More were buried under the floors and in a lean-to chicken run. This proved a valuable source of income for they could be sold to be ground up for poultry keepers to feed as grit to their birds. It was hard work, but remunerative.

More importantly they needed somewhere where they could detonate any bombs they discovered. Just across the River Cam there was a field where huge piles of earth screened a place where somebody had already been demolishing pyrotechnics. It seemed ideal so they obtained permission from the farmer to use it, provided they took care of his black-and-white cows.

The time came when they had a big 25-kg bomb to detonate and shooed the cows into the next field before exploding it with a bang that sent all the Milton hens clucking. The cows took no notice. But a couple of days later a farmer lodged a complaint: following the explosion he had found his cattle dead in the field. It took some time before he remembered that there had also been a massive thunderstorm and it had been that that caused the animals to panic.

Alec Haarer never kept a diary but recalls that it was in about July 1943 they were called to an incident in north Cambridgeshire where four unexploded bombs had been reported. It seemed they had penetrated the clay and been buried as the soil had then covered them over making it was hard to see where they had hit. By searching a lush half-grown wheat field the disposal team eventually discovered the entrance holes of three of the bombs. A circle of wheat at least twelve feet around the holes was stunted and yellow – it appeared the bombs had in fact gone off deep underground. The procedure then was to dig down into the underground chamber created and detonate a small charge so as to cause the dirt above to fall in. It would cause a depression but was safer than leaving a hidden hole.

This was duly done, the fuse lit and the disposers ambled away. The small bang they caused was followed by a tremendous explosion. The whole earth seemed to be flung into the sky leaving a huge crater. The experts had got it wrong: a large bomb must have lain unexploded after all and the charge in the drilling hole inserted very close to it. It was an easy mistake to make, but one that could have proved fatal.

But where was this. Have you any clues?

Records show 17 high-explosives were dropped at Twentypence, Wilburton in September 1943 and three high-explosives together with 92 other types near Shippea Hill in the October. But these were German bombs and there were more lost from allied aircraft together with practice bombs dropped by the Americans that could still cause devastation.

It was one of these that was discovered in the Old West River at Aldreth in April 1965- an incident recorded by a News photographer who got far nearer to it than I would. Perhaps you remember it?

Have you memories to share of unexploded bombs – write to Mike Petty at the News

Memories 5th May 2008, by Mike Petty

Cambridge United Football Club are going through a most interesting period as they strive to gain promotion *back to the Football League* **PLEASE CHECK THIS IS RIGHT!**. Whether they are successful only time will tell, but perhaps they may consider the lesson of the past.

Just 50 years ago their Vice-Chairman, J.F. Ablett addressed the club's annual dinner at the Dorothy Café. He expressed the opinion that Cambridge football had reached the most interesting position in its history, it was the dawn of professional football. Next season both the city's two senior clubs would be campaigning in the same league – the Southern League.

He went on to review their achievements so far. In the 1920s, the club, as Abbey United, had played in the third division of the Cambridgeshire League. They gained promotion in two successive years and became first division champions in the 1925-26 season.

In September 1932 Abbey United had started their football campaign in fine style. Not only did they play their first match on their new ground but they won it. That ground was situated close to their former pitch at Newmarket Road and had been levelled and fenced-in. All this had been made possible through the generosity of the club president, Mr H.C. Francis and it was officially declared open by Mr R.J. Wadsworth.

Then just after the second world war the Supporters' Club embarked on an ambitious scheme – the building of a £3,000 pavilion and clubroom with office accommodation. At first the loyal band of supporters was beset by building material difficulties and then hampered by the weather. There were scenes of great enthusiasm when the building was handed over to the football club management in 1952. "Our set-up is now really wonderful and there is no reason why the club should not go on from success to success", Harry Habbin, chairman of the Supporters Club told the News.

The new stand brought success and the future was being anticipated by the News cartoonist of the time. I thought it interesting to reproduce his contribution to the paper of 19th April 1958 in which he looks forward to a brave new world for United football when large crowds would pack the terraces.

The subsequent story of the club's ups and downs has been told and will be retold by others more competent to comment than I.

Doubtless the issue of the new name of the stadium will occupy the letter-pages for weeks to come. The stadium's current name is a reminder of the old Barnwell Abbey that was founded in 1092 by Picot, the Norman sheriff of Cambridge after his wife recovered from illness. However Picot squabbled with the king and his lands were forfeited to Pain Peverel who rebuilt the abbey on land between Newmarket Road and the river where it flourished until it was swept away by Henry VIII. The stones were taken for other developments until now it is remembered by Abbey Road, Abbey House, the Cellarer's Chequer in Beche Road and the stadium. Nearby stands another reminder in the form of the Leper Chapel, an early isolation hospital for those suffering from disease.

But there was another early hospital. The Hospital of St John the Evangelist stood in the centre of Cambridge – its site is now St John's College. It was founded at the end of the 1100s when Henry Eldcorn built the 'poorest of shacks' on a plot of waste ground near the main river crossing as a refuge for the poor. It expanded to become an institution of considerable importance and, backed by the support of generations of Cambridge families, it acquired lands.

Like Barnwell Abbey it disappeared and its story has been largely forgotten.

But now Malcolm Underwood, archivist of St John's College, has transcribed masses of ancient documents which have just been published by the Cambridgeshire Records Society. Through their pages one can gain a snapshot of life 700 years ago – even of the sheets on the hospital bed. It contains a detailed index of names of local folk: William the barber, William the carpenter, William the goldsmith ...

One name caught my eye: William Kinchant – who was sometimes known as Quinchant – and 'Quinn' (Jimmy of that ilk is the current manager) may well be a name chanted by United supporters if their promotion hopes turn to reality, or even lead to an appearance at a somewhat newer stadium, Wembley.

Cartulary of the Hospital of St John the Evangelist, Cambridge by Malcolm Underwood (ISBN 0904323 20 X) is available from Cambridgeshire Records Society, email philip.saunders@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Scan of the cartoon from April 1958 – there are other pictures of the stadium in the News library
choice of pictures of St John's College – site of the Hospital
old engraving of the Leper Chapel – another reminder of the old Abbey

Memories 12th May 2008, by Mike Petty

Rural post offices have been part of community life for generations, but like various other village institutions they now under threat. Without them rural life becomes the poorer.

In their heyday the village post office and general stores supplied most of the villagers' needs, as Beatrice Stevens recalled in her book: 'Stretham: a feast of memories'. "Swan's was a general store and housed the village Post Office. This was a small box-like office at the left of the entrance, with a fascinating aperture through which you voiced your requests and received the stamps and Postal Order that you might want. Occasionally one needed to send a telegram, but only when sad news was to be transmitted. Someone was ill and the daughter in service in London must be sent for. Or, perhaps even worse, one of the family had died or had had a farm accident, and other relatives must be informed."

But the post office side of the shop was eclipsed by the other things it sold. You could buy almost anything at Swan's including drapery, socks, vests, pants, men's and boy's trousers, women's combinations, warm knickers or drawers. Then there was calico for sheets and underwear, speckled wool for home-knitted socks and gloves, even boots and shoes. In the 1920's Swan's gave up the postal side of their business which transferred to another village shop where it still trades.

But it has not always been easy to find a new site for the post office, as the villagers at Ashley found back in October 1926. One option then considered was to attach it to the Crown Public House, although the language at a public house was not always of the best.

Their future has never been secure: in November 1929 the inhabitants of Houghton were up in arms as the postal authorities had removed their sub-post office, which had been there for more than a century, to the neighbouring village of Wyton. The Houghton office was run by the widow of an ex-servicemen who had lost her breadwinner in the service of his country. It should be returned and telephone facilities installed, they demanded.

The News pages have often recalled the appreciation communities have shown to their post office staff.

In 1979 Landbeach postmistress, Miss Doris Mitham, retired, ending a family involvement that dated back 36 years. The village lost a much-loved facility but the family regained the tiny room at the back of her High Street home that had served as the post office.

In April 1981 an era came to an end at Debden with the retirement of the village's 90-year-old postmistress, Mrs Lilian Peterson after 52 years. Over 40 villagers clustered round the tiny sub-post office to show their appreciation by presenting her with a cheque.

That year Lolworth's village post office was being praised as a cornerstone of the small rural community. It had been run since 1972 by Mrs Margaret Wenham, a jolly, red-haired lady who was born and bred in the village. For the first five years she operated it from a caravan but now it doubled as the only village shop stocking basic groceries and bits and pieces. It didn't have a full range of counter services or provide a proper living on its own. But it was relied on by pensioners and mums drawing family allowances in a village with only one bus a week.

In 1982 Lillian Cornwell retired as postmistress of Wilburton and looked back on her experiences: "So much has changed since I started just after the war. For one thing the fact that we are a post office as well as selling groceries has kept us going – the growth of supermarkets would have seen us off, I'm sure. Wilburton's a wonderful village with a wonderful crowd of people", she told the News. But one of her customers had another view of her success: "Her friendly, personal nature in running the store puts the supermarkets to shame. She is always at the counter with a smile and always a good listener to customers' problems". A bit perhaps like the folk in the current people's post office advertisements.

Back in April 1973 the British Tourist Authority pronounced that the village shop was alive and well and to prove it they picked out the post office at Gt Abington then run by retired R.A.F. squadron leader Jack Armitage. Since he and his wife took over the shop three years earlier they had modernised the inside and turnover had almost doubled. "I am sure there will always be a place for the village shop", Jack said.

But whether that will remain true once the latest round of cuts has worked its way through the system remains to be seen.

PHOTOS

VILLAGE POST OFFICE AT ARRINGTON AND LINTON c1900,
INSIDE THE POST OFFICE, SUTTON 1964,
LILLIAN CORNWELL OUTSIDE WILBURTON POST OFFICE WITH ASSISTANT
ANITA WOODS IN JUNE 1982

Memories May 19th Phone boxes TO FIND
Copied as PDF file, cutting in file.

Memories 26th May 2008, by Mike Petty

Barway is a small hamlet out in the fens between Soham and Ely. The only road winds between the houses, passes the former church and school and then crosses a bridge before it peters out in a field.

If it is isolated in 2008, then what must it have been like years ago? In fact Barway folk were in close touch with surrounding villages as they had riverbanks and footpaths they could follow and thought nothing of walking or biking.

One ran towards Wicken through Fordy Farm where, as recently as 1939, Mrs Markham, the farmer's wife would charge a penny to open the gate for cyclists to pass through. Another went across the fields to Stuntney where people would attend the Harvest Festival before returning by moonlight.

It was only three miles by the river-bank to Ely station to catch a train or they could cycle up to the Soham road and leave their bikes at the Toll house, before catching the bus to the city. At this time the Ely High Bridge was so narrow only one vehicle at a time could pass over it so you had to send somebody ahead before attempting to cross with a pony and trap.

A drove lead to the river Ouse where there was a ferry bridge wide enough to take a horse and cart across to Little Thetford. Here tradespeople crossed. One of these was a Mr Nightingale, a butcher, who used to tether his horse outside 'The Bull' public house. One day the horse got loose and was startled. It backed, the cart tipped up and all the meat slipped into the pond. Rakes and pitchforks were quickly brought into use and soon strings of sausages and joints of meat were being dragged out and lifted away from the water. These needed a good washing as cows often wandered through it on their way for milking.

In such an isolated community it was unusual to see a stranger, especially one who wore a turban. But one such gentleman came with a large suitcase on his bicycle and would display a range of goods on the doorstep. Housewives were pleased to buy underwear, pinafore or shoes – although he would only bring one pair and these had to be ordered for his next visit.

Peggy Chaffe's mother, Jessie Fleming, was a stranger when she arrived in Barway in 1892 to take over as Headmistress. But she was to become a part of the community's life for many years, teaching generations of youngsters and then, when the school was closed down in the early 1930s, she bought it at auction. She continued to educate a few of the older children who did not wish to change school and opened a little shop in what had been the scullery, selling basic grocery items and sweets.

She also built up a wonderful collection of newspaper cuttings, ephemera and snapshots that paint a unique record of local life. Highlight of the year was the village feast on May 5th which attracted people from all around. One year there were so many vans that Ben Pope's field was hired for those unable to park on the road. A big banner was made, it was blue and as big as a sheet with 'Barway Feast' written on it, which was put at the entrance to the field where the children's races and prize-giving took place.

Through these we discover how when the river threatened to burst its banks one family, the Seekings, put all their possessions on a horse and cart and moved into the school for a few weeks. They had a hearth-rug and table with an old-fashioned gramophone and made up their beds down one side of the school room.

The in 1924 four strangers dropped in from the sky. They had been flying a giant Vickers Vimy bomber from their base at Bircham-Newton to Margate when it developed engine trouble. They had no option but to make a forced landing in a stubble field where the plane ran along the ground quite happily until it reached a four-feet dyke and somersaulted. Fortunately it rebounded on to an even keel and the airmen were unhurt. They became instant celebrities in the village, where they stayed until the plane could be dismantled and taken away. The airmen were based in the school – a thank you letter from Ronald Martin of 'A' Flight, No.7 Bombing Squadron, Bircham Newton Aerodrome is amongst the papers. "Everybody had a lovely time (altho' the beds were rather hard) and we were very sorry to leave. You made it so homely for us that nearly everybody had had an attack of homesickness since we arrived back. We shall always be indebted everybody at Barway for being so hospitable to so many stranded airmen, but I for one shall remember the ditch!" he wrote.

But there are very sad mementoes too: one of Jessie's sons was taken Prisoner during the Great War. He wrote letters home, begging for items such as salt, corned beef, Golden Syrup and socks. Several parcels were sent, just one arrived. He got it shortly before he died.

At her home at St Ives Peggy continued to sort through her mother's fascinating scraps. Do you have similar collections of material? Contact Mike Petty at the News

scans

views of Barway, children at the feast, the Vickers Vimy aircraft, crew, newspaper cutting and letter

Memories 2nd June 2008, by Mike Petty

Tim Coles from Elsworth was surprised to read a snippet from 18th May 1933 in my 'Looking Back' column. It read:

Hangman's Corner, Barton Road presented a scene of excitement when the British Hospital's Air Pageant visited Cambridge and all afternoon there was the incessant 'zoom' of aeroplanes 'taking off' and landing. All-in advanced aerobatics provided a thrill; the 'crazy' flying drew many a gasp whilst equally entertaining was the dancing to music by the tiniest machines in the show. Wing-walking and parachute jumping were presented, together with balloon bursting and a chase after a 'kidnapped' bride. One machine which caused amusement was Mr Heath Robinson's conception of a Chinese dragon: the 'flying motor cycle'

Tim writes:

"I am intrigued by the paragraph on "crazy flying" – I was born and brought up in the house my grandfather built in 1931 on "Hangman's Corner", now number 112 Barton Road. . Neither my grandparents or parents ever mentioned any flying from the area. Can you or any of your readers shed any light on this aspect of the history of the area? Which side of the road was used as the airfield? What became of the airfield? Do any maps exist showing an airfield on Hangman's Corner, which we knew as Hangman's Bend? Do any photographs exist – these would be particularly interesting."

As so often happens I have very little information. I have a note of an accident to a three-seater Avro airplane engaged in pleasure trips from field off Barton Rd in October 1923 and in May 1934 the Sky Devil's air circus performed from there. But can you add more.

There were other sites. In April 1930 a *News* reporter experienced the thrill of looping the loop in a joy-ride aeroplane that was giving flights from Cherry Hinton Road and one of his colleagues had a far smoother flight that October when a 'Westland Wessex' three-engined six-seater cabin monoplane de luxe arrived at Marshall's aerodrome. Seated in a padded brown leather seat with arm and head rests he found it glided so smoothly that he could scrawl down his experiences in his best hand. There was no vibration and the businessman could take his secretary, for letters and notes are typed with ease, he noted.

Even bad weather could not deter thrill-seeking folk: in July 1931 a heavy, gusty wind and driving rain greeted Captain C.D. Barnard and his famous monoplane, the Spider, when he visited Cambridge. But when it abated a number of people took trips knowing they would be dry in the plane. Twenty readers of the Cambridge Daily News had been given free tickets for a ten-minute flight and enjoyed the experience; one young lady laughingly remarked she felt 'a bit funny' coming down.

In 1932 Cambridge town councillors were offered a flight by Sir Alan Cobham who was visiting Marshall's aerodrome with his fleet of planes. However the Mayor was unable to be

present and the deputy mayor preferred solid ground. When the party was about to take off it was discovered to number 13, so the County Chief Constable stepped into the breech and the plane both ascended and descended safely. They made a comprehensive survey of the town with its ring of new housing estates and would doubtless have looked down on Hangman's Corner.

Something of the story of Hangman's Corner was revealed during an appeal against a refusal of planning permission back in January 1956. Percy Tolliday wanted to erect one house with a garden on two plots of land there. He was supported by Kelsey Charles Kerridge of Dales Farm, Barton, a builder for over 30 years who said his father had acquired land there in 1934 and gained approval to build eight houses, two of which had been constructed. It was a dangerous spot: Tim recalls that his grandfather assisted at several accidents and in 1956 the County had plans for a western by-pass to carry up to 5,000 vehicles a day. Anyway the proposed house was outside the Cambridge development area and would constitute ribbon development they claimed. The Planning Inspector supported their arguments

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Readers often recognise themselves in old News pictures. So when David Carrington of Swavesey turned to the Memories column a couple of weeks ago and saw himself it was not that unusual. Except that he was pictured in close proximity to an unexploded bomb that was dredged up near Aldreth in April 1965. Not that he remembers the occasion now. He writes:

The policeman looking at the Aldreth bomb is me, although I do not have any memories of it, perhaps because there was no 'Bang'!

But of course it prompts other memories which take me into the land of reminiscence. This was at the time when most villages had their own policeman - I was at Sutton - Ray Thoday at Mepal - Bill Goodrum at Haddenham and Gordon Baxter at Witchford. We all chugged round on our water cooled Velocette motorcycles. 'Chug' was the word - good head wind and top speed might be 30 mph.

This was around the time of the amalgamation of the five forces into Mid-Anglia Constabulary. The policemen, we can say that because the ladies were still Wpcs, at snooty Cambridge dreaded the thought of being posted to the dark depths of the Isle. But the old Isle of Ely force knocked the others into a cocked hat. We had a diving unit, a motorised boat for river work, mostly for finding bodies, and a mobile lighting unit to take to accidents. We also had home-made intruder alarms and even a miniature listening device to hear what prisoners were saying to each other in the cells!

photos

Barton Road in the 1920s

David Carrington inspecting a bomb at Aldreth, 1965

article from the news of 18 May 1933

Memories 9th June 2008, by Mike Petty

A hundred years ago, in April 1908, the Queen got lost near Newmarket. What was worse the Dowager Empress of Russia was with her.

The two Royal personages had safely passed through Cambridge station, where elaborate security arrangements had been made with Inspector Baker and several constables in attendance in addition to the Station Master and other officials. There was no hostile demonstration but a kindly act on the part of Queen Alexandra was spotted by the waiting

News reporter: she waved her hand once or twice to the persons on the platform as the train proceeded without stopping to Six Mile Bottom. There their Majesties disembarked, transferred to their limousines and drove to Egerton House, on the outskirts of Newmarket, where they took tea with Richard Marsh, King Edward VII's trainer.

It was then that things went wrong. The chauffeurs consulted their maps and set out for Fordham station, not more than a quarter of an hour's drive away. The route however was somewhat complicated and they took a wrong turning, eventually landing up at Long Bottom, some miles from their destination.

By now the people on the platform at Fordham were worriedly waiting with the special train that was to have conveyed the Royals on to the next leg of their journey. The Cambridgeshire Chief Constable, Mr C. Stretten and Superintendent Winter together with railway officials Mr R.P. Ellis and George Kinum became ever more alarmed as the minutes slipped by and there was no sign of the Royal car. Officials communicated with Egerton House only to be informed that their guests had left some time before. After another quarter-of-an-hour cyclists were sent out as search parties. They returned without any news.

By now rumours had started to spread that Anarchists were responsible for the disappearance so it was time for more drastic action. The police approached Mr George Flinders, whose car was in the station yard, and he readily placed his vehicle at their disposal. Superintendent Winter climbed in and set off around surrounding lanes – but still failed to locate his prey. He returned back to Fordham, only to find that the Royal cars had arrived just moments earlier – they had got well and truly lost and then suffered from a burst tyre.

Queen and Empress at once boarded the train for Sandringham where they were well protected by a large number of special detectives from Scotland Yard.

At least with modern satellite navigation devices and mobile phones such things would not occur today. Oh no?

Last week I had a couple of talks in Norfolk and decided to make a three-day break of it. The first was at Narborough, where I met a lady who'd grown up at Barway and was fascinated to learn of the papers collected by Evelyn Pollard that Peggy Chaffe has been sorting. Afterwards we drove to a hotel along winding roads that were totally deserted and almost bereft of signposts. Next day we relocated to our favourite Country House Hotel at Lenwade from which it was a short drive to the Norwich Out and About Club for a morning talk on Ghosts and Witches. We rounded off the break with an evening meal at the King's Head country inn in North Elmham.

As we ordered a kindly local noticed that our back tyre was flat – punctured by a Norfolk flint. Since the meal was cooking it seemed best to enlist the assistance of the Royal Automobile Club to change the wheel. We telephoned at 7.30 and a patrolman arrived from his base a couple of miles away at 8.30. Quite unremarkable, except that was a delay of not one hour, but thirteen!

By midnight it was getting less than a joke. Despite numerous phone calls it appeared that the first two or three knights of the road had either got themselves lost or been sent to the wrong location

We could not keep the King's Head landlady up any longer, but we could not go back to Lenwade with a flat tyre that refused to respond to our own ministrations.

It was then that true Norfolk hospitality kicked in. Sue Dunn gave us a wonderful room overlooking countryside that by morning was wreathed in mist – and then tried to refuse any

payment. Then once the five-minute tyre change had been successful it was back to Lenwade where the manager - who'd offered at midnight to come out to us - also strove not to charge for the room that had remained empty through no fault of their own.

Which leaves a dilemma – when next in Norfolk which of the hotels that showed us hospitality fit for a King should we beg the privilege of staying at?

scans of
Fordham station 1950s
Six Mile Bottom station c1910
Queen Alexandra
cutting from CDN April 1908.
King's Head Hotel, North Elmham June 2008.

Memories 16th June 2008, by Mike Petty

The story of how a group of undergraduates managed to raise the body of an Austin 7 van on to the roof of the University Senate House in June 1958 without anybody noticing, and how then the combined might of the Cambridge Civil Defence Corps failed to get it down again, has been told several times. But I could not let this 50th anniversary pass completely unnoticed. Perhaps there are still some snaps or memories that you can share.

However it was not high parking that saw a Newnham College student in court in June 1933: it was low flying. Mary Enid Barnard was undergoing a course of instruction at Marshall's flying school and had to do three hours solo flying before she could obtain her certificate. During this she decided to have a closer look at her Alma Mater, so swooped down over Newnham.

But a Corpus Christi College don, Dr John Thompson, who was a flier himself, complained that she had descended rather rapidly, then flattened out and crossed Corpus' Fellows' gardens dangerously low: he assessed the height as about 600 feet. John Patrick Bury added that he could read the letters on the plane quite clearly.

Mary defended her actions: she denied going below 1,000 feet. She estimated that a plane could glide a mile if the engine gave out and as the nearest landing ground was 880 yards away she could have reached it without causing damage to people or property. The magistrates were not so sure but as it was the first prosecution of its kind they decided to dismiss the case with a caution.

Cambridge was getting used to aerial activity. My recent mention of an airshow at Hangman's Corner, Barton Road has encouraged Harry Bye of Ely to delve into his diaries for an entry from 18th May 1933. It reads:

“I was 16 years old when the British Hospital Air Pageant came to Barton. To see them meant a 60-mile round trip cycle ride from Shippea Hill, but I was determined to get there as my brother and I were fascinated by the wing walking by Harry Willis on an Avro 504. The programme starts with a formation flight by the 16 aircraft to advertise the show. There is balloon bursting, paper cutting, bottle shooting from the air and height judging. While some go for joy riding some so in for aerobatics. One pilot goes in for stunt flights. He hurls his passengers about the sky, rolling, looping, spinning and diving from about 250 to about 50 feet from the ground, then pulls out of the dive and when landing some of the passengers look a bit 'groggy'

“It is nearly dark when the flying ends and when parachutist Evans leaps from the Spartan aircraft and the parachute opens, advertising the Co-op, he lands safely. Most of the crowd make for home. We had 30 miles cycling to do and when dropping in at the Kum In Café at Ely for refreshment we were nearly home”

Harry took some pictures of the event, but they didn’t come out. So in July he cycled to Bury St Edmunds to see the display again, only to find that several of the aircraft were not there. He did snap one that had been at Barton Road.

One impediment to low flying is high poles, one of which was featured in the News in June 1908. The paper had already reported an outbreak of ‘Alpine fever’ which had seen students climbing trees along the Backs. But then they’d turned to a wireless telegraphy station on the Huntingdon Road – something that seems not to be widely mentioned. It was a pole over 200 feet in height that received messages from Cumnor Hill near Oxford. Two undergraduates merrily commenced the ascent by means of the metal spikes driven in at convenient intervals and managed to reach the top from which they enjoyed the views. However the descent was not so easily accomplished and they reached terra firma with a distinct sigh of relief.

I know nothing about this prominent Cambridge landmark – do you remember it, or have snaps.

SCAN

Van on roof of Senate House

Harry Bye’s snap of one of the planes that appeared at Hangman’s Corner, 1933

Newnham college – painting by William Matthison, 1907

Memories 23rd June 2008, by Mike Petty

The other morning I glanced out of the window to where a fine large house is being built in place of much finer large trees. It was not the birds flittering through the vanished branches that caught my attention but the antics of a roofer.

For there he was standing amongst the rafters apparently conducting an invisible orchestra with his hammer. Only by closer observation was it apparent that he was being buzzed, seemingly by bees that had made their home inside the opening he was now trying to cover.

It was a similar experience to that which confronted licensee Bert Martin at Whittlesford in July 1958. But he not totally surprised to see them – after all his pub must have been called the ‘Bees in the Wall’, for some reason.

Bert had become aware that something was wrong when he noticed an unpleasant smell. He called in the builders who opened up the wall of his bedroom and found an estimated 80,000 bees together with masses of honeycomb filling the space between two upright pieces of plaster.

Many of the bees were dead as the one exit from their extraordinary ‘hive’, a tiny hole in the outside wall where a drainpipe was cleated on to the brickwork, had been unknowingly sealed up by builders when decorating the house the previous year. For 18 months the bees had been completely incarcerated, living on their own honey. Once released the survivors swarmed over the adjoining car park: “it was like a dark and stormy day”, said Mr Martin, “and the noise was terrific”.

Perhaps it had been some such earlier manifestation which had caused the change of the pub name from 'The Exhibition' seven or eight years earlier. But nobody had known for certain that the bees were still there. Now there was clear evidence in the great clumps and clusters and rod-like groups of cells behind the bedroom wall. Reg decided to make it a feature by fitting a glass panel over the hole and its busy inhabitants

In May 1977 the pub was in the news for much the same reason; the bees had returned after disappearing the previous October. Once more they were to be made welcome guests by the landlord, then Mr David Smith.

But do you have similar experiences to relate.

[PHOTO OF THE NEWS REPORT FROM 1958;
SCAN OF THE EXHIBITION PUB WHITTLESFORD, LATER RENAMED THE BEES IN
THE WALL.
THERE IS, I BELIEVE, A NEWS PICTURE OF THE PUB IN THE NEWS LIBRARY]

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Can anybody help Julie Thompson identify a group of old soldiers. Her husband recently rescued an old photograph by the Cambridge firm of Mason & Basebe who were trading in Cambridge Market Street during the Edwardian era. It shows a Sergeants Mess Dinner, but what was the Regiment and where was it taken.

I know that 100 years ago, in April 1908 more than 1000 people gathered on Cambridge Market Hill at midnight to witness the official extinction of the Third (Cambs) Volunteer Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment. As the clock chimed the buglers played 'The Last Post' and the Volunteers were no more. But after a few seconds 'Reveille' was sounded, melancholy vanished and cheers greeted the new Cambridgeshire Battalion of the Territorial Force. The bugle band played the officers back to the mess room where they sang 'Auld Lang Syne'. But was this part of that reorganisation. Any information would be welcome please. You can email Julie at joolsnellie@blueyonder.co.uk or drop me a line [SCAN OF SERGEANTS MESS]

Ian Crisp from Hitchin has another query. He has a couple of photographs taken at Melbourn in the late 1800s by a fairground photographer, whose caravans are shown in the background. He knows who the people are but would like more information on the itinerant photographers who travelled round with the village fairs and feasts. Ian knows that the Harris family had a steam circus that toured the region and wonders if it was anything to do with them. Can you help [SCAN OF PHOTOGRAPHER'S CARAVAN AT MELBOURN FAIR]

Memories 30th June 2008, by Mike Petty

One of the items that arrived in my computer In Box was a postcard taken by the Cambridge photographers, Kidd and Baker.

It showed a young man in white shorts holding a bucket and spade and a toy trumpet. It was signed 'Kenneth Mellanby'. The sender, Nigel Brown, wondered if I could tell him anything about it. At first glance it seemed very unlikely. But Nigel had also sent a copy of the inscription on the back, and that did ring a bell. It read "May Week, 1927. Opening of Joanna Southcott's Box in Market Hill"

Joanna Southcott was a Devon girl who claimed to have supernatural gifts; she wrote her prophecies in rhyme and left them at her death in 1814 in a sealed wooden box with instructions that it should be opened at time of crisis but only in the presence of 24 bishops.

Eventually it was decided in July 1927 that the time had come to see what was in there. The box was x-rayed, and shown to contain a pistol and a dice box. But there were some papers as well.

Sadly they were unable to find a full contingent of Bishops, but the Bishop of Grantham did attend a meeting at Church House, Westminster, together with a selection of clergy and a large number of onlookers, mostly ladies

However they had to wait until H. Ernest Hunt, director of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, who had kept the box in safe keeping, had delivered a lecture setting out Joanna's story. He told how she'd little education but went on to produce 4,500 pages of prophecies packed into seven boxes, of which this was one.

Once the box was opened it was found to contain a diary for 1715, some books, a lottery ticket, a child's night-cap, an earring, some coins and other material. Oh yes, and the pistol.

But was it the right box? A correspondent to The Times claimed that he too had opened one of Joanna's boxes in a garret at Morecambe and found it to contain some finely-worked baby clothes made for the coming of the second Christ that she had expected, together with a large collection of 'passes into Heaven' filled out in the names of Cabinet Ministers of her day.

But the Cambridge Daily News had apparently scooped the nationals; for in their issue of 9th June – more than a month earlier, it had reported how Cambridge undergraduates had opened Joanna's famous box on the Market Hill.

Mammoth crowds gathered, with every window packed and several lads secured prime seats on top of the fountain. Just before noon a melancholy dirge from Petty Cury heralded the arrival of Highland pipers preceding one of Dale's brewery lorries on which was arrayed the full contingent of 24 bishops and their retainers. They were followed by a delegation of 'Mormons' from Salt Lake City and a variety of other colourful characters.

On arrival one of the mitred archbishops – looking very like Father Christmas – began to explore the contents of a large chest decorated with the letters 'J.S.' in huge white letters. Out came red tape, a teddy bear, some football boots and a dismembered limb from a tailor's dummy. There were some old examination papers, some bananas and various tracts proclaiming the 'End of the World' on 31st June 1927. Fortunately June only has 30 days!

But the News made no mention of the bucket, spade and trumpet depicted on Nigel's postcard, which adds to the record of this 'rag'. It had been organised to raise money for the Cambridge Fruiting Campaign which helped the people from the East End of London who spent their summers picking Strawberries in the Wisbech area

But does the name 'Kenneth Mellanby' on the front of the card mean anything? Indeed it does, for at that time a young man of that name was attending King's College. He went on to become a famous ecologist and founder of the Monks Wood Research Station near Huntingdon.

If it is the same person then Joanna's writings were not the only ones he investigated: at the end of the Second World War he went to Germany to hunt for documents relating to medical experiments at Dachau concentration camp. But, according to internet sources, despite

Mellanby's later claims to have brought German experimental records back to Britain, none of these has ever been identified. Perhaps they are in a chest somewhere?

photos

Market Hill in the 1920s

The picture of Kenneth Mellanby

Joanna Southcott engraving

the cutting from the CDN 9 Jun 1927

Memories 7th July 2008, by Mike Petty

The other week Cambridge was at its best. It was one of those magical days when the sky was bright blue, the college flags were flying and the streets were crowded with proud parents and their newly-graduated offspring from around the world making their way to and from the Senate House.

I had offered to show some American ladies from South Carolina around Cambridge. I arrived at our rendezvous place outside Starbucks on the corner of Market Hill just before the agreed time of eleven o'clock. They arrived at one. By that time I was in the University Library and they were in tears.

They had seen punts from behind the steering wheel of their car. Totally lost, they had followed a bus towards the city centre only to find a metal pole rise up from the road in front of them. It was then, in the depth of their despair, that a kindly taxi driver took pity and led them out of the hell of the Cambridge traffic system.

Even people who have been born and grown up here have problems with the current traffic restrictions. Could you tell a motorist approaching past Shire Hall how to get to the Lion Yard car park? When and which way is Silver Street open to traffic? And that is without the current chaos of the guided bus works affecting Hills Road.

Cambridge has always had traffic. The opening of Victoria Bridge in 1890 provided a new link to the historic centre and took pressure off the Magdalene Street – Bridge Street link where carts squeezed down narrow streets linked with ancient houses whose upper storeys overhung the road.

In the 1920s Cambridge experienced economic decline; to survive it needed to attract new shops and new shoppers. The town centre was redeveloped with massive new Boots and Sainsbury/Woolworth stores. To get there people needed better transport links from the north.

The solution was to widen the main road into the town. This also accorded with St John's College's plans for addition facilities. It saw the end of several old yards in Bridge Street which had provided homes for generations of residents. Antiquarians bemoaned the disappearance of some of the older buildings, but they could not be allowed to stand in the way of progress.

Across the road old, worn-out 16th-century buildings on the corner with Round Church Street survived until the 1960s. Then plans were announced to replace them with a supermarket. "The sooner we get the bulldozers in, the better" said one councillor. Eventually they were declared of Historic Interest and the frontage was retained with development behind.

Magdalene Street survives as a reminder of what Bridge Street once was. But that too very nearly disappeared in 1930. Under a large new scheme designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens the west side from the bridge to Northampton Street would be cleared for reconstruction making Magdalene Street a broad and handsome thoroughfare. In the event the scheme was not fully implemented before the Second World War.

With peace came major disagreement between Town and County planners. Cambridge councillors wanted to demolish those old, out of date shops and complete the widening, but the County preferred a new road across Jesus Green. By then Magdalene College had had a change of heart. In 1952 the Master wrote to the News: Sir. Twenty-five years ago the College started a scheme which might have involved the widening of Magdalene Street and the removal of buildings opposite the college. But it is now strongly opposed to the widening of the street and the demolition of the buildings on the west side. The College would be strongly prejudiced if it should be divided by a street similar in character to the widened part of Bridge Street and would strongly object to such a change of character and loss of amenity in the neighbourhood.

As they sat in their car with tears of frustration streaming down their face those American visitors might have been interested to know they were in an area that epitomised the debate between preservation and development. But I suspect they were more bewildered about how in 2008 this state of affairs could be allowed to exist in one of the greatest academic and tourist centres in the world

I don't know, I never met them. They have gone on to serve their country in other areas of conflict like Iraq or Afghanistan where there is perhaps a better chance of finding a solution to everyday problems.

But how many other visitors left equally frustrated on that most important day in their children's lives?

Memories by Mike Petty, 14th July 2008

Two Sylvias seek your help in identifying people.

Sylvia Keeffe, latterly of Little Thetford and now resident in Kent, has supplied me with a mystery photograph that should be of interest to about a dozen people, two of whom were not around at the time it was taken.

She discovered it in the effects of her late father, Stanley Blake and his wife Helga. Helga worked in the Grange maternity home in Ely in the 1950s, which gives a clue as to the probable location. The presence of cake and crackers on one of the beds indicates that it was around Christmas time.

But who are the people; are you amongst them – above or under the blankets?

Did you attend or work at the Grange, now the site of East Cambridgeshire District Council's offices in Nutholt Lane, Ely. News that the ten-bed general practitioner unit would have to close came in 1979 with most mothers using the RAF Hospital nearby.

And while you have your magnifying glasses out, who recognises themselves on this photographed of workers in the harvest fields in the early 1960s. The sky was blue and the crops stretch unbroken to the horizon. Now this may have been taken anywhere, but in fact was snapped by Sylvia McCann from her home in Arbury Road. The fields are now buried

under housing off Campkin Road – a fate that might soon befall other rural fields in the Cambridgeshire countryside.

Silvia also had her camera handy when she heard the once-familiar clip-clop of a horse's hooves and snatched a view of a man and his trap heading towards Milton Road. But who was he?

scans of Grange Maternity home, two views of Arbury road harvest and a horse and trap – 1960s

THIS IS A RUSHED ARTICLE AS I HAVE COMPUTER PROBLEMS WHICH MAY NOT CLEAR UP IN TIME FOR A LONGER ARTICLE

Memories 22nd July 2008, by Mike Petty (Tue)

Cambridge motorists are currently experiencing difficulties getting into the city because of work at one of the major bridges, that over the railway on Hills Road. But 50 years ago in July 1958 there was even greater disruption when Silver Street bridge, one of the two main river crossings, was taken down completely

It was not the first time this vital link had been cut: during the Civil War it was pulled down, as were all the other bridges except the Great Bridge, for defensive purposes. When restored in 1648 it was wide enough for only one vehicle to pass at a time.

Even then traffic was held up by a Corporation official who demanded payment for crossing it during peak times. But in 1824 tradesmen refused to pay. They were taken to court in a case that involved extensive readings from ancient documents going back to Domesday Book. The hearing lasted for a day and a half by the end of which the Lord Chief Justice was “so inaudible from exhaustion” that he could scarcely be heard as he summed up. The jury had no doubts: the Council had no right to the tolls they had hitherto collected. Two more cases followed. The Corporation won the second but lost the decider.

It remained a narrow, wooden structure until the 1840s when it was replaced with a cast-iron bridge made by Charles Finch at his foundry on the Market Hill. It was virtually the twin of the Great Bridge in Magdalene Street but sadly it failed to last as well.

An inspection in 1913 revealed the need for repair as more and more motor traffic passed over it. In 1923 Silver Street was closed for repairs forcing hundreds of cyclists to use Mill Lane and across Sheep's Green to Newnham mill path. It prompted suggestions that those bridges should be widened and the cobbles removed to encourage more cyclists to use it regularly.

The situation dramatically improved in 1926 with the construction of Fen Causeway, despite great protests from conservationists who feared it would destroy the attractiveness of Coe Fen. The bridge and its approaches were gaily decorated with bunting for the official opening and presented a colourful scene. The Mayor recalled how the project of relieving Silver Street traffic had started as long ago as 1904 and discussion had gone on for nearly 20 years before the Town Council finally approved the plan. Nine proposals had been put forward and had it not been for the urgency of the unemployment question the same position would have existed today, only instead of nine there might have been nineteen different schemes, he commented to laughter.

But it was not traffic but weather that brought the rebuilding of Silver Street to the forefront. The great floods of March 1947 caused the bridge to be closed with fears that the rush of

water would seriously affect its foundations. By 1950 it was found to be unsafe; vehicles exceeding two tons weight were prohibited from using it while negotiations started as to what to do next.

Both Queens' College and the Anchor public house were opposed to anything that involved extensive pile-driving, fearing damage to their own foundations. Eventually a design by Sir Edwin Lutyens was accepted and work started in July 1958. By early August rapid progress had been made, the old bridge had gone and a temporary footbridge erected for the use of pedestrians and cyclists pushing their machines.

Inevitably there were complications but in March 1959 Silver Street reopened to traffic. Then just when everything appeared to be finished the workmen were back digging up the new surface. Some said contractors had hit an underground river, others that the bridge was sinking or that the banks had started to subside; whatever the cause the thud of the pumps ruined the summer.

But by August 1959 all was fixed: Cambridge had a new river crossing, a reinforced concrete arch vault faced with tons of Portland stone. It was wider than Silver Street itself - but it should be remembered that the bridge would probably last well over 100 years, during which time the street may itself have been widened – something that has yet to come to pass

And in one of those odd co-incidences, in August 1959 work was under way reconstructing the railway bridge on Hills Road.

Do you recall the old Silver Street or Hills Road bridges – write to Mike Petty at the News

Scans of various images of Silver Street Bridge

The wooden bridge of the early 1800s

The cast-iron bridge of the 1840s

Photograph showing the scene after the old bridge had been demolished, July 1958

Newspaper article about the rebuilding, August 1958

The scene in 2008.

Memories 28 July 2008, by Mike Petty

‘The local post office is an endangered species’ lamented the News in June. It has been a story carried in newspapers throughout the country in the wake of current proposals for closure of village and community post offices.

Yet that story was not from this June – it was from 9th June 1983, 25 years ago. Days later came the news that despite massive protests the Head Postmaster had decided that the sub post-office in Cambridge’s King Street must shut when the owners retired. Councillors vowed to continue the fight and said they would consider buying the building in the hope they could keep it open. But all agreed that Mr & Mrs Mansfield had given a first class personal service for 30 years which would be difficult to match even if the post office were to remain

One of the consequences of closure is that everyday facilities like the simple act of buying a stamp becomes more complicated. There used to be an answer: outside our village post office there were two machines that dispensed stamps if you deposited the appropriate coins in the slot.

These did not always work properly – something a News reporter discovered way back in March 1925: ‘The stamp machine attached to the door of the General Post Office in Cambridge is such a boon that I hesitate to complain. But on no fewer than five occasions I have found the penny slot fail to act correctly. On the first occasion the machine delivered me two penny stamps for one copper. I was wondering what to do when another purchaser came along and slipped a penny in the slot without result, so I handed one over. The next time I received no stamp for my penny, and wiped that off as a loss. On the third occasion I got two stamps for the price of one, so cried “quits”. For those who like a little speculation these stamp machines are ideal’

In October 1951 Newmarket Post Office clerk Miss Cora Simpson sold a sheet of stamps to Lady Irwin. This would not normally have made news but it marked the opening of the town’s magnificent new post office, then the most up-to-date in the country. It replaced the former office in the High Street which had been destroyed in an air raid in 1941. At the ceremony a memorial plaque was dedicated to Miss Q. Kerry and Mr A.F. Barnes who were killed on duty when it was bombed. Other staff were to learn that the work could be dangerous when in 13th November 1978 four men wearing theatrical masks – one of an ape and another a clown – made a £30,000 raid on the post office. One was armed with a sawn-off double-barrelled shotgun, two had pickaxe handles and the other had an iron wrench. They tied up three sorters on duty and broke open registered mail. Perhaps they were fed up with waiting for the postman to call.

There is no doubt that a local post office has long been regarded as an asset; on 28th August 1931 a correspondent, signing himself ‘R.N.’ wrote to the News: ‘Sir – I have just visited Saffron Walden; its one cinema is perhaps not up to par, but shopping prices are reasonable; the buses do not monopolise the streets nor their passengers the pavements. The Sunday there is no more deadly than of Cambridge, prams do not form fours across the path and they are very polite in the Post Office. If I had to migrate, I would go there because a three-halfpenny stamp may be bought there in such a friendly and courteous atmosphere’

Now the Government once more claims they are not paying their way. Perhaps there is a solution: issue yet more special stamps. In early August 1983 the Fenstanton postmaster, Anthony Hobbs, found his business had mushroomed. He was at the centre of a world spotlight after the Post Office brought out a series of stamps commemorating the village’s most famous resident, the 18th-century gardener, Capability Brown. Stamp collectors from all over the globe were contacting him for first-day covers franked with a special mark designed by Jack Dady and a group of villagers

Perhaps this is one tactic that could be employed by those people fighting the loss of their own Post Office. But who would you choose to commemorate?

Pictures

I am short of pictures that I have here in Stretham

I attach

a Victorian view of a postman delivering letters

View of Newmarket High Street in 1930s

King Street Cambridge 1960s

please can you check in News library for a picture of Fenstanton and Saffron Waldon

Picture of King Street post offices appears in CEN 9 June 1983 p11 – please locate neg and print

The Fenstanton stamps story appeared in the News 3rd August 1983, page 10

Memories 6th August 2008, by Mike Petty (Wed)

A short time ago I received an email from David Farnell who organises the Eversdens village website (www.the-eversdens.co.uk) featuring a fascinating collection of community news and history.

He'd recent carried an item about a Dornier being shot down near the village which had triggered a recollection of a bigger bombing raid in 1940 from David Ellis who remembered it well as it happened on his 16th birthday.

He recalled it was 8.30 in the morning, breakfast was over and it was time to get back out on the farm. A deep drone and the boom of high explosives punctuated by the sound of machine gun fire drew the family out on to the driveway of Five Gables Farm. David looked up and saw, almost overhead, a close formation of about twelve Dorniers in a cloudless sky flying at around 15,000 feet. An ominous whine sent the family diving for cover, but no explosion followed it. The bombing raid was something of a botched attempt as far as he was concerned.

It was described in a Cambridgeshire County Council booklet "An Historical Account of Air Raid Precautions, 1935-1945" produced just after the war. This describes how the line of bombs started at Manor Farm, Fowlmere, went through stubble, orchard, and grassland until it reached the A10 where the side of the road was damaged and continued across stubble to the Hitchin- Cambridge railway close to the Blue Lias Cement Works. One bomb fell on each side of the railway within a few yards, but no damage was done. The bombs continued over a grass field and through an orchard to the Meldreth-Shepreth road where one fell in the middle of the road close to a small bridge. The line then continued close to the same stream until it entered the river, and there were a few bombs north of the river in Barrington parish. A number of Incendiary Bombs were dropped at the same time, but these fell not so regularly, and more to the east. Some fell in Fowlmere, others in various parts of Shepreth, and some on Barrington Green. A few of the High Explosive bombs did not explode on landing

Thankfully the Eversdens escaped, the supply of water-cress from Fowlmere was uninterrupted; traffic on the A10 continued to flow and the cows at Five Gables Farm got milked as usual.

However David Farnell was interested in finding more details. Co-incidentally I had received an email from a man who has been researching this, along with all other similar incidents. Julian Evan-Hart has spent 30 years wandering fields with his metal detector, talking to eye-witnesses and contacting surviving crew or families. He knows that the incident over the Eversdens was just a small drama in a bleak day. The Dorniers, probably about thirty of them altogether, had set out to destroy the fighter bases at Debden and Duxford. They were guarded

by squadrons of Messerschmitt. Debden suffered some damage to the airfield. Duxford escaped this raid completely. Bombs were jettisoned over a wide area from Cambridge to Chelmsford. One civilian died. One Dornier was lost together with six Messerschmitts and one crewman died. The RAF lost eleven fighter aeroplanes. Three pilots died and five were incapacitated. Only two of the fighter pilots engaged in the battle survived the war.

Julian has now published his discoveries in yet another new book on the Second World War. But what makes this one special is the sheer amount of detail that he has unearthed that has not been recorded before, like: What made a 50 feet crater in a wood at Pampisford and caused a local girls lung to collapse? How did the Water Board find an American fighter at Wendy? Who was the famous RAF pilot who shot down an enemy aeroplane at Orwell? What crashed at Shepreth and what is the story behind the young Typhoon pilot who is buried in Shepreth churchyard?

He also has compiled a long list of planes – both friendly and enemy - that crashed locally including that of a Wellington MkIII, X3668 which collided with a Stirling on 28th July 1942 and came down at Rampton, killing five of the crew – and incident that villagers there are seeking to ensure is properly commemorated.

So if you have been puzzling over those half-remembered crashes in local fields then turn to “War-torn skies of Great Britain”, vol.3: Cambridgeshire” by Julian Evan-Hart (ISBN 978-0-9554735-6-2, £14.95) or email the author, j.evenhart@ntlworld.com. And if you can add to his files, he would be especially delighted to hear from you.

scans:

That was Messersmitt: a German plane displayed in Cambridge Corn Exchange during a War Weapons Week exhibition in November 1940

'Blue Dreams' bomber which crashed with its wheels up at Steeple Morden with 10 500-lb bombs and with gasoline coming out of tops of wings on 16th March 1944; two villages were evacuated, no one was hurt

Memories, 11th August 2008, by Mike Petty

Last week Cambridge's ADC Theatre welcomed Elizabeth Hollingsworth, daughter of one of the principal figures in early twentieth-century undergraduate drama.

The name of Rupert Brooke is of course well known in literary circles around the world, but in this case he was only a supporting act; the important person being commemorated was another of the same surname.

In Edwardian times Justin Brooke was an undergraduate interested in English Renaissance drama, then largely unknown and unperformed for centuries. He became the leading figure in the establishment of the Marlowe Dramatic Society in Cambridge in 1907. The inaugural performance was Christopher Marlowe's 'Doctor Faustus' at the New Theatre in 1907, the second Milton's 'Comus', directed by Justin's close friend, the poet Rupert. They also performed plays entirely in Greek something that has itself become a Cambridge tradition.

Only men were allowed to participate but many of the characters were female. So the lads dressed as ladies, dressed in their sister's corsets that were tightly laced by the wardrobe mistresses to get them down to twenty-two inch waists! And to ensure their talents – and their sufferings – were not forgotten it was the norm to commission an album of photographs of themselves in costume as a souvenir. It was one of these that Justin's daughter, Elizabeth Hollingsworth, wanted to pass over to the ADC for addition to its archives.

The pictures show Chaplainesque villains with moustaches, goatee beard and black capes, Grecian ladies, maids and brides –and although the Marlowe Society established a tradition of not identifying its actors, each picture has a name underneath. They include Louis Mountbatten, Charles Carey who went on to be an Archbishop, Justin Brooke in long frock and his namesake Rupert in Grecian armour.

When his undergraduate days were done Justin joined his father's firm, married and had a daughter, Elizabeth, who went to live with her mother following the scandal of her parent's divorce.

Forced to leave his job, Justin became acquainted with another 'brook' – the village of Wickhambrook in west Suffolk which in the 1920s was suffering from low unemployment. There he started farming with a dairy herd and milk delivery services which travelled as far as Cambridge. He diversified into fruit, specialising in plums, apples and peaches which he sold to miners in Cardiff becoming Suffolk's leading producers of soft fruit and providing much-needed work for locals. Later he expanded further acquiring other farms, including Hinton Hall at Haddenham and the adjoining Grunty Fen Farm.

Justin retained his love of the theatre and it was at Wickhambrook in 1960 that the then undergraduate President of the Marlowe Society, a young Ian McKellen visited him. They spoke – Sir Ian recalls – 'little of blank verse but a lot about eating, drinking and hare coursing!'

Meanwhile Elizabeth had been awarded a place at Newnham College, Cambridge where she attended lectures by another theatrical legend, George (Dadie) Rylands and F.R. Leavis. She inherited his father's passion for the theatre and regularly watched the dress rehearsals of productions at the Arts Theatre, though she did not act herself. Her studies were interrupted in 1943 by the war but after serving three years in the Wrens, she returned to finish her degree. Later she took over her father's agricultural enterprises

So it was that Elizabeth Hollingsworth, now an elderly but very sprightly lady, caught the train from Bury St. Edmund's, carrying with her a plethora of programmes and photographs from 1904 and delighted the current thespians with her reminiscences of her father and his contribution to undergraduate drama.

Mrs Hollingsworth herself is mentioned in the Marlow Society's official history, 'Bloomsbury and British Theatre' by Tim Cribb, a fellow of Downing College (Salt Publishing 9781844714148). Now there is another footnote that can be added to its illustrious story

If you have further information about the history of the ADC then contact James Baggaley, the Manager, on 01223 359547 or email james@adctheatre.com,

SCANS

Scanned picture of the New Theatre in St Andrew's Street, 1920s

use pictures taken by News photographers –

CIT0502542 – Mrs Hollingsworth with her album and named people who met her at the ADC

CIT0502544 – Justin Brooke, her father, dressed as a lady – he was wearing his sister's corset

CIT0502543 – Rupert Brooke dressed in Grecian armour

Memories 18th August 2008, by Mike Petty

Last week's fire that devastated a restaurant King Street also brought back into the headlines a building known as the old 'County Hall'

Its story is an interesting one. When in 1888 Cambridgeshire County Council was established much of business previously transacted by Quarter Sessions was assigned to them.

The new bureaucracy needed staff. One of the first employees was Henry Wilkin who was to serve for 55 years and retire as chief clerk of the County Council in 1955. He recalled how at the age of 13 he had entered the office of a solicitor who in 1899 became Clerk to the Council. He received five shillings a week out of which he had to hire a barrow to take books to the council office – wherever that was.

Initially County Council meetings were held in the Guildhall on Market Hill and negotiations were opened between town and county councils over the possibility of joint use of their offices. But Cambridge councillors were very wary that this new upstart organisation that might come to dominate town affairs while the County feared that the Corporation was harbouring plans to gain additional powers over the rural county.

By 1912 the number of rented County Council offices were growing and they wondered what to do. If they could not join with the Borough in constructing a new Guildhall they could build their own headquarters. One option was to use the historic Assize court on the top of Castle Hill as a council chamber & construct new offices alongside. But this was felt to be too far from the station for councillors to get to meetings easily.

Instead they purchased the old Methodist Chapel in Hobson Street – a new Wesley chapel having been built on Christ's Pieces. It was demolished and replaced by new County Hall that was inaugurated in 1914.

The role of local government was expanding. The compiler of the CDN's Table Talk column in January 1928 was amazed at the speed of change. He wrote: less than 20 years ago I was doing journalistic work in a Hobson Street office. In those days there was no County Hall opposite, nor talk of one. It was begun only 15 years ago and if anyone had been asked how long it would remain the County Council headquarters he might have answered 'A hundred years at least'. But so great has been the extra work thrown on the Council that already the building has been outgrown and plans are now to be prepared for a new building on the Castle Hill site. There are now 86 officials and ratepayers may ask if such an army of officers are really necessary

Matters had been given impetus after the Home Secretary announced that he had decided to discontinue the use of the County Gaol on Castle Hill which had largely stood idle since 1916. This would allow the council to build a new Shire Hall on the prison site and plans

were drawn up for office accommodation together with council chamber, library and storerooms.

In 1930 the doors to the County Gaol were thrown open to thousands of residents before the building was consigned to history. Two years later the new Shire Hall was opened with little ceremony in the presence of a handful of people. The Architect (H.H. Dunn) presented the Chairman, Ald W.C. Jackson, with a gold-covered key engraved with the County Arms with which he unlocked the door. The council chamber was very similar to that at the old County Hall in Hobson Street from which all the seats and tables had been removed as a cost-saving measure. When Councillors held their first meeting there a recommendation that it be called 'Shire Hall' was adopted without discussion.

The idea was for the County Hall in Hobson Street to be sold with the proceeds being used to pay for the new Shire Hall. However nobody wanted to buy it. In 1934 it became the headquarters of Chesterton Rural District Council but continued to house a major section of the county council's social services department. It was sold to Christ's College, 25 years ago in what was one of the biggest property deals in the city centre for years.

Since then County Hall has largely dropped out of the limelight until last week's fire brought it back into the news. But did you work there, or have you memories to add to its story.

A new Guildhall was opened in 1939, the Assize Courts demolished in 1954

scans

of the Assize Courts on Castle Hill – the original site of County administration

Hobson Street 1930s showing the County Hall in the background on the right – I WILL TRY AND FIND ANOTHER PICTURE OF THIS BUILDING

The County Gaol, Castle Hill which was demolished in 1930 for

The Shire Hall, pictured at its opening in 1932

Memories 25th August 2008, by Mike Petty

Jesus Green is in the news at present with plans for a possible revamp of this tranquil area of parkland between Victoria Avenue and the Cam. This year on August Bank Holiday, should the weather prove clement, it will be a place where local residents can relax, read or run around. But some with longer memories may recall that at one time August Bank Holiday meant the Mammoth Show.

It had started in 1904 on the Leys School ground when a crowd estimated at 17,000 were entertained by the band of the Scots Guards, participated in sports and flocked to a dog show which attracted over 500 entries. A larger venue was needed so next year an area of Jesus Green was fenced off to provide a venue for a vast array of activities. There were various sports including an obstacle race with men running with a bucket over their heads and the 100 yards boys' race which was won by Master M. Townsend aged just 2 years 10 months. But it was the cycle races that attracted the crowds, especially when Cambridge had champions like Arthur Markham.

In addition there were displays of various types: in 1911 Percival Spencer, an aeronaut, gave people the opportunity to ascend in his balloon 'Enchantress'. Alphonso Smith, a boot and shoe maker was one who took advantage of the trip which came down at Exning.

The Show ran into financial difficulties but survived until the outbreak of the Great War during which the grass of Jesus Green was covered by military tents. The Mammoth was revived in 1922, drawing huge crowds but not all events came up to scratch. In 1924 the Rodeo displays were disappointing; the only part that created any real enthusiasm was the steer wrestling from an automobile. Montana Bob, the chief performer, had no easy task in overtaking the steer and then had considerable difficulty in bringing it to the ground. In doing so the steer trod on his arm but he was still able to ride the bucking broncho a few minutes afterwards.

In 1927 the Mammoth Show it was held for the last time: the Council did not want the grass to be cut up as they had other ideas for Jesus Green. Five years earlier an Act of Parliament had increased their power over the common lands: they could now restrict grazing and push ahead with their plans

One of these was for an outdoor swimming pool. Inevitably the proposals met opposition but construction began in 1923. The new baths were 300 ft long and 40 ft wide - and ideal for water polo. By putting them near Jesus Lock they were able to get a natural flow of water from the river, which would avoid the expense of pumping. They proved a success: by September 1925 20,000 tickets had been issued for male bathers alone. However soon the river quality failed to meet public health regulations and mains water was substituted.

Swimming was not the only attraction: despite a shower of rain a number of tennis enthusiasts were present on Jesus Green when in February 1925 the Mayor opened Cambridge's first public hard tennis courts. Directly adjoining were new grass courts, nearby was the bowling green whilst further afield cricket pitches were being laid. Dr Rouse Ball of Trinity College gave money to build a pavilion, which was named after him. Then in 1927 an 18-hole putting green was opened. It had been funded by the generosity of Col Tebbutt who'd promised £150.

Since then Jesus Green has been home to a variety of entertainments, including a pop festival in 1969 and a big top housing Sadlers Wells Ballet in the 1970s. There were even proposals to build a £40,000 open-air theatre on Jesus Green to be funded by the City Lottery Committee, but this never came to fruition. In July 1978 hundreds of people watched stars of television, stage and the music world in the heats of the Thames Television Star Games contest; they saw singer Joe Brown lead his team to victory while Dickie Henderson's team were second and £10,000 was raised for charity.

Did you attend any of these, or do you have other memories of Jesus Green?

scans

News report of the Mammoth Show on Jesus Green August 1906

Jesus Green 1914 showing troops

Jesus Green c1800 showing animals

Jesus Green c1906 showing area fenced for Mammoth Show

Cartoon 1907 commenting on financial difficulties of the Show

Memories 1st September 2008, by Mike Petty

Soon schools that have been uncharacteristically quiet will start to become noisy again. But some buildings have come to the end of their educational life. One of these was until recently part of the Council School at Fulbourn and, as Norman Osborne, has discovered it has had an interesting, largely forgotten past.

In 1858 a Church Room and Class Room were built on land given by the Rev C.F. Townley. According to the Deed of Conveyance it was to be used as 'a school for the education of

children and adults or children only of the labouring, manufacturing and other poorer classes in the parish, and for no other purpose'

Later it was supplemented by an Infants' school erected in 1871, with a Council School being erected in 1877.

At the outbreak of war in 1914 the Church Room was the venue for a recruiting meeting; several volunteers came forward of whom only one, Walter Plumb was accepted and the others returned home disappointed.

Soon the scale of the casualties was becoming apparent and the need for convalescent hospitals became urgent. The county director of the Red Cross, the Rev C.F. Townley who lived in Fulbourn appealed for buildings suitable for use as Voluntary Aid Detachment Hospitals. Responding to his appeal the Rector gave permission for the Infants School and Church Room to be used.

The children moved to the Congregational Church Hall where they stayed until November 1918 and in just four days the building was transformed into a hospital. The Church Room became a large and lofty ward holding seventeen beds with two open fire grates. A second ward held another eleven beds. There was a bathroom and washhouse heated by a large boiler while the outhouses were used for storing coal and washing up.

Soldiers needed to be fed so a kitchen was fitted with two stoves where cooking was done, with the exception of the large meat joints which were kindly cooked by the village baker, Mr Ellis. The nurses had a private kitchen. Supplementing all this was Fulbourn Reading Room which was made a recreation room for patients with a billiard table, piano and library.

Fulbourn's Red Cross Hospital opened on the 23rd November 1914 with the arrival of 30 patients from the First Eastern General Hospital at Cambridge. They were nursed by a team of ladies led by the Commandant, Miss R.C. Townley and her mother. A few days later forty men responded to an appeal to help with the transportation of patients and relieve the nurses at night.

Wounded soldiers became part of village life; they paraded with their band, gave concerts, were taken on trips to Bottisham lock and helped fight fires. They were allowed the use of the cricket and football pitches and had the freedom of the Manor grounds.

It was not the village's only reminder of the casualties of war. News came back of village lads who were being cared for in other hospitals, including Walter Plumb who was badly wounded in July 1916 but lived to tell the tale.

Meanwhile another former resident, Miss Dorothy Nicholls, was writing back to describe her experiences as a nurse on the Russian front. She was honoured for her service, as was Sister Whitmore who after four years splendid work at the Fulbourn hospital was summoned to Buckingham Palace where the King presented her with a silver medal in November 1918.

By then the Fulbourn VAD Hospital was coming to the end of its work. The beds were removed and the children moved back.

Although other communities such as Girton and Hildersham still have reminders of this period in their own village halls, Norman thinks this is the last actual VAD Hospital to be much in the same condition as it was in 1914-1918. Now it faces an uncertain future but the

Fulbourn Village History Society thinks it would make an excellent museum in which they could display the nearly 8,000 photographs and artefacts they have collected.

Amongst them are a series depicting the days when it was a place where 1,378 wounded soldiers were nursed back to fighting fitness, to be sent back to the Front to fight again.

scans of Fulbourn Church Room today and when it formed part of the VAD Hospital during the First World War – from Fulbourn Village History Society

Memories 8th September 2008, by Mike Petty

The financial headlines speak of a time of crisis. The collapse in the economy has seen builders laying off men and new developments being halted mid-way, adding to the problems for those desperately struggling to find and fund a home.

This was the situation too in 1931 when a worldwide slump led to wholesale unemployment and the whole banking system seemed on the verge of breaking down. Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald decided he would have to economise by raising taxes and lowering wages of civil servants from Cabinet Ministers to the Police. But some of his supporters objected and he resigned. The crisis led to a National Government featuring Conservatives, Liberals and Labour with MacDonald once more as leader.

The country was struggling to recover from the trauma of the Great War. The promises of Homes for Heroes were not being met, indeed in Cambridge many families were living in wooden huts that had been erected for the First Eastern General Hospital on land now occupied by the University Library.

One of the priorities for Cambridge councillors was the building of more homes for the poorer classes: the slums were a disgrace and should be abolished, they decreed. 1920 saw the completion of the first of the borough housing schemes with more than 100 homes being built in Cavendish, Hills and Hinton Avenues and Stanley Road. The second was the Chesterton Hall scheme which provided some 230 houses in the Milton Road, Hawthorn Way and neighbouring roads. To speed building in 1925 it was decided to erect steel houses. But it was not enough. It was never enough.

They also decided to sell council houses to people with no capital. A typical Milton Road property was priced at £579 repayable at £5 down and weekly instalments of 21/1 (£1.05) for two years then 17/- (85p) for 18 years. Those who could afford to pay such amounts were urged to contact the Treasurer. But many could not.

The Cambridge Housing Society was set up to provide housing to rent for larger families unable afford the council's prices. Their first scheme of 22 terraced 3-bed houses Green End road were completed in 1928 & let at 7/3 (36p) a week.

The needs of families with two or more children were obviously a priority but this was very hard on the newly-married who wanted to start a family but were forced to live with in-laws. They had no hope of a place of their own.

It was to cater for their needs that the Hundred Houses Society was formed in 1933. They selected young, working people unable to afford to buy their own homes. The rents had to be such that a man in full-time work could pay them but yet bring in enough revenue for the Society to repay its loans and continue its ambition of building 100 houses a year, every year. The first houses were constructed at Eastfield, off Scotland Road, to be followed by Fallowfield. It was the start of an initiative which has continued to provide homes for Cambridgeshire folk ever since.

Today they are celebrating their 75th anniversary with a dinner at St John's College and have issued a history in which Jeane Underwood has poured through the Society's archives and even tracked down some of the first tenants.

Peter Soar moved in in 1935 before the road had been made up and recalls there was a brick copper to heat water for the laundry and a black cooking stove in the back room but no electric sockets in the house. Another tenant remembers: "The bath was in the kitchen. It had a lid which pulled down to cover it and this acted as a kitchen table. We had to go out of the back door to reach the toilet. This was embarrassing, as anybody who was in their garden would know where you were going"

Mrs Mary Tilley was one of the first on Eastfield, "My husband worked for the Cambridge University Press and my children were born and grew up here. The only time I have not lived in this house was when they were being done up: they made a bigger kitchen and bathroom, put in central heating and double glazing. I've always been very happy here and I've never wanted to live anywhere else.

What were your experiences of starting life in your first house; was it harder then than now when 'the youngsters seem to have everything'. Or was life comparatively easy compared to the stresses of modern living.

Write to Mike Petty at the News

'A Hundred Houses: a history' by Jeane Underwood is issued by the Hundred Houses Society, 51 Scotland Road, Chesterton.

scans

Cover of the History showing the Fallowfield Estate in the 1930s

Architects sketch of Fallowfield

Some of the first tenants celebrating VE Day, May 1945

Memories 15th September 2008, by Mike Petty

J.H. Plumb from Landbeach has memories of brass – not brass bands, but the brass fittings that adorned the lavatories beneath Cambridge Market Hill. He was reminded of them after seeing a photograph of the fountain that used to stand in the middle of the Square. What ever became of the top section and stonework, he asks.

Many people remember it as "Hobson's Conduit". But it wasn't. Hobson's Conduit stood nearer the junction with Petty Cury and fulfilled its role of providing a supply of clean water to the town centre until 1856.

For most of that time what is now the market hill was packed with shops and houses, the stalls being confined to the area in front of the Guildhall and a strip along the eastern edge. Then in 1849 came a fire that destroyed many of the properties, leaving Cambridge with a ravaged town centre. Faced with such devastation the council debated what to do before finally deciding to clear the site and start again, creating a square market area.

Hobson's old Conduit would be out of place in such a redevelopment and was relocated to its present home on the corner of Lensfield Road and Trumpington Street. But there had to be some centrepiece to the scheme.

At that time a new Cambridge University and Town Waterworks Company had been established to supply better water so it was thought that a fountain would be appropriate. A number of schemes were put forward before Gordon Hill's design for an ornate stone-canopied structure was agreed.

Sadly things did not go smoothly and there were inordinate delays before work finally commenced. The new structure when finally complete became a landmark, revellers had their pictures taken around it, people parked their cars near it. But it was not well-built and within a century the stone of the canopy was crumbling. Repairs would be expensive and the town council wanted to take it down.

But the County Planners objected – it was an important part of Cambridge. However the County also wanted to demolish another historic building, the Assize Courts on Castle Hill. This time it was the City councillors who wanted its preservation.

Then both gave way, both structures disappeared. The top of the fountain was demolished in August 1953. Some of the carvings from the fountain were presented to the Cambridge Folk Museum, other stones were put into store so they could be reused if it was ever decided to put the top back on.

Since then there have been plans for replacement fountains but what we have today is the fountain head and the base that once supported the canopy that Mr Plumb remembers. The loos are another story for another day.

Do you have memories of that fountain and the coloured piece of glass at the top that would catch the light. Do you have snapshots to share – or other memories you would like jogged. Write to Mike Petty at the News

Various readers have done just that. Amongst them are R.H. Asbury of Cherry Hinton who lived in Trinity Street in the 1920s and 30's and was taken to see the Assize Court buildings and the county gaol on Castle Hill – even getting into the padded cell with its walls lined with leather and the gallows room with the trap door in the floor.

Mention of the County Hall in Hobson Street has brought a letter from Peggy Squires of Cambridge who worked for Chesterton Rural District Council from February 1931. She started in offices in St John's Street before moving into County Hall where South Cambs RDC also had offices for a while. The two councils merged in 1974. Viv Blunt from Cottenham has kindly sent me a copy of the programme for the opening of the Wesley Church on Christ's Pieces which replaced the Hobson Street Methodist Chapel that was demolished to build County Hall.

scans of

Gordon Hill's design for the fountain 1855

cutting of the demolition of the top of the fountain in 1953

the fountain with Great St Mary's church in the background c1890
a lady shopping on the market with the fountain behind, 1938
photo of Hobson's Conduit which stood on Market Hill until 1856

Memories 22nd September 2008, by Mike Petty

On 25th September 1933, just 75 years ago, two women, two children and an ice cream man witnessed the final act of an event which had been part of the life of Cambridge since well before the University had come on to the scene.

The Mayor, Alderman Mrs Keynes, together with the Clerk of the Peace (Sterndale Burrows) and the Sergeant at mace, journeyed down Newmarket Road to Stourbridge Common to make an official declaration just as their predecessors had done for centuries.

In 1933 there were just six in the official party. In 1727 there had been 86: councillors, officers, members of parliament in a grand procession, mounted on horseback and bedecked in official robes, with banners and streamers, drums and trumpets. For this was an important duty and followed by an official dinner.

It was too important a duty to be left to the Mayor and Council and so the University Vice-Chancellor together with his officials – registrary, commissary, proctors and taxors - also set off in their carriages to the Common, to proclaim three times and proceed to their refreshment in a substantial brick building called Tiled House. Here they partook of oysters straight from the barrel, and then enjoyed a stroll around Garlic Row before returning to its upstairs room for a substantial feast. (Does anybody remember this building, later known as the Oyster House and demolished in 1960?)

Together in 1727 they were proclaiming Stourbridge Fair, one of the greatest international trade fairs in the whole of Europe. In those days merchants made their way from Venice and Genoa with silks and velvets, Flemish weavers brought linen, Spaniards iron, Norwegians tar and pitch. Wines came from France and Spain and – sometimes – Greece. Then from all over England tradesmen with their packhorses and wagons negotiated the atrocious roads; from Halifax, Leeds and Rochdale came cloth, Birmingham sent iron and brass, Sheffield cutlery, Nottingham and Leicester glass and stockings. Lancashire wool would be bought by Norfolk manufactures, hops grown in Surrey and Kent were destined for northern breweries.

The fair was laid out upon regular lines with specific commodities in particular areas – coal by the river, leather near the fish hill. There was a brush row, joiners and braziers had rows, a cheese row, a cheap side and the duddery or cloth fair. The main approach from Newmarket Road to the river was called Garlic Row.

Nor was the prosperity limited to the fair itself: the vast influx of visitors meant that every inn bed and most stables for miles around would be utilised as sleeping accommodation and local butchers and bakers would call each morning and sell their wares from tent to tent. In 1724 fifty hackney carriages plied night and morning to and from London and watermen went so far as to bring their Thames wherries up to Cambridge by road so they could convey people along the Cam to the fair.

The same river that brought the goods still winds around Stourbridge common but now there is no fair, no heaps of dung, straw and rubbish left behind to re-enrich the ground so trampled by thousands of feet. The trading aspect declined during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By 1902 the only business was that done at the horse fair where cart horses, hackneys and hunters, foals and ponies were offered for sale. One dealer, Mr Titchmarsh of Barrington, got rid of about 40 carthorses during the morning. That year the pleasure fair

consists largely of refreshment saloons and stalls from which pungent odours proclaimed the nature of the edibles on sale. Some roundabouts, swing boats and one peep show, in Garlic Row, completed the scene

Things revived in 1923 through the enterprise of Messrs Thurston and Sons who brought their amusements and visitors could indulge in the excitement of "Housey, Housey", the scenic railway, Manning's flying horses and the swing boats which provided the thrill of the rush through space.

In 1930 there was just one traction engine with a cargo of swing boats, by 1931 even the swings were absent. But as one fair was dying, another was becoming a nuisance: residents at the other end of Newmarket Road were complaining that their peace was being disturbed by the noise and bustle of Midsummer Fair. Councillors agreed and decided that from 1931 it should be relocated to Stourbridge Common. But fair men boycotted the site, arranging another at Arnold's Meadow just beyond Ditton Lane. Next year they were back on Midsummer Common.

Thus it was that on 25th September 1933 the Mayoral party stood virtually alone on Stourbridge Fair declaration day. The News speculated on the future: "In this world of multiple stores and quick luncheon counters, great amusement parks and world exhibitions, what place can a fair have which was the child of the Middle Ages?"

In 1934 Stourbridge Fair was formally abolished by the Secretary of State.

But this year the grounds of the Leper chapel again welcomed the Mayor to pay tribute to the memory of the days when Cambridge housed its great international trade fair.

pictures:

there was a picture of the present Mayor at the Leper Chapel which appeared a few days ago – can we reuse it

I attach some old images of the fair

Stourbridge fair both 1832

sketch of the Oyster House in the 1800s and photo of it in 1958 – do readers remember it

plan of part of the fair in 1725

Memories, 29th September 2008, by Mike Petty

BBC TV's 'Strictly Come Dancing' programme has sparked a revival in Ballroom dancing. One of its especial fans is Keith Mann of Girton. He writes:

"I was born in Cambridge in 1931 and have lived here all my life. Like many young men of my generation in the late 1940's & 1950's I joined the Coleridge Youth Club in Radegund Road where I became quite keen on dancing. In September 1949 I joined a ballroom class at the Bobwin School of Dancing which met above Millers music shop in Sidney Street. We learned the Waltz, Quickstep, Slow Foxtrot and the Tango from strict tempo music recorded on 78 rpm records by Victor Silvester & His Ballroom Orchestra.

“There were many Dancing Schools in Cambridge at this time including the Leader School which met at the Masonic Hall in Corn Exchange Street, the Curwain School at the Dorothy Cafe and the Luman School of Dancing in West Road.

“It was about this time that the University founded a school for dancing for students which became known as ‘The Cambridge Dancer’s Club’. They met at Milton Road School and held regular dances at the Guildhall with competitions and a professional demonstration by some of the best champions in the world of ballroom dancing”. Keith won their Novice Competition in April 1951 with his partner, Mary Ebden.

The Guildhall was a popular venue with dances held most Saturday nights and it was there that Keith met his wife, then Mary Dant. They have been dancing together ever since, though one of her own memories is of dancing with another young man called Anton du Beck, the ‘Strictly’ star, in July 2006

Some of the dance bands playing at the Guildhall in the 1950s were the Stirlingairs, The Astrals, George Freestone, and Chic Applin, whilst at the Dorothy Ballroom one could dance to the Reg Cottage Ballroom Orchestra.

Another band was the Kestrals for whom Keith played the saxophone, performing at the Guildhall regularly and in many towns and villages around Cambridgeshire. They played for Old Tyme Dancing which was very popular in the 1940’s /1950’s. This has declined in recent years and has been succeeded by Sequence Dancing.

Keith continues: “During the 1970’s and 80’s my wife and I did some competitive dancing and had dancing lessons in Ballroom and Latin American with professional dancing teachers in London. We still love dancing to this day and attend a Sequence Dance Class at Shelford, as well as Ballroom and Latin dances with our friends at St. Neots and also at Letchworth, Herts. We have and still do go on dancing holidays to Pakefield and Gunton Hall in Norfolk, which has given us some wonderful memories.

“Needless to say we have been thoroughly enjoying the Series of Strictly Come Dancing on B.B.C. Television”.

Keith has supplemented his memories with a wonderful collection of photographs and ephemera some of which he has lent me in the hope they will jog memories for others. If so then please let me know.

pictures

Keith Mann and Mary Dant at a Youth Club Ball in the Guildhall, May 1953

Keith and Mary Mann still dancing, 1990

Keith Mann and his partner Mary Ebden winning the Cambridge Dancers Club Novice competition at Milton Road school 1951. The other couples were John Attenborough and Janet Cleverdon and Cecil Hewitt with Georgina Wright.

The Kestrals dance band with Keith Mann on saxophone

Advertisement for a dance at the Guildhall in the 1950s

Memories 6th October 2008, by Mike Petty

News readers recollections are needed to help various people who are researching their particular area of Cambridgeshire.

Barry Chambers from Sheffield writes: "Although born and brought up in Cambridge, I have lived away for many years now, hence it's difficult for me to visit and do family history in Cambridge. My father was Sidney Chambers who was a keen cricketer in the 1920/1930's and an umpire in the 1950/1960's until his death in 1966. He played for a local Cambridge cricket club – perhaps the Old Perseans - and I have some medals inscribed C.C.A for 1929, 1930, 1931 and 1932 and one inscribed I.L.C.L for 1935. There are others but they are not inscribed.

"Unfortunately when he died, my mother destroyed all his effects apart from the medals and I would be grateful if anybody has memories of him or can add details of the clubs. My uncle was Bert Charge, who was, I believe, a well known local billiards player. Again, I know very little about him."

Barry has sent me scans of the medals. I suspect the CCA was the Cambridgeshire Cricket Association, but what would I.L.C.L. have stood for? [SCAN OF BARRY'S MEDALS]
[SCAN OF A POLICE CRICKET TEAM IN THE 1930'S – DOES ANYBODY RECOGNISE A FACE]

Mrs C.M.Carter (nee Langford) also needs help. She has a picture of her Great Great Grandfather, Samuel Maltby, born 1803, taken when he received an honorary MA from the Cambridge University. It shows him holding the robe he made for King Edward VII when he was awarded an Honorary Degree in 1864, a feature of which were read gold trimmings. John Maltby, now dead, remembered this and said his own Mother made the robes for Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother when she was given an Honorary degree at the Senate House in 1948. Several generations of our Maltby's were also robemakers also often taking work on commission from firms like Ede & Ravenscroft. She would be extremely grateful for any information regarding this. You can email teabag.carter420@ntlworld.com or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch. [SCAN OF QUEEN ELIZABETH AT SENATE HOUSE 1948 WEARING GOWN MADE BY MRS MALTBY]

In my 'Looking Back' column I noted a letter from the CDN of 22 March 1954 from A.R. Almond of Sidney Street which read:

"Although I call myself a robemaker I do not personally make gowns. This is done as it has been for hundreds of years by operatives working in their own homes and many of them can trace back a couple of centuries. One of the best known names in Cambridge is that of Maltby, a member of which family is still active and busy in that occupation. Any unfamiliar details which we require we can generally obtain from this source with its accumulated knowledge."

Mrs Maltby herself appeared on the BBC "Down Your Way" programme recorded in Cambridge in January 1949 when she talked about the Queen's robes. Other local interviewed by Richard Dimpleby included Mr R. Shorrocks who worked for Pest Control Ltd, Miss M. Stuart, secretary of the Arts Theatre, Mr Fred Hudson, a television tester at Pye Ltd and Mr R. J. Pointer who was a CND linotype operator. Does anybody have a tape of this programme

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Mark Alvin is tracing his Whiteheads family tree. There were for several generations Fruit & Vegetable Traders around the old Fitzroy Street area and were related (by marriage) to the Reynolds and the Thurstons of Cambridge.

The Cambridgeshire Collection has a photograph taken in 1940 of A.E.Whitehead, fruiterers, of 30b St.Andrew's Street, pointing to 'Help to win the War' notice. It is noticeable that despite rationing he had oranges and pineapples on display.

The fruiterers trade was not without its problems: in June 1906 Albert Whitehead of Burleigh Street appeared in court after his shop had been broken into and 90 oranges values at seven-and-six had been taken. Four schoolboys were charged with the theft – they had taken them to the gala ground on Midsummer Common and sold them. Two of the lads had very bad characters and were sentenced to receive 12 strokes with the birch. Albert had not wanted to prosecute, he'd just wanted the police to frighten them and was himself reprimanded for not turning up to give evidence. If you have similar memories then Mark would be pleased to hear from you. You can email mark.alvin@tinyworld.co.uk or drop me a line

[SCAN OF BURLEIGH STREET IN THE 1960S]

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If you attended Central School or Parkside college then you should get down to the Folk Museum in Castle Street which will be celebrating the history of school from the earliest provision of education in 1870 to the comprehensive system introduced a century later with a new exhibition which runs from today until 23rd December. Assistant Curator Becky Proctor has already had a lot of positive response from former pupils keen to relate their personal memories or offer school mementoes and looks forward to more.

Memories, 13th October 2008 by Mike Petty

Suzanne Langford from West Wrattling is seeking information on parish pounds as there is one in the village they'd like to restore to its original state. Its not known how old it is but a photograph taken in the 1920s shows a gate. Inside there is a small archway cut out of the lower part of the wall near the ground and they can't work out what this would have been for. Perhaps other villages had a pound and they may be able to help them with some history, she hopes. If so please email suzanne.langford@tesco.net or drop me a line.

The background to pounds was described by C.F. Tebbutt in his history of Bluntisham-cum-Earith, issued in 1941. He records that the pound, or pinfeld, was a necessary institution in every unenclosed parish, as the Open Field System made growing crops particularly liable to damage by straying cattle. The great area of common grazing grounds over which the cattle wandered made adequate fencing difficult. The owners of cattle were therefore deemed liable to prevent them getting among growing crops, meadows laid for hay, or on to commons resting from stock. Cattle found where they had no right to be were shut up (impounded) in the pound by the Pound Keeper (known usually as the Pindard or Pinder), and could only be recovered by the owner on payment of the appropriate fine. Pounds were small square enclosures built of posts and rails or brick, with a gate in the centre of one side. Both Bluntisham and Earith pounds were of wood, and still existed within living memory. Earith Pound was on the north side of The Hill, Bluntisham Pound at Little London on the north side of Station Road, he records

Writing in 1908 Albert Pell recalled the situation at Wilburton in his childhood: "An important officer of the manor was the 'Pinder'. His services were constantly required, and he was for ever bringing up cunning donkeys, wandering cows and loose colts to the fine brick

enclosure, the manor pound. I was fond of climbing up the red-brick walls and getting on the bold picturesque coping to look down at the captives. The pinder was not a young man, and pigs at 'shacking' time were occasionally his masters. They were very uneasy and restless when in durance, whereas the donkeys stood stock still in the sun, almost asleep, with their lower lip dropping as if they were well accustomed to their quarters and were certain of release, and the cows chewed the cud placidly till kicked by a cart colt. Then a general rumpus ensued in which the pigs took a leading part, getting entangled in the legs of the rest of the community, and finally drawing up in battle array in a corner with their snouts 'at the rest' outwards".

Out at Landbeach in February 1980 the pinder was George Arnold who was carrying on a family tradition. For the last 40 years he had held the post that his father held before him. The job was unpaid but he could charge owners for releasing the animals and sell unclaimed beasts after a month and keep the cash. In the old days pinders could charge 6d for every animal; that was worth half a day's pay. The last time George had any animals in the pound had been in 1978 ago when six cows escaped from a field but he didn't have the heart to fine the owner.

Not every pinder was as honest. In the early 1800s the pinder for St Giles parish, Cambridge was William Cooke whose compound was on Pound Hill. He'd been drinking in Preston's beer house when the landlord refused to serve him more beer, so he determined on revenge. Preston's cattle were grazing, quite legally on Queen's Green but that did not stop Cooke letting them out, then driving them to the pound. A local resident, Sarah Coxal was disturbed by the noise, looked out her window and saw him lock the cattle in the pound just as the clocks struck two in the morning. The matter came to court when the pinder was found guilty and sentenced to a month's imprisonment

Do you have similar tales to tell, or pictures that can add to the record of these largely-forgotten institutions

SCANS OF

West Watting pound 1920s

Pound at Wisbech St Mary

Imprisonment for man and beast: animals in a wooden pound at Whittlesford with the village stocks in the foreground, 1860s

Cattle wandering down Wilburton High Street – straying animals would be impounded

Memories, 20th October 2008, by Mike Petty

As one who travels round more halls than most I can testify from personal experience that they come in all shapes and sizes. They range from brand-spanking new edifices with all the latest creature comforts to the more homely, sometimes shabby, older constructions which them can themselves have a long history even before they were pressed into their present use.

Some as at Girton and Hildersham were once wooden war-time hospitals, the meeting place at Downham Market was a former cinema with a screen to match and the hall at Ringstead near Hunstanton will be always remembered for the warmth of the welcome: when the group knew we had arrived they set a match to the fire which was soon roaring away in the grate.

Few have such a lengthy history as that at Trumpington, which is now celebrating its centenary. It was officially opened on 22nd October 1908, though it was not quite ready and various legal formalities had to be completed before it actually became the possession of the village in perpetuity.

The idea had begun to take shape after Mrs Mansfield, a respected parishioner, left money in her will for the benefit of the village. Canon Pemberton of Trumpington Hall gave the site and started the subscriptions with a donation of £100. This was followed by £200 from E.B. Foster and various sums from other notables, including the Archbishop of Sidney, Australia. Mr W H Brierly was commissioned to draw up plans for the builder, Mr W. Saint, and the corner stone was laid by Mrs Patience Pemberton on 11th February 1908. She was presented with a silver trowel.

The new hall would accommodate 250 people: “It will provide opportunities for the inhabitants to spend as much of their leisure time as they desire in reading, intercourse with one another and participation in various recreations”, the News reported. There would be concerts, billiards and a reading-room

Although it was the Village Hall, it was more frequently referred to as ‘The Men’s Institute’ and certainly the children thought of it as male territory. As one child wrote, “An Institute was built opposite the Post Office for young men to go in the evenings instead of going to the public house”.

Women were allowed in for concerts and whist drives and when the Women’s Institute set up a branch in Trumpington in 1920 the ladies met in the hall and have continued to do so to the present. In 1922 the men wished to put a second billiard table in the hall, but other users protested that there would be room for nothing else. So an extension was added specifically for the Men’s Institute.

In 1977 a loan in the Queen’s Silver Jubilee Year enabled a new extension to be built with its own kitchen and cloakrooms. It is known as the Jubilee Room and was initially intended for use as a Youth Room. Since the Church Hall was closed the Village hall has been much busier and has had a few improvements in this its Centenary Year.

The hall has been used for myriad functions including a Hawkey supper organised by Trumpington Young Farmers’ Club in June 1959. Now all this week it will house an exhibition celebrating its role in the community with documents and photographs of events that have taken place over the years. The earliest wedding photograph is from 1927 and the bride is mentioned many years later on the committee of the Over 60s Club. Another couple pictured on their wedding day in 1958 recently celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in the Village Hall.

The exhibition will open from 11am - 8pm, Tuesday – Friday and 10-4 on Saturday.
Admission is free

scans of

Exterior of the Hall, 1930s

Young Farmers Club supper 1959

George VI Coronation party 1937

Golden wedding party, 2008

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Peter Harrall of Willingham has written following Keith Mann's memories of ballroom dancing. He has sent me a photograph taken at Cambridge University Examination Hall on New Years Eve 1957. The Ken Stevens Orchestra was booked to play at this venue but found they had another booking somewhere else at the same time. So they put together another band to fill the gaps while the Orchestra shuttled between the two. The personnel in the photo are Peter Harrall on trumpet, Keith Mann and Jeff Harrison on alto sax, Trevor Edwards and Dave Sanderson on Tenor sax, Paul Bircham on piano, Geoffrey Whitehead on double bass and Dave Wiseman on drums

scan of the stand-in band

Memories 27th October 2008, by Mike Petty

Last week Ridgeons, the timber and building materials firm, celebrated the 50th anniversary of the foundation of its '25 Club', which recognises the contributions of its long-serving staff.

Cyril Ridgeon began the company in 1911 from a bedroom in his house on St Barnabas Road before taking a small piece of ground in Tenison Road in 1913 for his first depot. Then came the first world war which might well have crippled such a young business but he was able to keep going and at the end of the conflict the firm was able to branch out.

In 1922 bought its first solid-tyred lorry. It had none of the modern luxuries like a heater and at 20 mph the driver was flung about all over the place. Before this goods were transported by horses and carts which were hired locally and often it would take all day to make a delivery of only 12 miles.

Throughout the depression of the 1920s and 30s the firm supplied materials for the programme of council house-building that was seen as a means of making work. During the Second War they became 'wharfingers' for the Ministry of Works and had to be prepared to get materials off to bombed areas within an hour or two of being warned.

In 1946 the firm branched out to March and in 1958 the Saffron Walden Building Materials Company became part of Ridgeons. By then they had a staff of 160 with 28 lorries and vans as well as a fleet of 13 cars.

Few will remember those distant days when everything was measured on the Imperial system and paid for in pounds, shillings and pence. Despatch notes were all handwritten using plenty of carbon paper (who now remembers carbon paper!) and everything entered into ledgers by hand.

There were few mechanical aids in the yard: timber was loaded, piece by piece, into railway trucks, up to 800 of which would come into their Cavendish Road sidings while bricks had to be moved manually. Ray Andrus who started at the firm's Nuffield Road site with Glyn Richards and Ted Ashman remembers: "Cement these days came in cold, but then it was boiling hot so I had to wear gloves. I had to use a sack barrow and load up to 10 bags inside the lorry, then steadily edge my way to the open back door where there was a tail-gate on an angle. You had to be very careful not to allow the weight of the sacks to over-balance you – it happened to me once: I got half-way down and the weight pulled me over; then both barrow and I shot down the steep tail-gate. The barrow stopped abruptly at the bottom but I went shooting over the top and landed on the ground."

Domestic customers in those days had far less choice than that now available but it included bathrooms in white and six other colours, fireplaces – which were made at Cavendish Road – and that latest innovation, central heating. Then came Westinghouse washing machines, imported from America, and stainless-steel sinks. Peter Silk recalls how during the early 50's kitchen planning was unheard of: a white glazed earthenware sink with perhaps a clip-on wooden draining board was the norm. Things were transformed by the coming of plastic and Formica worktops with cabinets and wall cupboards arriving in the 1960s. Bathrooms consisted of a free-standing bath, a small basin on brackets or maybe a pedestal, and a toilet with a high-level cistern and chain-flushing pull.

There was one must-have product in those days: red lanterns that were used by civil engineers to warn people about holes in the road. In one bad winter people flocked to buy them to heat outside toilets. Who knows, given global warming they may soon be back in demand!

SCANS

part of Ridgdon's Tenison Road site before the removal of the railway sidings, showing locomotives; taken from the top of the Spillers building – this is very interesting – use it as large as you can.

Station Road from the Tenison Road site, 1950s

Executive directors and 25 club members, 1961

the latest kitchen equipment, 1950s style

Memories 3rd November 2008, by Mike Petty

The recent cold snap has made the inevitable headlines but ice was making the news in central Cambridge in August 1908.

Mr J.V. Pryor, a fishmonger, had developed a method of making great blocks of glittering, iridescent ice every hot midsummer morning in Falcon Yard, our present Lion Yard off Petty Cury. There he had installed the most up-to-date plant where the shrill insistent note of the dynamo was joined by the plunk-plunk of the gas engine exhaust.

He had constructed a large clean room whose floor was honeycombed with galvanised steel tanks filled with brine maintained at low temperature. Here the water was frozen in moulds for some 50 hours before being dipped in a tank of warm water and tipped out in slabs weighing two cwt apiece. But it was not this simple: ordinary Cambridge water contained a fair percentage of chalk as well as air. This would make the ice opaque so to produce clear ice it had to be agitated during the freezing process by a mechanical arm actuated by a dynamo.

This and more was described in detail by the News reporter who commented that like the flying machine (and this was 28th August 1908), the ice factory was at present only in its infancy and the plant expensive. It also made more ice than Mr Pryor needed for his ordinary fish business. So what was he to do with it?

In addition to the needs of wealthy gentlemen for a piece of ice to add to his bandy-and-soda there were commercial possibilities. The frozen meat trade, the preservation of perishable foods or indeed its potential to cool down buildings in hot countries had hardly been considered. In breweries, dairies and other industries there was an immense opportunity for an enterprising business in refrigerators and ice-making machines that might have made the name of Pryor known around the world.

But can you add more to the story of this Cambridge initiative?

SCAN OF FALCON YARD IN VICTORIAN TIMES; SCAN OF FISH MERCHANTS ON PEAS HILL 1930's

##

Whilst visiting the wonderful exhibition of material at the Soham Community Museum's display and 1940's fashion show recently I met Denise Leonard who is seeking help in identifying a picture she has of her great grandparents, John and Matilda Pope.

Normally there would be very little chance that anybody would know more than the family does, but these couple are pictured standing in front of a windmill. It may well be the Hardfield Mill Soham since I have another picture taken as part of a survey made by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. If you compare the windows and doors on the two pictures they do seem to line up in the right places and the external brick buildings seem to be the same. In Denise's photo the brick base of the windmill is round, which is quite unusual, and so is the one in the Antiquarian's collection.

Sohamroots, an organisation that helps people who are researching their local ancestors have a record that Hardfield Mill was on Kings Parade, but can anybody add further details. Email Denise at Denlen29@aol.com or drop me a line.

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SCAN OF DENISE LEONARD'S PHOTO OF SOHAM WINDMILL

##

Recent Memories articles have brought me letters from a number of people including Miriam Brown of Cherry Hinton who tells me that she and her husband Alfred were members of the Cambridge Dancers Club and attended all their Saturday dances. They went to Milton Road School to practice their routines for the Cambridge Formation Team dance at the Guildhall. All the girls wore Cambridge blue net dresses while the men sported black suits with tails. They had competitions against teams from Romford and Baldock which were judged by the Star Ballroom Champions from London. Amongst the couples was John, the younger brother of Richard and David Attenborough who often appear on television.

#

Meldreth Local History Group will be reviving memories at an Open Day in Meldreth Village Hall on Sunday 16 November from 11.00 am to 4.00 pm. Visitors will be able to discover the history of the village through its people, with displays focusing on a particular individual or family, the events they were involved in and the places where they lived and worked. Cambridgeshire Family History Society will be represented and there will be A "Can You Help?" board with requests from people who are researching their own family histories. In addition, there will be a slideshow, maps of the village and aerial photographs. Entrance is free and refreshments will be available.

SCAN OF FAMILY TAKING TEA AT MELDRETH, 1920's

Memories 10 November 2008, by Mike Petty

Tony Brotchie from Cambridge has lent me a photograph which is especially relevant at this time of year. It shows a very unusual view of the Memorial at the end of Station Road, Cambridge on the day it was unveiled.

The story of the memorial is itself unusual.

At the end of the Great War Cambridge decided to erect a War Memorial and a collection of £6,000 was made for the Nurses' Home at Addenbrooke's Hospital. Then in September 1920 a meeting of the Cambridgeshire Joint War Memorial Committee agreed the erection of a statue at the corner of Station Road. A Canadian sculptor, Tait McKenzie was commissioned, and he modelled the figure of a private soldier, in full kit, striding along bareheaded, helmet in hand, a German helmet as a trophy strung on his back and partly concealed by a laurel wreath, carelessly flung over the rifle barrel. In his hand he holds a rose, another rose thrown to him has fallen to the ground. His head, based on that of a Christ's college undergraduate, Kenneth Hamilton, is turned to the side, his expression alert and happy and his lips slightly parted as if he has recognised an old friend in the crowd. As he glances over his shoulder he looks down Station Road from which he left for the war. But now he is at peace, for the statue is of The Homecoming.

The day for its unveiling was set for July 3rd 1922. The Duke of York, who was in Cambridge to open the Royal Show at Trumpington, would perform the ceremony. The plinth was erected, the crowds anticipated. Everything was ready. Almost.

Meanwhile the sculptor was feverishly trying to get the design just as he wanted it. In his studios at the University of Pennsylvania he was working constantly, inviting artist friends to comment and criticise. At last he was ready. The mould for the statue was complete, it just need to be shipped to England. But the boat was delayed and the bronze could not be cast in time for delivery.

With the day booked, the Duke booked and the plinth erected the Committee was faced with a dilemma. They could not unveil a statue that was not there – or could they. They decided on a subterfuge. A plaster cast of the statue was erected and painted to look like bronze. Then they prayed that it would not rain – for that might streak the paint - and that the wind would not blow and the covering canvas rub out essential details. But being Cambridge it rained and blew. However nobody noticed and in the presence of thousands of people The Homecoming was unveiled.

Then ten days later a lorry drew up at four o'clock in the morning. Mr Kett and ten men were waiting and within four hours the copy had been taken down and the proper figure erected. But they were not identical, for the sculptor had made slight changes once he'd seen the figure in place. As far as I know nobody took a picture of the switch-over and the fact that it happened would have been forgotten except for the vigilance of a News reporter who turned out early to describe the action.

Other memorials have been erected over the years, including a roll of honour in memory of the citizens of Cambridge who lost their lives during the Second World War which was unveiled in the Guildhall in November 1955. It is written on two skins of vellum with raised

gold lettering and also commemorates the Women's Forces and all the civilian casualties. It was executed by Miss G. Horsley, a designer at the Technical College and School and is a poignant reminder of how modern wars have involved the very homes of the people. The first name is a woman's and the names of children killed in one of the air raids also appear.

For years the 'Homecoming' has witnessed acts of Remembrance, though as the years have passed so the old soldiers of the First and Second World Wars have faded away and new generations have taken their place. Now given current conflicts its importance is enhanced as a place where people can gather to remember, even if the memorial's own story is largely forgotten.

Scan of unveiling of the Homecoming statue 1922 – picture from Tony Brothie

Remembrance service at War Memorial in 1950s

Details of the scroll unveiled at the Guildhall in November 1955

the article reporting the replacement of the memorial – CDN 11 Jul 1922

Who remembers them – women planting poppies in the 1950s – but who are they and where were they remembering.

Memories 17th November 2008, by Mike Petty

At eleven o'clock last Tuesday, Armistice Day, the pupils and staff of St Paul's School, Coronation Street, Cambridge, observed a two minute silence in memory of other generations who had discovered that their life would not be one of peace. Just 100 years earlier in 1908 other youngsters had been snapped in Castle Street. The picture of boys and girls parading with wooden swords was captioned "Their country's future defenders". Indeed some were just the right age to be just that when the world descended into the horror of the First World War.

However other youngsters have been prepared to fight to prevent war. Their story has been largely untold. Almost as soon as the 'Homecoming' statue was erected at the end of Station Road, people started agitating against further conflicts.

In 1922 there was a "No more war" demonstration on Parker's Piece with banners such as "For Peace and Freedom", "Cambridge Sisterhood says No More War" and scores of bannerettes bearing the words "No More War". They kept the memory of the dead alive but did they remember the maimed, the blind, shell-shocked and the mad? No one was worrying about those men, speakers complained.

Next year there was another anti-war demonstration on the Piece which by July 1930 had become an annual event organised by the Cambridge Peace Council.

But protests did not bring peace: next month air exercises saw squadrons of fighting planes engage in bitter mock combat and in March 1932 the chatter of Lewis guns and the rattle of rifle fire echoed almost continuously over the countryside around the peaceful villages of Bottisham and Quoy for almost four hours as members of the Perse, Leys and County School Officers' Training Corps took part in a field day.

Anti-war activity was restrengthened in 1933 when a band of sixty undergraduates from the Students' Anti-War Council marched through Cambridge carrying placards reading 'We want Peace' & 'Scholarships, not Battleships'.

However it was the Senior Service that prompted one of the greatest battles. In November 1933 the film 'Our Fighting Navy' was playing at the Tivoli Cinema on Chesterton Road when fifty Anti-War students decided to make a protest. However a rival party, numbering between 700 and a thousand undergraduates, also marched to the cinema with two bands playing war-time songs and carrying Union Jacks.

Some tried to push their way into the Tivoli whilst those inside struggled to hold them out. Several pieces of glass in the doors were broken and the girls inside the paybox feared for their safety as fireworks and stink bombs were thrown and cries of 'Down with Hitler' and 'Hail Hitler' were heard above the general uproar. Four policemen with drawn truncheons managed to keep the crowd at bay whilst a dozen more raced to the scene in motor vehicles and the University Proctor took several names. It took an hour before the streets were cleared and peace restored.

Then on Armistice Day 1933 itself battles broke out once more when Anti-War demonstrators tried to lay a wreath at the War Memorial. They assembled on Parker's Piece where speakers were heckled before their procession set off, escorted by police in uniform and plain clothes. They had to draw their truncheons to repel a charge of opposing undergraduates who managed to seize one of the poles of the 'Workers by Hand and Brain Unite Against the War' banner.

Outside Peterhouse the attack was resumed with tomatoes, eggs and flour thrown and for ten minutes a pitched hand-to-hand battle was fought with many of the demonstrators knocked to the ground and the standard torn to shreds. It forced them to abandon their planned route and turn down Corn Exchange Street to get to Regent Street. Here a car containing several women pulled up and handfuls of white feathers were flung out which the pacifists picked up and proudly placed in their button holes. There were more rotten eggs before they reached the Memorial where many hundreds of demonstrators had gathered waiting for the laying of a plain laurel wreath. It was to have carried an inscription In Memory of all Victims of a War They did not Cause, but this was removed on police advice.

Afterwards the procession made their way back to the town centre, still escorted by police and continually pelted with eggs and fish. At Petty Cury they met 'Hitler' and his supporters and together made their way to the Market Hill where the anti-war demonstration was soon forgotten in the excitement of Poppy Day

The anti-war struggle continued with exhibitions, torch-light processions and demonstrations. But as history shows, they were ultimately unsuccessful and in 1939 battle was joined all over again when young men who had trained for war were once more called upon to lead the fight for freedom.

Did you campaign for peace – write to Mike Petty at the news

pictures of

St Paul's school children remember, 11 Nov 2008

'Their country's future defenders' Castle Hill, 1908

Tivoli Cinema, Chesterton Road: site of a battle with ant-war students 1933

Students' anti-war protest 1933

Contingent of the County School Officer Training Corps.

Memories 24th November 2008, by Mike Petty

Taxis have been part of the Cambridge scene for just 100 years this month.

It was in March 1908 that Cambridge Watch Committee inspected a motorcab, described as a luxurious vehicle of the brougham class built. It was one of twenty which a London firm, the Provincial Motor Car Company, wanted to place for hire upon the Cambridge streets at fares of one shilling for the first mile and threepence for each quarter mile afterwards.

But the men who ran the existing horse-drawn cabs petitioned them. When the undergraduates came up and went down it made work for 100 vehicles carrying their mountain of luggage between station and college, but for the most of the year their living was a very precarious one. Ellis Merry said that for weeks the cabmen did not average two fares a day and many were on duty 18 hours a day to get a living. "Most of us are married men with large families and it is as much as we can do to make ends meet as it is. It would mean semi-starvation for some families and ruination for the rest. Some have put all our savings into buying a horse and cab of our own" magistrates were told.

Their concerns were backed by some councillors: There were 120 hansom cabmen, probably married and with families, who owned the cabs they drove and had spent money on renovating them. But in all there were 500 people who were getting a livelihood out of the cabs including those supplying harness and fodder for the horses. Motor cabs were unnecessary, would be a constant source of street accidents and add to the congestion on already-crowded roads, they contended.

But Magistrates were in a dilemma: although they could refuse to licence them plying for hire or using the cab ranks they had no power to prevent people coming to Cambridge and running motor taxi-cabs. Anybody could get a garage, be on the telephone and receive orders to drive passengers in their taxis, just as the hansom cab proprietors did.

If taxis were to come it was better that they be licensed. They could then restrict the number of people the vehicles might be allowed to carry; although constructed for five passengers, four inside and one outside sitting beside the driver, this was not a good idea in Cambridge – it might be dangerous for undergraduates!

Anyway motor taxis would not compete with the horse cabs. They would create a new, long-distance trade since ordinary street traffic would not pay them and if anybody ever saw a motor taxi plying for hire at the railway station it would be proof that the business was not satisfactory.

The motor company also offered to employ existing cabmen and train them to drive the new machines free of charge. One of the first drivers was Sidney Wisbey, another was Jack Wallman whose family is still part of the Cambridge taxi scene.

But it was a driver named Darby who became involved in perhaps the first accident to befall a motor taxi when in November 1908 he misjudged the distance he needed when manoeuvring in Peas Hill. The lamp of his taxi caught the awning connecting a couple of stalls and there was a general upset. The stall of Mr Reynolds was practically demolished and the sweets strewn about with the result that a number of boys had a scramble and pocketed as much as they could.

No one could deny that the new machines were somewhat quicker than their horse-pulled competition and William Cooking, Manager of the Taxi-meter Cab Company was summonsed for driving at the dangerous speed of 23 miles an hour in Trumpington. He could

have been fined £20 and have had his licence suspended but magistrates only fined him £3. It was a warning that they were determined to put down fast driving through the villages.

The hansom men hit back; they started to work on Sundays, something not done before and improved their vehicles by adding rubber tyres. They even changed their image by wearing Top Hats. But their days were numbered. By 1932 the hansom cabs had long disappeared, though there were still a couple of four-wheelers to be seen on the stands, one driven by George Jolley and the other by Arthur Carter. George had been driving for 40 years but said things were not what they had been. Cabbies used to assist undergraduates who were locked out of their college by backing the hansom against the wall to allow the belated reveller to climb over and slip in unobserved, something the motors would not do.

Do you have a tale to tell of taxis – write to Mike Petty at the News

scans

hansom cabs in Station Road

hansom cabs, taxis and buses at Cambridge station

a more animated picture of hansom cabs, taxis and buses taken at the station during a ‘Mock Funeral’ c1913

line of motor taxis 1983 – thought you could use the ‘Taxis’ signs

line of horse-drawn cabs outside Cambridge station waiting for the trains bringing undergraduates and their luggage

Memories 1st December 2008, by Mike Petty

Another mystery Memories photograph has been identified.

Margaret Stephen of Cambridge recognised an unknown war memorial as being that of St Philips Church on Mill Road which used to have a memorial garden before the railings were taken down. She also identified one of the women as being her late grandmother, Mrs Ethel Hunt who used to live in Cromwell Road.

Ethel is the small lady in the middle of the group at the back of the photograph and was paying tribute to the memory of her husband William James Hunt who was killed on the Somme on 13th November 1916, aged 31. Ethel lived till she was 91, dying in 1976. She never remarried and brought up her family of six children single handed, earning her living as a dressmaker and tailoress in Fitzroy Street.

There is another point of interest: William’s father was Thomas Bidwell Hunt, one of the finest of Cambridge photographers who traded for some 50 years from the mid 1870s to the 1920s from premises in Fitzroy Street and St Edward's Passage. His trade card proclaimed him a "portrait, landscape and architectural photographer" and negatives in the Cambridgeshire Collection confirm each of these specialities.

The portraits are of unidentified academics & women, of children dressed as Jack & Jill and a sailor from HMS Indomitable; the landscapes include Coe Fen, the Plough Tea Gardens at Fen Ditton, Christ Church on Newmarket Road and a view to Garret Hostel Bridge taken after a heavy frost has coated the trees and grass.

Most of the large glass negatives are of the traditional college scenes such as Trinity, Clare and Queens', though the women's college at Newnham features extensively. But Hunt also sought out the unusual viewpoint, carrying his heavy camera into elevated positions to capture views across town from the Chapel of St John's college or views of Kings Parade over the spires of the college screen.

His pictures show that some college buildings remain largely unchanged for centuries; but the life within them varies from generation to generation. Last week two American teachers were invited to Trinity College for the launch of a book written by another American. They were impressed with the atmosphere of the college on a dark, rainy evening, with the lights shining out from the windows of students' rooms. On arrival they glanced into the great Dining Hall as it lay quiet and empty and, on departure, saw it fulfilling its role as a place where students took their evening meal – very different to that of their own colleges back in the States.

Imagine then how Charles Bristed felt when he arrived at Trinity in 1840 at the start of what was to be a five year stay. He was introduced to his room and to the men and women who were employed to make his stay. He noted:

The Freshman is first inducted into his rooms by a gyp, usually recommended to him by his tutor. The gyp is a college servant, who attends upon a number of students, sometimes as many as twenty, calls them in the morning, brushes their clothes, waits at their parties, and so on.

The new-comer generally finds his apartment ready prepared for him, it being the custom for him to take the former tenant's furniture at a valuation by the college upholsterer, and make such subsequent additions to, or alterations in it, as his convenience requires or his fancy suggests. The appearance of a student's apartment, though by no means splendid, is decidedly comfortable; it is well cushioned and sofaed, with a proper proportion of armchairs, and a general air of respectability - much better on the whole than our [American] students' rooms ever are.

But the new occupant finds one deficiency. All the glass, china, and crockery of the man going out become the bed-maker's property; accordingly our Freshman's first business is to provide himself, usually under the gyp's guidance, with a tea-set, and other like necessities, among which decanters and wine-glasses figure conspicuously. An American student is somewhat surprised at having these articles recommended to him, as it were, by the college authorities. This is only the beginning of what he has to learn.

Charles indeed had a lot to learn and used his experiences to produce "An American in Victorian Cambridge" which has long been out of print and largely forgotten. But now it has been reissued with an introduction by Christopher Stray and illustrations by another Victorian student, John Lewis Roget, son of the man who published the famous Thesaurus. (Exeter University Press, ISBN 978 0 85989 825 6, £16.99)

Another lad recalling his schooldays is Rupert Gandy from Watlington in Oxfordshire has written to me following Peggy Chaffe's reminiscences of Barway. He was born in Soham in August 1917 and moved to Barway when a lad of five. He was one of those taught by Peggy's mother and his name is amongst those listed in the two-volume history of the school that Peggy has just compiled. Rupert has just celebrated his own personal history: He left Barway in January 1938 moved to Buckinghamshire. Next month he met a young lady named, Renee. They married on 26th November that year and have just celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary.

T.B.Hunt view of Christ Church on Newmarket Road, a Victorian copy of King's College Chapel

Trinity College Great Court as it was when Bristed studied – and still is

Roget sketch of a new student with his Gyp and Bedder

Remembrance day photo showing Ethel Hunt laying a poppy in memory of her husband

Memories, 8th December 2008, by Mike Petty

I met Leslie Stock after I'd given a talk to the Haverhill University of the Third Age; he told me that he'd been setting down his memories of his early life at Linton and I asked for the opportunity to share them.

Leslie's life changed when his father was killed in the war. He writes: "Some years later, to lift her depression, mum was taken to the dances at the American air base a few miles away. She made some new friends among the other ladies who went to the dances. One of the girls came and lodged with us; she was going steady with an airman from the base called Placedo Gamboa, a Mexican Indian from El Paso on the Rio Grande. Placedo's mates came round and liked to play chequers and dominoes.

"We got a black dog, which was half Chow with a black tongue and curly tail. He was a friendly animal who used to go up to the base, with Placedo. He was always home without fail to meet us off the school bus until one day he went missing. This was at the time that the War had ended and the yanks were going home. We learnt later that all the dogs on the base were rounded up and shot. So that was the end of our dog.

"On the day that victory in Europe was announced, the Americans went loopy, and were driving through Linton in jeeps firing off Very Lights (Flares) one of which got caught in the thatch of a barn opposite the Green Hill pub. Volunteers led the horses to safety and American Fire Fighters put out the blaze, which was quite spectacular.

Not much war damage was done in Linton but a boy's mind remembers the small details: a row of bucket of toilets at the back of the Crown pub were blown up scattering excrement everywhere. Mr George a veteran of the First World War who kept a shop next door was woken up violently by the bang. He put his artificial leg on, struck a match and found that his staircase was blown away by the blast and that his bedroom was just hanging there by a thread. His family were rescued but it was a long time before proper repairs were carried out.

Things at Leslie's home were grim and cold: "I had a washstand in my room at home. The face flannel was frozen stiff overnight in winter and you could scrape the ice off the windows. Washing in the morning was a hurried affair. In 1954 we got a council house this was a step up; it was an old house with an outside flush toilet so we still kept pots under the beds. We waited another eight years for a bathroom"

Leslie left school at the age of 15 in 1959 and worked as a welder for most of his life before starting his own window cleaning, business that he ran for 20 years. He has set down his memories for his children and grandchildren. If you have done the same, please share them with me at the News. And do you have memories of Americans in your village

Then whilst at Huntingdon Methodist Men's Club I met David Bushby from Godmanchester who'd discovered two old film strips. Holding them up to the light it was obvious they

contained some interesting pictures which seem to have been taken in about 1968. Several are instantly recognisable; others show just how much Cambridge has changed over the last 40 years. See what you can remember or identify

David Bushby's Pictures show

View over Lion Yard Car Park with Downing Street in the background; this is now the site of the Grand Arcade

View down Petty Cury towards Sidney Street, taken from roof of the Guildhall – the buildings on the right were demolished for Lion Yard

Sidney Street showing Marks and Spencer and Woolworth's

A mystery picture – please can anybody identify it

Separate pictures to illustrate the Linton story

Linton 1954 showing a Humber Hawk car – but whose was it?

Americans entertain children in Steeple Morden at Christmas 1944 – do you remember them in your village?

Memories 15th December 2008, by Mike Petty

Tick Fen, Warboys, is not an area where many people linger, but Wharms Tinkler knew it very well. His father, Tom, was one of the original tenants when Huntingdonshire County Council bought land in 1913 to rent out as smallholdings. They built seven new houses at a cost of £280 each and converted John Rowell's old farmhouse into two cottages.

Wharms attended the Fen School, two miles away along Puddick Drove but left as soon as he could to start work full time on the land. When his father died in 1934 Wharms took over his tenancy, together with additional land. He then started to keep a diary. His entries were brief, almost entirely concerned with his farming activities. He recorded the work he was doing, the crops he was selling and the names of the people and businesses with whom he was dealing. He continued keeping diaries most years until 1970, proving a unique record of farming life in the fens around Huntingdon.

Many of the terms and descriptions relating to farming as it was carried on seventy or more years ago that were used by Wharms are now unfamiliar.

From Monday to Friday work on the land started at seven o'clock in the morning and finished at half-past-three in the afternoon. A break for 'dockey' was taken in the field from ten-thirty till eleven with a ten minute drink at 'oneses' and dinner, the main meal of the day, at four o'clock. On Saturday hours were from seven till one

However while Wharms kept horses his day began when they were fed at 5.30. Then there were pigs and poultry to feed, goats to be milked and either fed or staked on the roadside verges to graze during the day. After that the horses were brushed down and only then did Wharms take his breakfast. At the end of the normal working hours the horses had to be stabled, fed and brushed down. Pigs and poultry were fed, goats milked, water fetched for the animals, mangolds were cleaned, fresh straw spread in stables and pigsties. All in all, a working day was twelve hours. Provided there was nothing extra to be done while there was still daylight. But at least Sunday was a day of rest – unless crops had to be harvested before they spoiled.

Of course there were holidays – Wharms took every Christmas Day and Boxing Day off, with occasionally Easter too.

In 1950 Wharms acquired his first tractor, a second-hand Fordson which was old and obsolete. He bought his last, a new Massey Ferguson 35 in April 1963. Most tractors ran on paraffin but had to be started on petrol. Wharms serviced them himself, only occasionally calling out a mechanic when repairs were needed

He grew potatoes, sugar beet and wheat on a three-year rotation with some barley and occasionally carrots, red beet or onions. But it was the potatoes – Doon Star, Dunbar Rover, King Edwards and Majestic amongst the varieties - which brought the most profit. And all of this he jotted down in his diaries together with the variety of work he was undertaken at the various seasons of the year – rolling beet, spraying beet, horse hoeing mangolds

None of this is earth-shattering but little of this has been recorded in such detail before. Now his son, Richard, has transcribed the diaries and added detailed explanatory notes to provide a record of a way of life where small farmers worked closely together. A community whose economic and social life revolved around the land and the associations they had with each other.

Richard has published just 100 copies of the diaries which can be obtained direct from him for £25 including postage. They will soon disappear, as will the way of life Wharms describes. Contact Richard Tinkler on 01487 842434 to reserve your copy.

One of the changes in agriculture was the making up of the muddy droves with sand and gravel. One of the suppliers was Wisbey's pits at Hauxton – and this it transpires was the mystery picture I featured in last weeks Memories

John Mallows from Cambridge visited regularly as a lad and remembers the rough sand being tipped onto the conveyor belt that took it to the hoppers where it was washed and graded before being used for building purposes or sold to farmers or smallholders He knew the lorry drivers and would join them in their hut for a lunch of bread and cheese.

The drivers were John Childerston, Harold Bushell and Ken Moss, recalls Will Garfit who knows the site better than anybody. For he bought it in 1969 and has transformed it into a private nature reserve, winning an award for his approach to shooting and conservation and describing it in his book "Will's Shoot". He points out that the old tree in the background to the photograph was home to a large colony of bats. The view is now obscured by houses that were built along the edge of the site opposite the church.

Pictures – NB subs - they are not of Warboys

SCAN OF YOUNGSTERS INSPECTING FERGUSON TRACTOR 1956 – BUT WHERE WAS IT AND WHO ARE THEY?

Lolworth men, Mr Martin and Mr Peppercorn in harvest field wearing medals they were awarded for nearly 100 years service in July 1956 – their way of life has disappeared

SCAN OF WISBEY'S PIT WITH HAUXTON CHURCH IN THE BACKGROUND, 1960s

Memories 22nd December 2008, by Mike Petty

If you scan the television schedules looking in vain for something to watch over Christmas then you must hope that Father Christmas will leave some DVDs in your stocking

Recently the East Anglian Film Archive has been releasing some of their material on a series of discs, the latest of which is a two-volume compilation entitled 'Memories of Cambridgeshire and the Fens'. It features a variety of films edited together with added sound effects and a modern commentary which is sometimes less than accurate – see just how many errors you can spot! All in all it is more entertaining than many of the festive offerings

The films are a joy. They feature some of the familiar Cambridge's central streets when they were open to motor vehicles; one made in 1951 depicts traffic problems: pollution, jams and policemen on point duty controlling cyclists and undergraduates in sedate open sports cars.

But the worst motoring offender – if one film is to be believed – is an employee of the County Council. He backs his car out into Gilbert Road, narrowly missing his neighbour, then speeds through the streets, ignoring traffic lights and no-waiting restrictions as he makes his way – via a somewhat circuitous route – to his office at Shire Hall. This is an excerpt from a remarkable road safety film entitled 'Wise or Otherwise' which has been issued before in an uncut version.

University life is depicted with views of an Honorary Degree procession, Sir Winston at Churchill, Madrigals on the Cam, rowing and Rag Days. But there are also films of schools with activity at St Faith's shown in some detail as is the opening of Sawston village college.

Films of the fens give an excellent glimpse of the agriculture of the time – hay cart, sugar beet, mud, with a tug-driver's perspective of the problems of drainage. Inevitably floods feature with interesting views of Mepal and Littleport, though again there is a tendency for one flood to be mixed up with another in the editing process.

It is on safer ground when the films themselves have commentaries; they include a propaganda film for Papworth Village Settlement and another made by Pye that shows something of the production methods of the 1960s. Transport buffs will enjoy a colour journey along the Cambridge to Mildenhall railway line, a glimpse of the work of a Canberra squadron and an air show at Mildenhall

And if you can't manage to have a peaceful Christmas without a war film, then there are remarkable scenes of lightweight tanks speeding through a Cambridgeshire village in the lead-up to the Second World War and of troops attempting to dig trenches in a farmer's field during the 1912 army manoeuvres around Linton.

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Today sees the funeral of Mark Harris, described as "the city's Mr Fashion". With his wife he started 'Vogue' in St Andrew's Street in 1934, just a few doors from 'Modiste' run by his father. They built up a high-class trade and in 1953 sold a dress to be worn in Westminster Abbey on Coronation Day; it was of pure silk, priced 65 guineas. "We are absolutely thrilled, it is a great honour", Mr Harris told the CDN, adding that they had also sold three evening gowns to be worn at Coronation balls in London connected with the Court. White was proving to be the most popular choice that year for May Ball dresses; the off-the-shoulder style was in demand and the average price was 15 guineas. By 1983 prices for a post frock could reach £500.

It was on December 19th 1983 – just 25 years ago – that the News reported that Vogue, the top fashion house in East Anglia, was to close. However for them a closing-down sale did not mean a wild scrimmage as customers fought over coats and dresses. Instead a locked door kept the bargain-hunters out on the pavement while staff dealt with two or three clients at a time.

The story was illustrated by photograph of fashionable customers queuing up for a bargain. Were you one of the customers, and what do you remember of “Mr Fashion”

The East Anglian Film Archive DVDs cost £9.99 each from HMV and other selected retailers across Cambridgeshire or online at www.archivefilmshop.co.uk.

SCANS

Traffic conditions in St Andrew’s Street in 1950s, with Vogue in background

Car leaving King and Harper’s garage – a still from the new DVD

The cover of the new DVD

Film cameraman – in foreground – records Sir Winston Churchill planting at tree at the new Churchill College, 1964

Closure of Vogue fashion shop, December 1983

A GENERAL VIEW IF NEEDED:

Father Christmas meets children at Eaden Lilley’s staff party in the 1960s.

Memories 29th December 2008 Field of dreams

Ploughing match / Plough Monday

Memories not 12th May 2008, by Mike Petty

Readers have been quick to paint another side of life around the Occupation Road area of Cambridge.

Cherry Ford lived in Lower York Street (Dobblers Hole) and she and her sister went to St Matthews School where the headmaster was Mr Smith. She has many fond memories of playing on the ‘piece’ and the swings, which were on a tarmac area on the corner of Abbey Street and New Street, where they also had a large bonfire on November 5th. On the other corner was Rolphs the grocers and just around the corner, in Occupation Road was Darlers who sold sweets which they wrapped in cones made from blue sugar paper. Further along on New Street was Lucas’ shop – the building is still there, painted blue. The Reynolds family had their sweet ‘factory’ on the corner of Abbey Street and Newmarket Road. Cherry concludes: “Happy days in what was, as you said, quite a grim area!”

Mrs Jack Clements lived in Blossom Street, off Norfolk Street and remembers the nearby slaughter house, together with the Pelican pub on the corner of Nelson Street. Then there was Gold Street where her aunt and uncle had a bakery, Tebbutts. On Good Friday they used to deliver hot cross buns, direct from the oven. Not far away was the White Ribbon Hostel, run by the Salvation Army for homeless men. Her parents hired the boys club hall in Nelson Street for their wedding reception in 1926. “Occupation Road may not have been very special, but it wasn’t all that bad when I was young”, she concludes.

Charles Hall, assistant churchwarden from St Andrew the Less, writes to point out that the fuss about the name change of the Abbey Stadium is misplaced. There never was a Barnwell Abbey – it was a Priory. So perhaps we should agitate for a major change in the map of Cambridge – renaming Abbey Ward to Priory Ward, Abbey Estate to Priory Estate and so on. But that would mean there'd be two Priory Roads and taxi drivers would never find the Priory Street off Huntingdon Road. There was a similar situation in the 1930s when the Cambridge boundaries expanded to take in Chesterton. Ted Mott was a local photographer, producing postcards and saw an opportunity to increase his sales. So, he reasoned, if Chesterton was now Cambridge, then Chesterton High Street must be Cambridge High Street ...

Last week I spoke following a meeting of the Ickleton Village Society which was agonising over the latest issue to concern the village: the prospect of a new town at Henley Grange. Glancing back through my files I notice that in September 1976 the community had other issues on its mind: complaints that pigs and cows have been straying through their streets, gardens and even houses. The pigs have been walking through the streets holding up the traffic, pigs and calves have been eating vegetables in gardens and one woman even had a pig in her dining room. One mother says she saw a pig rooting around her two-month-old baby, asleep in his pram in the garden. The man who owns the animals, a chartered accountant, said he had not kept pigs before he moved to the village: "It would have been more sensible to come and tell me personally. I'm usually here at the weekend".

So with other visits in prospect I wondered what would be concerning them – if history is any guide.

In April 1955 A Gamlingay councillor was complaining about a horde of caravanners who had been told that their site should be hidden from the road - so they put up ten feet of zinc which made it even more hideous. He referred to a bungalow they had built with their own labour which he called 'a monstrosity'. 'If we allow two more places like this then Gamlingay will not be worth living in', he complained..

In November 1929 the inhabitants of Houghton were up in arms because the postal authorities have removed their sub-post office, which has been there for more than a century, to the neighbouring village of Wyton. The Houghton office was run by the widow of an ex-servicemen who had lost her breadwinner in the service of his country. It should be returned and telephone facilities installed, they demanded.

But in April 1898 the News reported how William Facer, a shepherd of Houghton, had attended St Ives market. Next day he discovered he had lost two £5 notes. He enquired at different places if the precious bits of paper had been seen. Among the places visited was Mr Hewson's, the pork butcher in Merryland. On Tuesday a boy swept out the shop. He picked up the bits of paper about the floor, and was about to light the fire with them, when his attention was attracted to two pieces by their crispness. He smoothed out the crumpled bits of paper and lo! they were two £5 notes. The note must have lain on the floor a while scores of people went in and out and did not see them. Facer may thank his stars the notes were found by good honest folk, and also that they were not burnt without being noticed

Memories 2009

5th January 2009, by Mike Petty

Joyce Svensson from Fulbourn seeks help in identifying a very old picture of what is captioned as the Arts and Crafts School, Cambridge (Science Room) in 1928. All she knows

is that the late Jack Svensson from Barrington is the lad, second from the right in the front row. But who are the others, she wonders.

The School of Arts and Crafts was an early stage in the development of one of Cambridge's oldest educational establishments, now known as Anglia Ruskin University. So I sought the assistance of Tony Kirby, whose new history of that University has just been launched to mark their 150th anniversary.

Tony can add more details about the college in those days:

“It took children at 14, mainly (70%) from the county - offering one of the few forms of secondary education available to these (to age 16) before the Village College system got off the ground. They came in by train or (increasingly) by bus.

“The photograph almost certainly shows 'Day Trade School' students. These were the first full-timers. The School was started by Arthur Bryant (Principal 1923-25) for unemployed youths, but was put on a firmer basis by Dorothy Enright, who succeeded him as Principal (1925-32).”

According to an article I spotted in the *Cambridge Daily News* of March 1931 Miss Enright came to Cambridge in 1924 to help in the reorganisation of the School of Arts, Crafts and Technology and became the first woman to be elevated to be head of a technical school in the UK. At that time there were odd classes for unemployed boys and girls with 54 students but by 1930 the number in the Day Trade School had grown to 151. Dorothy had a special interest in training women in domestic science, needlework, cookery and simple home hygiene. Rooms were equipped with all the latest gadgets but few girls show much interest in so essential an art, the paper lamented.

However all the pressure did not worry her: “not only is she still young as far as years are concerned, but she is young in outlook, of high good humour and most pleasant to look upon” the reporter commented, obviously smitten.

Tony Kirby continues: “Neither I nor our people in Estates can recognise the room, but I suspect that it's in the 1928 extension to what is now the Ruskin (officially opened by the Duchess of Atholl, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, and the first woman member of a Tory government) on 17 December 1928.

“I also suspect that it's a specially-posed photo. The Day Trade School offered classes for boys in Printing, Engineering, Woodwork and Tailoring, for girls in 'Artistic Trades', Dressmaking, Office Work and Cookery. No mention of Science per se in the Prospectuses I've seen - although as 'general education' was part of the syllabus, they may have had some basic science. The lab would almost certainly be more heavily-used by the "Apprentices' Classes" - put on for local employers. What appear to be heavy-duty voltmeters (or similar) in the background would support this.”

The 1931 *News* article concludes by commenting: “the Cambridge School of Arts, Crafts and Technology is regarded as being not only one of the most progressive technical institutes under civic control in Great Britain, but also one of the most successful”. Which seems very similar to the sentiment expressed by the present Chancellor, Lord Ashcroft, when addressing Anglia 'Honoraries', (of which I am proud to be one), at a recent dinner in the House of Lords.

I have other pictures to tease:

One shows Class EIIb – engineers - in 1944 when it was the Cambridgeshire Technical College and School of Art.

The names are –back row: Parker, Simkins, Mr Holmes, Mr Purvis, Twigg and Simpson
centre row: Parish, Gardiner, Frank Stubbings, Rex Stubbings
front row: Dale, Rodwell, Stockbridge and Walker

But who are the young ladies and gents in the Business Class, taken between 1947 and 1949

Did you attend similar classes, or do you have a similar picture in your own family archives.

Tony Kirby's history of the first 150 years of Anglia Ruskin University is available from the University, priced £6.99

Memories 12th January 2008, by Mike Petty

Its just 125 years since Cambridgeshire Football Association was formed at a meeting at Trinity College on January 4th 1884.

It was launched with a trial game on Parker's Piece between two teams selected from the Old Perseans, Modern Perseans and Cassandra football teams on the one side and the Granta, Rovers, Printers and Albert on the other. Other clubs soon affiliated, including Newmarket, Linton, Sawston Swifts and the Cam. An idea of the conditions of the period can be glimpsed in a sketch published in The Graphic in 1887. (The sketch shows Queen Anne Terrace in the background which was demolished for the present carpark – do you remember it?)

In those days the game was controlled by two umpires, one in each half of the field. When an infringement occurred the umpire in that half of the field stopped the game by waving his flag. Should the umpires disagree the matter was 'referred' to the referee who sat outside the field of play.

In 1891 the system was changed by bringing the 'referee' on to the pitch to take sole control of the game and the umpires became 'linesmen', still keeping their flags. Two years later the Association required the referees to pass a board of examiners when they received a special badge and cap.

Referees experienced various problems. In April 1930 Referee L. Sylvester complained of the conduct of the Littleport Football Club after they'd played Wisbech Town. He said they followed him to the dressing-room calling him 'everything under the sun' and threw pieces of mangold wurzel at him. But the Club Secretary complained that the ref incompetent and his decisions bordered on the ridiculous.

Spectators too could be troublesome: that same month in 1930 sensational scenes were witnessed when Cambridge Town met Ipswich in a vital football match at Milton Road. The crowd, numbering over 7,300, were annoyed by some disputable rulings by the referee and at the final whistle they surged on to the field and surrounded him. The situation looked very ugly until Cambridge players and police with drawn truncheons went to his assistance. They got him to the pavilion where the crowd tried to storm the building. But for the quick work of many police both uniformed and plain clothed, players and officials, the referee might have been very roughly handled, the News reported.

In January 1984 controversy surrounded the result of a game on Parker's Piece. It was either a 13-all draw or 13-14 to the Ditton Players who were playing their rivals, the Ditton Irregulars. Both teams were in Edwardian dress as they recreated a game of 'foot-the-ball'

originally played between Oxford and Cambridge students in December 1946. The match was quite like football except that it had three balls and 15 players to a side. The 1946 players had been well-behaved, although one had been penalised for forgetting to remove his top hat before heading the ball.

These days we are used to the jet-setting lifestyle of some players. But in December 1929 F.A. Ridgeon, the Cambridge Town Football Club's inside left hit the headlines when he travelled by aeroplane to Sussex for the F.A. Amateur Cup tie with Southwick. There had been some doubt whether he could make the match owing to duties in Stamford preventing him from travelling by train. Hearing of his difficulty Mr D.G. Marshall of Aviation Hall generously placed his Moth aeroplane at his disposal. His son, Arthur Marshall, would have piloted the machine but he had gone on an air trip to Austria so a de Havilland pilot was engaged for the journey. This was probably the first time an amateur footballer had travelled to a match by air and it was worth the effort, for Cambridge won 2-0

Do you have interesting refereeing tales – write to Mike Petty at the News

Readers have been quick to identify more Memories mystery pictures

Ian Garner emailed to say the man ploughing with horses (Memories 29th December) was his late father, Stanley Garner, who worked the family farm at Willingham with his brother for most of his life. He ploughed with horses regularly at both Willingham and Cottenham annual ploughing matches. Stanley loved Percheron horses and continued to breed them for showing at major farming shows even after the tractor had taken over, Ian tells me

Pictures of students at what is now Anglia Ruskin University have sparked more memories.

Julia Hardy identified the young lady seated third from the left in the Cambridge Technical College commerce class as being her husband's late sister Joan Hardy, who sadly died in 1968. The girl sitting to the right of Joan is Daphne Cook. Joan and Daphne were very good friends during the time they were at the college in about 1948.

Keith Westley from Sawston tells me he was very nearly in the picture of the trainee engineers - he was in the next year's intake. The photo was taken by Miss Lessey with her Brownie camera. Gerald Doubleday from the Arbury has one of those long, long pictures that show large numbers of faces; his shows six rows of pupils and staff and was taken in 1947.

SCANS

Football on Parker's Piece, from the 'Graphic' of 1887; the building in the background was Queen Anne Terrace,

Queen Anne Terrace, Gonville Place 1969; it was demolished for the building of the present car park which opened in 1971: do you remember it

Cambridge City Footballers in training, 1952 – do you recognise anybody. In 1930 the referee had to be escorted from the pitch following controversial decisions

Stanley Garner ploughing at Cottenham

Joan Hardy (seated third from left) and Daphne Cook alongside were part of the Commerce class at Cambridge Technical College about 1948

Memories 19th January 2009, by Mike Petty

In January 1909 thousands of elderly people suddenly found that life had got easier with the start of the new Old Age Pensions. It was the first step in the development of the modern benefits and welfare system by Asquith's Liberal government.

Now for the first time in history, veterans of toil claimed from the country the wherewithal to end their days in comparative comfort, free from the haunting dread of having to enter the 'House', as the contemporary PR people put it

The full pension was five shillings for a single man or woman and seven and six for a married man, (worth £19.30 and £29 in today's money). It was kept deliberately quite low in order to encourage as many as possible to make their own savings arrangements to top it up.

It was also means tested. Pensions Officers visited people's houses to check how much money and what possessions they had - including the kitchen sink. Many of the elderly were to be disappointed, the CDN complained, due to the stupid and unfair interpretation of the rules by the Local Government Board on what constituted income.

People had to prove they were of 'good character' before they received a penny; they were ruled out of a pension if they had refused work when able, made themselves poor in order to qualify, had been imprisoned or were habitually inebriated.

They also had to be over 70 to qualify. This proved difficult to prove as one bedridden old 84-year-old Cambridge lady discovered when the officials asked her when she was born. She didn't know, as both her mother and father were dead. She was an orphan, she tearfully explained.

As the formalities proceeded so the Post Office clerks prepared for their new duties. The pension book covers had been printed in different colours to reflect the amount to be paid: those entitled to five shillings had blue-covered books, 4/- were cream, 3/- drab, it was orange for the two-shilling claimants and terra cotta for those who only received a bob. The money was to be paid out in silver coins and there were worries these would run out.

As the first Pension Day dawned a rush was expected, but it was a raw morning and few of the old folk were astir early. In the main Cambridge post office the clerks with their mass of silver coin ready to hand had a quiet start until eventually the first pensioner arrived at 9.30. He was cordially received and so overcome with his reception that he tottered away leaving his spectacle case on the counter.

But at Mill Road one old gentleman was there clutching his cheque book when the doors opened. Later everywhere numbers built up with several old men, worthy though poor, entering hesitatingly, then taking off their hats and caps with the greatest respect as they waited to receive the payment that was their right – not a charity, it was emphasised. The elderly had to sign for the money which caused an embarrassment as some could not write their names. Kindly officials told them that a cross was a good substitute.

Across the county it was a similar story: Swaffham Bulbeck saw 15 residents receive their allotted five shillings, at Histon the old folk could hardly realise they were getting five shillings in exchange for a piece of paper, at Cottenham nearly 40 people were fortunate

enough to receive a pension though sadly two claimants died just days before the payment was due.

In Longstanton John Bell had the distinction of being the first to receive the pension in the village and at Isleham the Vicar gave permission for the church bells to be rung in celebration.

But inevitably things did not always go smoothly. Residents of Haddenham had to leave empty-handed. There were various reasons, one of which was that the list of the applicants had been sent to the Parish Council for their approval.

Once the money was received the pensioners left the post office positively beaming with happiness, clutching the precious five shillings tightly in their hand or carefully bestowing it in a safe pocket. One old lady of past eighty made direct for the nearest butcher's shop for the luxury of a fresh piece of meat. "Poverty was written upon her worn face and corroborated by her rusty, though scrupulously clean frock", the *News* reporter observed

Not all were satisfied: one gentleman years ago had been a poulterer who regularly took his stand on Market Hill. But he had not married and was now lonely: "I've seen better days, it's a little. It will help", he moaned.

Perhaps those most contented were those who had formerly occupied responsible positions and in their old age been reduced to penury. Yet they had fought with such a will against the indignity of poor law relief that they were now able to claim more than they would have received from the Guardians.

At Stretham it was agreed that the best way of celebrating the advent of Old Age Pensions would be to give a tea to all persons in the village over 70 years of age. This went ahead, though as some got more than others and others none at all, it would have been interesting to have listened in to their conversation!

Scans of Mill Road where the first Cambridge pension was paid
Longstanton Post Office where John Bell was the first to receive his entitlement
Stretham Old Age Pensioners' tea – though not all qualified for payment

Elderly couple outside Gt Wilbraham Post Office

A pension book - - download from
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/pensioncentenary/archive-sample-pension-book.jpg>

Memories 26th January 2009, by Mike Petty

A recent picture of a long-gone building has prompted several readers to share recollections.

It showed Queen Anne Terrace, a long red-brick building on Gonville Place overlooking Parker's Piece. It had replaced a building whose accommodation was far less pleasant: the former Cambridge Town Gaol which was pulled down in 1878. [PHOTO OF THE OLD GAOL OVERLOOKING PARKER'S PIECE]

In 1963 it was visited by Erica Dimock as part of her 'Down Your Street' articles in the CDN

At that time nos 1-6 Queen Anne Terrace was home to the University Correspondence College, better known as Burlington House. This had been founded in 1887 to provide a complete University education by postal tuition and had expanded to cover a wide field of

educational activity. The majority of its students were taking courses to improve their career prospects with expert tuition supervised by tutors of high academic ability, Erica noted.

Valerie Beavis (nee Stokes) from Little Shelford remembers it. She writes:

“On leaving school at Easter 1959, I worked for the next two and a half years as a Junior Clerk at the University Correspondence College in Queen Anne Terrace. The stairs were narrow and steep and the rooms small in comparison with the open plan buildings of today. The only heating in each room was a little gas fire. I was in the reception office, dealing with all the post and telephone calls. The exchange was old fashioned, pressing a button, turning a handle on the side to make the telephone ring in the appropriate office. The person who taught me my duties was named Cynthia Howell. The only other names I remember are Nina, Val, Margaret, Miss Johnson Miss Hornsby, Mrs French, Rita Reed, and Daphne a shorthand typist.

Mrs J.M. Jones from Cambridge knew it somewhat earlier. She took a post running the filing department there when she was demobbed in 1946. Everything was committed to paper in those days and she had rooms full of files, she recalls.

Next door was the University Tutorial Press, founded like Burlington House by Dr William Briggs, but by 1963 an entirely separate organisation. Its printing works were at Foxton where it produced a wide variety of textbooks for schools and universities.

Then came the offices of the National Industrial Fuel Efficiency Service which had started at Brooklands Avenue in 1953 before moving to the Terrace four years later. It was set up to investigate the tremendous amount of fuel wasted through faulty plants, poorly insulated buildings or by untrained stokers. They helped bring industrial plants up to high standards of fuel utilisation enabling savings of 15 per cent during 1955-56 – but do you know more of its work? Earlier it had been used by the Ministry of Health – Miss Dorothy Foreman of Cambridge recalls that when she worked for Denton-Smith architects in 1946-47 she had to bicycle there with piles of specifications which had to be rubber-stamped to show they confirmed to the ‘Restriction of Ribbon Development Act’

Completing the occupants of the red-brick Terrace was a nurses’ home comprising 31 bedrooms with a kitchen, sitting rooms and even a television lounge. Mrs Sylvia Heinemann (nee Jacobs) of Cambridge knew it between 1955 and 1958. She was one of about 20 trained nurses working at Addenbrooke's Hospital who lived there together with a few midwives working at the Maternity Hospital. A room at ‘Q.A.T.’ was coveted and there was always a waiting-list of nurses wishing to move there, she recalls.

Helen Sharpe agrees: “It was a lovely old building. Afternoon tea was wheeled into the staff sitting room and it all felt very genteel. When I returned to Cambridge in 1968 I lived there for about 18 months until the building was demolished to make way for the multi storey car park. At that point another nurse and I were transferred to Coton House (flats) on the present hospital site. We asked to share a flat as we were the first and only two people in the building for quite some time. However, because Dorothy was a Sister and I was a Staff Nurse our request was turned down and we each had to live on our own in separate flats and on different floors in the block. Such was the red tape in nursing during the so called Swinging 60's!”

Everybody remembers that at the back of the Terrace there was a secluded walled garden with a tennis court and beyond that the Fenner's Cricket Ground. When the Australians played the University the staff had a ‘station’ on the garden wall where anyone on a coffee break could watch the game.

Queen Anne Terrace was demolished to make way for the present car park, which opened in 1971.

There must be more to be said about Q.A.T. – can you add to its story

SCANS

FRONT OF QUEEN ANNE TERRACE, SEPTEMBER 1963

FRONT VIEW SHOWING TREES, 1969

REAR VIEW OF QUEEN ANNE TERRACE SHOWING TREES BEING CUT DOWN, 1969

VIEW FROM THE SPIRE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ABOUT 120 YEARS AGO SHOWING QUEEN ANNE TERRACE WITH MORTIMER ROAD TO THE RIGHT

THE CAMBRIDGE TOWN GAOL WHICH STOOD ON THE SITE OF QUEEN ANNE TERRACE

Memories Special on Cambridgeshire Technical College students, 26 January 2008, by Mike Petty

A recent Memories article featuring Tony Kirby's recently-published history of the first 150 years of Anglia Ruskin University has prompted various readers to get in touch

Several have put names to faces on the pictures I featured, but Dawn Wilkin writes from Jersey with the comprehensive guide to the youngsters attending a two year Business Training Course from September 1947 to July 1949.

She was amongst them and has been spending the last seven years tracking down each of her fellow students from 60 years ago. Not only does she know who's who but she knows where they lived in 1949, where they are now and also has a summary of their subsequent careers.

One worked as a personnel officer and is now having great success as a bobbin lace maker in Salisbury, another became PA to the headmaster of a Public School before working in the City, a third was Property Secretary at a Stately Home until she retired. Others went on to secretarial careers with banks, solicitors, auditors, schools and nursing while Eveline Thulborn who used to live at the Rose and Crown in Teversham has retired from a golden career in Geneva, Switzerland where she now lives.

Thirteen of them came together for a reunion in Cambridge in March 2003 and they plan another for later this year.

But there are three or four classmates that Dawn has been unable to locate despite placing advertisements in magazines and newspapers and appealing on the radio. Nor does the Ruskin Alumni Association's own records go back all that way

So please, she asks, can anybody supply information on the following:

Dorothy Matthews who was then living in Barton Mills whilst her father was working for the Ministry of Defence (on the left of the main front row)

Arthur Stockdale then of Mildenhall, third from left of the middle row

Michael Dear (middle of the middle row) who in 1949 lived in Roseford Road, Cambridge

Michael Hodge, formerly of Bell Hill, Histon who stood to the right of Mike Dear

Dawn Wilkin would be pleased to hear from you; email dawnwilkin@jerseymail.co.uk or contact me and I'll put you in touch

But amazingly we can already solve one of her mysteries, for a letter from Derek Chapman of Oakington tells me that Michael Dear later had a stall on Cambridge market and died about 20 years ago. Derek also knew Michael Hodge as the three of them attended St John's College Choir School and then moved up to the Tech at the same time.

The full set of names of the Business Trainees is

Back row

Jean Hutchinson, Brienne Barfoot, Joan Amor, Brenda Oaks, Rosemary Cross, Dawn Wilkins

Middle row

Doreen Johnson, Nina Potter, Arthur Stockdale, Michael Dear, Michael Hodge, John Peachey, Joan Graveling, Margaret Huggins

Front row

Dorothy Matthews, Eveline Thulborn, Joan Hardy, Daphne Cook, Ann Gillingham, Irene Barker

seated at front

Mary Reed, Jean Warren

[SCAN OF THE BUSINESS CLASS]

Molly Sekulla, a Tech old girl who's stayed in Cambridge, has been delving through her archives to find another couple of snaps. One shows a number of staff in June 1946 including Miss Strawson who taught business training and French on the front row, one from the right. [PART OF THE PHOTO OF THE STAFF SHOWING MISS STRAWSON IN THE MIDDLE WITH MISS BENNETT (DRESSMAKING) ON THE LEFT AND MISS HORSLEY (ART) ON THE RIGHT]

Molly also has a photograph of dressmaking students, 1944-1946. It shows

Back row: Molly Sturgeon, Miss Bennett the tutor, Mr Wilson the Principal, Molly Unwin

Centre row: Mary Farrington, Doreen Driver, Joy Cundell

front: Bridget Rider

[PHOTO OF DRESSMAKERS 1944-46]

Michael Taylor from Cottenham has lent me a photo of the Technical College staff v pupils cricket teams taken in the Summer of 1948 [PHOTO OF CRICKETERS]

They are: umpire Sharp, then Mansfield, Russell Brown, Mr Charles Leeson, Mr Newman, Douglas Oliver, Lionel Marsh, Mr Islip, Reggie Hill, Mr Cyril Cornell, Dennis Savill, Peter Cotterell and Michael Taylor.

He sadly cannot remember the name of the attractive scorer, though thinks her first name was Betty.

At that time the college principal was Mr Mumford, the headmaster was Mr Hoffman and Nicholas Johnson was head of the building school. After two years at the Tech five apprenticeship years followed culminating with two years National Service which in

Michael's case took him to the Canal Zone and Cyprus. That was, he says, a typical life of the youths of those days.

Tony Kirby's Celebratory History of Anglia Ruskin University is available from the University or through bookshops at £6.99. (ISBN 978-0-907262-71-8) [SCAN OF COVER]

Memories, 3rd February 2009, by Mike Petty

Newspapers are an important resource in the local historian's armoury. My email inbox recently included a message that read 'Did Hilton Hang?' It came from Neil Storey of North Walsham and relates to an incident out in the fens at Parson Drove in 1861.

There farmer Augustus Hilton and his wife had been to the corn market at Wisbech after which they had got into a squabble when he claimed she'd kept back some of the money. It resulted in him cutting her throat, then going to her father's house where he was found by the police sitting by the fire smoking and drinking brandy and water. He'd admitted the offence, been tried, convicted and sentenced to death.

But Neil could find no actual account of the hanging in The Times newspaper and, finding problems getting to the Cambridgeshire Collection at Milton Road library, was getting desperate as the deadline approached for him to submit the manuscript of his new book.

However just as the modern Cambridge News can be read electronically, so other databases are available to researchers. One of these carries a number of articles which describe the unfortunate man's end on the gallows at the County Gaol on Castle Hill. Crowds of people – male and female – came into town from Chesterton and other villages to witness the event. In the words of one reporter the condemned man "partook of some slight refreshment furnished by Mr Gibson, the governor. When he reached the summit of the scaffold, he had one hurried glance at the thousands assembled round the hill, and then hung down his head as if deeply affected". The cap was placed over his face by the hangman and as the clergyman prayed the bolt was withdrawn and the hapless man ceased to exist in a very brief period.

The paper also furnished the news that the previous execution had been on 13th April 1850 when Elias Lucas and Mary Reader had been hanged for murder. That double execution had been witnessed by between 30 and 40,000 people, "many of whom conducted themselves, as such crowds generally did ten years ago, in the most disorderly manner".

Anyone interested in such activities should read Glenda Goulden's book 'Foul deeds and suspicious deaths in the Fens' (Wharncliffe Books, £12.99 - ISBN 1-8456370-27-6)

One person who spent a lifetime recording Cambridgeshire's past and its traditions was Enid Porter, curator of the Folk Museum for 30 years, who died in January 1984. Amongst her publications was a monumental survey of 'Cambridgeshire Traditions and Folklore'. But now it appears that a supplement may be necessary – if a recent newspaper report can be relied upon.

For 'Evil spirits were driven away when villagers in Stretham held their traditional annual wassail', it read, adding that crowds had gathered at Orchard House, in High Street, with bottles of cider which they poured on the roots of apple trees in a centuries-old tradition accompanied by lots of noise and singing. It was part of a celebration by the locally-based 'Pickled Pig Cider' company to celebrate some recent awards.

Wassailing apple trees is a tradition that is carried on in Somerset. There it involves the blowing of horns as cider is poured on the roots and a wassail cake placed in the branches as an offering to the tree spirits. Then the beating of kettles and firing of guns loaded with powder are used to drive away the witches and ghosts believed to reside in the crown of the apple tree. This is followed by a wassailing song sung to the tree

Wassail, wassail all round the town;
The zider-cup's white and the zider's brown;
Our zider is made vrom good apple trees,
And now my vine vellows we'll drink if you please.

I must admit I never knew that my fellow villagers have also performed such ceremonies for generations. But then I've only been researching Stretham history for the last 60 years. I've consulted village elders and also quizzed the assembled brains who gather at Burwell Day Centre but nobody can recall such happenings occurring in this area..

So has this 'tradition' been going on in Cambridgeshire for generations without anybody noticing? Or is the Pickled Pig telling Porkie Pies?

SCANS

ELIAS LUCAS AND MARY READER HANGING AT THE COUNTY GAOL, CASTLE HILL – SITE OF THE PRESENT SHIRE HALL

THE GALLOWS AT THE COUNTY GAOL WERE SOLD OFF IN SEPTEMBER 1930

STRETHAM FRUIT PICKERS IN 1920S

ORCHARD HOUSE, STRETHAM IN THE 1970S WITH THE LATE ERNEST EDGLEY, FORMER GARDENER – VILLAGERS ARE PUZZLED AT NEWS OF A 'TRADITION'

AN ILLUSTRATION OF WASSAILING IN THE 1860S

THE CUTTING FROM THE NEWS, 19TH JANUARY 2009 REPORTING THE WASSAIL

Memories 9th February 2009, by Mike Petty

Queen Anne Terrace was an imposing building on Gonville Place, Cambridge, that was demolished for the building of the present car park which opened in 1970. Since then it has largely been forgotten

But now News readers have recalled something of the various activities that were carried on there. They include a wartime secret, now revealed by Margaret Mason of Cambridge for the first time since she signed the Official Secrets Act.

She writes:

"From 1939 to 1949 Queen Anne Terrace housed the Eastern Regional Headquarters of the Ministry of Health, headed by some very senior civil servants transferred from Whitehall. They dealt with matters of general health services, welfare, social services, building and planning matters, and war emergencies, throughout East Anglia.

“I was among the first women conscripted either to the Forces, Industry or the Civil Services in 1942, and drafted to Cambridge in the Civil Service where I anticipated working somewhere similar to Whitehall.

“It was a surprise to arrive at Queen Anne Terrace. The houses were obviously past their best, creaky, draughty, with inadequate heating and lighting. Conditions were cramped, even the attics were used. There were no connecting doors between the houses and in bad weather we used umbrellas to get from house to house

“I was allocated to the Typing Pool in house no 12, which was said to be haunted by the ghost of a man who died in the prison previously on the site. There were about ten of us in the front room on the first floor. We took letters and reports in shorthand, using pencils and notebooks, and typed on heavy upright old typewriters. We had to learn the jargon of the professions represented in the offices. Usually we worked ordinary office hours, but extended hours in an emergency - as we were so frequently reminded "there's a war on".

“The Regional Office was expected to take over in East Anglia if Whitehall was bombed. If Cambridge also became untenable, a small group had to be ready to move further out into the country and we had to keep an emergency suitcase packed. Fortunately, it was never used. In 1949 the whole establishment moved to Brooklands Avenue.”

Monty Goding knew Queen Anne Terrace in the 1960s; He emails:

“In 1961 I had just graduated from the University of Leeds and my first job was with the National Industrial Fuel Efficiency Service at Queen Anne Terrace. The Manager then was Mr E.Tickner, who lived in Great Shelford as did his deputy, Ted Vousden better known for forming the Riverside Jazz Band, which he ran for four decades.”

NIFES had been formed in 1954 from the Ministry of Fuel and Power to assist industry to increase fuel efficiency and overcome the problems associated with the lack of coal in the early 1950's. Funded by the National Coal Board, Gas Council, the Electricity authority and two major oil companies, it started its own scheme for the training of boiler operators and moved to no.8 Queen Anne Terrace in February 1957.

The senior staff had come from the Ministry and amongst other things had been responsible for the drafting of the Clean Air Act 1956. They were assisted by a number of scientists with specialist knowledge in combustion and for implementation there were a number of former Navy Artificers employed as stoker demonstrators.

Mike Brown phoned from Cherry Hinton to say that his dad was one of the engineers who travelled around the region in an old Bedford van checking the efficiency of boilers in breweries and other such works. Mike would often go with him for the ride.

NIFES developed into a Consulting Engineering Practice specialising in the design of large steam producing plant, oil-fired conversion, incineration etc. The Company still exists, but not in Cambridge.

Coal fired boilers generated steam for engines that drained the fens, shifted sewage at Cheddars Lane, pumped water at Fleam Dyke and heated buildings such as Ely Cathedral. Do you have memories of working with them?

Pictures

Engineers restoring boilers at Stretham Old Engine 1977
Energy efficient? : heating Ely cathedral 1964

Queen Anne Terrace 1963

Government offices in Brooklands Avenue, May 1966 where Margaret Mason moved in 1949

Memories, 16th February 2009, by Mike Petty

January 29th 1934 started as just an ordinary day for Percy Titmous. By the time it was over he was world famous, In the words of the New York Herald Tribune he had become a "motorized knight", a Launcelot who'd rescued his Queen from dire distress.

Queen Mary was a regular visitor to Cambridge: her honeymoon train had paused here briefly when en route to Sandringham in 1893. In 1918 she visited Papworth Hospital and the Cambridge military hospital in Burrell's Walk with King George V. Three years later they returned to inspect the National Institute of Agricultural Botany where crowds glimpsed a tall Imperial lady inside the smoothly running Royal car,

It was the car that betrayed what was to have been a secret visit in 1932 to the Fitzwilliam Museum when it was held up at the Northampton Street traffic lights. The Royal car had again been spotted in January 1934 parked outside the Cambridge Tapestry Works in Thompson's Lane and then in St Andrew's Street whilst her Majesty chose numerous tiny ivory objects for her famous Dolls House from Woolston's antiques shop.

Three weeks later she was due to return. The police were alerted that the Royal car had left and were keeping the route clear so that the Daimler should have an unimpeded run. In fact it was nothing of the sort. Three times the limousine broke down through overheating, once just outside Ely where it was noticed by Harold Sedgwick of Egremont Street, Ely. He had thought of stopping but as two chauffeurs were at work on the engine he left them to it. The car was restarted but finally came to rest outside the Slap Up public house at Waterbeach.

It was here that Percy found them. His wife suggested he stop to see if they needed assistance so Percy paused some way off and waited for a sign. Soon the Lady in Waiting approached to explain the predicament and ask whether the Queen might hitch a lift to Cambridge in their little car.

The constables charged with keeping the road free from traffic tried several times to intercept the Titmous vehicle, only to jump aside when they recognised the passenger. Even Cambridge crowds normally used to anything were stunned they saw the Queen emerge from the car wearing a coat and hat of brilliant purple and carrying an umbrella of the same colour. She appeared intensely amused at the reaction to her somewhat unexpected arrival

As Queen Mary visited Collins and Clark's antique shop on Regent Street her attendants were busy. They telephoned Walter Riddy, proprietor of a garage in St Andrew's Road, Chesterton, requesting the hire of a Daimler saloon. As soon as he realised for whom it was required Walter changed out of his working clothes and drove into town to convey her Majesty on to her next port of call, the K.P. Café on King's Parade and then on to Exning. On arrival there the Queen personally thanked him for his services and invited him to remain for lunch. Sadly he had another urgent engagement and could not accept.

Meanwhile Percy Titmous had tried to slip away unobserved. But somebody had taken his car number and a call to the Council offices soon elicited his name. Soon pressmen, news agencies and even film companies were hot on his trail.

The American newspapers were full of the story: “Queen Mary Thumbs Ride as Auto Quits” ran one headline which went on to describe how “townspeople stared in amazement from the sidewalks”.

The Queen herself seemed unperturbed by the incident; her visits to Antiques shops continued unabated, as did her motoring adventures. In May 1939 her car was involved in an accident and in August 1948 the Royal limo again broke down again at Lt Thetford Corner. History was not allowed to repeat itself however and this time she continued her journey in a police car.

Then in early March 1984 another Royal in a motor car hit the headlines. Shoppers on King’s Parade were surprised to see Prince Edward sitting at the wheel of a London taxi whilst a couple in evening dressed danced on its roof. It was his off-beat way of publicising a charity show he was producing for the University Light Entertainment Society in Cambridge Rag Week. But the elaborate stunt almost flopped when he failed to find the old London taxi he needed. Finally he turned to the *News* for help and they arranged for Londoner Maurice Hamilton to make a special trip to Cambridge with his cab. Edward fixed a temporary dance floor to the roof and tied bunches of balloons to the bonnet as it stood stationery in King’s Parade.

Another tale, not previously told, relates to an incident whilst the Prince was producing one of his ‘Crown and Country’ television programmes. I had been invited to say something about the history of the fens and suggest locations where sequences might be filmed. One part of the story was of how William the Conqueror had fought his way on to the Island of Ely, overcoming the resistance of Hereward the Wake. What better location could there be than the Aldreth Causeway, the ancient trackway through the fens. So there the film crew travelled in the production van and the sequence was recorded. It was obvious however that Prince Edward could not really appreciate just what the problems could have been – the area was quite passable. Until it rained. Having spent some time in the back of the van he had to leave – he had a meeting with King Charles I at Earith. Only by then the track had turned to a quagmire and the vehicle got very stuck. Eventually it took a traveller with a four-by-four to tow the van to hard ground – and receive a souvenir of the occasion in the form of a portrait of the Queen as engraved on a £20 note!

SUBS - BOTTOM PARA CAN BE CUT IF NECESSARY

SCANS

KING’S PARADE IN 1930’S

REGENT STREET IN 1930S

QUEEN MARY IN CAMBRIDGE

QUEEN MARY IN CAR IN CAMBRIDGE – NOT NECESSARILY THE ONE THAT BROKE DOWN

PRINCE EDWARD AND THE TAXI FOUND BY THE NEWS, MAR 1984

Memories 23rd February 2009 by Mike Petty

Elliot Farnon has emailed from Australia to seek help. He is trying to locate Haig Road in Cambridge. Elliot remembers it from when in 1961 attended he attended a course run by the Pye Training School and thinks it was near their head office. But he’s searched Cambridgeshire maps on the internet and can’t track it down.

It’s still there, but under a different name.

Haig Road was listed for the first time in the 1924-5 edition of Spalding's Cambridge Street Directory at a time of massive housing development which also saw Hawthorn Way, Harvey Goodwin Avenue and Coleridge Road added to the maps.

It ran from Chesterton Road to link up with Cam Road, part of the De Freville Estate, and provide residents of Montagu and Humberstone Roads with a new access to the north. At the other end of Cam Road was Lovers Walk, part of which was widened and renamed St Andrew's Road in 1904

Haig Road was busy when the Pye Radio employees flocked out of work, a scene captured in one of the albums compiled by the company in 1932. At that time they were making 4,000 sets a week but demand was greater than supply and they were planning to increase the size of the works by 50 percent. They held an open day when they invited people to inspect their works and queues five or six deep stretched halfway up the road. It was amazing, said the News, that a non-industrial town should have such fine works and few realised that we in Cambridge had such an important and highly organised industry in our midst. In these times of depression it is a novelty to find a works which is really flourishing, it commented

Rodney Dale recalls it as a quiet area on which he could practice on his friend, Micky Mansfield's, home-made trolley. Once they put a sail on it and went for an exciting speed trial down Haig Road – he still has the scars as a reminder, he records in 'Halcyon Days', his recollections of post-war vintage motoring in Cambridge

The peace of Haig Road was never destined to last. There had been plans in the 1930s for a new route from Milton Road to run down Haig Road, Cam Road and across the river to Walnut Tree Avenue and Newmarket Road. It finally arrived in 1971 when the name disappeared from the maps to be replaced by Elizabeth Way.

At first the new route eased traffic problems but by 1977 it had become a noisy and polluted choked artery. Residents lamented how Cam Road had once been a tree-lined quiet residential street with front gardens. Now they lived in back rooms and looked forward to the relief that would come with the opening of the Northern Bypass

Photographs in the Cambridgeshire Collection show Haig Road in the early days when residents included Samuel Haddow, Alan Mills and Herbert Burley – but there must have been many more. Were your family amongst them, if so what do you recall of the road

##

More letters have flowed in following recent Memories articles about the earlier days of Anglia Ruskin University.

Then Dawn Wilkin wrote from Jersey seeking help with locating students who attended a two year Business Training Course at Cambridge Tech from September 1947 to July 1949. She had been tracking her classmates down and was planning a reunion. After years of search there were just four she had been unable to locate despite placing advertisements in magazines and newspapers and appealing on the radio. However thanks to the Memories article that number is down to just two. For a letter from Derek Chapman of Oakington tells me that Michael Dear later had a stall on Cambridge market and died in 1975. Derek also knew Michael Hodge but he had since lost touch. However another News reader knew that he now lives in Hellesdon, Norwich and forwarded the cutting. Now Mike has written in, and Dawn can send out another invitation to her reunion party. It just leaves two to find: Dorothy Matthews who was then living in Barton Mills whilst her father was working for the Ministry of Defence and Arthur Stockdale then of Mildenhall.

Meanwhile Liz Tubman from Wells in Somerset has a photograph of Engineering students at that same period while Richard Peacock from Newton was taught engineering by Mr Purvis – a very clever man – between 1938 and 1940

Sheena Dale emailed to say she recognised her father, Garry Dale, who now lives in Ashdon, while Joan Fischer made contact all the way from Fayetteville, North Carolina. She finished a business course in July 1947 and still has happy memories of her teenage years in Cambridge. If you remember her then email FISCAD2@cs.com or drop me a line.

Other Tech memories have come from Betty Parker from Thriplow who spotted her late husband Cliff amongst faces from 1944; it was very poignant for he had died that very morning.

Viv Blunt of Cottenham identifies the Building Science Room where he was a student from 1942-45. He also has other information that I am passing on together with the other correspondence to Tony Kirby, whose history of Anglia Ruskin University sparked this outburst of interest in what is obviously a much-loved institution.

SCANS of

Haig Road shortly after it was constructed

Cam Road with its tree-lined pavements

Pye Radio employees flocking out of the works in 1932

Memories 2nd March 2009 by Mike Petty

West Dereham is not exactly on the main road to anywhere.

Approaching along the A10 from the south I turned into Southery where the ruins of an old church recall an era when the parish was ‘most reprobate, abandoned and a stronghold of Satan’ while its Victorian replacement contains a stained glass window erected by Robert Sayle of Cambridge in memory of his father. It is a story told in a recent church history by local farmer’s wife, Judith Legge.

Then it was out along Poppylot, the bouncy road towards Feltwell, before turning off left where, at night, the bulk of the Wissington Sugar Beet Factory looms in the darkness wreathed in steam which drifts across the river making the whole scene somewhat spooky. Still the rural road continues until suddenly there’s a turning on the left that leads along a narrow, winding, mud-lined road to a T-junction with little sign of any habitation nor indication of which way to turn. Down there on the right, behind a high wire fence, lies a village hall which will win no prizes for beauty and whose stage has now been removed leaving yet more open space to be heated by the overhead electric fires.

Here the other evening a dozen people turned out to investigate websites on which they could pursue their studies into their community’s history, if only they could get a broadband connection. Amongst them was Christopher Shaw who has just published a study of the area around Hilgay, Little Ouse and Southery including an account of the devastation caused by the floods of 1947 despite the struggle of troops to control the rising waters.

Other members of West Dereham's Heritage Group have written histories of their round-towered church and their long-departed abbey whose site was supposed to be haunted by the ghost of a monk with a face like a pig. Last year two of their numbers, Pam Bullas and Cyril Marsters turned their attention to their abandoned railway, the Downham and Stoke Ferry line.

It was set up by Act of Parliament in 1879 and the arrival of 150 navvies provided a welcome income for local hostels. The line opened on 1st August 1882 when a two-coach train on its inaugural run from Stoke Ferry to Downham Market stopped to pick up passengers at West Dereham's 'Abbey' station where Pam's father was later to be station master. The passenger traffic was never extensive but the goods business thrived with the construction of a Light Railway to Wissington where a beet factory was constructed in 1925. The last wagons ran at the end of 1981 and the railway past into history.

Cyril Marsters also has memories of life at a small village station for his recollections of being a boy on a branch line at Wilburton were published some years ago. Now he has turned to another form of locomotion, horse power. For in 1944 Cyril got a job at Chivers of Histon. Unlike thousands of others he did not work making jam: he worked on their farms as a horse boy. Cyril has a wonderful memory for detail. He started with Sid Parker, the head horse-keeper at Park Farm, from whom he learned to handle, harness and lead a trace horse as it pulled the plough.

But horses did more than that: there was muck cart, water cart and hay cart together with a mass of other jobs in the various areas of Chivers' farming enterprise – the blackberries, blackcurrants, apples and plums, not to mention their poultry farm on Arbury Road. Cyril recalls the pruning and all the other farming activities while he was employed there between 1944 and 1948. He pays testimony to the skills of the men and boys with whom he worked, some grumpy, some friendly. If your father was one of them then 'In harness at Histon: working on Chivers farms in the 1940s' is essential reading at £8.50 including postage.

Like all the booklets it needs to be tracked down – email clr@marstersvoice.co.uk for details or check the West Dereham website www.westderehamheritage.co.uk. Chris Shaw's 'Fordham, Hilgay & Ten Mile Bank, Little Ouse, Ryston & Roxham and Southery: a brief history' costs £5 plus postage – c.j.shaw@btinternet.com & Judith Legge's 'Little history of Southery and its churches' is available from bill@leggefarms.co.uk

If you're not into emails then drop me a line and I'll put you in touch. And if you have tales to tell, then please share them.

SCANS

covers of the books

Troops gathering near Southery in March 1947 preparing to fight the fen floods

Little Ouse chapel under water in floods of 1915

ploughing with horses in 1940s (NB TO SUBS – THIS IS NOT CHIVERS)

Memories 9th March 2009, by Mike Petty

My mention of the day that Queen Mary got a lift into Cambridge with a brewer's assistant has brought me a fascinating letter from Vera Hedge of Cottenham.

She writes

“Having read in the Cambridge News ‘Royal motor adventure turns Percy into a star’ prompts me to write about my late husband. He was a young airman in the Second World War and during part of his time was stationed on Witchford airfield. One day, due for leave and hoping to get a lift home, he was walking along the Ely Road when a black car passed him but stopped a short distance ahead.

“He was beckoned to the vehicle and as he approached he realised it was the Royal car and the passenger in the back seat was Queen Mary. He was invited to have a seat in the front and had a ride into Cambridge where he alighted at the bottom of Castle Hill in order to continue his journey home to Toseland, St Neots. My husband saluted Her Majesty, who nodded and smiled and said ‘Thank you’. What a day for him! The car then turned into Magdalene Street, no doubt Queen Mary was going to visit the antique shops, as she often did.”

The story doesn’t end here, Vera continues:

“Many years after the war a young fellow (a distant relative of my husband) was helping with work that needed doing in a house in the St Neots area. The workmen were removing the floor covering and years ago newspaper was often placed on floors before linoleum was laid. What did they discover? Nothing other than the old newspaper with the account of my husband’s surprise ride in the Royal Car! The young workman was unaware of this story until he went home and his father told him all about it”

Vera still has the newspaper together with a cutting of the article which she keeps in one of her family albums alongside a picture of Sam, the airman who was given a lift by his queen. Perhaps Queen Mary felt she should repay the favour shown to her by Percy Titmous all those years before.

Do you have memories of riding with Royals – email Mike Petty

Mr G.S. Badcock from Swaffham Bulbeck has also written to me following a photograph of a group celebrating plough Monday in Swaffham Prior in 1929

He writes: “In 1935 when I was ten years old I went with a dozen other boys to get Mr C. Ambrose’s horse plough from his farm yard and pull it through the village to his farm house where we stood beside the plough and started to sing. He came to the door with his long whip and walked up both sides of the plough cracking the whip as he went. We thought he was going to hit us. Then he put some money in our box. I went out on Plough Monday to pull the horse plough through Swaffham Prior for a few more years when we would black our faces by burning a cork”

When he started on Mr Ambrose’s farm in 1939 they only had one tractor and most of the work was done by 25 working horses. The fen in Swaffham Prior had no hard road then so all the corn sheaves were carted out by horse to the village to be thrashed out in winter. Mr Badcock worked on that farm for 50 years and has lent me a snap of himself and a group of other workers that was taken about 1947

More memories of working with horses can be found in a little booklet of reminiscences by Charles Wood who lived in Swavesey until 1933. He was the schoolmaster’s son and visited many of the elderly residents to record their recollections. They include Joseph Ellis the doctor, Harry Wells the coal merchant, Walter Thorp the carpenter who made his own coffin and stored it in his cottage till it was needed and Charles Culpin, the blacksmith.

Culpin’s forge was a wonderful place for children. Charles Wood recalls the anvils, the bellows, bags of horse shoes and the dust: “As you walked from the hard earth floor of the stall into the forge itself, so you walked into an ever-increasing depth of dust, which reached

four inches and more around the anvils. This dust was light and floury, pale grey in colour and rose in puffs around your feet at every step. It looked of medieval vintage and it intruded into trouser turnups and infiltrated into lace hole on boots and shoes. ... The roof space overhead was filled with long lengths of all sorts of iron and steel. From every rafter hung huge festoons of dusty cobwebs from whose shelter hairy spiders of large size and ancient lineage maintained a malignant and disapproving watch on the activities going on below”

Now John Shepperson has published Wood’s essays for the first time, adding extra biographical notes on the characters who were once part of Swavesey’s community.

“Remembered” by F.C. Wood is available from John Shepperson at 148 Boxworth End Swavesey, CB24 4RA. - price £2.50 including postage.

PHOTOS

Sam Hedge, who was given a lift by Queen Mary

Original cutting from September 1945

Swaffham Prior in the 1930s

Swavesey school where Charles Wood’s dad was headmaster

A blacksmith – but who and where?

Memories 16th March 2009, by Mike Petty

This week’s postbag has brought wonderful letters following my Memories article of March 2nd.

Harry Bye of Ely writes to me after reading Cyril Marster’s recollections of working with horses at Chivers’ farms, Histon. Harry lived with his father in a nine room farmhouse on Chivers Station Farm, part of their Shippea Hill estate, from 1926-1942. He worked for them for 12 years, mainly with horses, pigs and cattle, before leaving the land for a job at Shippea Hill station.

Harry remembers the horse-drawn railways which ran from the Prickwillow farms to Shippea Hill station and from Redmere Plantation Farm and the Decoy to their own railway sidings at Duck Drove. They had their own steam locomotive until 1934 when it was cut up for scrap and replaced by Tilling Stevens petrol electric loco, built by Chivers engineers.

It hauled out trucks of fruit, cauliflowers and celery while wagon loads of seed potatoes, manure, cattle and coal for the farm houses were brought in. Lots of chicory was grown as Chivers had their own factory. They also grew peppermint and had their own distillery.

Chivers had their own village shop, chapel, school, tennis court and football and cricket teams. They also had their own electricity system. Alf Wilderspin was in the charge of the engine that provided the power for the lights, bakery, chicory factory, sawmill, the engineers and blacksmith’s shop. Two men started the engine at seven in the morning and it ran till five that afternoon when a back-up engine would provide lighting. They also had a private telephone so you could ring the office, shop or any of the farms.

Harry recalls that the estate was a picture in spring when the fruit trees were in blossom but with cheap fruit coming in from abroad they were pulled up with a steam ploughing engine and the farm workers had an abundance of firewood.

But it was not always easy in the fen. His late wife's uncle and aunt who lived in the Little Ouse area got so fed up with being flooded that they moved out and found employment in the steel works at Corby – somewhat different from the peaceful flatness of the fens.

Gwen Lister from Girton also spotted something of interest in that issue of Memories. She writes: "I was surprised to see a photograph of my husband amongst the people helping in the Southery floods. He was the middle one in a greatcoat. We were at his mother's house in Southery and he was helping his uncle who had a farm in the fen to get his potatoes out of the heaps and bagged before the water broke the culvert and blew a hole in the Southery road. I remember walking along the road when the sandbags were six feet high and it was very eerie hearing the water lapping the other side. It was an awful moment where the water took the side out of the house and the furniture went across the fen towards Feltwell. His other uncle on the other side of Feltwell Road had to leave his house and move into the village. His house had been flooded in the first fen flood when water had got as high as the bedroom windows.

Maureen Addicott from Cambridge recalls the opposition to the building of Elizabeth Way. Her family lived on the corner of Cam Road and St Andrew's Road, then a beautiful, tree-lined quiet area. She writes: "We had a large, corner house with gardens all the way round it and walked to Brunswick school down 'The Lane' and across Pye's Bridge. It was very safe and traffic free and in the summer Midsummer Common was our playground. The best thing for us as small children was a sweet shop opposite our house owned by a Mr Nunn. It sold all the old favourites you could think of and we loved spending our pocket money there. We knew most of the families along the road but of course lost touch when everyone moved out."

Maureen has some old photographs of the area that she got from the Cambridgeshire Collection as a reminder of those days before their house was compulsorily purchased. Its site is now a garage forecourt.

But can anybody remember a large house that used to stand behind Mill Road bridge, close to the former Mill Road library. S. Bristow remembers it as a child and was quite upset when it was demolished. Do you know its history, who lived there or have any photographs?

Or do you have memories of the chalk pits at Cherry Hinton. They are an important aspect of local life; in fact it was the cherry trees in Lime Kiln Close that gave the village its name. Over the years, the pits have been host to school groups and walkers and had their own nature trail. They've also been the scene of less peaceful pursuits. During the war the Home Guard utilised them for training in the art of mountain climbing – essential in the fens - and in September 1947 5,000 spectators thronged there to watch Cambridge Centaur Motor Cycle Club's second scramble of the season. For five exciting hours, the competitors urged their snorting, bucking, skidding mounts over a gruelling course which comprised nearly a mile of the toughest ground in the county.

Today the Wildlife Trust and Cherry Hinton Community Archives Group are staging an exhibition at Cherry Hinton Village Centre on Colville Road, 10am -3pm. If you miss it you can call Laura Watson on 01954 713500 or see the website www.wildlifebcnp.org. Their new East Pit nature reserve will be opened on 20th June, so add the date to your diary

Pictures

Harry Bye at Shippea Hill Station

House surrounded by water at Southery, March 1947. Within hours it had been washed away

The sandbag wall along the A10 near Southery remembered by Gwen Lister

Garage in Cam Road cming of Elizabeth Way

Home Guard training in Cherry Hinton chalk pits

Memories 23rd March 2009, by Mike Petty

People have been bemoaning the loss of 'Old Cambridge' for centuries. But few have done anything to record just what has disappeared. One of those who did was William Beales Redfern, a most interesting character in late Victorian Cambridge.

Redfern's name was connected with various businesses; he was a politician, Mayor four times, leader of the Conservative party, chairman of this, leader of that. He was also passionate about plays and became Director of the New Theatre when it opened in 1895. It was a post he held at his death in 1923

He was also an Antiquarian, lecturing on many topics and amassing his private museum of medieval gloves, shoes and spurs. It included the actual shirt King Charles I had worn on the day of his execution. Sometimes items from his collection were used as props on the stage.

He is best remembered today as an Illustrator. Born in New Square, Cambridge in 1840 Redfern became a pupil of William Herring the artist, who lived in Fulbourn. Later he journeyed to Scotland where he painted Highland Cattle. But it was in 1875 that he started to record the ancient and interesting buildings of his home town before they were lost for ever in the demolition that was then the rage.

The engravings were issued in monthly parts but then brought together into a volume entitled "Old Cambridge" which was published in 1876.

Over 30 years later, in March 1909 some of his pictures were exhibited at a crowded meeting of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. The CDN reporter gave a brief resume of his talk which has resolved a mystery. For amongst those he featured were two pictures of a house reputed to be the residence of Oliver Cromwell when his troops occupied the castle during the Civil War. But where that was had since been forgotten.

However the News report reveals that Redfern told the Antiquarians it stood in Shelley Row, Castle Hill. It had been built, he speculated, about 1556 and retained some of the ancient timbers. Some of the rooms were panelled and two contained some rather handsome fireplaces which he had removed to his own home, Inveruglas House, Parkside.

Nearby stood The Three Tuns, also known as Whyman's Inn, doubtless frequented by Cromwell's troops, but more famous for being the last house at which Elizabeth Woodcock called in February 1799 before starting the fateful journey back to Impington which would see her buried in the snow for eight days. It was demolished in 1936.

In Petty Cury Redfern singled out old houses which he felt should never have been pulled down. They dated back to the 16th century and were the most striking and perfect in Cambridge. But they had been demolished for new shops. Nearby was the Falcon Inn, parts of which had only recently been removed in 1909. The site is now occupied by Lion Yard.

Redfern also turned his attention to Christ's Lane when a jumble of picturesque gables gave it an exceedingly quaint appearance. His artistic accuracy can be judged when compared to an old photograph of the same area recently lent me by Barbara Blows of Cambridge. Now, as Redfern anticipated, time has swept them away and even their replacements have passed into history.

Redfern's views can still be found in the Cambridgeshire Collection, Folk Museum and antiquarian bookshops. They retain their fascination of a reminder of what was lost through redevelopment in the Victorian era.

Do you have old pictures of parts of Cambridge that do not normally get photographed – contact Mike at the News or email mikepetty@tiscali.co.uk.

Memories 30th March 2009, by Mike Petty

During my visit to the 'Forget-Me-Not Club' at Royston last week, the conversation got around to washing. One lady had worked in the town's laundry during the Second World War and recalled the sheets arriving regularly from Cambridge colleges for cleaning, pressing and returning. It was hard, hot work whilst some jobs were worse than others, apparently starching collars of men's shirts was one of these.

Then while compiling my 'Looking Back' articles I spotted the report of how the Mistress of Girton College had opened a new dry-cleaning department of the Wellbrook Laundry in March 1934 and been shown round the various processes which included the sorting of customers' work by tape recording and sheets automatically folded by machine. The laundry had been originally opened in 1896 for the benefit of Girton College in the days when they sent the clothes by horse

This sent me searching for other snippets amongst my files.

In 1897 a laundress from Gloucester Street, Cambridge, was fined for keeping a woman at work for more than 14 hours. Annie Sindell told the court she had started at 9.30 am on Friday and worked until ten past six the next morning. The day was supposed to be of 12 hours, less meal times, and for that she got 1s.3d. She had never agreed to work all night but the laundress would have the work done. The overtime pay was a penny an hour and she earned 7s.6d. (32p) for the whole week.

Laundresses could earn good money if one Newmarket man was to be believed. In September 1907 during a cinematograph entertainment given by the Gaumont Company at Newmarket a piece of hot lime had ignited one of the films. In trying to extinguish the flames he'd knocked over the lantern, the cylinder of gas ignited and there was a rush for the door. One lady was so terribly injured that she died in hospital. Now her husband demanded damages: she had earned 10s a week at the laundry he told the court.

But it was a complicated process: in April 1926 an inquiry was set up into the working of the Cambridge Workhouse laundry. They were doing wrong with the washer, boiling the dirt into the clothes instead of rinsing it out. Soap was not put in properly, the waste steam was wrongly used, they had wooden rollers in the mangle and people swore about their buttons coming off, the committee reported.

By 1932 Cambridge had various laundry companies. The Stokesay Laundry of Histon Road was a happy hive of industry where women and girls worked under ideal conditions in a healthy atmosphere.

They had installed a wonderful ironing machine which was the last word in efficiency, the paper reported. Nearby an 'automatic laundry' opened in Hartington Grove Cambridge. Dignitaries inspected the Forum Cleaning and Dyeing Company machines where several garments were cleaned and dried before their eyes in less than ten minutes. After cleaning clothes went on to a dusting wheel where they were tumbled and dried in a current of cold air before passing the eagle eye of a 'spotter' to the pressing room so that obstinate stains could be removed

By August 1948 Cambridge had five laundries which handled college washing. During term time they handled something like 150,000 pieces every week. Stiff shirts and white waistcoats were a feature of the college wash - especially during May Week. Before commercial laundries came into being the students' washing was usually done at home by the bedmakers. Each would undertake to wash for 20 to 30 men, and collect the bundles in a handcart. Village carriers too used to come in to collect washing which was undertaken by cottage women in nearby country areas, the News recalled

There was rivalry about who could wash best. In November 1948 laundry girls from Haverhill and Ely travelled into Cambridge for a competition aimed at increasing the status of both the laundry girl and the laundry. The winner was Miss Vera Morley, a 22-year old girl with six years experience with Coldham Model Laundry, Coldham's Lane. She was crowned "Queen Lorna" and received a cheque for £5

Laundries hit the news for other reasons. In February 1952 the "Homewash Laundry" in Abbey Street, Cambridge, was almost completely destroyed by a disastrous fire whilst in 1953 the Swiss, Scotsdale and the Cherry Hinton Steam Laundries were busy washing and ironing articles sent from flooded laundries at Lowestoft following the north sea surge which caused such devastation.

But trade declined. In Easter 1974 Cambridge Co-operative Laundry in Cambridge in Histon Road closed. At their peak 100 people worked there compared to the 60 at the time of their closure. "The problem was getting staff. It was terrible," said the Chief executive.

Were you one, and what do you recall of the conditions and friendships you made whilst ironing other people's dirty linen?

The *News*' photo files has a picture of Newmarket Laundry in the mid 1960s showing women working on what was then the latest machinery. But who were they, and what were they doing?

Write to Mike Petty at the News.

Photos:

Interior of a Laundry at Newmarket, mid 1960s

The Leys Laundry 1935

Memories 6th April 2009, by Mike Petty

Hayley Fabb has kindly responded to my appeal for unusual pictures of Cambridge by emailing me a couple that have been saved by her dad. Coronation celebrations are obvious times for people to bring out the camera but I had never seen the remarkable picture taken inside Cambridge Corn Exchange for the celebratory tea for the Coronation of King George VI in May 1937. It shows hundred of excited faces – were you one. [PHOTO SENT BY MR FABB]

Other pictures show that Cambridge streets were decorated with bunting, Oakington held a tug-of war as part of a programme of sports, there was a Coronation queen at Sawston and Burwell decorated their shops. Huntingdon Town Hall was transformed, not just by decorations but by the removal of the stucco which had covered the red brickwork; when the flags and bunting had been put away it would remain a reminder of the Coronation. [CASTLE HILL DECORATIONS, CAMBRIDGE]

The Coronation procession in London became the first BBC television outside broadcast with pictures transmitted to a tent in Sedley Taylor Road, Cambridge. There was even a new coin to coincide with a new King. It was the eight-sided threepenny bit. Do you still have one? [TV OUTSIDE BROADCAST TENT]

Last week's memories of laundries has brought an interesting email from Roger Cork of Stretham. He writes:

"Several of these laundries were in the Cherryhinton Road area, and I remember them well. The Forums in Hartington Grove was near to our house which I passed on my way to the Morley School from 1943 - 1950. During this period lots of American Army Air force vehicles called with rails of uniforms for cleaning and us boys were fascinated to see all their Medal Ribbons and Stripes that were attached to them. Needless to say that we all started to collect Buttons and Badges, and scrounged Wrigley Chewing Gum from the very generous Americans, with 'Got Any Gum Chum' that usually did the trick.

"There was a great interest in bomb fragments and bullet cases etc and I well remember exchanging an 8th Air Force badge for a half burnt out incendiary bomb that came from the Eastern Counties Bus Garage on Hills Road that was fire bombed. The Forums, at this time seemed to employ many girl workers that walked passed my gate, and gave me lots of bits and pieces that they picked up. One gave me a pennant, that I now suspect was nicked off a staff car parked outside the laundry!" [CHERRY HINTON ROAD IN 1960s]

Peter Oates from Godmanchester emails to say that his daughter who is at Hills Road Sixth Form College has chosen to do an 'art project' on laundry in the fens and would welcome any guidance as to museums or collections of old tubs, washing lines, mangles pegs etc where she might get some inspiration. I have sent him a couple of washday snaps, do you have more. Email captoates@aol.com or let me know and I'll put you in touch [WASHING AT LONG ROAD, TRUMPINGTON]

Margaret Ayres, nee Heffer, writes to say that Harry Bye's account of his life at Shippea Hill jogged many memories. "My parents moved to Decoy Farm, Sedge Fen in 1944 when I was just nine years old. I was the oldest of four children, with my two brothers Geoffrey and Malcolm and my sister Mary Heffer. We all attended school on the estate and I used to push my little sister to school in a pram, as three miles was a long walk for a five year old, along fen roads in all weathers and crossing the railway line twice a day. Two sisters, both called Miss Pack, were our teachers and we used to get given wonderful school dinners cooked by Mrs Dunham, for which we were charged 2/6 per week. Leaving school at fifteen, I started work in the estate shop and sub post office and remember a Mr Bye collected the mail each evening to take and put on the train at Shippea Hill station - was this a relative of Harry? We also attended the lovely chapel in Sedge House on the estate - Sunday school in the morning and the evening service. We walked the three miles twice on Sunday. I'm sorry to say that the estate was sold and in 1953 my family moved to Cantelupe Farm in Haslingfield, also one of the Chivers Farms. It was in Haslingfield that I met my husband, Arthur, who was living with his family at Penn Farm Haslingfield. We are still together and have been married for over 50 years now".

Pictures

Excited children in Cambridge Corn Exchange, May 1937

Children with decorated pram

Coronation banner in Castle Hill, Cambridge 1937

Tent in Sedley Taylor Road where the first television outside broadcast was received

Washing in Long Road, Trumpington, 1880s

Cherry Hinton Road in 1960s

Memories 13th April 2009, by Mike Petty

James Reynolds Withers, Cambridgeshire's hedge-side poet, was born at Weston Colville, near Newmarket in May 1812. His father had been village shoemaker but had fallen on hard times and when James was born he was a less than welcome addition to the family's precarious budget. There was no money for schooling so the lad was sent out at an early age to pick stones, weed corn and scare birds. As he watched he absorbed something of the natural life around him, the flowers of the fields and the birds he was employed to keep in the air.

When aged 12 he went to work for a market gardener at Fordham, finding reading matter in the tattered pages from Shakespeare amongst the waste paper from which he made seed bags. Good fortune came his way in the form of a legacy from his deceased grandmother with which he entered into his father's old trade. It was not a success so he went back to Fordham, took a wife, started a family and failed to earn enough to support them. In 1846 in desperation he turned to Newmarket workhouse for relief, describing his impressions in verse:

“Two days in the week we’ve puddings for dinner,
And two we have broth, so like water, but thinner”

All the while he was composing rhymes, though his lack of writing made it difficult for him to set them down. Eventually a farmer's wife took notice of him and funded his first volume of poetry, published in 1854. Two years later a second volume appeared, then others. Today his ‘Poems Upon Various Subjects’ are digitised on the ‘Google Book Search’ internet site.

As his fame spread he received letters of encouragement from Charles Dickens, Queen Victoria – who included a welcome gift of £50 – and Tom Hughes, author of “Tom Brown's School-days”. His output and his income increased but soon his literary friends passed away and his capital was lost in a disastrous investment. However villagers in Fordham rallied round to ensure he could continue to live a thrifty life in his cottage until his death in 1892. It was a place he immortalised in verse:

Home is home – and this is mine,
Nothing grand, not even fine:
A cottage, in a shelter'd nook,
Beside an ever flowing brook

Some crock'ry-ware, a little delf,
A few old books upon the shelf:
A few old pictures on the wall,
My wife and children – this is all

That cottage holds many memories for his great, great granddaughter, Irene Elmer. She was born in Fordham in 1938, attended Ely High School then moved away to Berkshire. But when she learned that Withers' old home was up for sale she decided to pay a visit to the village of her youth.

In the churchyard she found the poet's grave, despite his wish for "no sculptur'd stone, when I am gone, to flatter me with eulogy" preferring to sleep "calm and deep, beneath a mound with briars bound, where strings of ivy creep".

The village hall with its own memorial to the poet was locked and the caretaker nowhere to be found so Irene sought out the cottage itself, a crumbling shell with cobwebbed windows and a garden overgrown with brambles where once a neighbour's cows had caused Withers problems:

"And when I try and frighten her, and stamp and loudly bawl,
She licks her nose and coughs and stares, and does not mind at all"

Later, after it had been restored and repaired Irene visited once more; the floor had been lowered, the old pantry incorporated into a larger living space and an inside bathroom replaced the Victorian 'throne room' at the bottom of the garden. She fantasised about buying it but somehow the spirit had gone.

So she returned to her own home and garden in Cookham where she reflected on her experiences and has now produced her own poetic tribute to the poet's cottage

"Poets Cottage" by Irene Elmer published by Pegasus Publishers of Castle Park, Cambridge – ISBN 978184386510 0 £6.99

Pictures

James Withers, the poet
Fordham church in 1848
Fordham village hall c1900
Withers' cottage beside the stream, 2006
The cover of the new book
Memories 20th April 2009, by Mike Petty

I am always delighted to hear from readers who recognise themselves or members of their families on the pictures I feature in 'Memories'

Margaret Hunt from Cambridge wrote in to say that a snap of the Leys Laundry taken in 1934 shows her mother-in-law, Ruby Everard. Ruby was then 16 years old and has just celebrated her 90th birthday. Mrs A. Pauley from Cottenham tells me that she started work at the laundry on Histon Road when she was 15 and worked through the war years, leaving when she had reached the age of 28. Both her sisters worked at the Model Laundry at Coldham's Lane.

But in the same article I featured a picture from a much earlier era. It showed washing in the garden of a property in Long Road, Trumpington with children playing in the road outside.

Now Gail Cooke emails to tell me more:

The lady doing the laundry was Sarah Careless (nee Barker). Family lore tells how Sarah's husband Cornelius died in January 1889 and she bought the children up "at the work tub" - taking in washing to provide for their large family. One of these was Louie, the young girl shown in the picture, who was born in 1878. Louie married William Hayden and went to live in his home village of Thriplow. She died on the 4th April 1929.

In the background of the washing photograph stands Long Road windmill. In 1928 Miss Moore, daughter of the last miller, recalled that the mill stopped working in the spring of

1887 and a year later was sold to John Peile, the Master of Christ's College. He tried to let it but failing to do so had it pulled down.

The photograph was taken by Ralph Herbert Lord who had studios on the corner of Market Place and Market Street, Cambridge where pictures like this were displayed in the large shop window and attracted much attention.

Lord liked to compose and title his photographs. One he entitled "The Grinder" shows the scene at Milton including a labourer with scythe, children and a woman with pails and yolk. Another, "Try Again", depicts the interior of a cottage where an old lady is making fruitless attempt to thread her needle, to the great amusement of a gentleman in the same room. The windmill picture he entitled "Work and Play".

Lord's work achieve international acclaim. He won bronze medals at an exhibition in Vienna in 1888 for three pictures he entitled "Netting", "The Blacksmith's Forge" and "Neddy's New Shoes" which shows a smith at work.

After I featured a picture of a mystery blacksmith some weeks ago Geoff Axe emailed me to say it showed Bill Spicer, the last working smithy in Thriplow and was probably taken in 1961. Writing in 1969 Fred Gambie remembered: "Before the days of the farm tractor there were 85 to 100 horses in Thriplow, including the young ones in training. It was an interesting sight to see the farm men taking the horses out in the fields to plough, sometimes as many as 20, two or three to each man. A Mr Fordham had all his horses (85) on one big field at Thriplow at the same time as he wanted it done quick".

And of course Fred would probably have remembered William Hayden, husband of Louie the washer-woman's daughter!

scans

Corner of Market Street and Market Hill, Cambridge where Lord had his shop

Long Road windmill with Louie Careless watching and her mother Sara at the washtub

Milton – a Ralph Lord photograph with the church in the background

"Try again": a lady tries to thread a needle – do you know where it was taken

"Neddy's New Shoes"

Exterior of Thriplow blacksmith's shop in 1937

Memories 27 April 2009, by Mike Petty

Concetta de Martino has emailed me after she found an old photograph at the back of a picture frame whilst sifting through the family archives following the death of her dad, Mr. Vincenzo De Martino.

Vincenzo came to Cambridge in around 1952 from Naples in Italy. He worked in farming for a number of years before becoming a chef at Chesterton Hospital in Union Lane for 35 years. He sadly passed away in 2003, very much loved by the very strong local Italian community who like her dad left their families in Italy to start new lives here in Cambridge.

But the photograph seems to have nothing to do with Vincenzo's family. It was taken by Mason and Company who had studios near Robert Sayles in St Andrew's Street just before the Great War and through to the 1930s. It shows a group posed in front of a large, academic building which carries the University motto 'Hinc Lucem et Pocula Sacra' ("From here, light and sacred draughts") around the top of the stair turret. It is part of the Downing site opened by the King in 1904

But who are these men and women, boys and girls of all ages? They are dressed in their finery with hats and watch chains and several of the gentlemen seem to be wearing ribbons or favours on their lapels.

Is there an Italian connection? Certainly their countrymen were in Cambridge at that time, though the snippets that I've featured in 'Looking Back' tend to emphasise the occasions that they come into conflict with both town and gown alike.

It was the music that was the problem: there were frequent complaints from academics and residents disturbed by the sound of Italian organ-grinders. But not everybody objected. In 1902 Antonio Arpino was grinding out the strains of "When the boys come marching home once more" at Newmarket races as King Edward VII drove past in an open carriage. Arpino raised his hat and held it out for a coin and the King ordered the carriage to stop. Arpino ran to catch it up, saying in Italian, "Good morning, King" which obviously caused His Majesty considerable amusement for he threw him a florin before the carriage drove off. Arpino claimed the King had "patronised" him and promised to have the Royal Arms painted on his organ.

And did you realise that it may be Italians who brought us out-of-town parking? The University Vice Chancellor told members of the Town Planning Institute in 1929 that in certain Italian cities there was a rule enforcing motorists to leave their cars outside and proceed into the town on foot. Anybody who suggested such a thing in this country would be cried down as a faddist, but it was a practical proposition. "Of course I don't think I should like to see people stopping four miles out of Cambridge", he added.

Many Italians came to know Cambridgeshire as Prisoners-of-War and several stayed on when hostilities ended. But it seems to have been in the 1950s and 1960s that people like Vincenzo made the move. By 1976 there were more than 1,000 Italians in Cambridge forming the largest immigrant group in the city.

Many had earned enough to start their own businesses and establish their own homes. The head of one Italian family told the *News* that he had emigrated from Naples in 1961 to achieve a standard of living in which he could raise a family. But he spent 88 hours a week on running a continental corner shop and bakery so there was not much time for family or social life.

And as summer heats up, where would we be without Italian ice-cream, despite conflicts such as that in May 1977 when two rival companies set up their stalls side by side in Lion Yard and proceeded to give away free ice cream. "It's poisonous" said one schoolboy to another who was clutching no less than three chocolate cornets to his chest.

But what are your memories of Italians in Cambridge – and can you shed any light on that mysterious picture.

John Everett has emailed after finding my website. He was researching a postcard-backed photo he owns which that was postally used in 1911. It shows Scott and Wilkinson photographers' premises which were in St Andrew's Street opposite the old Police station, near the New Theatre and old Cambridge Daily News building. It will appear soon on John's own website 'Footsteps' at www.footstepsphotos.co.uk

But can anybody identify people in another picture of St Andrew's Street that was taken by the News in the late 1950s. Who is the man with the sandwich board or do you see anybody on the pavement?

pictures:

the group on the Downing site – full picture and/or detail

The Downing Street laboratories opened by the King in 1904

Chesterton Hospital in the 1960s, where Vincenzo worked as a chef

St Andrew's Street showing Scott and Wilkinson's premises, from John Everett

A 1950s photograph of a sandwich board man in St Andrew's Street

Memories 4th May 2009, by Mike Petty

In a hollow six Miles from Newmarket racecourse is a small community with a pub, a windmill and some large houses. One was formerly home to the half-sister of Lord Byron, who visited several times. It later belonged to Herbert De la Rue of the printing family who enlarged and remodelled it into the Swynford Paddocks stud. Now it is a hotel.

A second residence was inherited by William Henry Bullock in 1871 from his uncle, General John Hall, so he changed his surname in gratitude. The new owner took a great interest in his inheritance, built good cottages and reading rooms for the labourers and founded a co-operative store. The Six Mile Bottom estate became famous for its excellent sport: the Duke of Cambridge was an almost yearly visitor during the shooting season and the Prince of Wales occupied the house for four weeks one winter..

William lavished money on his picturesque thatched country residence, in every way typical of an English gentleman's home. But in September 1899 a maid noticed smoke coming out of the thatch close to the kitchen chimney. Help flocked in from all directions but it was too late. The News reported the devastation: "All that remains of the house, covered from end to end with creepers just turning into rich autumn tints, snugly hid among well-laid-out grounds and surrounded by leafy trees, are bare tumbled-down walls with chimney stacks, grim and gaunt, ready to topple any moment, charred beams and tons of loose scorched bricks."

When William Hall got to the scene his grand piano stood safely out of harms way but much of his antique French and Chippendale furniture had been burned to ashes. However he seemed more concerned for the plight of the swallows who sought to fly home to their roost in the projecting eaves of the now destroyed mansion. He set about building again, a new residence with all the latest inventions.

After William's death the family decided to move away but planned a parting gift to the people of Six Mile Bottom - a church to be dedicated to his memory. A bank account was opened, to which the Halls were the main contributors and a suitable plot of land identified. Progress was delayed due to the Great War and disputes between the clergy but slowly the funds accumulated until in 1931, the newly arrived rector of Little Wilbraham, Rev. Lindsay Chaplin wrote to the then widowed Mrs. Favell Helen Hall, asking her about the possibility of finally building the church.

Mrs. Hall responded positively to this suggestion, and promptly engaged her young god-son, (Henry) John Seely (2nd Lord Mottistone) and his partner, Paul Paget, as the architects. They had finished their plans for both the interior and exterior in 1932 and contracted the local Cambridge builders, Rattee & Kett, to construct the church. The foundation stone was laid with due ceremony by Mrs Hall on 1 April 1933 and the church was consecrated on 17 December 1933.

Since then the building has changed little but the congregation has dropped. These days the church is closed apart from one annual service which is held there in September, and regular Thursday morning prayers.

Now plans are in hand for special 75th anniversary church service on Sunday 31 May 2009 to be attended by representatives of the Hall family. Jane Lane has compiled a church history but would welcome further memories of people who have known the church and community. You can email her through the parish website at www.bvsda.org.uk/fulbournpcc or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch.

Probably the most dramatic event to have hit the headlines from Six Mile Bottom occurred in July 1947 when the station master noticed that fire had broken out in one wagon of a train carrying American mustard gas bombs.

Fireman Alfred Chandler jumped down and uncoupled the burning truck from the rest which was steamed out of the way. Then the railwaymen tried to subdue the fire with buckets of water, fully aware of the dangerous nature of the contents of the wagon.

An eye witness told a "Cambridge Daily News" reporter: "It was a spectacular sight. About fifty per cent of the bombs exploded with a 'whoosh' and a burst of flame which shot fifty feet into the air. Poisonous fumes spread over a range of fifty or sixty yards". Seven members of the Cambridge National Fire Service were taken to Addenbrooke's Hospital after suffering burns and the main line between Cambridge and Ipswich was closed to traffic.

Later Alfred Chandler together with fireman Joseph Westland and drivers, Frederick Smart and William Thorburn, all of Cambridge, were presented with the L.N.E.R. Medal in recognition of their bravery.

There was a similar incident in August 1974 when a convoy of lorries carrying 50 one-ton bombs to an American air base were diverted on to the half-built Newmarket by-pass after some of the loads were found to have shifted dangerously near the railway crossing at Six Mile Bottom. Explosive experts examined the bombs for damage before they were reloaded by a crane brought from USAF Lakenheath. The scare lasted for five hours and involved dozens of firemen, police and American military personnel.

Jane Lane's book 'St George's Church, Six Mile Bottom' is on sale in the County Record Office, Shire Hall and at the Cambridgeshire Collection, Milton Road Library, for £6.

illustrations

Six Mile Bottom

church shortly after opening in 1933

Post Office c1900

Station Road c1910

Windmill c1956

cutting of the fire, Sep 1899

Memories 11th May 2009 by Mike Petty

Within the last few days my talking commitments have led me to two areas of the region that are somewhat different in style.

Both were to meetings of Probus clubs, one a ladies' group in Peterborough, the other at Great Yarmouth, and both were held co-incidentally in Masonic buildings.

Peterborough has a fine cathedral and excellent shopping but there is another side too: when we drew up at the venue, in one of the new townships just off their orbital ring road, a kindly lady suggested that the club's carpark would be 'more secure'. This involved driving into an enclosure protected by high steel fences, feeling like it should be the approach to Whitmoor. Usually it is nice to explore the environs after a talk but a glance at the boarded-up windows of the houses nearby was enough to persuade us that this time it would be better to head off again back into the fens as soon as the meeting was over. Otherwise it was a typically interesting group of business ladies whose interests and careers had spanned a wide area.

By contrast the opportunity to reacquaint ourselves with Great Yarmouth was not one to be a merely straight-in and straight-out experience. This time we decided to make an overnight stay and booked into a hotel, not on the Golden Mile but on the South Quay.

This was the traditional area of the hard-working fishing community whose boats once filled the quayside and whose nets once dried on the denes beneath the memorial to Nelson that was designed by William Wilkins, architect of many Cambridge college buildings.

It was here that hundreds of ladies would annually journey down from Scotland to gut and process the harvest of herring. They also needed accommodation and found it in the warren of rows and lanes in houses that had once been Merchants' mansions and had become squalid tenements before 'town clearance' through the devastation of German wartime bombs. Yet there are reminders everywhere of its rich heritage, not least in two of Norfolk's museums which recreated some of the rooms as they would have been at various periods. In one of these sat a model seaman at his supper who, from a concealed loudspeaker, related some of his experiences.

Next morning it was easy to find the Probus venue in a magnificent building opposite one of the piers. And there too was the usual audience of gentlemen who had pursued professional careers. Some of them knew Cambridge: one had worked for a while at 'Butlins' – the Government offices in Brooklands Avenue, another had lodged in Elfleda Road whilst repairing Stirling aircraft at Marshalls during the war.

But some made even more of an impact: one tall gentleman had skippered his own boats and was now working to support the remaining members of that now almost-extinct breed of men

in the former fishing-town whose Fishermen's Hospital still provides accommodation for old sailors as it has for centuries, looking for all the world like a Cambridge college.

John Ball also went to sea, but made little of his experiences. He has however recorded those of his father, William 'Billy' Balls. Through the pages of his excellent book, 'Out of Yarmouth Harbour' he has charted the hardships and everyday problems of one of the hundreds of fishermen who fought the sea to produce the catch that the herring girls gutted along the Quay where visitors now stroll.

He presents a vivid picture of a side of seaside life that is easy to miss amongst the amusements, of a once hard-working town where today there is precious little work. These men, proud of their community, told me of the large numbers of third-generation unemployed – why should a lad work when his grandfather never had? And what would he do now the associated trades of basket makers, shipwrights and the rest are no longer needed to service the fishing fleet?

There over scampi in the restaurant of the Masonic club I was meeting men far more fascinating than the museum models whose recorded voices had made such an impression only the day before. They will remain a memory long after they themselves have disappeared.

John Ball still has a few copies of 'Out of Yarmouth Harbour' at £5.50 plus postage – write to him at 16 South Garden, Gorleston NR31 6TL or phone 01493 600270

SUBS – JOHN BALL DOES NOT HAVE THE FINAL 'S' OF HIS FATHER, WILLIAM 'BILLY' BALLS

pictures

John Ball's book
Yarmouth Fishermen's Hospital
Mike Petty with a model of a seaman

Peterborough cathedral painting

Brookland's Avenue Government Offices, 1966

Memories 18th May 2009, by Mike Petty

Generations of Cambridge folk have enjoyed a leisurely boat trip down the Cam from Cambridge to Clayhithe. They float beneath Victoria Bridge, admire the magnificence of the former sewage pumping station in Cheddars Lane, glide past the site of the great Stourbridge Fair and catch a glimpse of Fen Ditton and Horningsea churches before they arrive at Baits Bite lock.

But very few of them realise they also pass an isolated farmhouse which has played an important part in the history of England.

In the early 13th century, something about a low-lying, marshy spot between Fen Ditton and Horningsea caught the eye of the Bishop of Ely. There Bishop Hugh de Northwold (1229–1255) built himself a palace conveniently near – and far enough away - from Cambridge, where the student population was already growing following the foundation of the University.

His princely mansion became known as the 'Biggin' and proved a suitable stop-over for Royalty. Henry III stayed there for the first time in June 1238. Other Royals followed though

they were not always greeted with enthusiasm by the locals as they brought with them their chief officers and a large retinue – all of whom had to be accommodated and fed!

In those days the King acted as Judge, treasurer and international negotiator, making war and peace in England, Wales, Scotland as well as in France. Anyone who had a complaint about a neighbour, a wife or a merchant would follow his Majesty around the countryside until he managed to get his dispute heard. And they all would have come to the Biggin!

In 1276 Bishop Hugh de Balsham was given permission to fortify the building and construct a moat. Edward I visited several times before and after his accession to the throne. Edward II came in 1314 and seems to have taken a liking to the Biggin as he returned in 1315 and remained off and on for three weeks. From 1316 however he seems to have taken to staying at Barnwell, rather nearer Cambridge, and after his death things became rather quiet at Biggin.

The Bishops still regarded it as an important asset and presented it with other prime buildings to Queen Elizabeth I – though she never got around to visiting. By this time the building had declined in grandeur and became the farmhouse it has been ever since.

In 1768 Reverend William Cole, then vicar of Milton, came to see it for himself. He had some caustic comments to make about it:-

“Having a desire to see an House in which the ancient Bishops often resided with great Hospitality I went on July 29 1768 to look at the old decayed Manor, or Palace of Biggin, now the estate of Mr Panton of Newmarket. It is seated on the Bank of the Cam, in a very low and moist situation, just between the parish churches of Ditton and Horningsey. It is now in the occupation of one Mr Woollard, a farmer. The Distance from the River is about a furlong, all marshy ground; but the House itself is on a little elevation not liable to be drowned, as is all the ground from it to the bank. Must have been a cold damp situation for the Winter”!

The farming story of Biggin continues to this day. In May 1906 it was sold at auction when it was divided and let as two tenements. The adjoining buildings were used as henhouses, piggeries, looseboxes, cowsheds, carthorse stable, barns and cartsheds. There was a good orchard at the back of the Abbey and a stackyard. The nearest neighbour was the “Pike and Eel” public house at Baits Bite lock. *“The Abbey could be converted into a charming Country Residence and is surrounded by park-like grass lands prettily timbered”* the auctioneers suggested

Now as part of the Ely 900 celebrations the parishes of Fen Ditton, Horningsea and Teversham have invited the Bishop of Ely to re-visit Biggin for the first time in 550 years.

On Sunday 24th May he will travel by boat from Clayhithe Boat Club to St John’s Lane, Horningsea and then walk up to the village church for the Service of celebration. Then after a picnic lunch in the Churchyard everyone will make their way to Biggin Abbey by boat or on foot.

Mediaeval entertainers – jugglers, dancers, musicians - will be there to greet them and pupils from Fen Ditton school will sing and dance.

The organisers hope as many people as possible will come and take part at some point during the day and that children may like to dress up as medieval princesses or jesters! They look forward to seeing you at St John’s Lane, Horningsey at 10.30 or at the service at 11am or at the picnic at 12.30 or at Baitsbite at 2.30 ... or at all of the events!

For more information please contact Lindsay Davies - Lindsay@horningsea.freeserve.co.uk

pictures

NOTE: the Cambridge News organised a river trip for 'Our Time' readers – I think on 10 August 2005 – can we find a picture taken then

Cambridge University Assistants Pensioners river outing 1954
Cam Conservators and their ladies July 1964

Biggin Abbey as sketched by William Cole in 1768

Horningsea church from the river c1910
Baitsbite lock 1760

Memories 25th May 2009, by Mike Petty

Sue Parlby emailed in some time ago seeking information on the history of Romsey House, near the corner of Mill Road and Coleridge Road.

She knows that it has in the past been a theological college, and then a GP surgery before it was bought by EF, a Swedish company, in around 1971, and is now the EF Corporate Executive Centre teaching international students. But any other information, recollections or reminiscences would be welcome.

At the time I had very little on my files. Sara Payne in her wonderful 'Down Your Street: East Cambridge' traced its origins back to a cottage built about 1840 and owned by a plumber named Edward Favell. It was sold about 1880 and incorporated into the new Romsey House which was home to a solicitor, James William Prior.

But when I continued reading the past issues of the *News* for my 'Looking Back' column I came across an article which added much more.

An editorial of 11th June 1909 reports that Romsey House had been purchased by the committee of the Romsey Town Institute for £1,435.

The red brick, Tudor House standing in about half an acre of ground had been designed by Mr G.H. Shackle, an architect of Marlborough. It contained several exceptionally large rooms that would be ideal for its new use.

The central hall, morning room, drawing room, library and dining room could easily become a billiard room, concert room, committee room and reading room. The large paved court with its glass roof that had been used as a winter garden, together with a well-built span-roof conservatory would make an ideal smoking room, they thought in the days when smoking was still regarded as a social asset.

The whole had been occupied by a Mr W.E. Curry who was a supporter of the Institute – one of his last acts had been to write a cheque for their funds.

So what was the Romsey Town Institute? It appears to have been flourishing in 1911 providing a hot bath that its members could use for twopence – though few did. By December 1915 its closure was being anticipated and it seems to have shut in October 1916.

But this is only a small part of the house's story. Can you add more. You can email Sue - sparlby@hotmail.com - or drop me a line.

##

Charlotte Jordan from Oakington was sifting through her late mother's photo when she came across a snap taken in the village WI hut in 1932. It shows the cast of a play, 'The Fairy Ring' in which her mother took part. "What fun we had", she used to recall, "organising our own entertainment. One paraffin heater, if we were lucky, and only rudimentary sanitary arrangements – the field. We made our own costumes, wrote, produced and advertised all our own plays". The little hut was used most days and maintained by the village. Now there is a new 'multi-use games area' – how times have changed, Charlotte reflects

##

Harry Bye from Ely has sent me his memories of an Italian ice-cream seller, Adolph Baigie who lived in Newmarket in the 1920s and would push his ice cream barrow around the villages. "When my two bothers and I were coming home from Snailwell school one afternoon we walked along with him part of the way. As we neared the railway bridge he said, 'Pushey. Pushey' so we helped to push his barrow up the slope. He rewarded us with an ice cream cornet each", Harry recalls. Dorothy Grainger took a wonderful photo of a travelling ice cream seller in Burwell in 1933 – do you know who he was?

#

Dr Colin Forbes of Cambridge has kindly solved the mystery of a picture taken in the University Downing Site that I featured on April 27th. It shows the south, courtyard, face of the Sedgwick Museum of Geology and was taken in the afternoon. He can positively identify one person seated in the second row as Professor Thomas McKenny Hughes who was Woodwardian Professor of Geology from 1873 until his death in 1917. The Museum was opened by King Edward VII on 1st March 1904 when he unveiled a statue to Adam Sedgwick. Dr Forbes believes that the photograph shows a group of people who had come to the opening ceremony.

Scans

Two pictures looking in to Romsey Town from Mill Road bridge; one taken about 1910 the other in 1991 – Romsey House has been part of the community for over a century

Romsey House in 1982 – Roz is looking for the actual picture from Library 'Mill Road' photo files

'The Fairy Ring' play at Oakington WI hut, 1932

An ice cream man at Burwell in 1933 – photo by Dorothy Grainger

Memories 1st June 2009, by Mike Petty

Alf Lawrence from Cambridge has written following the closure of the Gala Bingo Hall in Hobson Street, Cambridge. He has lent me a picture of a Burns Night celebration held there which shows his late wife Jessie smiling in the background, behind the lucky winner of the Haggis and the large bottle of Scotch.

Alf writes: “Jessie loved her Bingo Saturdays and used to go to the other Bingo halls by coaches organised by a lady named Mrs Jean Nightingale. She once won £1,000 at the Mecca Bingo Hall in Harlow”

Several News journalists have reported on the Bingo phenomenon over the years.

In July 1966, when the boom was beginning, Dereck Harvey visited the Kinema in Mill Road, Cambridge where the manager, Mr A. Pink told him: “I’ve never seen anything like it. We had 9,000 members in the first nine weeks”.

The caller sat at a large transparent container in which numbered ping-pong balls jostled with each other before being pushed up a tube into his hand. He called out the numbers and illuminated counter-markings on a big display board at the back. Three hundred people were concentrating hard, hoping for the big break – like the one enjoyed by Mr E. Brauerski, head porter at the Blue Boar Hotel, who had just the week before hit the jackpot with a massive £1,000 in a national competition. But there were even bigger winnings at the Rex in Magrath Avenue

By January 1977 the Central EMI Bingo and Social Club in Hobson Street boasted 10,000 members. It had opened in March 1972 to offer enthusiasts an almost non-stop programme six days a week. Every afternoon and evening hundreds congregated in the theatrical, almost surreal surroundings, a brash, psychedelic mish-mash of colours – silver, yellow, red, green, rust, cream. It was a place with its own special vocabulary – “last’un”, “flyer”, “ling double”, “quickie”. The players were perfectly normal people – police officers, traffic wardens, doctors and housewives. They were all quick to acknowledge that it was an addiction – especially the fruit machines that paid out up to £30 in 50-pence pieces; people dashed to them in the brief intervals between games, and long queues formed during the interval. But the main money was to be made on Bingo itself, especially the jackpot when the Cambridge club linked up by phone with that at Oxford and there was £400 on offer.

Then in the 1980’s the national newspapers discovered the magic of bingo. A Cambridge man won £40,000 in ‘The Sun’, a Cambridge woman won £20,000 with the ‘Mirror’. Once more a News reporter was sent into the Bingo Hall. This time it was Chris Elliott who took the afternoon away from his desk in March 1983 for a return to the Central. Now there was the additional attraction of Parti Bingo, the kind of 20p-in-the-slot machines found in seaside arcades, before the main games started. Queen of the Club was Mrs Daisy Driver who’d been playing bingo since 1948. She went four times a week, paying 23p admission – pensioner price – and £1.70 for a couple of books. If they won – and prizes went right up to £1,000 on a Saturday night – then that was a bonus. It was a home from home where regulars had their favourite seats; they met their friends and enjoyed the social repartee, it got them out of the house and kept them mentally stimulated.

If you have memories of Bingo, write to Mike Petty at the News

Last Sunday a flotilla of boats carried the Bishop of Ely from Horningsea to the Biggin Abbey, near Baits Bite Lock. It all jogged memories for Rosa Bates of Elmdon, near Saffron Walden who was born there in December 1932.

“My grandparents lived in the original building. I was brought up in London but returned to Biggin with my mother just as war ended, this time living in the other half. I have so many happy memories of the place where I lived until my wedding in Fen Ditton church in 1956. I remember the bad winter of 1947, sliding down the snowy slopes of the old moat on Gran’s large metal tray and the sight of water for miles when the thaw came. Cycling down the leafy avenue and coming back to face the bull that had broken loose. Cattle in the yards in winter. Leaping over the ditch that was originally the waterway that brought the boats from Baits Bite Lock to the Biggin.

“Inside there is an old worn stone staircase which, according to rumour, joined a secret tunnel underground. A window at floor level in an upstairs room, cupboards within cupboards, all of which I found utterly fascinating. Outside the stables and cowsheds were finally converted to bungalows. The large barn where the cows were milked has now gone. In my old age I wonder how many others were born there”.

If you were one, please get in touch

Scans

Alf Lawrence’s picture of a lucky winner on Burns Night at the Gala Bingo, Hobson Street, Cambridge

The Kinema cinema, Mill Road in 1957

The Rex in Magrath Avenue, seen in 1964, was a popular bingo venue.

I attach a picture of the Bishop’s visit to the Biggin Abbey last Sunday; I am trying to get a higher resolution image – did the News cover it, if so can we use one of those pictures.

Memories 8th June 2009, by Mike Petty

Last week Cambridge University announced a change in a long tradition, that of the results of examination being announced on boards outside the Senate House. Candidates have complained that they might learn of their fate from friends who had got there before them. So from next year students will be emailed with the results before they are displayed to public perusal. It will reduce stress.

A until a century ago crowds of dons and undergraduates congregated inside the Senate House to learn the results of the Mathematical Tripos. This was the most prestigious of the University degrees – attracting the same sort of world-wide interest that now devolves on the winner of ‘The Apprentice’ or ‘Big Brother’

The examiners stood in the gallery and read through the names in order of merit before tossing down printed lists to be scrambled for, while the friends of candidates dashed off to impart the news to those who dare not come to hear for themselves.

The News described the scene June 1909 - in days before women were treated as equal (or superior) to their male colleagues:

“Long before the doors of the Senate House opened sweet girl graduates clustered round the gates. Women easily beat the men in early rising. The most critical eye could discern no signs of hasty or slovenly dressing among the ladies who were waiting for places a good half-hour before any undergraduate turned up. And when the men did arrive, breathless and in haste, it

was obvious many had slipped on the clothes that had been nearest at hand and had finished the buttoning process on the way.

“When the doors opened there was a scramble helter-skelter up the staircase for places of vantage in the gallery. The floor of the Senate House filled in almost equally quick time. Coaches and pupils, dons and undergraduates, men and women, jostled each other without any thought of University decorum.

“Towards nine o’clock the examiners flanked by tier upon tier of anxious but silent women, took their accustomed places in the gallery. Still people poured into the Senate House and were surprised to find themselves bulging around the doors in most disadvantageous positions. Late arrivals ran from one door to another in frantic haste.

“The clock of Great St Mary’s still pointed one minute to the hour when Mr Birtwistle, himself a former Senior Wrangler, consulted his watch. A round of applause was instantly greeted with ‘S-s-s-h-h’. A moment of dead silence. Mr Birtwistle carefully replaced his watch and with Mr J.M. Dodds (the Moderator) stood inscrutable as the Sphinx. The time had not arrived! A laugh broke the tension. Nerves were strung up again by King’s College clock striking the hour. Again the babble of conversation was hushed. But King’s was premature by about half a minute. Those last minutes to the anxious ones seemed prolonged indefinitely. At last Mr Dodds raised the paper in his hand, and in dead silence announced slowly and distinctly: ‘Mathematical Tripos, Part 1. Old Regulations. Senior Wrangler ...’

That was stress!

Later came the actual award of the degree in the Senate House when the Senior Wrangler was greeted with applause from undergraduates packed into building. But the successful candidate with the lowest marks was rewarded with a large wooden spoon. The handsomely decorated trophy was suspended by strings from the galleries and as he left the recipient was handed a pair of garden shears, decked with his college colours. With these he cut the string, bravely shouldered his trophy and marched out of the Senate House accompanied by a perfect tornado of cheers.

This ceremony was held for the last time in 1909. After that the results were published in three classes – wranglers, senior optimes and junior optimes, arranged in alphabetical order so there was nothing to distinguish between the merits of the first and twentieth wrangler. It was intended to minimise specialisation in mathematics and give more scope to newer branches of study.

The award ceremony remains the culmination of hard years of study and all taking part need to look their best. It was traditionally a busy time for people like Henry Collins of Cambridge who was one of the team of hairdressers at Joshua Taylor from 1946 to 1972. Dressed in white suits and white shoes they built up a rapport with their customers, knowing who wanted to chat and who preferred to be silent. Henry has lent me a photograph of himself at work inside the shop in October 1952. Were you one of those who had your hair cut there, in the days you had hair?

SCANS

News report of June 18th 1909

Scene inside Senate House at announcement of the Mathematical Tripos 1890s

Degree presentation inside Senate House with wooden spoon in background

Wooden spoon recipient outside the Senate House 1907

new grads being photographed c1957

Undergraduates waiting for the results to be posted on boards outside the Senate House – NB
DO WE HAVE OTHER PICTURES

Henry Collins at Joshua Taylor's hairdressers, 1952

Memories 15th June 2006, by Mike Petty

I have recently been lent six photographs in a somewhat battered frame. They show a number of different vans bearing the name 'Somerlite'. So what was the story, I was asked.

It was about 1887 that Charles Brown had the idea of supplying groceries and paraffin oil to outlying villages. He believed he could establish a successful business and at the same time provide a service to residents. His son Robert C. Brown joined him, amalgamating it with a similar one of his own, and soon many other members of the family were engaged in the paraffin-selling business from the base in Gwydir Street, Cambridge

The early deliveries were made by horse and cart. The family's travelling shops became well-known outside Cambridgeshire and after the Great War spread to 17 counties in Eastern England. Their vans were loaded with saucepans, frying pans, crockery, tea pots, soap and brushes and at one time they sold enough matches to stretch from Cambridge to Cairo. But their biggest seller was Somerlite Lamp Oil.

To Robert Brown 'Somerlite' was his life blood; he bought oil from various sources of supply, mixed it together and told the public it had no equal. And people seemed to agree: he sold two million gallons a year and was concerned to protect the quality of the product.

So when a Fordham retailer started to obtain paraffin from another supplier he went to court to try and prevent it being sold under the 'Somerlite' name. It was as part of this legal process that the photographs of the vans were produced. They show various horse-drawn vehicles including one used at Fordham from January 1919 to November 1920 clearly proclaiming 'Somerlite Lamp Oil has no equal' and the name 'Robert Charles Brown, Wholesale Oil and Hardware Merchant, Gwydir Street, Cambridge'.

There is also a snap of a motor delivery tanker. One such vehicle made news in November 1930 after it caught fire in a shed at Barley that housed a tank containing about 200 gallons of paraffin. The driver had started the engine and gone to fetch some water for the radiator. On returning he found the whole vehicle enveloped in flames. To make things worse the tap at the rear of the van came off and a jet of flames 30 feet long shot out across the yard, igniting a pig sty. If the Fire Brigade had pumped water on the fire it would have carried the burning oil along the High Street so they allowed it to burn itself out.

Robert C Brown died during the Second World War and his wife withdrew from the business in 1960 when it was taken over. By 1964 the vans were still touring the area under the name of Johnnie Call Weekly

Today the name is famous since Corgi toys made a model of a Somerlite delivery tanker which is highly sought after by collectors and widely advertised on the Internet.

But do you remember the Somerlite vans visiting your part of the county or have more to add to the story?

Photos:

A 'Somerlite' motor petrol tanker

The Corgi model delivery tanker – a best-seller on the internet

A Somerlite horse-drawn van used at Fordham from 1915 to 1920

A delivery boy smoking as he mans the paraffin van

Soap, matches and pots on a Fordham van.

Memories 22nd June 2009, by Mike Petty

Ian Wallace from Burton-on-Trent has been writing books on birds and birdwatching for 30 years. He's been beguiled by birds but absolutely fascinated by a young lady he met over 50 years ago.

Ian came up to Cambridge in 1954 where he read Economics, English and Scots law at Clare College. In those days undergraduates fell into two main groups: those who had already done their National Service and those who had not.

Ian was in the former category and after experience of the Mau Mau and Suez he felt University rules were at odds with his more advanced experience of life. For many like him Cambridge became less a great seat of learning and more a ticket office on the way to a career.

But there was more to Cambridge than study. Ian had a town girl-friend, a bonny lass called June Roberts who lived on the Newmarket Road. They had great fun together in jazz bands but parted when she found someone to be serious about. Through her, however, he was introduced to a circle of other girls who took up with undergraduates.

Their leading light was a stunning dark five-foot-six brunette with hour-glass figure, called Pauline. What was unusual about Pauline was the fact that she was not, as he first thought, a 'gilded hawk' - although her boyfriends included one with a gull-winged Mercedes sports car and another with a title - but actually a fine person, thoroughly admired by the other girls.

Among them was her best friend, a more overtly challenging mop-haired blonde, and together they would dazzle the lads at dances, parties, jazz and flamenco sessions. They were given the title of the "Cambridge It Girls" in about 1955 and the Merc owner arranged for them to have a walk-on / look decorative appearance on an early TV pop show almost certainly Pete Murray's '6.5. Special'.

Pauline was a beautician, who probably worked at Boots. She must have lived in the city or within bus distance. Her surname was a common English one, but he can't remember what it was.

Ian finds it increasingly reluctant to allow such a peerless young woman to disappear into the mists of his memory. She certainly made an impression and now – with the backing of his wife – he would like to discover anybody who may have known her or who can share their memories of those distant days.

And although there may have been several 'Paulines' surely there can only have been one gull-winged Mercedes car – do you know who owned it?

You can phone Ian on 01283 872364 or contact me and I'll put you in touch.

By co-incidence another Pauline has written to me; this one is Pauline Anderson (nee Saddington) from the Cherry Hinton area. She has been a regular contributor to this column and wrote to me some years ago about Brunswick School. However she did not keep a copy of her letter and now Cambridgeshire Archives are seeking ex-pupils' memories so she'd like to know what she said. I can't keep all my letters either, but this one was so interesting that I added it to my files – and actually found it! Somewhere Pauline has a snapshot of the winning relay team at the Town Schools Sports Day in 1931-32. They all got a certificate and had the picture taken on the grass lawn in front of the school with Miss Gilson, the coach, she recalls.

The tradition of presenting a wooden spoon to the student who finished bottom in the University Mathematical Examinations died out 100 years ago. Now St John's College is hosting an exhibition at which five surviving wooden spoons – from Corpus, Emmanuel, Selwyn, and St John's are on display. Its being held in St John's College Library Exhibition Area, until next Friday, 26 June 9am-5pm.

pictures

'Pauline' – Ian Wallace's sketch of the girl who made such an impression
Cambridge University Jazz Band at the Rex Ballroom, February 1954
Faces in a crowd: a scene in 1950's Cambridge
Cambridge Beauties of half-a-century ago: a line-up for Miss Cambridgeshire contestants
c1954 – can you name faces

Grads and their girls: a scene at the Senate House

Two Wooden spoons being presented at the Senate House in 1906

Memories 29th June 2009, by Mike Petty

Odd things can start people remembering

It happened to Ken Isaccson of Soham when he spotted the name of Janet Street Porter. He writes: "Early in the war years a man by the name of Mr Street Porter kept poultry at Kennett near Newmarket. He had cages made for these chicks which were the first I had seen where when the hens laid their eggs they rolled down to the front of the cages. When he decided to sell up my father and I went to the auction and we were amazed that we were the only ones there as the price of eggs was so high. My father started bidding at a very low price and had the lot knocked down to him. My brother and I carted them home by our tractor and trailer.

"Eventually we set some of them up in one of our Nissen huts but these had only dirt floors we knew that the hens would throw their food pellets about and they would spoil in the droppings. So we bought some 70 ducks and let them loose on our nearby pond, knowing they would find the pellets. It worked a treat and we had duck eggs, hens eggs and goose eggs to sell when the egg collector came round."

Tony Boyce has also been recalling geese at Soham. His dad, Algy Boyce, kept eight breeding geese and two ganders on his field near Brook Dam. From these he would rear 50-60 birds which his mother, Annie, was responsible for feeding and watering so they were at peak of perfection to send by train to butchers around Liverpool Street station and Tottenham ready for the Christmas table.

Later Algy diversified into turkeys. Some kindly person told him the best way to fatten them up was to feed them fishmeal for a month before Christmas. It worked a treat and produced fine plump birds that would provide many families with a magnificent festive treat. Tony remembers: “We had our own small plump hen turkey on Christmas Day, which mum cooked and dad carved. It looked and smelt delicious, but it was impossible to eat. It tasted very strongly of fish, and as Dad realised, all his birds would taste the same. He was reduced to tears!” Valued customers were either furious, embarrassed or humiliated amongst their friends and family. It marked the end of turkey rearing for them!

But there were many other triumphs and disasters that befell the Boyces in the Soham of the 1930’s and 40s and now Tony has set them down in the latest publication from Soham Community Museum Association. ‘Old Curiosities, volume seven’, costs £3.50 from Soham bookshop or OC Box 21, Fountain Lane, Soham CB7 5PL (Email museum@soham.org.uk)

##

Readers have been quick to respond to my request for memories of Romsey House, Mill Road

David Shackle from Chorleywood tells me that the architect was his grandfather, George Harry Shackle of Marlborough, Jill Pratt recalled that Dr Simpson, her family doctor, used two rooms in the house from 1943/44 to about 1961 when she retired.

Later Romsey House it became a theological college. Margaret Perry from Haslingfield was one of its students in 1988 when it provided theological education for African, Indonesian and other foreign students wishing to serve in their homeland churches. The courses ranged from basic recreational to the London University Bachelor of Divinity degree which Margaret took. She recalls the lovely oak hall with sweeping oak stairs and how the students lived under very strict rules: they had to be in by 9pm and no alcohol was allowed, not even to celebrate Christmas.

Margaret herself has a claim to fame: she was the first nurse at Addenbrooke's Hospital to own a motor car. She recalls: “I bought it from an Australian surgeon who was going home. It was a 1935 Austin 7 with a handle at the front to crank it into life. He taught me driving it round the front of the hospital in Trumpington Street, having started it with a hairclip from my cap! My terror at being caught dissolved when he told me I could have it for £35.

“At this time what is now Brown’s restaurant was the hospital’s outpatients’ department (the clock is still there). The elderly working men patients sat on benches in their large boots with their caps in their hands and each speciality had a small room off the main hall. People were called by their surnames – terrible really, but they seemed to expect it in those days.

“As a student nurse at the old site, going off duty from the ward I would stand looking out over the front car park as the sun set and watch the lamp lighter climb up the street gas lamps and light them. Then he would polish each glass door, shut it and move on to the next lamp. Life was so much less of a rush in those days, and one had much more time to devote to patient care than is the case today”, she laments.

Pictures:

Poultry at Lolworth in 1920s

Shade school at Soham which Tony Boyce attended

Addenbrooke's Hospital, Trumpington Street showing the outpatients’ department on the right
The front of Addenbrooke's Hospital where Margaret learned to drive
Addenbrooke's Hospital nurses in 1950s – can you put names to faces.

Scene near Romsey House, Mill Road, 1950s

Memories 6th July 2009 by Mike Petty

John Pickles, Librarian of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, seeks your assistance.

Back in the 1930s the Society set out to supplement its Cambridgeshire Photographic Record by collecting original sketches and watercolours. Now he is preparing some of them for publication. The collection features works by well-known figures such as Edward Vulliamy, Louis Cobbett and Dorothy Bradford but also include a neat little view of the junction of Fitzroy Street and Burleigh Street taken from the roof of Laurie and McConnal's Stores about 1935. It was painted by Miss Beryl Pickering who at the time lived in Clarendon Street but John can find very little about this lady. Can you help – email jdp1003@cam.ac.uk or drop me a line.

Other paintings were submitted by a Mrs Pollock who is also currently a mystery. Her contribution includes a watercolour of the Little Rose in Trumpington Street dated 1943 and a pencil sketch which is labelled as 'Old buildings near Coldham's Lane'.

Coldham's Lane seems an unexpected area for an artist's attention, which makes this somewhat dull view suddenly interesting. The Cambridge Antiquarian Society photographers photographed the junction with Newmarket Road in 1929. By then the road was busy with traffic en route to the cement works. Five years earlier Councillor Doggett had reported that Coldham's Lane was a veritable slough and almost impassable. Its condition had got to such a pitch that one ratepayer proposed to sow it with potatoes!

Quite separately I have been shown three little paintings by Florence Severs who worked as an illustrator for the Cambridge University Press. More information on this lady would also be welcome. One of these depicts the old entrance to the Red Lion Yard, another shows Seymour Yard, but where was this and what can you tell me about it? If you have similar views I'd be pleased to know.

#

My recent article about Somerlite has jogged memories for Joy Northfield who emails "I always read your features with great interest and was really surprised to see the article about Robert Brown. Both my father and uncle worked for Browns for many years - my uncle longer than my father. The picture that was used in a legal battle could even be them. I was wondering if you had any replies from other readers".

Indeed I have:

Mrs Margaret Brown (no relation) has written of her life in Fulbourn and the traders that came around the village. 'Somerlite' was one such, she recalls: "My mother always bought her oil from Mr Brown's van plus many other items like matches, candles and sometimes a saucepan or kettle". When these started to wear and a tiny hole appeared she would buy tin plugs to repair them; these worked very well and extended their working life. She also got her galvanised bath, scrub brushes and soap from them. "We did not have the luxury of a bathroom so had to bathe in front of the kitchen range in the galvanised bath, it was also used to do the washing before it was put in the old brick copper to boil", Margaret recalls.

Peter Hullyer from Ely tells me that his father, Hubert Hullyer of Babraham worked for the company as a tanker driver collecting bulk fuel from places such as Thames Haven and Shell Haven on Canvey Island for resale to the travelling shops. He has sent a photograph of Hubert with his tanker.

Peter recalls that the Brown family ran the company for many years. The heads were the two Miss Browns who lived at 'Many Coates', a large house between Red Cross Lane and new Addenbrooke's Hospital which was demolished for a block of flats. They then moved to Gresham Road in the house that became base for the National Farmers' Union. The company was brought by Emile Litler, the owner of London theatres. In one of the plays at the time there was a line 'Johnny calls weekly' and this became the new name on the lorries.

pictures

Old entrance to Red Lion Yard by Florence Severs

Little Rose, Trumpington Street 1943 by Mrs Pollock

Old buildings in Coldham's Lane: sketch by Mrs Pollock

Coldham's Lane corner with Newmarket Road – CAS photograph 1929

Hubert Hullyer with a Somerlite Oil tanker

Memories 13th July 2009, by Mike Petty

'You've never written about Donkey Common', I was reminded on Thursday. Well I have never really thought about this area of land at the junction of Mill Road and Gonville Place and certainly have no memories of it. But many others will have, so here are some gleanings from my files to start the ball rolling.

One man who did know the area was a Mr B. Nevinson of Willis Road who wrote to the News in April 1959. He had spoken to an old man who remembered it still being used as a common grazing ground for ponies (and presumably for donkeys). It had been crossed by an avenue of well-grown limes as well as haphazard trees such as acacia, hawthorn and copper-beech. Under these mothers with young children would sit in the afternoon, away from the danger of the cricket balls on Parker's Piece, though it was out of bounds to bigger children and to youths with footballs.

Then came the Second World War when the Royal Engineers built army huts on the land, carefully avoiding the trees. Originally intended to accommodate three officers and 224 other ranks by June 1949 they were occupied by a Women's Royal Army Corps unit and a small detachment of Pioneers, comprising three officers and 76 other ranks in all. The Senior Officer Commanding did her best to maintain the grazing rights by getting a flock of geese to keep the grass down.

After the war the huts were used as emergency accommodation by the Ministry of Housing who agreed in December 1954 to hand them over to the city council. Planning permission for their continued use was granted until 30th September 1957 or until such time as major repairs were required. The huts could then be removed and the land reinstated as a public open space.

By 1955 the condition of the huts had steadily deteriorated and some were so bad they would have to be abandoned earlier than planned. They were an eyesore, 'a cluster of rusty scraps on the corner of Parker's Piece, Coun D.O. Ash described them, and should be removed as soon as possible. Councillors were urged to purchase old premises due for demolition and carry out minimum repairs to enable them to be occupied temporarily instead.

There was much debate on the future of the site and in April 1955 the Council decided to erect a giant super-modern heated indoor swimming pool with space for 230 bathers and 600 spectators, together with parking for 35 cars and 200 cycles. There would also be a roof-top restaurant with a view over Parker's Piece and changing rooms for footballers and cricketers could be installed later. There were also proposals to allow the site to be used for car parking

until the pool was ready to start. In the event it was to be 1963 before Parkside Pool was finally opened.

Many people objected, wanting the land kept as open space, though the common rights had not been exercised for 50 years and had lapsed. But if it were to be developed either as a swimming pool or car park, Mr Newinson pleaded, let it perish under its old and correct name of Donkey (not Donkey's) Common.

So what can you add to the story?

Readers have been quick to record their memories Beryl Pickering and Grace Pollard, two artistic ladies who contributed their work to the Cambridge Antiquarian Society.

Marie Burrows emailed to say she knew Beryl Pickering who lived at 27 Clarendon Street, Her father was a tailor and her aunt was Miss Enid Porter, who was for many years the curator of the Folk Museum. Beryl was educated at the then Cambridge & County High School for Girls in the 1930s and later taught at the Cambridge School of Art (where Marie was one of her pupils). Beryl married a Mr Tittensor & moved to the North of England, she had one daughter and died in a nursing home about two years ago.

Marjorie Hillier from Cambridge has copies of the school magazines in which two of Beryl's lino-cuts appear. She was the school's outstanding art student, taught by Miss Woolstenhorne, and almost invariably won the annual prize for art awarded by Mrs Gwen Pollock, herself a well-known artist, Marjorie recalls.

The noted fenland artist, Anthony Day has good reason to remember both ladies. He writes: "After a few weeks part-time study at the Cambridge School of Art in 1947 I became a full-time student in January 1948. At this time Beryl Pickering was a part-time teacher there, where she had originally studied in the 1930s or 40s. On the day of my arrival I spent my time painting from a studio window before joining the class heading for the Intermediate Examination in Arts and Crafts. Beryl was the teacher. I still have the laboured watercolours I did under her tuition. Grace Pollard was a respected member of the Cambridge Drawing Society and I was given one of her watercolours after her death."

Tony's own paintings of the fens, town and country can be seen at his studio on Pond Green, Wicken as part of Cambridge Open Studios 2009 each weekend throughout July, 11am-6pm.

Jenny O'Dell emails to say that her later father Frederick J. Foster also sketched areas of Cambridge. He, and his father before him, had a shoe repair shop on Mill Road which opened about 1930 and closed about 1973, although Fred continued to live in the flat above the shop until he died. He won a few prizes with the Boot Trades Association for shoe repairing in the early 1950s. This was not a normal repair but a repair with artwork on the sole and heel outlined with tiny brass nails. He was quite well known in the area at the time, do you remember him?

PICTURES

Aerial view c1889 with Gonville Place on the left and the open space of Donkey Common just beyond Queen Anne Terrace. The old chapel at Mill Road cemetery can be seen in the centre distance with Fenners cricket ground on the right

View across Parker's Piece c1842 showing Donkey Common with the Cambridge Town Gaol to the right and the windmill at Covent Garden, Mill Road to the left

(Please check with the News library for a picture of Parkside Swimming Pool which was built on the Common in 1963)

A sketch of Gold Street in August 1979, before the redevelopment of the Grafton Centre, by Frederick Foster

Memories, 20th July 2009, by Mike Petty

Alec Forshaw grew up in a house on the corner Histon Road and Roseford Road, Cambridge in the 1950s and 1960s. There were few shops but a variety of travelling tradesmen supplied the family's needs.

Alec recalls: "Several times a week a Hovis baker's van would stop outside on Histon Road and the driver would come and knock on our side door. My mother would always buy a large brown loaf. On Thursdays there was a well-stocked fish van, and we were probably one of its early stops as it trundled out to Histon and the villages beyond. The fish man didn't come to the house, but had a hand bell to alert the neighbourhood.

"Our house depended on coal for heating, with an open fire in the front room and an enclosed fire in the dining room which also heated the hot water. The coalman was ordered through Underwood's hardware shop and came several times a year, a shifty character with filthy hands, smudges of black on his face and a greasy black cap perched on his mop of tousled black hair. His open lorry had flaps at the side so that he could ease the grey sacks onto his back, and then half run, half stagger up our gravel drive to the corrugated iron coal bunker beside the garage. He spoke with a gruff mutter, and I made sure I kept out of his way.

"The rag and bone man was even shiftier, and he used a short whip to urge his pony to a trot. 'Any old iron?' was his cry, but he seemed grateful to take anything. He was so thin and poorly dressed that I assumed that the rags and bones applied to him.

"Our favourite caller was Mr Wiseman. He ran a market garden in Cottenham where he grew potatoes, carrots, turnips, cauliflowers and cabbages, and on Saturdays he did deliveries around the local villages. He worked long hours, and often didn't come until late in the afternoon or early evening. His veined cheeks were cherry red and he always wore a light brown working coat, cloth cap and woollen gloves with the fingers cut off. He would knock on the door, take my mother's order, then scuttle back to his truck, returning with the vegetables and to take the money. One of his pockets chinked with coins. He always seemed in a hurry and out of breath, and my parents often said that he worked too hard and too late, particularly on dark winter evenings..

"The dustmen and their smelly cart came on Mondays, a gang of men who my mother described as 'uncouth'. We had a metal bin with a metal lid which made a loud clatter as they threw it on the paving. As if to irritate everyone, they never put the lids back on the bins and usually managed to scatter some rubbish on the road. We did our fair bit of recycling, with a compost heap at the bottom of the garden and a separate pile for the ashes from the fire. We kept paper and cardboard to burn on bonfires, and milk bottles were always washed out and put in the crate for collection. Nothing much came in plastic, so it was only tins or cartons, or uneaten meat and fish bones which went in the bin.

"Less frequent callers included a window cleaner who somehow managed to ride his bike carrying his ladder and pail, and a white-haired lady who only had her own two feet for transport and who sold clothes pegs, buttons, ribbons and reels of cotton. Most exciting was

the chimney sweep who had a little Baby Austin van to carry his equipment. On his word we would rush out into the garden to see the brush pushed up on its rods and thrust out above the chimney pots. My mother was less enthusiastic about clearing up the dust afterwards.”

Alec grew up in Cambridge, attending Milton Road Infants and Cambridgeshire High School for Boys from which he went to Jesus College, spanning the town-gown divide. Now he has moved away to central London but set down his reminiscences in ‘Growing up in Cambridge: from austerity to prosperity’ (History Press, £12.99 - ISBN 978 0 7524 5004 9)

Pauline Robson seeks your help. She emails: A friend and I are in the process of writing the life story of a 94 year old living in Yorkshire. During the war this gentleman served in the army and after Dunkirk he remembers coming back to Dover. On his arrival the troops were served tea and packed off by rail to Cambridge where they marched through the streets. There was no military accommodation for them and in these desperate times there was a general appeal to householders to take soldiers into their homes for a few days. He remembers women in white aprons standing by their doors in the terraced streets, shouting out how many men they could take. ‘I can take three,’ ‘Send me four,’ ‘Two over here,’ ‘Go to the Church Hall.’ We would love to pin the above down to a specific area in Cambridge and bearing in mind its proximity to the station we think it could be around Mill Road.

If you can help email Pauline Robson at probsonis@googlemail.com or drop me a line and I’ll put you in touch.

And whilst mentioning ‘Pauline’, you may remember we had an appeal from Ian Wallace of Burton-on-Trent who was trying to track down a lady of that name who he knew in the 1950s. Thanks to *News* readers we have identified her, but there will be no happy reunion as sadly it seems that she has passed away.

scans

Histon Road 1963 when Alec was a lad.
The rear garden of his house in Histon Road
Cambridgeshire High School for Boys 1966
Cambridge dustmen 1970s

Dunkirk headlines – but where were the rescued soldiers billeted in Cambridge?

Memories, 27 July 2009 by Mike Petty

Last week the latest report on Cambridge traffic problems was published. Amongst all its suggestions there was nothing about reopening New Square car park.

But as a photograph lent me by Christine Newman of Cherry Hinton shows, this was once a major facility for both visitors, residents and tanker owners – or at least it was when Somerlite oils chose to line up their tankers for a publicity photograph. Her dad drove one of the small delivery vans that toured various villages throughout the week and Cambridge town centre on Saturdays. It could be dangerous work: he always wore leather spats which came almost to his knees as some of the customers’ dogs would nip his ankles, she recalls.

I remember parking on New Square as being one of the perks of working for Cambridge City Council in the decade before Local Government Reorganisation in 1974. In those distant days

the central Reference library in Wheeler Street was open until nine at night and so it was handy to have a parking place just across Christ's Pieces after the late shift.

New Square was developed by Jesus College as a spacious urban development in the 1830s, the houses overlooking a green park. Postcards from the Edwardian age show elegant ladies and gentlemen strolling across as they make their way to the town centre. By the 1920s photographs show a truly rural area with cows grazing on grass which resembles a meadow.

But change was in the air. With the growth of the motor car came the demand for somewhere to park them. In 1925 a small piece of Christ's Pieces was taken as part of a scheme for a combined bus station and car park at Drummer Street. This caused great protest with a mass meeting lobbying the Mayor to demand that the council change its mind on the desecration of such an important open space. Nevertheless the scheme went ahead.

Within a few years the car parking problem was again acute and eyes and in February 1929 Cambridge councillors debated converting New Square into a parking place. One commented: "If I lived in New Square I should not be at all pleased at the idea of that nice little patch of green giving way to a parking place, but if I had a business establishment in Fitzroy Street I should say 'Yes, let the cars park there by all means'. There was a danger of New Square being built upon in the near future and residents might consider a car park the least of two evils. Opponents urged the Cambridge Daily News to take a stand but the paper commented: "Most people smile when they think of the tremendous agitation worked up against Drummer Street ... but nobody is one penny the worse. The only fault is that Drummer Street was not big enough ..."

In 1932 after all the controversy and heated arguments there was no excitement at the opening of the New Square parking place. The council turned up in force and from under the shelter of umbrellas watched the Mayoress drive her car through the pale blue ribbon that had been knotted across the opening. At last motorists had a place where they could leave their cars and not come into the police courts. The Master of Jesus suggested that path inside the trees should be known as Coleridge Walk.

At first nobody seemed to use it: a correspondent to the News commented in April 'Sir – as motorists do not appear to need the new New Square car park I suggest something useful should be done with it. It could be turned into tennis courts or used as a model yacht pond, a skating rink or the site for the new Guildhall. Meanwhile the surface should be coloured an appropriate shade of green as the white grey of the desolate expanse of concrete hurts my eyes. And could passers-by spare a few books for the attendant to read while he is waiting for the customers who never come". Soon motorists discovered it and it was packed with 188 cars.

But it also provides a suitable venue for a demonstration of the wonderful non-skid properties of Michelin Zigzag tyres. About 5,000 people turned out to watch in July 1933 when it was drenched with water and two Austin Sevens, a Morris '14' commercial van and a Citroen saloon went whizzing round at a dizzy speed, twisting, turning, swerving abruptly to right and left, corkscrewing and turning figures of eight in a perfectly hair-raising fashion. Their tyres gripped like octopuses.

By 1950 over 43,000 vehicles a year were using it, despite the increase of other parking areas. Park Street multi-storey car park opened in 1963, Queen Anne Terrace in 1971 and Lion Yard a few years later – but still New Square continued. It was improved by the addition of a pedestrian bridge in 1966. Then came proposals for a comprehensive redevelopment of the Kite Area to include more provision for cars. One element of the plan was that New Square should revert to grass. Thus it was that the concrete was removed and in 1983 nature regained ground previously lost to the motor car.

But do you remember it?

Pictures

New Square as a meadow, 1930

Workmen start to dig up the grass – cutting from August 1931

Cars parked on New Square during the bad winter of 1962-63

View of New Square from the roof of Laurie and McConnal's shop, 1964 with Christ's Pieces in the background.

Somerlite Lorries – but when was it taken

Somerlite lorries detail - and who are the drivers – NB they DO NOT include Christine

Newman's dad

Memories 3rd August 2009, by Mike Petty

Last Wednesday's News contained two stories that caught my eye. One was the restoration of the lock gates at Jesus Green, the other a report on plans for the future of Cambridge transport.

Jesus Green lock is a picturesque part of the river scene but when it was constructed in the 1830s it was an essential part of the town's commerce. In those days many of the commodities on which the town relied came down the river from King's Lynn. The construction of Denver Sluice in the 1650s had blocked the tides which formerly swept boats well inland and led to the need to construct a series of works to enable the trade to continue.

One of these was to cut a new straight River Ouse between Littleport and Ely – something commemorated in the name of the Cutter Inn. The other was the building of a number of locks to allow barges to reach Cambridge. One of these had been in front of the Fort St George public house on Midsummer Common but this was replaced by a new one at Jesus Green. Yet within a couple of decades all that work was rendered superfluous when a new form of transport, the railway, arrived in 1845. Its metal lines could carry more weight, more quickly and the old system was doomed to a slow decline.

Now the Cambridgeshire Transport Commission report considers new systems of transport including trams, metro or an elevated trackway. Others say there should be an underground tunnel. All these have been debated, and rejected before. There were proposals for a tunnel under New Square in 1968 and a plan to tunnel under The Backs surfaced in 1981. The elevated railway became a reality near Earith until the project was scrapped because of cost in 1973

In Cambridge the tramway did become a reality. It opened in 1880 to convey people from the railway station into the town centre. It killed off the previous system of horse buses but the horse-drawn trams were slower than the newly-developed petrol buses which arrived in 1905. One proposal was electrification but this would have meant power lines which would have disfigured the streets.

The trams faced other problems: they relied on specialist vehicles and when these wore out they were expensive to replace. Such vehicles could only go where there were tram lines and these were very costly to install. They were also expensive to maintain. It was these infrastructure costs that were cited as the reason for the trams' closure in 1914. Today small fragments of tram lines are museum pieces.

By contrast the nineteenth-century investment in the locks and sluices is still proving beneficial although the boats that now use them today are vastly different from the horse-drawn barges they were designed for.

So how will the future look back on plans for elevated trackways (or indeed guided bus routes)?

PICTURES

Choice of views of Jesus Lock

Railway bridge over Cam at Chesterton 1859

Choice of views of tram on King's Parade or last tram 1914

News view of proposed tunnel, 2009 and 1981

News view of elevated track 2009

Tracked hovertrain at Earith 1973

CAN BE HELD OVER IF YOU NEED MORE SPACE

##

The search for Pauline is over.

Back in June Ian Wallace from Burton-on-Trent got in touch with me seeking information on a young lady he met when he came up to Clare College in 1954. But there was more to Cambridge than study and Ian met a stunning dark five-foot-six brunette with hour-glass figure, called Pauline. She made a great impression on him in the few months they knew each other but then their worlds moved apart.

However her memory never quite left him and after 50 years Ian felt increasingly reluctant to allow such a peerless young woman to disappear into the mists of time. So he set out to discover anybody who may have known her. Sadly he had forgotten her surname and task seemed impossible. For years his search proved fruitless, then he phoned me and I promised to mention it in 'Memories'

As soon as she read my column of 22nd June Mrs Ann Brown realised that she might know the identity of the Cambridge belle of the mid-1950s. It could be that it was Pauline Jenkins, one of five children in a local family. I put Ann in touch directly with Ian and over two weeks they slowly worked out memories and clues. Everything fitted and so Ann approached Pauline's relatives, starting with her sister. The news was not good: Pauline had died in 2005 within months of Ian starting his search. It seemed he would still end up without knowing about her later life.

But happily on 16th July Ian got a call from Pauline's daughter Karen who was willing to meet him. From the moment he saw Karen he knew the search was over: she was a vividly beautiful as her mother! For four hours they put together their two families' stories and compared photos and other mementoes of Pauline. In short, she had indeed turned the heads of many undergraduates in the 50s and won the hearts of several up to the rank of an Indian Prince!

Pauline Jenkins stayed lovely all her 69 years and her sense of fun and compassion for others is particularly remembered by her two children.

And Ian Wallace has proved that even without a surname you can find lost loves. You just have to keep telling people how wonderful they were.

Over the five years of search for Pauline over a dozen Cantabrigians tried to help Ian. I am really pleased to have been the one who provided the penultimate piece of the jigsaw that means he can put the final full-stop to this chapter of his memories.

Memories 10th August 2009, by Mike Petty

Avril Tabor from Hauxton can identify the Somerlite tanker drivers I featured in Memories on the 17th July.

From the left they are Harold Tabor (her late father-in-law), Dennis Tabor (her husband), Mr Crinks, Mr Howchin and, far right, Phil Clarke. The two suited gentlemen by the fourth tanker were the Company secretary, Mr Ingamells and the Managing Director, Mr Bass. One of the fleet was missing from the photograph taken in late 1949 or early 1950 as it was working that day, it was driven by Don Stearn

Avril also lends me a picture of one of R.C. Brown's Foden vans from around 1920 when it was used as a removals lorry. The driver was Bert Moden, her husband's late uncle.

Such unusual vehicles stimulate interest. Recently contributors to the *News*' online Messageboard have been discussing the old Sentinel steam wagons that were used by the Cambridge gasworks

'AJT' remembers when there used to be two of them trundling up and down Coldham's Lane all day long. They used to load at the Company's railway siding, where the Beehive site now is. There the coal trucks were lifted up and turned over onto the tipper/elevator which loaded the steam wagons for transport to the gasworks off Newmarket Road.

'60's Man' recalls: When I was a nipper I lived with mum and dad and little sister at Brandon Place. It was a lovely terraced house, a bit like Coronation Street, with two up and two down, a cold water tap, gas lighting and a toilet down the bottom of the garden, (chilly in winter). On Saturdays we took the wheels off the pram and went to the rag and bone man on Newmarket Road, next to The Bird in Hand pub, with our potato sack full of rags. We got our pennies for them and then it was a walk up to the gas works to get our sack filled with coke. At the main gate sitting on the weighbridge on numerous occasions was a Sentinel Steam Wagon. It was a monster truck, getting up steam, puffing, hissing and blowing before it took off to Coldham's Lane and came back with its load of coal.

Things changed in March 1956 as the *News* reported: A fire-eating gargantuan of a bygone era made its final journey when a steam-powered 'Super Sentinel Wagon' completed its last run at the end of a degrading tow from another vehicle. For the monster, which started service with the Gas Company in 1928, is no longer able to run on its own steam. It now stands in Messrs Silverman's scrapyard in Ditton Walk awaiting the oxy-acetylene cutters which will render it a heap of metal.

But the Sentinels were not finished with just yet. In November the second steam-powered lorry was brought back into commission as a means of conserving petrol. This one had been delivered to Tarmac new in 1933 SIX WHEELER and bought by the Gas Company after the war. Now preserved and owned by the Worshipful Company of Paviers, it is unique in being the only wholly original 6-wheel tipper in existence with a top speed of 40 mph on the open road.

Such vehicles were not the most manoeuvrable: in April 1930 one crashed into the taproom of the White Lion public house at Melbourn. The wagon was about to pass a Co-op van when the driver saw another vehicle approaching. He swerved and crashed through the wall. Two men were in the taproom at the time but they escaped injury as did the driver and his mate. Fortunately the building was of plaster, or more serious injuries would undoubtedly have resulted to the men. Part of the house had to be propped up and traffic was diverted for some time.

Do you have memories of such vehicles or were you a furniture remover?

TO CONTRIBUTE YOUR MEMORIES TO THE NEWS MESSAGEBOARD
[PLEASE DESCRIBE WHAT TO DO!] ... to contact Mike Petty visit his website
www.cambridgeshirehistory.com/MikePetty or pick up your pencil and write to him at the
News.

Pictures

Avril Tabor's photo of the Foden steam wagon
Somerlite tanker drivers from 1949 – now identified

Cambridge gas works 1950
One of the Gas Company's Sentinel steam wagons
The scene at Meldreth in April 1930 when a Sentinel smashed into the wall of the White Lion

Brandon Place where '60s Man' grew up
Memories 17th August 2009, by Mike Petty

Over the past several years 'Memories' readers have solved scores of puzzles for other people. Now can you help me?

Amongst a wonderful collection of photographs taken by John Carter is one captioned 'Works outing to Brighton'. It shows a stream of people alongside a Premier Travel double-decker bus which is labelled 'County of West Suffolk'. On the right is a notice that reads 'Bridge Taxis' with the telephone number 57080. I'm fairly sure it's a Pye works outing near the Barnwell railway bridge, Newmarket Road in June 1954. But can you confirm it and identify any faces?

MYSTERY PHOTO – PROBABLY A PYE WORKS OUTING – IN JUNE 1954 – I
SUGGEST WE GO BIG WITH THIS PICTURE AS THERE ARE LOTS OF FACES

##

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IAN WALLACE'S SKETCH OF 'PAULINE'; NOW HE FINALLY KNOWS HER STORY

##

Monica Smith from Cambridge responded to my request for information as to where the soldiers rescued from the beaches of Dunkirk were billeted in Cambridge. She writes that some stayed with her family in Gwydir Street: "I remember the soldiers being lined up in the road and each householder was asked how many bedrooms we had. It was expected that there'd be two adults to each double room and as we had two doubles and one single we took in two soldiers. They slept in a double bed and were still staying with us when the bombs dropped on Vicarage Terrace", she recalls. In 1945 families who had given a home to the evacuated troops organised a street party to celebrate of the end of the war in Europe

PHOTO OF STREET PARTY IN GWYDIR STREET TO CELEBRATE THE END OF THE WAR IN EUROPE

HOLD OVER IF NECESSARY

###

Community magazines are excellent ways of keeping in touch with the local area. Recently in 'Duxford Chatterbox' Philip Wade reflected on the names on the village's Great War memorial. About 100 men had gone out to fight from that small community, fifteen of whom did not return. Afterwards in commemoration of peace Albert and Ellen Haylock gave their son, Herbert, the second name of "Armistice".

The peace did not last and Herbert was captured in Singapore whilst serving with 287 Field Company, Royal Engineers. He died as a POW on Saturday 25 September 1943 and was buried near the River Kwai in Burma.

A few days after the magazine was issued letter the postman brought a letter from Mary Wakefield of Great Shelford. She wrote: I am Herbert's sister, now 96 and I must thank you for the trouble you have taken to remember him and my parents. Herbert worked for Mr Marriott the butcher and used to deliver meat to his customers, so he was well known. One of

the “highlights” of his job in December was to take joints to the Rev Browning who labelled them to be delivered as Christmas presents to various village folk.

It is appreciations like this that make all the hard work put in by volunteers to compile such newsletters well worth while.

Memories 24 August 2009 by Mike Petty

The Castle Inn in St Andrew’s Street was one of Cambridge’s most famous old hotels situated immediately opposite Emmanuel College.

It was one of the rarest of places: an old house whose story was told in its architecture, a generous table and comfort without glitter. A writer in The English Illustrated Magazine for 1904 described how on alighting at the inn door he received a courteous welcome from the host and enjoyed happy conversations with farmers who left their horses in the inn’s yard. He dined on soup of a quality expected from a chef who had been at Queens’ college followed by cod cooked at the moment of perfect firmness and washed down by a glass of Worthington’s beer, then there was a kingly sirloin before finishing with baked apple and cream.

But above all it was the atmosphere of the place: the old beams and old staircases which seemed to speak of the thousands of people who had enjoyed its hospitality for centuries.

All that changed just 75 years ago in August 1934 when smoke was spotted pouring through its ancient gabled windows. Within moments St Andrew’s Street was almost completely obscured in a great cloud of exceptional blackness and density, reported the Cambridge Daily News, whose offices were just down the street. Soon the adjacent shops – Collins’ Typewriters and Domestic Servants’ Agency, Richards and Rees the art needleworker - were being advised to remove what they could.

Dozens of volunteers rescued furniture as ancient tiles showered down from the crumbling roof. One room that attracted their attention was that in which Oliver Cromwell was said to have slept, still containing furniture from that period. They also carefully removed crates of beer from the bar, though bottles of liquor were heard breaking in the intense heat.

Firemen were quickly on the scene – their station was almost next door – and every available policeman was withdrawn from other duties to play their part. Together they fought the ever-increasing blaze and, although their efforts hindered at first by a shortage of water, eventually the powerful jets of the brigade’s two motor fire engines began to win the battle.

Despite their efforts the front of the old gabled inn was destroyed along with the bars and 14 bedrooms above. It was thought these had been rebuilt about 1620. A large dining room and about 30 bedrooms in the more recent extension of 1891 survived.

Plans were made to rebuilt but the damage was just too great and the hotel was demolished in January 1936 to make way for a new Regal Cinema. Its name however lives on in the pub nearby

PICTURES

ST ANDREW’S STREET 1910 SHOWING CASTLE INN ON RIGHT AND THE FIRE STATION JUST DOWN THE STREET

CDN REPORT OF 16 AUG 1934

SMOKE FILLS ST ANDREW’S STREET

THE AFTERMATH OF THE FIRE

#

Last week's picture of a day trip to Brighton has sparked memories. David Burling emails:

I was on this day out and I guess I am somewhere in the crowd but cannot identify myself. Going all the way to Brighton by train from Cambridge, no changes, and by a long circuitous route around London, it turned out to be a very long but very enjoyable day. The weather was generally kind to us. There were two trains that day taking the large number of employees from Pye and some of its smaller associated companies from the Cambridge area, so you can imagine how crowded Cambridge station was, and the large number of visitors that hit Brighton on our arrival. I do remember one very amusing incident from this trip and that was at Brighton station late that evening awaiting the train for the return trip. We had to make sure that we got on the right train and the announcer, who was located on the platform itself, was informing us of this. But, as with all these trips it wasn't long before some of the girls had moved into his booth and took over the announcing themselves, announcements which amused not only us, but also the many other travellers on the station. It certainly would not happen today!! Interesting Memories Mike, well done, keep it going!

Thanks Dave – but I do need help from readers like yourself digging through your old files

John Wakefield can tell me more about the vehicle featured in the picture. The double decker *County of West Suffolk* was HVE 402, one of three identical Daimler CVD6 double decker coaches with Wilks & Meade bodywork that were new to Premier Travel in 1950. The other two were *County of Cambridgeshire* (HVE 401) and *County of Essex* (HVE 403). Premier Travel intended to operate the three double deck coaches on express services, but the licencing authorities at the time put restrictions on the intended routes. Apart from some private hire & excursion work the vehicles were later relegated to more mundane local service bus work. Quality problems with the bodies despite rebuilding at one stage, resulted in all three being scrapped by 1966. Premier Travel had contracts with Pye in the 1950's & 60's to provide works transport from outlying areas, he emails.

PICTURE OF PYE OUTING AS USED LAST WEEK

Memories, 31st August 2009, by Mike Petty

Did you see John, Paul, George and Ringo in the 60's? If so Martin Creasey wants to hear from you.

He is researching a new book aimed at telling as full a story as possible of the six UK tours of The Beatles between the beginning of 1963 and the end of 1965.

He has already interviewed fans, reporters, photographers, musicians from bands that toured with them, plus staff from the boarding houses where they stayed and the venues where they played. Now he's researching it gig by gig, town by town, and would like to hear from fans who saw either the Montez/Roe tour at the Regal in Cambridge on Tuesday, March 19, 1963 or The Beatles own headline winter tour performance there on Tuesday November 26, 1963.

The same principle applies - are any of the Regal staff such as projectionists or usherettes still around today – or even the girls who sold the ice creams? Reporters/photographers who

covered the show will also have a story to tell. And where did the Beatles stay afterwards? he asks.

Martin's previous book - *Legends On Tour, the Pop Package Tours Of The 1960s*, included a section on The Beatles, but this book is devoted entirely to them. People may think it has all been told, but there are those who were there with a story to tell and he's interested in talking to them.

One who has already done so is Michael Howard, MP was present at the performance given by The Beatles at the Regal cinema in Cambridge that March. Mr Howard recalls: "My most abiding memory of the concert at the Regal was that it was impossible to hear any of the music because of the screaming of the fans. I don't suppose that was unique later on but I imagine that was one of the earliest examples of that phenomenon."

Just to jog your memories it was at the Regal cinema on 19th March 1963 that Cambridge fans got their first glimpse of "a four man 'rock' group with weird hairstyles as a gimmick" who sang and played their current hits "Love Me Do" & "Please Please Me". The four lads from Liverpool, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr were part of a bill that included bigger name stars such as Chris Montez, Tommy Roe, Debbie Lee & the Viscounts. Despite the wealth of talent the *News* reporter was not impressed: "The fast moving show was not the best Cambridge audiences have seen"

But then Cambridge audiences were used to these touring shows; Cliff Richard, Adam Faith, Billy Fury & Phil Everley had played the venue in previous months, as had Eden Kane, Dave Clarke and various others. One of the biggest names of all, The Rolling Stones were to appear that September.

In November 1963 The Beatles returned, but by then their debut album "Please Please Me" had soared to the top of the album charts and a subsequent single, "She Loves You", sold 1.6 million copies in the UK alone. Beatlemania was in full flow. Wherever they went, they were mobbed by screaming fans.

The queue for tickets stretched round the building controlled by members of Cambridge Police's 12-strong Vespa motor scooter squad including Roy Coxon, one-time goalkeeper for Cambridge Town Football Club & Jock Urquart. The Red Cross had dozens of men ready for fainting or hysteria amongst the 4000 in the audience.

Rosemary Preston was there. She recalled in previous a 'Memories' article: "We heard nothing because of the screaming, but had a really good time just seeing them. They had the Shelford rugby club at the front of the stage to stop people trying to get onto it. The next morning my mother came to my room with a copy of the Daily Express in her hand with a photograph of me and a couple of my friends at the concert screaming. The caption was 'City of learning and culture bends to the sound'. The date November 27th, 1963"

After the show, the Fab Four were smuggled out. The News reported how it took the four young Beatles less than a minute to run down a flight of stairs back-stage and scramble into their van. A Black Maria, with headlamps blazing, headed along Downing Place to where the screaming fans were waiting. But the Beatles were not in it.

They were in another van driven by police sergeant Arthur Quinney, who went through a back gate into the University Downing Street site and then along Tennis Court Road, Lensfield Road, Gonville Place and Parkside to arrive at another back door – that of the University Arms Hotel where they spent the night. Getting them out next morning was another matter as hundreds of fans blocked the road causing traffic chaos as they waited for the Beatles to continue their journey to the next venue, York.

So what can you add to the Cambridge side of the story. You can email Martin.creasy@talk21.com or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch. But please also share your memories and any snaps with other News readers through 'Memories'

Martin is also anxious to track down people who saw them at the other venues during 1963. He tells me that there are some of the earliest performances that seem to have been almost forgotten – do put him right!

pictures

Barbara Northrop from Sawston queued all night to get tickets for the shows in the sixties; she is pictured between Ringo and George in the coffee bar above the Regal.

Fans queue for tickets under the watchful eye of members of Cambridge Police's 12-strong Vespa motor scooter squad including Roy Coxon, one-time goalkeeper for Cambridge Town Football Club & Jock Urquart.

The Beatles in performance at the Regal

Enthusiastic audience – Michael Howard MP remembers that it was impossible to hear any of the music because of the screaming of the fans.

There are other pictures in the News files that Sandra may be able to supply

Memories 7th September 2009, by Mike Petty

Jim Goodrum is seeking information on 'Goodrum's Dairies'. He emails: "I visited the Edenbridge & Oxted Agriculture Show in Surrey recently and whilst walking through the various stalls I caught sight of a painted milk churn embossed 'Goodrum's Dairies, Cambridge'. As this is my name you will appreciate why this caught my eye! The seller had no details but I bought it as a feature for our garden."

It seems the dairy was based at Hemingford Road, just off Mill Road until the 1960s or 70s and at one time drove their cows along to Coldham's Common between milkings. In 1999 David Sharpe of Darwin Drive told me his father had driven their de luxe milk float which featured car type wheels and hubcaps, chrome handrails & a lovely padded seat. Can you tell me more or email jgoodrum@hotmail.co.uk

Such once-familiar sights prompt memories. Back in 1999 Mrs Peggy Brutnell then of Howard Road, Cambridge recalled how her Granddad, Bob Beamiss worked for Arnold's Dairies. He rose at 4.30 in the morning to milk the cows which were housed in a cowshed in Abbey Street then drove them along Newmarket Road & down Auckland Road onto Midsummer Common. She also remembered being taken in her uncle's pony & trap on the daily milkround, sitting on a little seat beside the huge churn of milk & watching him skilfully tip a pint into the customer's own jug.

Despite the care it was difficult to ensure absolute cleanliness and inevitably some customers got more cream than others, all of which lead to new laws and regulations.

There was another major problem: in the days before refrigeration milk very quickly went sour and needed to be market as soon as possible. With the spread of a network of railway lines village farmers delivered milk in churns to the station for onwards transit to a town dairy. Any that was off by the time it arrived was not paid for, adding to the problems that were seeing farmers going bankrupt.

In the 1930s the Government established a Milk Marketing Board to collect and market milk, ensuring the producer a guaranteed price for each gallon. This was by no means a straightforward operation and from the 1960s it was Bert Collacott's job to make sure that it ran smoothly in this area.

In those days the farmer left the heavy churns full of milk on a raised platform by the roadside so that they could be more easily lifted into the collection lorry. But the churns became dented making it difficult to ensure they contained the precise amount of milk specified. Later bulk collection in refrigerated tankers was introduced. This had to continue each day, every day, no matter what the weather or the state of the road leading down to the farm. Then at the dairy the milk was checked, processed and bottled ready for delivery.

At every stage hygiene was essential and Bert recalls various instances when he had to remonstrate with farmers whose standards had slipped, with the ultimate sanction of stopping the daily visit of the milk tanker.

On one occasion he went with a chemist to visit a producer who was disputing a hygiene test result. After inspecting the milking equipment and premises they were invited to the farmhouse kitchen to discuss the issue in detail. "The kitchen was not particularly clean and at one point we spotted a mouse roaming around the furniture. The lady of house produced a brush and pan and calmly without comment swept the mouse into the pan and deposited it in a kitchen bin. Shortly after this we were each given a mug of tea. Fortunately we were left alone in the room for a few minutes, the chemist deposited his tea in a flower pot and mine went down the sink. The chemist and I thought the mouse incident was a regular routine, and the mouse was quite used to it. It was probably released or escaped after we left", Bert recalls

Now similar co-operative schemes are being proposed in Holland, Belgium and Germany. But in Britain the Milk Marketing Board became a casualty of EEC Bureaucracy in 1994, leaving producers at the mercy of the supermarkets. Since then dairy farmers receive 10% less than they used to whilst consumers pay 50% more for their pinta. And the morning visit of the milkman has largely passed into history.

Bert Collacott has written a most amusing but detailed book 'Black Sheep, Cattle Breeding and Orderly Marketing of Milk'. It should be essential reading for anyone whose family once kept a cow and sold the surplus milk. Sadly it will not be, for very few copies have been produced. They cost £12.99 including postage from Bert on Cambridge 564804 or email him – A.Collacott@ntlworld.com.

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In recent months some 50 groups have been busy searching out and scanning photographs as part of the Cambridgeshire Community Archives Network. Now hundreds of images can be consulted at their website <http://www.ccan.co.uk>. But for the Swavesey group this is not enough and they have now published a book entitled 'Swavesey: a pictorial history' with the aid of a Lottery Grant with all the proceeds going to village organisations. Copies can be obtained from Roger Holland at 45 Gibraltar Lane, Swavesey CB24 4RR (01954 230077) price £10. It includes a picture of milk churns being loaded on to a train at Swavesey station in the 1920s

Pictures:

cows being driven for milking at Sutton 1964

milking in cowshed – painted by C.E. Brock in 1880s

A Simplex milking parlour manufactured at Sawston in 1955

Churns at Swavesey station 1930s – from the Swavesey book

Visitors at Cambridge Co-op dairy Sleaford Street with Douglas Percival the manager 1954

Milkman on his rounds – choice of Scotland Road 1920s or H. Doggett milk cart c1910

Memories 14th September 2009, by Mike Petty

One of the all-time greats of aviation, Wing-Commander Ken Wallis, is seeking your help in adding the final details to one chapter in his remarkable story. It revolves around a plane built in a garden shed in St Barnabas Road, Cambridge.

He writes: “My father, Horace, & his younger brother, Percival, were the middle brothers of four, in their father’s wholesale grocery & tea importing & blending business. Early in the 1900s the Sunlight Soap Company offered a ‘Rex’ Motorcycle for some enormous number of coupons that went with their soap. Being in the trade my father & uncle purchased a large number from a retailer which is how they got their first motorcycle”. The brothers soon acquired on old Blacksmith's forge where they made their own versions.

Then in 1908 they went to France, where they saw a Wright ‘Flyer’ aeroplane with a Prestwich aero-engine. The moment they returned home they started to build a monoplane in a shed in their garden utilising the same materials they’d previously used for the motorbike. Their father subsidised them as there was to be a £1,000 prize for the first ‘All-British’ aeroplane to fly a mile. He paid £300 for the aero-engine only to find it was fitted with a German ‘Bosch’ magneto, so could not have qualified as “All-British”.

In May 1910 the brothers exhibited their ‘Wallbro’ aeroplane at their home. Over 200 people flocked to St Barnabas Road and paid sixpence for admission. The machine was staked down securely and the motor set running twice each day. But while it was going the brass boss of the propeller became unscrewed and fell off on to one of the blades, causing some slight damage.

A month later it was put on display again, this time in Few’s Barn near the river in Old Chesterton during the May Races where it attracted large numbers of visitors. A News reporter described it as “a large and graceful-looking craft and looks a real flyer although its capacities have not been tested as it is only just completed”. It had been designed by the Wallis brothers together with C. Knightley, P. Booth and E. Muller, all of Chesterton, in their spare time. Can you add any details about these men?

The report goes on to give a detailed technical description: its framework was of spruce and bamboo, it was covered by a special aeroplane fabric and it was fitted with elm skids to take up the shock of landing and there are details of the controls. But, says the paper, it was to be initially tried as a glider mounted on a carriage with three cycle wheels so it could be pushed

downhill to give the glider a start. If the experiments were successful a petrol motor of 25 to 30 horse power might be installed. It was hoped to try it in the air within a fortnight.

By early July a motor had been fitted and the plane was taken to a field near Abington. Percy Wallis made a successful run to test the pulling power of the engine, covering half a mile at a speed of a little over 20 mph. Then he turned the machine round and started back. At first the monoplane skimmed lightly along the ground on its pneumatic-tyred wheels but then it suddenly rose completely off the ground and sailed along at a height of three or four feet. It appeared to lift quite evenly, both back and front, being nearly horizontal and continued like this for several yards. Then the back was seen to lift in the air and the front to sink towards the ground. It slid forward on its skids but the tail continued to rise. Finding himself unable to right the machine Percy stopped the engine and sprang off. He was only a few feet from the ground and was unhurt but the monoplane slowly turned a complete somersault, eventually landing upside down with its wheels in the air like some giant insect on its back.

The propeller was smashed to atoms and the left wing considerably damaged. It was thought that either a sudden gust of wind had lifted the tail or the balance of the craft was not quite right. Probably the driver's seat was too far forward and made the machine too heavy in front. It would take a fortnight to repair, they thought.

By the 1st August 1910 the repaired plane was on display again, this time at the Mammoth Show on Jesus Green where hundreds more flocked to see it. Organisers decided that the crowds were so great that it would not be safe to attempt a flight. But what happened to the Wallbro Monoplane after that?

Aviation was dangerous and the papers carried reports of disasters and accidents that resulted in the death of the Hon. Charles Rolls and a Belgian aviator. It also seemed that rising costs would threaten aviation meetings. Ken Wallis believes his grandfather realised there was to be no quick return from the monoplane project and ordered his sons back to the family business. The machine was apparently destroyed in its shed during a freak windstorm in mid December 1910.

But the story does not end there. In 1912 Horace Wallis married Emily May Barker, who had been a school-mistress in Cambridge. She'd got very annoyed when her pupils left their desks to watch the strange apparition of the "Wallbro" Monoplane being towed past their window, wings folded, behind a Pratt 's Motor Spirit van, itself pulled by a giant cart-horse!

Ken is their son. He learned to fly at Marshall's airfield on a 'Gypsy Moth' gaining his licence in April 1937. A few days afterwards he drove to a field near Caxton Gibbet where he hired an early 'motorised glider' and went off solo in this very different type of aircraft. Later he developed a new type of autogyro in which he won numerous world records – one when flying from Wyton in October 1984. He is still flying today from his home in Norfolk

He also reconstructed the 'Wallbro', using the newspaper reports as a guide for some of the technical details, to see whether his father and uncle had got it right. They had: the plane took to the air in 1978 (though, as Ken says, he did have the advantage of knowing how to fly!) It is now preserved at the Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum at Flixton, near Bungay, where they are preparing to mark the centenary of the first plane to be built in Cambridge.

If you can add anything to the story please drop me a line or email Ian Hancock, Ken's biographer - ianhancock@tinyworld.co.uk

pictures:

The Wallis brothers with their monoplane 1910

The 'Wallbro' – rear view

Poster for St Barnabas Road display 1910

Ken Wallis in his workshop, 2009

Ken Wallis on an autogyro, 2009.

The News report of the accident, 5th July 1910

extra information

The brothers certainly became very active in the early days of motorcycle racing & Ken has cuttings in which it said "The Wallis brothers sorted out the opposition, then fought to see who would be First". They had soon acquired an old Blacksmith's forge & were making their own racing motorcycles, bracing the frames with Accles & Pollock steel tubing & "Chater Lea" lugs, making wheels & belt rims with spokes & nipples, & using a 2¾ hp J.A. Prestwich engine.

Then in 1908 they went to France, where they saw a version of the Wright "Flyer" demonstrated and a V-4 J.A. Prestwich "Aero-Engine". The moment they returned home they started the build what became known as 'The Wallbro Monoplane' in a shed in the garden of 12 St.Barnabas Road. They made all the primary structure of the same materials they'd previously used in their motorbike and their father subsidised this project, as there was to be a £1,000 prize for the first "All-British Aeroplane to Fly a Mile". He paid £300 for the V-4 J.A. Prestwich aero-engine, such as the brothers had seen exhibited in France.

The project then suffered a serious setback when it was discovered that the J.A.P., engine was fitted with a German "Bosch" magneto, so could not have qualified as "All-British". It did indeed do a few hops", on a field beside which is now the A-11, with the Fulbourn/Teversham Flyover just to its North and was then destroyed in its shed in a freak windstorm. My grandfather, realising there was to be no quick return from the Monoplane project, ordered his sons back to the family business.

However, in 1911 it must have been realised that war with Germany was imminent. There were to be big Army manoeuvres in East Anglia. . The Army had no skilled motorcyclists to act as Despatch Riders & asked for skilled civilian volunteers to undertake the task.

My father & uncle quickly volunteered & their quite patriotic father agreed to release them for this. It proved to be the way the brothers escaped the family business. Uncle Percy started a motor business in Cambridge. He also acquired the Central Cinemas &, later, the Tivoli.

My father, & his younger brother, Garnet, in 1912 set up the "Walbro", (this time with one "I"), Cycle & Motorcycle Works, at Lynn Road, Ely.

In 1912 my father had married Emily May Barker, who had been a school-mistress in Cambridge. She had been very annoyed when her pupils left their desks to watch the strange apparition of the "Wallbro" Monoplane being towed past their window, wings folded, behind a Pratt 's Motor Spirit van, itself pulled by a giant cart-horse!

Subsequently, through the Cambridge Photographic Society, she met Horace Wallis. She must have determined to keep him in order in future by marrying him. So, but for aircraft & photography I would not be here!

Father quickly bought his brother, carnet, out of the "Walbro" at Ely. It was certainly in that business that I gained my practical experience.

I notice with interest you mention, under "1910", "Wallbro" airplane exhibited at 'Mammoth Show, destroyed in storm when hangar collapses (3,23,5,5)

The latter part is indeed true, though "Hangar" is a very polite word for the shed that had been at 12 St.Barnabas Road, Cambridge, to be re-erected by a disused railway embankment at the edge of the test site. However, I had no idea that it had been exhibited at the Mammoth Show.

It had been on display at 12 St.Barnabas Road on the Whit-Monday & Tuesday, 16 & 17 May 1910, before going on trial.

By incredible chance thanks to James Bond's "Little Nellie" I got a poster announcing this, the public being required to pay 6d --"All Who Have Not Seen A Fullsized Flying Machine should Avail Themselves of This Opportunity"

I understood the "Wallbro" was then transported to the field beside what is now the A-11. I suspect the Mammoth Show would have been about mid-Summer. I would certainly be grateful for any further information concerning it being exhibited in the Mammoth Show.

Through father's contacts I went many times to see the R-101 Airship in construction at Cardington & I went up the mooring mast when she was tethered to it. When the overweight R-101 crashed the successful Vickers R-100, which had done Atlantic crossings had to be scrapped. I later got to know one of the crew of the R-100 well. He was a fabric specialist & worked on the gas-bags.

Mention of Sir Arthur Marshall & his airfield brings back memories. I had gained my "A" Licence at the old Cambridge Airfield, on DH "Gypsy" Moths, in a total of 12 hours & 10 minutes, dual & solo. That was on the 11th April 1937.

On the 25th April I drove to a field by the "Caxton Gibbet". There I hired an early "motorised glider, a "B.A.C.,Drone", with a Douglas motor-cycle engine & propeller above the wing & I went off, solo, in this very different aircraft. It cost 7/6d per hour. It was owned by a Mr.Dimmock, who was in the early days of Electricity Supply in Ely.

Memories 21st September 2009, by Mike Petty

Many of the emails I receive relate to Cambridgeshire photographers.

Andy Amos is seeking details of a less-well-known picture taker, William Pugh who had his studios in James Street, Cambridge, from the 1860s to the 1890s. He is listed in the 1881 census when he was 64 years old and a widower. Andy has portraits he took of Emmanuel and Eliza Pugh, his own great, great grandparents but few other pictures seem to have survived. [PICTURE OF EMMANUEL & ELIZA PUGH]

J. Smith is interested in the Farren brothers photographers and in particular their branch in Chatteris. I was speaking to the Probus club there last week when members got to reminiscing about the late Maurice Kidd, who researched many aspects of the town and would probably have known all about it. The two brothers, Robert and William Farren set up in business in Rose Crescent in the 1860s as printsellers, framemakers and photographers. The partnership was dissolved in 1870 when Robert concentrated on his work as an artist and William stayed with photography. But on Guy Fawkes' day 1874 tragedy struck when fire broke out in the kitchen of William's shop. All the cameras, lenses, negatives and photographic apparatus were destroyed together with over twenty of his brother's paintings. William found a new shop on the corner of Market Street from which he traded until about 1884 when the studio was taken by R.H. Lord. [FARREN ADVERTISMENT]

John Goodrich from Palm Springs, California is researching his great uncle, Charles Edward Goodrich, who worked from studios in Post Office Terrace until the 1920s. He took portraits of many famous people such as Lord Rutherford - Goodrich said he looked like a farmer - very nervous of camera and difficult to photograph, Sir Arthur Quiller Couch, F.R. Leavis, and Arthur Hamilton, the Christ's college man who was chosen as the model for the Cambridgeshire War Memorial at the end of Station Road. Many of Goodrich's negatives are preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection, soon to reopen in Lion Yard. The library also has a number of billheads relating to household items that Charles bought. A Girton couple have been delving through these and have supplied John with many fascinating domestic details he would never have hoped to find.

Amongst the people who recorded Cambridgeshire's past was Percy Salmon who died in August 1959 at the age of 87. Percy was a photographic prodigy. The son of a Cambridge policeman he started photography as a hobby as a lad of 12 winning the Cambridge Camera Club's Silver Cup in 1892. Many awards were to follow along with a Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society in 1898. Percy studied photography in the Paris studio and workshops of Levy et Fils and went on to travel the world with his camera, visiting many countries including Egypt, the Sudan, Asia Minor and Turkey. He met Kings, Queens, Emperors and Statesmen and contributed to nearly all the English and American newspapers and magazines, often using the name of 'Richard Penlake'. [OBITUARY OF SALMON]

Percy maintained his contact with his home town through a series of articles in the Cambridge Daily News which recorded his journeys abroad. After he retired to Melbourn he continued to exercise his journalist skills as village correspondent for the "Cambridge Independent Press" and the "Royston Crow". His interesting and faithful recording of village happenings made his column very popular. He was too modest and retiring to say much about his own adventures though one week (when village news was scarce) he told how he once photographed and reported the doings of Queen Victoria when on a visit to the French Riviera. He did however share his photographs through many lantern lectures illustrated by his views. Years later several boxes of his glass lantern slides were discovered in the basement of the Worker's Educational Association and passed on to the Cambridgeshire Collection. [PERCY SALMON PIC OF FRUIT CART]

Now they have another collection to treasure following the death of Michael Sawyer at Eltisley. Michael spent many years amassing pictures and information about that village which he shared with anybody who was interested. Despite his modesty his knowledge was appreciated well outside his local community and I recently had the privilege of presenting him with a 'Dedicated Service' award on behalf of The Cambridgeshire Association for Local History. Now Michael has joined the other Cambridgeshire local historians who will live on the memories of those who knew him, while the material he collected will be shared by generations of historians yet to come. [MICHAEL SAWYER RECEIVING AWARD 2009]

[ELTISLEY GREEN SHOWING CHURCH AND WAR MEMORIAL GUN TIPPED ON ITS BARREL]

If you have pictures taken by members of your family then please don't destroy them. Contact your nearest library, museum or record office. And if you know me more about these or other photographers then please let me know and I'll put you in touch.

Pictures:

Emmanuel & Eliza Pugh photo'd by William Pugh
William Farren advertisement
Sorting negatives at Goodrich's old studio, Post Office Terrace in 1979
Percy Salmon obituary 1959
Percy Salmon picture of fruit cart
Michael Sawyer receives his award from Mike Petty, 2009
View of Eltisley

Memories 28th September 2009, by Mike Petty

What do you know about Bandy?

I've had an email from Carl Giden, the President of the Swedish Ice Hockey Historical Society who is researching the origin of stick-and-ball games on the ice. And much of it goes back to Bury fen at Bluntisham, near Earith.

This low-lying area of land is easily flooded and still used for skating whenever the temperature allows. But during the exceptionally bad winter of 1813-1814 the rivers froze solid, trapping many gangs of lighters so the younger bargees spent their enforced leisure playing 'Bandy' with the local farmers and labourers.

In those days Bandy and hockey, or 'Shiney' as it was known, were favourite sports played on the quiet village roads. So it was natural to transfer to the ice where an area about the size of a football ground was cleared, the goals being about 150 to 200 yard apart.

It was played with a 'cat' or 'kit' made by the village tailor who wound material into a ball about three inches in diameter. Cricket or India rubber balls were also used, although often a bung of cork or wood did service.

The curved sticks known as 'bandies' were cut from the lower branches of pollarded willow tree. A good bandy was eagerly looked after, carefully preserved, and became the pride of the owner. As it hung up in the cottage it recalled many an exciting game, and started many a fireside talk of how matches were lost and won, thus stimulating the young to become players.

Teams from Swavesey, Over, Willingham, Cottenham, Chatteris, St.Ives, Godmanchester and Huntingdon flocked to challenge the local Bluntisham and Earith lads who boasted they had not been beaten for 100 years. All that changed in 1890 when they were defeated by a club from Virginia Water, London.

A Bury Fen Bandy Club was established and the rules written down. Then in 1891 with Charles G. Tebbutt as Captain, they set off for Holland to introduce the game to the Continent. Other tours followed to Norway, Denmark and Germany. Then in 1894, when visiting Stockholm, Tebbutt arranged for a Swedish Athletic Club to try it. Hence the email.

Although England won the European championship in 1913, organized Bandy seems to have disappeared from the Fens after the Great War. However scratch games continued on Bury Fen up to the 1940s whenever skating was possible. They were played in the old way: every sort of stick and ball were used, few rules hampered the players and the area of play could be enlarged to accommodate almost any number on each side. It has been superseded by a variant version of the sport, Ice Hockey

Documents relating to the sport are preserved in the wonderful Norris Museum at St Ives and in Cambridgeshire Archives. The Swedish researchers are planning a visit to consult it but they'd also like to meet anybody who has other material. So do you have photographs, trophies or newspaper cuttings to tell us more? Email Carl Giden - c.giden@gmail.com or drop me a line.

Did you play hockey in the street. My files report how in March 1900 four Ely youths were summoned for playing the game in West End. PC Green said they were running about and knocking the ball into the middle of the road. Thomas Larkins and Henry and Walter Martin pleaded guilty but Robert Smith claimed he did not touch the ball. Play had paused for a while but was resumed in St John's Place. The lads ordered to pay 8s.6d., the court expenses, between them.

And, talking of hockey, can you shed any light on a picture of a ladies' team taken in 1953. The players' badge reads something like 'USFHP', if that helps. In March 1950 the News reported that a feature of that season's Cambridge ladies hockey club was that it included three sets of twins, from the Harris, Macleod and Cook families. The club started about 1900 on one of Mr Nutter's fields at Grantchester but moved to the paddock at Pinehurst. They then played on the Perse girls school ground. Past members of the club included Miss Rose Macaulay, the authoress, Miss Irene Flanders and Miss Margaret Field Hyde, both well-known in the musical world.

EXTRA STORY IF NEEDED

##

What were you doing at 7.45 am on 29th September 1962? George Bainbridge was delivering milk with his horse-drawn float – at least that's according to a pencil note on the back of a photograph loaned by his daughter, Mrs. J. Badcock of Cambridge. George had his farm and Star Dairy in Vinery Road – it is now Danebury Court. But where was he photographed and who is the young lady standing with him?

SCAN

Ladies demonstrating Bandy in 1899

Bury Fen, Earith 1929

Can you find a picture of Earith or Bluntisham from the News Library please

Fore Hill Ely 1900 showing youngsters – they were not always so well-behaved

A Ladies hockey team at Cambridge in 1953 – can readers shed any light on it.
also : detail of badge

George Bainbridge and his milk cart, 29th September 1962

Memories 5th October 2009, by Mike Petty

Often when I talk to groups – especially real Cambridge folk like those who gather at the Cherry Trees Day Centre in St Matthew's Street just off East Road - they will speak of the old days and the characters they recall.

Last week they told me how the picture on the front cover of the latest 'Our Time' magazine had generated great discussion: it shows a heap of rubble that was once Vicarage Terrace before German bombs cleared the site where the present club meets. One lady had lived there before the war and remembered the neighbourhood well.

It never was the most prosperous area of Cambridge but over the years various attempts have been made to improve conditions for the people who lived there.

In 1903 the London Express newspaper described Cambridge as having incurable slums and possessing filthier homes than Whitechapel. In reply Mr Campkin, a Guardian had said: "There is no doubt there is an amount of poverty and squalor in Cambridge but there has been a vast improvement in the St Matthew's district over the last 40 years".

That year St Matthews' church held a service of thanksgiving for God's mercies in delivering many from small-pox, scarlet fever and diphtheria. The Vicar said that since the parish had been formed 37 years ago nobody had known anything like the amount of sickness. In eight months they had been visited by three terrible diseases, each taking a large number of victims, 12 of which had proved fatal.

Just 50 years ago, at the end of September in 1959, an Inquiry was held into conditions in the district between East Road, Norfolk Street and St Matthew's Street. The Deputy City Surveyor, Raymond Gibb, described the narrow streets and courts. "In general the dwellings are of the demolition standard and many of the businesses are conducted in old and dilapidated buildings creating a general impression of decay". The whole area should be demolished and rebuilt, he told the Inspector.

More detailed evidence was given by J.F. Edwards, the Chief Public Health Inspector. He reported on twenty-nine houses on the corner of Staffordshire Street and Norfolk Street: "All the houses in this area are, in my opinion, unfit for human habitation. Every one is damp, some roofs are sunken and leaking with displaced and broken slates. Brickwork of walls and chimney stacks is loose, perished or open-jointed. Roof spoutings are missing or leaky.

"Some houses are dark owing to the narrowness of the street, needing artificial light on a normal day. Woodwork and internal plaster work generally is perished and decayed. No house has proper ventilated food storage. Water closets are not readily accessible, some being across the street from the houses they serve, and several are shared between houses", he continued. Two other 'clearance areas' – St Matthew's Street and Leader's Row – were very similar.

The Council wanted to rip them down and build maisonettes, shops and a public house, giving existing shopkeepers first refusal. But not everybody agreed. One 80 years old lady was totally blind and living in Staffordshire Street. But her home was only 21 years old and she should not be compulsorily moved, her daughter told the Inspectors. There would be a set of old people's homes in Christchurch Street providing 29 bed sitting rooms, a central lounge and people to look after the residents, the council responded.

For traders the disruption would be immense: Mr Harrison, a 74-year-old hairdresser in Norfolk Street said he had been in business there since he was 20 and would find difficulties in relocating. But Lacon's Brewery had already agreed a new site for their Norfolk Arms public house.

Since then redevelopment has taken place with new homes and shops. But have you grown up in the area, either then or now, and what do you remember of it?

Pictures

Cover of 'Our Time' showing devastation of Vicarage Terrace following wartime bombing

Former parish workhouse in Staffordshire Gardens, 1911

Mr Taylor's baker's shop, Staffordshire Street c1910

White Swan public house, Norfolk Street in the 1950s, now a home

News report of the Inquiry, 30 September 1959

Staffordshire Street following redevelopment – I MAY FIND A BETTER COPY IN NEWS LIBRARY

Memories 12th October 2009, by Mike Petty

As Halloween approaches once more people will start telling spooky stories. Tales of unexplained happenings, lights being turned on and off, a sudden chill in a heated room will be happily shared.

Other people will quietly reflect on profound personal experiences, convinced they have re-met loved ones after they are known to have died. Some of these experiences will be comforting, others terrifying. Sometimes people want to know what, or perhaps who, is causing it. Other times they just want it to stop.

Damien O'Dell was 12 years old when he saw his first ghost. Now he spends his time looking for them. Has set up the Anglia Paranormal Investigation Society whose members go out with a range of equipment and their own six senses, visiting pubs, houses or priories to see what they can detect

Damien has already published books on haunted Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, now he's turning to this area. Cambridge is a special place for the student of the paranormal. The Society for Psychical Research, Britain's leading organisation for such investigations, was founded in Cambridge in 1882 and its first President was Henry Sidgwick, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Trinity College. Phenomena have been reported from any number of colleges including Girton, Sidney Sussex, Emmanuel, Corpus Christie and Peterhouse. Then there's Abbey House off Newmarket Road which at one time was regarded as the most haunted house in England, long before Essex's Borley Rectory claimed that particular accolade.

Other tales relate to Fenland: Spinney Abbey is haunted, Ely Cathedral notorious for its ghostly monks and Oliver Cromwell's former home in Ely has reported strange happenings it is claimed. But is it all a load of bunkum?

"If people are sceptical then I don't try to convince them otherwise, just let them know the stories and make their own minds up.", says Damien, who will be speaking at the 'Fenland History on Friday' meeting in Ely Library on 23rd October, starting 10.30 am. If you have a story to tell or know something that you feel should be investigated he would be delighted to hear from you. Email damien.odell@yahoo.co.uk or drop me a line and share your experiences.

Last week's Memories article on the St Matthew's area of Cambridge brought an instant response from Ron Hartley of Duxford who felt conditions were not quite as bad as the 1959 Inquiry was told.

He emails: "I lived at 54 Staffordshire Street from the time of my birth in 1932 till the houses were demolished in 1960. The damp and squalid houses that are referred to in the article were at Staffordshire Gardens, off the main street. These faced onto the back garden of our property and were separated from it by a small footpath. Only one house had a water closet down the street, the rest had them across the road with the number of the house painted on the doors. In the row of houses in which I lived we had wcs attached to the houses but we still had to go outside to access them.

"The majority of houses in our row were decorated regularly. My father was a painter and decorator and there was frequently the smell of drying paint in our house. Some of the neighbours used to scrub their front doorsteps and the pavement outside. One of your pictures shows Mr Taylor's bakery shop. I remember going there and buying freshly baked rolls for a halfpenny each from an old lady who served in there.

"The corner shop opposite the Norfolk Arms, now the Man on the Moon, was once a cobbler's shop run by a one legged old man, who had lost his leg in the First World War. Then it was a grocer's shop which was taken over by the Co-op. The Swan Inn was run by my uncle and aunt during the war when because beer was in short supply they used to lock the front door and the regulars used to go around the back for their tippie. On Derby Day I used to collect all the bets from Staffordshire Street and take them round to my aunt at the back of the pub before twelve noon when the milkman came to collect them!"

Ron remembers the night that Vicarage Terrace was bombed: "We slept through the siren and were woken by a tremendous bang and the house and windows shaking. We dressed and sat in the living room, thinking that the world had come to an end. Our neighbour, Mr. Rouse, came banging on the back door to say that Vicarage Terrace had been flattened and that my father should accompany him to see if there was anything they could do. I was so intrigued that I pestered and pestered until my father to allow me to go up and have a look. So we went down Leader's Row to the corner of St Matthew's Street where I saw a stretcher, covered in blood against the wall. There were a few people around and a policeman in the middle of the road. The corner shop on Vicarage Terrace/ St. Matthew's Street was still standing but badly damaged. In Vicarage Terrace there was brick rubble all over the road and people climbing all over it."

That truly was an experience never to be forgotten.

Pictures

Abbey House, just off Newmarket Road, Cambridge

Spinney Abbey, Wicken

A ghostly woman passing through a door without opening it

Cromwell House, Ely, once sold beer – but is it haunted by spirits?

The devastation of Vicarage Terrace seen by Ron Hartley

A News report of the bombing

Memories 19th October 2009, by Mike Petty

One of the regular features in the Cambridge Daily News of the 1950s was a 'Mainly for Women' column edited by Gillian Maltby. It covered topics such as fashion, housekeeping and other domestic subjects. But on 2nd October 1959 Gillian focussed on the issues concerning 17-year-old girls. Some of these were still at school, other had been working for some years and had different outlooks on life

The girls in the sixth-form of a local Grammar School studied most evenings and at the weekends, which left them little time for relaxation. However the majority belonged to clubs, practically all listed swimming and tennis amongst their regular pastimes and three-quarters attended church each week.

Most of them made their own blouses and skirts and more than half had made the main portion of their wardrobe. They all helped in the home, made their own beds, washed-up regularly and did a proportion of the shopping. They rarely watched television except when there was a good play on and went to bed at ten o'clock during the week, an hour later at the week-ends. The girls read an extraordinary amount of books, mainly light novels and biographies, almost all had learned to play an instrument and half had been abroad, the majority on exchange visits with other Continental teenagers

The sixth-formers received pocket money of around five shillings a week which was spent on sweets, stamps, nylons and make-up which most had started to wear when they were 15. Lipstick and powder were generally used while a few also liked eye-shadow and mascara – though only when they were going out and not as a matter of course.

The majority had not considered marriage seriously, indeed only one had a 'steady' boy friend. Virtually all wanted to wed ultimately, but not until they were well into their twenties - 25 was quite early enough – as this would give them time to attend university and work in their chosen careers, probably teaching or nursing. However once they married over half wanted large families of four or more children.

But the majority of the seventeen-years old girls out at work felt they should be engaged by the time they were 18, otherwise they were obviously 'on the shelf'. Unlike the schoolgirls, most had boyfriends and insisted on sharing expenses on 'dates' – though not the first one, because a boy would feel offended. They could afford it, for having often worked for two years they were receiving an average weekly wage was £4 out of which they were left with about 30 shillings (£1.50) for themselves. Much of this went on clothes, holidays and entertainment.

The working girls were interested in clothes and their general appearance and went to a lot of trouble to make the best of themselves. Like most teenagers they collected jazz and pop records, were keen on dancing (jive of course), were regular cinemagoers and generally enjoying life. They either took a women's magazine or read the one taken by their mothers.

Generally the characteristic picture of the jiving, fun loving teenager was right for many of the girls in this age group. But whatever her interests, occupation and beliefs, each was full of life and very much in character with the bustling 1950s. And far removed from the 17-year-olds of twenty years earlier.

But what do you recall of the days when you were seventeen?

In the 1950s Hockey was a popular sport and Myra Carpenter was one of its keenest exponents. She has emailed with details of a picture of a hockey match that I featured in Memories on 28th September. It showed a game between the East Women's Hockey Association and the United States Field Hockey team which was played at Homerton College in November 1953. The US team had come over for the International Federation of Women's

Hockey Associations Fifth Triennial Conference cum Tournament in Folkestone, one of 16 international teams present. Myra has the programme together with the cutting of this Cambridge game.

pictures

academic young ladies: can you identify this school prize-giving in November 1954

50's fashion in Cambridge: were you ever on the catwalk?

fashionable and fast: do you recognise these 50's girls on their Vespa scooter

US Field Hockey team takes to the pitch at Homerton, November 1953 for their match, as remembered by Myra Carpenter

The article from 2nd October 1959

Memories 26th October 2009, by Mike Petty

A couple of weeks ago I related how in 1959 Cambridge City council told a planning inquiry of the deficiencies of the area around Norfolk Street, off East Road. But readers say it was not as bad as councillors claimed!

Incredibly three of them once lived in the same small street: Blossom Street.

David Rumbelow from Lincoln writes: "I was born and lived at No 5 Blossom Street from 1942 -1966. My parents had six children and we all had a good life with many good friends in the area. There was exceptional community spirit. My father died in 1949 leaving my mother to bring up four children under nine years of age and two older children. Times were hard and money was short. All of us have gone on to have successful lives.

"My memories are of wonderful characters that lived in the area. These include Harry Pauley, the butcher, who used to give me jobs and pay me with meat to take home for the family. Vi Smith and her husband, the greengrocer in Blossom Street, would let me have wooden orange boxes that we used to chop up for firewood while Gordon and Ann Taylor ran a chip shop on the corner with Norfolk Street. Nearby were Terry Whitehead the greengrocer, Bridgeman's Bakers while my brothers Donald, Peter and I did paper rounds for Newman's Paper shop in Norfolk Street. There was Masons, the chemist: Ken Mason was more like a doctor. He was able to take out splinters, foreign objects in our eyes and cure other ailments.

"All of these wonderful people played an important part in my young life. They taught me respect and a huge sense and importance of community spirit, which has given me a lot of pleasure in my adult life.

"I returned to Blossom Street with two of my brothers and their wives recently. We found carvings of our names still on the wall. We visited St. Matthew's Church. We were all christened there and sang in the choir. Mr Lister was the choir master at that time. We walked down Norfolk Street and looked at the house where my Aunt lived, which is next to the passage to the churchyard and cemetery. Wonderful memories. I did leave with a tear in my eye remembering such characters and events. God Bless Blossom Street and thank you!"

Jean Clements, now in Campkin Road, also lived in Blossom Street, as did her grandparents. Their house was on the corner of Flower Street and is now a parking place for cars. They

brought up nine children there and the house was spotless. It is true there were some very dilapidated and run down places in the area, she concedes. One was the Popjoy Building in Gas Lane, a block of one-up and one-down dwellings. They shared toilets between houses and had a communal wash house. After it was demolished in the 1930s an air raid shelter was built there during the war.

From Harston, Beryl Green writes to say that her father, Arthur Rose, had a butcher's shop on the corner of Blossom Street, now a hair-dressing salon. She phoned her brother Arthur in New Zealand members who recalled various other tradesfolk in the area including Sadie's second-hand clothes shop, a dress shop kept by the Frost family and Burgess' hardware shop.

Janet Claydon from Cottenham remembers that Rose's shop was almost next door to Taylor's fish and chip shop. She also recalls Bridgeman's bakery, previously run by Mr Norman and his wife (lovely Chelsea buns and doughnuts), a wet fish shop operated by Sonny Thurston and his wife – Sunday treat was winkles, cockles and shrimps. Townsend's cycle shop, a second-hand shop run by Ada Warwick ... the memories pour out. "What a wealth of history and so many wonderful characters", she concludes.

pictures

Erasmus Naylor greengrocer's shop, Norfolk St 1910

Norfolk St 1981

Blossom Street 1978

Gas Lane 1953 – from the Cambridgeshire Collection

Mason's chemist, Norfolk St c1965.

St Matthew's church 1956, sketched by Lewis Todd

Memories 2nd November 2009, by Mike Petty

Cambridgeshire local historians have been remembering some of the people who have contributed to a fuller understanding of the area.

One of these was William Mortlock Palmer, a country GP from Linton who in the early 1900's journeyed many miles on horse, dog cart, bicycle and later a somewhat erratic motor car to visit his patients, often taking antiques in payment for services rendered. Somehow he also made time to continue an interest in local history stimulated as a lad at the Cambridge Free Library while he was an apprentice chemist. Now library shelves hold dozens of his publications, many of them reprints of newspaper reports of the lectures given to Women's Institutes on the history of their local area. After retirement in 1925 Dr Palmer devoted much time to a photographic survey of Cambridgeshire's villages, houses, windmills and customs that was being compiled by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. He died 70 years ago but his legacy lives on.

One woman who had more call than many to remember him was Enid Porter who ran the Cambridge and County Folk Museum virtually single handed for 29 years until she retired through ill health in 1976. She would spend as much time as she could in her little office with a single bar electric fire and the door just open in case anyone came in. When she heard

people talking about the artefacts she would be out there engaging them to find out their experiences. Enid set down that accumulated knowledge in books and articles and encouraged Arthur Randall & W H Barratt from the Fens to publish their tales and traditions.

This is the centenary year of Enid's birth and as a special tribute Decker Murfitt, a horseman from the fens, will be giving a talk on his life with horses. When Decker started at the age of fourteen with Cole Ambrose in Stuntney they had 3000 acres, 100 men and 200 horses. He had already worked horses since the age of eleven and all of his forbearers were horsemen of some description. Decker will tell of the ways and secrets of the old horsemen, the control of difficult animals, old cures and even the pagan custom of not burying the afterbirth which is still in use to this day. The meeting will be introduced by Neil Lanham who has himself devoted a lifetime to recording such oral traditions. It promises to be a fascinating evening at Swaffham Prior Village Hall tomorrow, Tuesday, at 6.45pm – contact Cambridge & County Folk Museum (Tel 01223 355159.) for tickets, which are £5.

Elsewhere folk have been gathering to pay final respects to other local historians. St Wendreda's church at March was packed virtually to its angel rafters for a tribute to Peter Hewitt, a retired teacher who shared his passion for history with classes and groups up and down Cambridgeshire. He also participated in many other areas of community life, from choral music to Whitemore Prison, touching many lives in many ways. March's wonderful town museum owes much to his support.

Then last week at Chesterton church friends and family gathered to remember Derek Stubbings. [As Alan Brigham recalls, Derek's great achievement was to connect with others and to pass on his care and his enthusiasm for the past to the present generation, while enabling those whose childhood WAS that past to have the opportunity to reflect and remember together. Many people got great satisfaction, enjoyment and companionship from attending meetings of the Chesterton Local History Group that Derek helped to establish 25 years ago.](#) His knowledge of Chesterton, Barnwell and Fen Ditton areas was prodigious and his support to Enid Porter at the Folk Museum and to the staff of the Cambridgeshire Collection was greatly appreciated.

A wonderful tribute of a completely different nature has come in after I featured a picture of two girls on a motor scooter. It brought an instant response from Harry Chalklin, aged 13. Harry writes: "The young lady on the front of the Vespa happens to be my grandmother, Thelma Hill. It was taken shortly before she met my grandfather when she worked in the motorcycle shop Hallens. My grandfather was a motorcyclist, and met my grandmother through a friend who also worked in Hallens at the time. She made the red dress she's wearing in the photo. She's still as pretty today."

pictures

William Mortlock Palmer at Kirtling Post Office 1930
March and Chesterton churches – both packed for funerals
Enid Porter receiving a Gas Cooker at the Folk Museum in the 1950s
Harry Chalkin's gran, Thelma Hill, on her Vespa 1950s

Horse and cart at Stuntney 1965

Arguments over the changing use of fenland are not just confined to Wicken. Just a few miles away is Quy Fen, an area of quiet open land linking Quy, Horningsea and Fen Ditton.

Kitty Watts remembered it as it was just before the Great War. "About twice a week, after an early tea, my cousin and I would help my father harness the old horse to the tumbrel cart and off we would go down the wide leafy droves to Quy Fen to cut grass or hay for our cows and horses. Oak, Ash and Elm trees had been planted alternately on each side of the droves and were now almost full grown. Willow, Whitethorn, Wild Rose, and Blackberry bushes grew in profusion along the sides of the cart tracks.

"Once we reached the fen we helped unrein the horse so that it could wander around and feed. While Dad sharpened up his scythe and got busy mowing swathes of the grass, some patches thick with white clover, trefoil and wild tares, my cousin and I would wander off for half an hour or so collecting an armful of meadowsweet, purple loosestrife and other wild flowers which grew in the marshy places among the rushes and round the Cut, a big pool of water where fossils had been dug.

"With larks singing overhead and all kinds of warblers and tits among the bushes, a startled snipe or plover joining in with their cries, and many different kinds of butterflies, moths, dragonflies or occasionally a glimpse of a grass snake or lizard sunning themselves along the chalk hills, the time passed very quickly. By the time we returned Dad had long swathes of cut hay all around and we got busy with forks and rakes making it into heaps and filling the cart with it. Once we had loaded a good load we all climbed on to the top and set off for home again"

In later years Quy Fen Cut became a very popular bathing pool, and in summer people came by cars and bicycles from Cambridge and other villages around to picnic among the bushes. Fishermen would come too, for there were plenty of fish in the smaller cuts around that were not suitable for bathing. Although Quy Fen was a long way from the village one rarely visited it without seeing someone else enjoying its beauties", Kitty recalled.

But things could not last. During the Second World War it was enclosed and later let for grazing to a farmer for his cows and horses. Without getting proper permission he sent tractors down there and cut down trees, uprooted bushes and old favourite landmarks, levelled out the chalk hills and ploughed up much of the land. After protests it was reset with grass, but it was never quite the same old Quy Fen, Kitty lamented in 1958

However the area had changed radically before that. There had been great drainage enterprises of the seventeenth-century, the inclosure of the early 1800s and the massive disruption to the tranquil acres that was caused by wholesale extraction of coprolite after 1850.

Then in 1959 a large area became designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest because of its beetles and dragonflies, plants and shrubs. But this status caused extra problems for the trustees who managed it on behalf of the villages. They were told what to do by 'experts' from environmental organisations, most of them young and inexperienced who felt their new college degrees meant they knew better than the countryfolk. As a result the open grass areas became infested with weeds, ragwort and thistle and the ground became overgrown with brambles.

Now once more it is being put into a good condition by the Quy Fen Trust whose secretary,

Bill Watts, has contributed a foreword to a history of the fen that was written by his late sister, Peggy.

It includes an account of the death of William Ison who died while cutting hay in the fen on 28th August 1873. Ison had put his pitchfork in a pile of hay that he'd raised above his head to serve as an umbrella during a downpour, thus providing conductor for the lightning that killed him.

Incidents of this kind form the basis for an almanac of horrible happenings just produced by Neil Storey. For each day in the year he has some macabre of tragedy –bodysnatching, murder, arson, cholera or witchcraft. It can be interesting to see what happened on your own birthday – for mine it's the execution in 1898 of William Horsford, a farmer from Spaldwick who'd poisoned his cousin when she found herself pregnant by him. It is not all horror for Neil features an engraving of a strange memorial to an Impington tripe-seller, Claud Coster. It was entitled 'The Puzzle' and published in 1756 but was probably completely made up. The trick is to ignore the full stops and line breaks; it starts 'Beneath this stone ...' and ends 'his consort Jane'. Can you work out the rest?

The History of Quy Fen by Peggy Watts is available from the Quy Fen Trust, 6 Orchard Street, Quy, CB25 9AE at £5 plus £1 postage

A grim almanac of Cambridgeshire by Neil R. Storey published by The History Press, £14.99 – ISBN 978-0-7524-5010-0

pictures:

Girl leading a horse and cart (nb subs this is not Kitty)
Memorial to William Ison, struck by lightning on Quy Fen
The Impington memorial

covers of the two books

Memories 16th November 2009, by Mike Petty

The opening of a new Primark store has brought an increased number of shoppers into Burleigh Street, Cambridge. It is an area that has changed dramatically in recent years following the arrival of the Grafton Centre and the loss of two former major shops, Laurie and McConnal and the Co-op, the site of which now houses the new arrival

But 50 years ago, in November 1959, over forty shopkeepers in the Fitzroy-Burleigh area sought to boost trade by clubbing together to launch the Greatest Shopping Week ever. There were be a galaxy of attractions, free gifts and even late-night shopping until 8 pm on a Friday.

In an advertising supplement in the News they sought to boost their reputation for quality and service:

"In the past few years the Fitzroy/Burleigh Street area, with its easy access, ample car-parking facilities and huge variety of shops, has become increasingly popular as Cambridge's most convenient shopping centre". When tracing the development of Fitzroy Street they mentioned: "Some of Cambridge's oldest inhabitants might remember the gates, which until once stood at the New Square end marking the boundary of the old market". I must admit this is new to me – does it linger on in your family memories.

Many of the shops which grew up there in the 19th century were in ramshackle buildings, combining timber and corrugated iron with a minimum of brickwork. Often these were built over the front gardens of houses which had their ground floors converted – a common practice in those times. Nevertheless a lively trade developed and the 1900s saw the gradual development of new shopping.

“Within the last few years two of the last-remaining groups of ramshackled shops have made room for up-to-the-minute shopping remises; many other shops have had ‘face-lifts’ and improvements are constantly going on to provided nothing but the best shopping conditions for the public and working conditions for employees”, the traders claimed. But did you work in any of those shops, and what are your memories?

As well as the two large department stores there were 39 specialist traders including groceries, meat, fish, green fruit, confectionery, furniture, gramophone records, dry cleaning and denture repairs. Each gave the best possible service and prices which, quality for quality, were the lowest to be found anywhere. Amongst them was Vic Davis, Hillman and Commer agents at the Garage in Fair Street, Dysons clothing shop in Burleigh Street who were stocking shortie overcoats and suedette jackets, pullovers and knitwear while Pets Corner had everything for the tropical and coldwater fish as well as dog, cage bird, cavy or hamster.

It was easy to get to by bus, being just a short walk from Drummer Street and it was car-friendly. “Parking is one of the hazards of motoring these days; happily enough it isn’t such a great problem in the Fitzroy / Burleigh Street area”. the traders reminded shoppers, with two car parks plumb in the area, one at New Square and the other at East Road near the junction of Burleigh Street.

But change was in the air following the arrival of a Fine Fare Supermarket as part of a new block in 1956 which had caused concern to some traders who felt it spoiled the atmosphere the street. Such change should not come piecemeal, the whole area should be erased and redeveloped at one time, they felt. The scene was already set for a massive debate that would rumble on for decades.

Did you shop there and what do you recall of the area in the days before the Grafton.

pictures

Vic Davis advert Nov 1959

102.16 – Queuing outside The Man’s Shop, Burleigh Street in the 1950s

9863 – Fitzroy Street, 1936

10287 Fitzroy Street corner of James St 1939

Burleigh St 1960s – News pic Supp 0161109.jpg

Co-op – Co-op shop, Burleigh Street c1903 – NB will need to use small

Butcher – G.A. Gilbert and his son serving customers in their Fitzroy St shop, June 1964 – news pic SUP 0158596

Fitz03 – Fitzroy Street c1903

Fitzr – Fitzroy Street 1963 – news pic SUP 0158608

new shops 1963 – the new block in Fitzroy Street – news SUP 0158598

Memories 30th November 2009, by Mike Petty

Now another Remembrance Sunday has passed and the poppy wreaths are being battered by the wind. This year there has been nobody with personal memories of life in the trenches of the Great War. And there are few who actually recall the impact that it had on the people left at home.

One man who has left a vivid picture of both home and war fronts was Cyril Ramsey Vincent. Born in Oxford, he worked as a Post Office clerk in London before retiring to Swavesey about 1899. There he started a second career as a village correspondent for a group of villages, contributing weekly columns to Cambridge Weekly News, Cambridge Express and Hunts Post. His keen eye for detail and his interesting style of writing - being paid by the inch for the reports he wrote - made his articles essential reading and he gained the trust of the people whose triumphs and tragedies he recorded.

Each week he cut out his paragraphs and pasted them into a scrapbook. After ten years he decided instead to carefully fold the cuttings into paper wrappers, listing the contents on the outside. This he continued week in, week out until September 1942. They were discovered in a barn in Swavesey and transferred to the Cambridgeshire Collection a couple of decades ago. There they have remained, largely unappreciated.

But now John Shepperson and Chris Richardson have transcribed the snippets on Swavesey during that great period of carnage called the Great War.

There are details of recruiting, of margarine shortages, blackout, the hospital for wounded soldiers that was established in the village and of the tribunals who decided who could be allowed to stay behind when others had to go. But the most poignant are the letters home from the lads who went. They were written from Gallipoli, Mesopotamia and from the mud of the Western Front.

Arthur Coulson of the Cambridgeshire Regiment wrote home in April 1915: "We had a rough ride the other night. It was like being in hell itself. The Germans were blowing up the road as we were going along it. We had to lie down flat in mud and water for a very long time. I expected every minute was the last. We lost a few men but White and Prior from Swavesey are all right. We took the trenches back again after a hard struggle. It was up to our necks in water in the trenches".

Later he wrote of another incident: On Easter Sunday the Germans put up a big card on which was written a happy greeting to the British and 'If you don't fire, we won't'. The truce did not last long "As I am writing the shells are going over my head from both ways. There are 30 or 40 dead Germans and French lying about. It looks a sight to see dead men lying in the fields"

The dead needed to be buried and in September 1918 Arthur Whybrow spotted a figure he knew: "Who do you think I saw the other day? Mr Sharp, the vicar of Swavesey, now a temporary chaplain to the Forces. He was burying a dead man just behind the lines who had just been killed"

It was the Rev Sharp's second tour. He'd gone out in January 1916 and written home "I seem to have been on horseback ever since I got here - it is the only means of progress as the mud is unspeakable and not infrequently a man has to be literally pulled out. I had five services yesterday and rode about 14 miles, besides tramping a mile or two, so I had a bit of a strenuous day. Two of the services were held in old gun dug-outs by the guns. I celebrated the Holy Communion and we had three hymns. The dug-out was quite full ... it was a strangely impressive service. The rain and wind is incessant. One gets wet and tired out every day". Within a week he was laid up with trench fever

Some local lads fought on horseback: Trooper Frank Hepher, Northants Yeomanry wrote of the impact of shelling: 'The horses nearly went mad and we thought we had better make a move for shells were coming over wholesale. You can guess what a job we had with four horses each, and they nearly mad. I was riding my own and got the other three on one side and we didn't let the grass grow under our feet'

Some lads fought in the air. A.A. Girling was with the Royal Flying Corps: "I have had several flights in an aeroplane; most of them have been for engine tests and I have been up two or three times on patrol after Germans, with a machine gun. It is quite exciting". One plane returned simply covered with bullet holes, "the pilot had one through his stocking, but he did not seem to mind a jot"

Their letters tell of their progress: George Beaumont enlisted in December 1915, he was wounded in June 1916, awarded the Military Cross in January 1918 – the first Swavesey man to win one – was promoted to Captain and died of wounds that April.

Vincent recorded story after story, telling how the news of the armistice was contained in a telephone message from the CDN which was displayed in the Post Office window 90 minutes before the official communication was received. There were victory celebrations and prolonged debates about Memorials. But even after the guns had fallen silent the sad news of casualties came in – in July 1919 William Howlett was told by the War Office that as nobody had seen his son for over a year, they must assume he was dead.

Cyril Vincent compiled a booklet to raise money for the War Memorial Hall. A few copies survive. But his weekly articles paint the most complete picture of the impact of that conflict.

There are to be only a very few copies of 'A Village during the Great War: Swavesey'. They can be obtained from John Shepperson at 148 Boxworth End, Swavesey, CB24 4RA (01954 230313) for £8 plus £2.25 postage.

Memories by Mike Petty, 7th December 2009

Christmas is an important time of the year for shopkeepers anxious to attract as many customers as possible in this prime buying time.

It is also a busy time of year for the staff who serve. But how does Christmas shopping now differ from that of 100 years ago?

In December 1909 a News reporter went out window-shopping. He was not alone, there were lots doing the same thing. It was not just the goods, but the way they were displayed that they flocked to see.

"A study of the windows of our local tradesmen dressed in all their Christmas bravery is sufficient to convince one of the enormous strides which artistic and tasteful window dressing continues to make from year to year. Every Christmastime the height of skill and attractiveness seems to have been reached until the next comes round."

The displays had moved with the times: "Not so long ago no shop window at Christmas time was complete without a mechanical figure of some description, not intended for sale, but to make people look into the window. But these devices often defeated their own object by causing crowds to assemble and concentrating people's attention on the mechanical wonder. One stopped and gazed at it, and often passed without noticing the things that were for sale."

By 1909 they had largely disappeared to be replaced with mechanical toys in profusion, many

of them amazingly ingenious and well-constructed, and so cheap that one wondered how they could possibly be made for the money. Children were particularly attracted to the window displays: "There is every excuse for the little ones many of whom will get their only Christmas treat by looking at the good things their more fortunate brothers and sisters will be able to play with at closer quarters."

So what was the Nintendo Wii of 1909: "It is interesting to note the continuance of the 'Teddy Bear' craze, which does not show any sign of abatement but remains as strong as when these quaint little animals were first introduced"

Few shoppers were organised: "It seems a strange condition of things that some persons start out on shopping expeditions without the smallest idea of what they intend to buy or any appreciation of the amount of trouble and irritation their undecided state of mind must engender on those whose fate it is to minister to their wants and help them come to a definite choice". I suspect this may not have changed!

Christmas was also a time to feast but with so many butchers competing for custom, how were they to convince the shoppers that their meat was best. The answer had been 'Show Night' which by 1909 was just a memory.

In the old days "Show Night" was the time when all Cambridge and his wife used to turn into the streets and every shopkeeper did his best to make a display of his wares and catch the public eye by some form of novel window dressing. The chief objects of attention were the butchers and poulterers where the carcasses of prize beasts and poultry were exhibited in prestigious quantities whilst the proprietors dispensed hospitality to their customers in their private offices or parlours.

But it all got out of hand and in their endeavours to beat one another the butchers killed more meat than they could get rid of in the ordinary way and losses followed. And then 'sentimentality' came on the scene – people thought it was barbarous and unworthy of nineteenth-century civilisation. The custom died and with it went the art of the butchers' 'window-dresser'. 'Show Night' provided a considerable fillip to trade and provided an opportunity for a great deal of harmless enjoyment and useful social intercourse – the late-night shopping of its day.

But butchers continued to display their meat beside the pavement as photographs from Burwell and Ely testify.

But what do you remember of your childhood Christmases?

Pictures of a Christmas meat display at Haslops butchers in Silver Street, Cambridge

Display of turkeys at Ely in 1931

Matthews of Cambridge advertisement in the Cambridge Chronicle 13th December 1922

Eaden Lilley shop staff c1900

Roz has some general Christmas pictures that might fit, including one of a shop in Saffron Walden with a model of Father Christmas in the window

Memories 14th December 2009, by Mike Petty

Last week I was invited to journey up to Peterborough to speak to a group who are raising money to support the work of the Sue Ryder foundation at Thorpe Hall. This imposing Jacobean mansion stands in its own landscaped grounds and cares for people in their frailer years. Yet the building itself is also in some need of attention, the ornate interior decorations are long past their best, the carved staircase now no longer used and the ceilings stained by leaking water from the wards above.

Then after lunch I drove a few miles to meet a man who told me something of Thorpe Hall's wartime role in training agents who were parachuted into occupied Europe. But it was his own experiences that I'd come to learn.

David Venters had been one of the soldiers who'd been involved on 'Operation Neptune' in March 1947. Then a hard frost, combined with heavy snow that melted quickly and a high tide in the Wash had resulted in the bank of the Great Ouse River giving. Water had poured through the gap and flooded hundreds of acres between Swavesey and Sutton, driving families from their homes.

As part of the fight-back Army engineers had drafted in American 'Buffalo' tanks to form a metal box around the collapsed bank to allow the earth barrier to be reinstated. The plan worked and the Duke of Gloucester had visited the scene to express Royal support for their efforts and sympathy for the plight of those who'd lost their house. All this was recorded by Walter Martin Lane, an Ely photographer who deposited his pictures in the Cambridgeshire Collection some four decades ago.

But Dave could tell me little about it. He'd arrived with the soldiers when it was all over and his job was to remove the vehicles and take them back to their depots. The Buffalos were amphibious tanks but would fill with water unless their pumps were started to clear the bilges. Donald recalls the soldiers lived in a Three-ton lorry opposite Bluntisham railway station and crossed a rickety bridge get to the site. He was not there long before he damaged his ankle and had to be taken to Addenbrooke's Hospital. His one memento is a photograph of himself taken beside a stack that had floated across the fens on the flood water

What he could tell me however was something that seems to have been less recorded. For two years he was based in Nissan Huts at the old American camp on the Milton Road at Cambridge. It had been constructed to occupy 850 people in wartime, 700 in peace-time.

When Dave was there in March 1947 it was a vehicle reserve depot packed with old military equipment, including several hundred tanks and armoured cars that had been damaged in wartime fighting and were destined to be scrapped. He was one of the many conscripted men who were totally fed up with army life, they'd had quite enough of being shouted at and ordered around and had no respect for the sergeants or corporals who tried to impose army 'bull'.

They still had to learn karate and to train to fight – but they trained to fight the Yanks! David had little love for the American servicemen many of whom, he says, were convicts who'd been released from gaol in order to get them to play their part in the war. He particularly disliked their attitude to coloured soldiers and has several tales to tell that are better unrelated.

There were Ordnance and Remy troops at Milton Road, as well as ATS Girls and German Prisoners of War many of whom who left their huts and hid in a massive dump of beds, chairs and other furniture until the army threatened to force them out. They taunted each other as 'Hitler Youth' and 'Churchill's children'.

David Venters went into Cambridge for dances at The Dorothy and The Rex on Magrath Avenue – a bit rough, he recalls. Then he was moved on to another depot at Castle Camps.

He has a remarkable memory of names and numbers of the men with whom he served, but would love to hear from anybody else who may have eked out their army days at the Milton Road camp. If you have memories to share of this or its later role before it became the Science Park, please let me know.

Pictures

David Venters beside a stack that floated during the 1947 floods

A stack floating on the floodwater at Haddenham

David Venters beside a tank (SUBS – NOT AT MILTON OR EARITH)

The Buffalo tanks form a barrier in the Great Ouse opposite Earith in March 1947

Coloured American singers entertain folk outside Trinity College c1955.

Remains of army buildings on the Milton Road camp 1974

American servicemen at King's college during the war.

Memories 21st December 2009, by Mike Petty revised

‘Christmas is not what it was’ is a lament that has been echoed through the centuries.

In 1825 Hone’s *Everyday Year Book* commented: ‘Now Christmas-day only, or at most a day or two, are kept by people in general. But, formerly, there was nothing but a run of merry days from Christmas-eve to Candlemas, and the first twelve in particular were full of triumph and hospitality. We have seen but too well the cause of this degeneracy. The middle classes make it a sorry business of a pudding or so extra, and a game at cards. The rich invite their friends to their country houses, but do little there but gossip and gamble; and the poor are either left out entirely, or presented with a few clothes and eatables that make up a wretched substitute for the long and hospitable intercourse of old’

But what made a proper 1820s Christmas. “Many were for mince-pie; some for the beef and plum-pudding; more for the wassail bowl; a maiden lady timidly said, the mistletoe; but we agreed at last, that although all these were prodigious, and some of them exclusively belonging to the season, the *fire* was the great indispensable. Upon which we all turned our faces towards it, and began warming our already scorched hands. A great blazing fire, too big, is the visible heart and soul of Christmas. But a huge, heaped-up, *over* heaped-up, all attracting fire, with a semicircle of faces about it, is not to be denied us”

Many however have no real fire and few friends or family to share it with. In 1951 a visitor wrote to the *News*:

“Sir –I have spent Christmas in a few places, but this one which I was compelled to spend in lodgings in Cambridge has been unique. With all cafes, restaurants and hotels closed and with those public houses which were open devoid of their usual snacks and sandwiches I found it impossible to get a meal on Christmas Day. With the complete cessation of public transport it was impossible to go in search of more hospitable regions. Perhaps in the future Cambridge will conform to the standards generally offered by its counterparts elsewhere – A Stranger”

This year there will be many whose soldier husbands, sons or daughters may be away in distant places. Their pain at separation was also felt by families during other wars, mementoes of which survive in the form of silk Christmas cards sent back home from the trenches in the days before emails and mobile phones [CAMBRIDGESHIRE REGIMENT CHRISTMAS CARD 1915]

But separation affects others too. In 1947 200 members of the Polish community were based at an Agricultural camp at Cherry Hinton. Away from their own families they gave a Christmas party for English children, entertaining about 75 youngsters at their hostel in Walpole Road. The Poles, who had been doing agricultural work since they were demobilised about six months earlier, gave up their sweet ration for two weeks and part of their special Christmas allowance to provide the tea. During the meal the kiddies were entertained with lively Polish folk songs played on two accordions and to Polish carols sung by the newly formed hostel choir

Another visiting community were American airmen who at Christmas 1953 threw a party for local youngsters: "For unrestrained Yuletide abandon you have to go a long way to beat the Christmas parties held by the U.S. Army at Lakenheath for children in local homes. When 300 British youngsters join forced with 300 uninhibited G.I.s and embark on a festive warpath they simply love every hectic minute of it and the breathtaking pace of the joviality saw them coming back for more. Each child is allocated a buddy – a soldier whose duty it is to see his young charge goes short of nothing. This year they had ham sandwiches and ice-cream, as previous experience has shown you can't expect a young child to sit down and eat a supreme dinner of high quality and gigantic proportions."

Did you attend any of these parties, or are your memories of parties organised by local groups or businesses. Perhaps you might recognise some of the faces in a 1950s picture taken by John Carter. [PHOTO OF CAMBRIDGE CHILDREN WITH FATHER CHRISTMAS c1955 – DO YOU RECOGNISE ANY FACES?]

And did your trade have a special way to mark the festive season? In the 1930s merchants at Cambridge Corn Exchange traditionally ended the year by something like a snow-ball fight, using the corn and other items in which they traded. The News of 1934 reported: "The signal for the commencement of the battle was the explosion of a cracker near the door. The 'firer' was immediately bombarded and soon covered in flour, wheat and artificial manure. Crackers banged merrily, bags burst with marked effect and very soon all the corn-merchants who had not thought discretion the better part of valour were life-like imitations of snowmen. Dignity of every kind went to the wind, even the rather grim-looking statue of Jonas Webb looked comical with the flour-bag headgear that one of the brighter sparks had placed on it!" [SKETCH OF TRADERS AT CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE IN 1950S]

There were many Christmas dances, with the Dorothy Ballroom one of the prime venues. But for many the highlight was the Dustman's Christmas Ball in Cambridge Guildhall. In 1953 dustbins were tastefully displayed on the stage behind the Astrals All Star Dance Orchestra, reminding the dancers of the occasion. Miss Daphne Frostick of East Road was chosen as the new "Queen of Scavengeria". The cabaret was amusing and skilful with four men and four girls entering into a ballet. Although the men were a little less graceful than their partners they gave a performance that will long be remembered by the 500 people who attended one of the most looked-forward to and popular functions of the year. [PICTURE OF A CHRISTMAS DANCE MID 1950S – NB NOT THE DUSTMAN'S BALL]

This year it will be 'Strictly ...'

If you are quietly remembering (or trying to forget) the olden days of parents and presents why not drop me a line and share your recollections of Yuletide past.

Merry Christmas.

Memories 28th December 2009, by Mike Petty

In treacherous snowy weather postmen have been delivering Christmas cards showing picturesque snowy weather

One perennial favourite scene is a stagecoach battling though the snow, as they did in December 1836. That snow, almost unparalleled in living memory, was accompanied by a severe wind from the north-nor-east which caused drifts so big as to form impenetrable masses. The roads from London to the north, and indeed to every other place, were completely stopped up. Some of the stagecoaches bound for Cambridge had managed to get as far as Puckeridge but there conditions had become impossible. The town had never seen so many stranded passengers, every bed had been taken and upwards of forty people had been compelled to pass the night as comfortably as possible on chairs at the Bell Inn. [SCAN OF STAGECOACH STUCK IN SNOW NEAR WELLS, NORFOLK]

Even the Lynn Union coach had found its passage impeded, finally forcing its way into Cambridge on the Tuesday afternoon at four o'clock, instead of the previous day at two. Even then the journey had only been possible at all by taking the horses off the coach and driving them through the snow to beat out a track for men to clear. By the time he had reached Barkway the snow had been level with the top of the coach yet in the Wagon and Horses at Barley the pub was full of men who should have been clearing snow but who were refusing to work until they were paid. It had taken the coachman, Thomas Cross a deal of cajoling, bullying and a considerable quantity of ale before the coach was able to get even as far as the twelfth milestone - and more ale before he could get further. [SCAN OF BARLEY INN SIGN, 1901]

Snow comes at many times of the year but the Christmas of 1906 was heralded as one that occurred few times within a lifetime. A good old-fashioned Christmas when the brightly-blazing Yule log, or its modern equivalent, was necessary to counteract the efforts of King Frost was as a rule so old-fashioned that it seemed to have existed only in the picturesque imaginations of the novelist and pictorial artist, a reporter noted on 27th December 1906 reflecting on a countryside covered with a white mantle of snow. In those days a Cambridge byelaws compelled a householder to remove the snow from the path in front of his habitation, which provided an opportunity for out-of-works to earn an honest copper. One rang the bell of a corner house and informed the occupier that he had swept the snow from his path. Obviously the only thing the housekeeper could do was to pay the man for his labour. But when he rang the bell of the adjoining house with many feet of frontage there was no answer: the occupants had gone away for Christmas but not drawn their blinds [SCAN OF TRUMPINGTON STREET CHRISTMAS 1906]

In 1927 snow began Christmas day & led to most complete stoppage of road & rail traffic since the coming of motor car. Many of the main roads in the county were blocked with snowdrifts from six to ten feet. Trains, motor buses and cars were held up and travellers stranded. The wheels of the mail vans were equipped with chains with the result that hold-ups were uncommon, though one van on the Histon – Milton road had to be dug out. The Ortona motor buses had a terrible time in the blizzard. Buses were stuck in snowdrifts and relief gangs had to be sent to dig them out. 1950 was another snowy December when roads became treacherous. Melbourn hill was completely blocked by three lorries across the road, while cars struggled to climb Madingley Hill and there were long queues also in the Girton road because they could not get a sufficient hold on a rising road.

But for all the tales of hardship and people trapped in their vehicles there is still nothing to beat the epic experiences of Elizabeth Woodcock who was lost in the snow for eight days and nights back in February 1799

She had been shopping in Cambridge before setting off back to Impington just as dusk was coming on. Snow was already falling and as she got near home she decided to take a short cut across a field. But her horse took fright at the snowflakes and she dismounted, intending to lead him. But the horse bolted, Elizabeth got disorientated and became lost and exhausted. She sat down under a hedge to rest - and got buried by the snow. Meanwhile the horse came home alone and her husband set out to search for her, without success. They searched the next day and the day after that. They thought she had been stolen by gypsies and would never be seen again - unless when the snow melted her body would be found murdered in a ditch. But then a shepherd noticed a handkerchief sticking out of a snowdrift - and heard Mrs Woodcock shouting at him. He dashed off and came back with men and shovels, together they dug her out. She had been trapped under snow eight days and nights, but was still sensible. They carried her home and called for the doctor. He put her to bed without delay & prescribed small quantities of weak broth – and no strong drink. But Elizabeth's plight attracted attention, people brought out prints and sketches, poems and rhymes all cashing in on her experiences and she had many visitors taking her stronger, more nourishing broth, and strong spirits. Her doctor persuaded her to take port wine and opium and she began to rally, but one by one her toes turned black and had to be snipped off. By April her general health had much improved, but the mutilated state in which she was left, without even a chance of being able to attend to the duties of her family was almost worse than death itself. Still the people came to see her, still they brought her hard liquor, and still Mrs Woodcock enjoyed it. She died on July 24th 1799 a victim of snow, frostbite, and hard liquor. A memorial was erected to her memory near the site of her snowy entombment.[SCAN OF ELIZABETH WOODCOCK TRAPPED IN THE SNOW OR OF THE MEMORIAL WITH KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL IN THE DISTANCE

EXTRA PHOTO OF YOUNGSTERS TOBOGGANING BESIDE MIDSUMMER
COMMON IN MID 1950S – DOES ANYBODY RECOGNISE THEMSELVES?

Memories 4th January 2010, by Mike Petty

Albert (Bertie) Biggs was born at 29, Gwydir Street in 1925. He now lives in Letchworth but has been sharing his memories of the family's dairy.

He writes: "In 1942 the government ordered that there should only be two milk suppliers per street and our family firm (Sturton Town Dairies, A Biggs and Sons) were allocated Gwydir Street, Sturton Street and surrounding roads. Most of the milk came from a farm in Bottisham and the dairy where the milk was bottled and pasteurised was at 121/123 Fitzroy Street.

"My father Frederick Biggs delivered to Gwydir Street with a horse and milk float. He and the horse, named Dinah, started at Norfolk Street end. There were few cars parked but the horse would give them a wide berth and knew where to stop, including outside the dairy at 29, whilst he had his breakfast!"

Another of the company's milkmen was Walter Newman who married Frederick's sister, Alice. Walter carried on the rounds after Fred's death and eventually worked for the company that bought the business.

One day in the mid 1950s Walter was delivering to properties in New Street when his horse, Polly, apparently decided to help out by knocking on a door for the money - or perhaps she was delivering leaflets! But does anybody know the name of the lady!

Albert tells me he drove the float in the photo, but being 17 he preferred the firm's 5cwt Fordson van as the brakes and acceleration was better!

If you can add anything to the story then let me know or take a look at a website devoted to the Gwydir Street area - <http://www.colc.co.uk/cambridge/gwydir/>

Another milkman to operate a horse-drawn float was George Bainbridge; J. Badcock of Cambridge has lent me a snap of him taken in September 1962. But do you recognise the street in which it was taken.

##

Geoffrey Reed from Girton has contacted me to say he recognised himself amongst the group of lads tobogganing down the slope towards the River Cam beside Victoria Road bridge that I featured in last week's 'Memories. His mother (who will be 97 in February 2010) still has the original CEN copy somewhere in a drawer.

Geoffrey writes: "I guess I was about 10 or 11 years of age at the time. I can remember it vividly and I also 'built' the sledge upon which I was seated! We used to live above my mothers' shop (The Granta Bureau) in Milton Road and my father had hairdressing businesses in the City. I also remember my parents insisting I still wear short trousers when I started at Chesterton Secondary Modern. I did manage to obtain long trousers by my second year. Thus the photo has to be around 1953/54."

Perhaps some of the lads are also amongst the youngsters shown on a picture of a Chesterton Boys' School outing to London as part of the school's 21st anniversary celebrations in July 1956. Can you put any names to the faces?

PHOTOS: WALTER NEWMAN AND HIS HORSE POLLY IN NEW STREET

GEORGE BAINBRIDGE WITH HIS MILK FLOAT IN SEPTEMBER 1962 – BUT WHERE WAS IT TAKEN

GEOFFREY REED AND FRIENDS TOBOGANNING ABOUT 1953

CHESTERTON BOYS SCHOOL EXCURSION TO LONDON 1956

Memories 11th January 2010 by Mike Petty

Two readers from different sides of the Atlantic have shared their memories of the same area of Cambridge.

Alastair Green has emailed from Salem, Oregon to recall the 1960s when he lived on Maids' Causeway a short stroll away from Norfolk Street where his grandfather had a butcher's shop. [SCAN OF MAIDS CAUSEWAY IN 1930's]

"My grandfather made sausages and let me eat the raw pork that remained. Never once was I ill as a result. He would give me a chicken's foot and I'd tie it to a piece of string and drag it round the streets. I used to go down into the cellar of the butcher's shop and remember the smell of the sawdust and all the knives and saws my grandfather used. The steps down were

wooden, and there was a length of rope onto which you had to hold when ascending or descending the steps. My grandmother was a great cook, and I well remember her making suet (steak and kidney) pudding. She had a copper and used to cook the pudding in that.

“I remember their house being absolutely frigid in winter. My grandfather wouldn't have the light on in the living room and so we'd sit watching television in the gloom. They had one of those big radios, but it didn't work.

“Grandad only drank bottled Guinness and would have one with lunch. He had fought in France and had shell casings that had been decorated and polished. They had two of those white ceramic dogs that nowadays are probably quite valuable. They also had a number of Toby jugs, and had a bowl and a jug for water in their bedroom.

“In later years I worked for Loker's wholesale newsagents on East Road. [SCAN OF LOKER'S EAST ROAD 1950s]. There was a fish and chip shop on Fitzroy Street and there was part of a sawfish on the tiled wall. In James Street there was a shop owned by an old couple. She had rouge on her cheeks, and I remember the bell above the door. On one occasion, when it started to rain, I sat under a table outside an antique, or possibly furniture, store that was on the same street”. [SCAN OF JAMES STREET 1964].

Ron Gouldstone from Toft goes back a couple of decades earlier:

He recalls: “I was born in Burleigh Street in 1933 and lived there until around 1946. [SCAN OF BURLEIGH STREET c1964] My Mother owned the wool shop on the corner of Adam and Eve Street, number 47. She also had a wool shop in Sussex Street, the Granta Wool Store. I can remember some of the shops in the area.

“In East Road there was Sylvesters on the corner of Dover Hill who sold sweets and ice cream, I used to go there and purchase two separate pennyworths of sweets for myself and my sister once a week. There was Lokers the news agents where I obtained my comics and I had my hair cut at Mathews, a barbers shop full of posters of cricketers and airmen with Brylcreemed hair. In Burleigh Street there was Lefage's grocers shop next door to Renbros, Mr. Wills who repaired radios and charged their batteries and the Dunlop Rubber Company which sold car and bicycle tyres.

“In Fitzroy Street there was a pet shop run by a Mr. Wright where I obtained tropical fish, lizards and green tree frogs, much to the consternation on my long suffering parents. Sturton's was a fantastic emporium, stuffed full of hardware and the pungent smell of paraffin and vinegar. The floors were made of wood and produced wonderful clunking echoes as you walked around. Cash for purchases was put in a small tin and shot up to the cashier's office on an overhead wire device, your change returned by the same route. They also generated their own electricity using a very large oil engine in the lane at the back of the shop, we youngsters would creep around to watch it working. [SCAN OF FITZROY STREET 1964]

“Street lights were ignited by a man on a bicycle carrying a long pole with a burner on the end. He would hook open the lamp door, turn on the gas in light the mantle. At daylight he would reverse the procedure. Milk was delivered on a pony and trap by a Mr. Wortley, scooped out of a churn with a dipper and deposited in your waiting jug. And there was a disabled man who pushed a pram around with a wind up gramophone in it and played records to all and sundry for loose change.”

Alastair sums up both their feelings “I have to say that there are times when I look at some of the photos and wish I could snap my fingers and be on those streets and see the town as it was in the Fifties and Sixties.”

Memories 18th January 2010, by Mike Petty

Harry Clements has written to me from Girton passing on his wife Gladys' memories of Christmas

She recalls: "When I was about 6 or 7 years old in 1926/7 my parents and I lived in very cramped conditions with my grand-dad on Brookside in Cambridge. [SCAN OF BROOKSIDE c1910]

"On Christmas Eve my mother would send my dad and me down to the Christmas market in Cambridge to buy oranges and nuts, but mainly to get us out of her way so that she could finish her many preparations. The market square would be really busy with people looking for last-minute bargains, and market traders anxious to dispose of their abundant stock. I had a good view, perched on my dad's shoulders, so I could see all the activity by the lights of the street gas lamps and the gas flares on the market stalls. Market traders were in a jolly mood and later on some of the green-grocery men would throw oranges to the crowd [SCAN OF THE MARKET 1920's]

"I remember that where the Arts Theatre is now in Peas Hill there was a small row of shops including one that was to me a magical shop owned by a Miss Shrive. I loved looking round all the toys. There was one that I particularly desired. It was a tin-plate model of a kitchen about a foot square containing equipment that could also be bought separately: the stove was sixpence and the saucepans threepence. [SCAN OF SHRIVE'S SHOP, PEAS HILL IN 1930's]

"As we made our way home to Brookside along Trumpington Street, the gas lamps were already lit by the gas-lighter and the muffin man would also be calling his wares that were carried in a tin tray on his head. When we arrived home my mum would have finished preparing the food for Christmas day, usually making delicious meals out of not very much. By this time I would be ready for bed which was mum's intention when sending us to the market, so that I wouldn't wake too early on Christmas morning to inspect small presents which today would not be worth consideration"

##

Michael Cosgrove from Cambridge has added greatly to my knowledge of the old army camp north of Milton Road level crossing. He was a design engineer at Pye Limited and spent two spells working in a Nissen hut on the camp. The first was during the early 1950's when Pye were developing the gun control equipment for the then secret Conqueror tank.

He writes:

Rather than paying repeated visits to the Fighting Vehicles Research and Development Establishment in Surrey it was decided to bring one of the prototype vehicles to Cambridge, and place it on the camp in a Nissen hut furthest away from Milton Road.

By putting the tank to the side midway down the hut it was possible to traverse the gun through 180 degrees, and to fully elevate or depress it. The electric motors were powered by a generator driven by an Austin 7 type petrol engine and, after the briefest of instruction, on a number of occasions my colleague and I had to drive the tank round the perimeter road to refuel it at a depot on site that was operated by the army at that time.

One feature of the design was a separate Commander's turret on top of the main one, to enable him to select a target. This had to stay on line by contra-rotating while the main turret was brought to bear. During the early stage of development control was far from perfect and, until it was demolished, the hut had a large bulge on one side where it had been hit by the gun overshooting the desired bearing. [SCAN OF AN OLD HUT ON THE MILTON ROAD ARMY BASE TAKEN 1974]

Some years later Pye decided to develop a wire-guided anti tank missile (Python) as a private venture. This had full government support short of financial, including rocket firing tests at Cranfield and prototype test flights on the ranges on Salisbury Plain. Initial design work took place in the Club Room over the pub in Portugal Place, and I was given the job of building a flight simulator using a large analogue computer based on a basic design from the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough. It was called PAMELA (Pye Anti-tank Missile ELectronic Analogue).

Due to its size, the project was moved to another Nissen hut on the Milton Road camp and displayed the missile as a small spot on a cinema sized screen. The computer controlled the position of a missile in flight as seen by its ground controller, allowing for its aerodynamic properties and the controller's input. Some 50,000 simulated flights were made to optimise the control design, using naval ratings as operators. These were drawn from groups who volunteered for unknown experiments carried out by the Medical Research Council in Chaucer Road.

One set of experiments were made for Short Bros. of Belfast, when the simulator was modified to represent a similar ship-borne anti-aircraft missile they were developing. After a few years the project moved to the Pye factory in Orchard Road, Royston, but was eventually terminated when the television receiver market collapsed and funds were no longer available.

Memories 25th January 2009, by Mike Petty

Richard Cox from Quy has sent me a picture of his wife Helen's grandfather, Leonard Lofts who lived in Suez Road, Cambridge. But he was not sure where it was taken, perhaps Trinity Street or the Green Street area, he thought.

Just a little research identifies it as Rose Crescent where the Kelly's County Directory of 1937 shows that Harry Tuck's newsagents shop was at number seven. Dating pictures can often be difficult but not in this case. The newspaper headlines relate to a boxing match between McCormick and Beckett which was reported in The Times on 13th September 1921.

Rose Crescent itself saw an epic battle on Bonfire Night 1929. Nearly thirty arrests were made during a Guy Fawkes 'Rag' on Market Hill. Early in the evening an attempt was made to light a bonfire in Petty Cury and there was a considerable blaze in front of Falcon Yard before the police noticed it. Then the undergrads moved to Rose Crescent where an effigy was soaked with petrol, stuffed with fireworks and deposited near the Market Hill end. The Guy itself was quickly put out but the petrol continued to burn for a long time afterwards.

Fire was always a worry. In January 1904 considerable damage was done by a blaze that started in the attic at the Rose Hotel. News was received at the Fire Station by means of the fire alarm post on Market Hill and they were soon on the scene with the horsed fire escape and tender. Despite this much damage was done in a comparatively small area and every room in the hotel suffered from the effects of water, which saturated the ceilings. Fortunately none of the bedrooms were occupied at the time. Then in 1907 firemen fought a blaze in the roof of a building which housed Miss Hutchings' Modes and Ladies' Outfitting Establishment and assistants were kept busy in removing hats and other goods from the shop.

Every generation will have their own memories of the area.

In 1973 a News reporter visited the Gardenia Middle Eastern Restaurant where he dined on Hummus, a thickish paste made with chick peas and oil which you scoop up with pieces of unleavened bread. It was quite tasty though for the price (25p) not particularly plentiful. It is not particularly elegant tackling by hand a four-skewer kebab (60p) in an envelope of unleavened bread with bits of onion and tomato spilling out. But the Gardenia does not pretend to be the place to take a grande dame out to dinner with candles. The Kadeifi (15p) which followed looked on the plate like a prandial imitation of Dougal, everyone's favourite long-haired television dog, he reported. Others preferred to get their food at the nearby Berni Steak Bar or the Health Foods Store, one of the oldest in the country, which traded in the Crescent from 1938 to 1988

Rose Crescent was originally the courtyard of the Rose Inn, with stagecoaches turning in from Trinity Street. Samuel Pepys once stayed there and noted that his rest was disturbed by 'drunken scholars making a noise all night'. In 1980 it was described by its landlord as a place where a man in gumboots and work clothes could stand alongside a businessman with brolly and bowler hat and get along together. Sons of the gentry, over late-night cups of coffee, would ask to borrow the phone to ring 'Mum'. The pub closed in 1981 and was converted into shops and Flambards wine bar.

Many of the original inn buildings had been swept away in the early 1800s for small shops and more change came when Caius College rebuilt the west side of the Crescent as rooms for undergraduates a century later. The somewhat bleak façade was transformed when some of the student bedrooms were turned into up-market shops in 1979.

But what are your memories of this area of central Cambridge.

PICTURES

Harry Tuck's newsagents and booksellers shop, 1921

A delivery man in Rose Crescent 1930s

Painting looking to Market Hill, 1900

View into Rose Crescent before rebuilding on Market Hill in 1935

Rose Crescent before changes by Caius college in 1979

The new shops, taken 1980

Memories 1st February 2010 by Mike Petty

Cambridgeshire's past is full of mysteries, some of which have been explained with the publication of the latest volume of *Proceedings* of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. But it has also prompted more questions.

Some of the most mysterious archaeological monuments stand just over the county border at Bartlow, near Linton. They are – or were – a series of Roman barrows, the largest in Britain, which when excavated in the 1830s were found to contain a rich array of grave goods dating back to the first and second century AD. Richard Neville, a prominent antiquarian, was present and jotted down his observations in his notebooks. But some of these have disappeared. What is worse is that several of the mounds themselves have also gone, destroyed when a railway line was constructed through the site. This attracted criticism in 1903 when A.R. Goddard wrote to the News:

Sir – the famous barrows known as the Bartlow Hills will soon be no more. It matters nothing that they were reared in Roman times or are the private property of a possessor bent on preserving these splendid relics. The railway company that would have destroyed them 50 years ago but for determined opposition at the time, has set its mind on their removal. They have elected to run their lines through the barrows instead of around them. So the picks of English navvies, backed by compulsory powers, will soon be at work ‘dinging doon’ these works of our Romano British forefathers, since they stand in the way of their company’s dividends. It is nothing short of a national scandal - A.R. Goddard.

In one of those strange coincidences I had been sent a view of the hills by Bryan Howe of the Sawston local history group. It was discovered by Ivan Start who found it in his loft and shows the view from the encroaching railway that was responsible for so much devastation

Now archaeologists from the University of Reading have published the results of recent geophysical and archaeological excavations. Their paper has been illustrated by a view of the hills painted by Richard Relhan, one of a remarkable series held by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society and deposited at the University Library.

A once-prominent Cambridge structure is also featured in the *Proceedings*. It was known as ‘Vicar’s Buildings and was erected as a model lodging house for sixteen families by the Rev John Cooper, vicar of St Andrew the Great in the mid 1850s. It was intended to provide sound housing at affordable rents for the working classes with one-bedroom apartments costing two shillings a week. They came complete with fire places, mains water and ample waterclosets, facilities far better than most private houses at the time. There were rules that had to be obeyed including no dogs, no drunkenness and no putting flower-pots on the window ledges. It was designed by Richard Reynolds Rowe, architect of the Cambridge Corn Exchange, and stood in St Tibb’s Row until razed for the Lion Yard redevelopment. In its latter days it had been taken over by the Arliss family as a printing works. Many will remember it as a gaunt, structure but when seen through the eyes of an unknown artist is revealed as an attractive building, almost as colourful of some of the people it sheltered.

John Pickles, the Society’s Librarian, has also been exploring the story behind a long-lost roadside stone. It was a memorial to John Layton, an Ely porter who had taken his own life in 1799 utilising a cord previously used to tie up a pig. As the inquest found he had committed suicide he could not be buried in consecrated ground but was interred “near to a certain place called Barton Pitts in the parish of Ely Trinity”, thought to be at the junction of Cambridge and Witchford. A stone was erected by subscription engraved on three sides to warn others of ‘the crime of self murder’. It has now disappeared and would probably have been forgotten but for a sketch by Hilkiah Burgess in 1807. Hilkiah was an engraver who produced views of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire churches including a representation of Ely Cathedral as it may have appeared before the collapse of the North Transept. Dr Pickle’s researches have revealed that an album of 130 of Burgess’s ink drawings dated 1808 has been sold in recent years, but he has been unable to track it down.

Can you help solve any of these conundrums – or have you something else to test the experts with?

Copies of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society’s *Proceedings* for 2009 cost £14.50 from the Editor c/o Haddon Library, Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3DZ – email editor@camantsoc.org.

SCANS

Bartlow Hills as seen by Richard Relhan c1820 - CAS
Bartlow Hills from the railway –

Layton's stone, Ely by H. Burgess

Ely Cathedral as it may have appeared before the collapse of the north transept – engraved by H. Burgess

Vicar's Buildings, St Tibb's Row by an unknown artist

Memories 8th February 2010, by Mike Petty

I take great delight in travelling around the area talking to groups of all kinds. Sometimes they are brought together by lack of sight, sometimes by a love of gardening, a past employment or just for companionship.

The other week I journeyed out to Haverhill to speak to the 'Golden Girls' who meet in a community room in the middle of a large estate that would not win many architectural awards.

Before I started the presentation on Sherlock Holmes in Cambridge, part two (we did the first part last time), I took the opportunity to share with them an article which had appeared in the Cambridge Daily News just 50 years before

On 28th January 1960 the News devoted virtually a whole page to a story headlined 'Haverhill – A Growing Township'

"Haverhill is a town that wants to grow", the report read. "It claims to be the first ever to ask London, voluntarily, for some of its overspill population and there are no grumbles". Already ninety families, mostly from the East End of London, had moved into a new housing estate in a scheme which would eventually double the present population of the little West Suffolk town. The London County Council paid for the initial cost of putting up factories and houses to encourage industries to relocate. Once firms made the move they brought their workforce with them.

"Many have come from unsatisfactory conditions and now have a home of their own for the first time", the paper reported. Afterwards one of the Golden Girls spoke of her own experiences.

She had lived with her husband and children in a flat in London. They could not lock the door as the tenant upstairs had to use their entrance to get in and out. This meant that she dare not have a bath in the kitchen but had to use the living room instead. One day her husband suggested they take a trip to the country on their motorbike. They put the youngest child in the sidecar and set off for a ride. After a while they arrived at a quaint Suffolk town where the market was in full swing. It seemed tranquil and a world away from the smoke and noise of London.

Later he drew up outside a large building and went inside leaving wife and child in the car park. By the time he got out she had got completely fed up with waiting and gave him a piece of her mind. But he had an excuse: he had a key. They made their way to a new house, the key fitted in the lock and they went inside. It was a marvellous home with all mod cons. And it was theirs if she wanted it! She lives there still, over 40 years later.

There were downsides: "It is possible you will miss the big supermarkets and multiple stores of London, and the food will be rather more extensive, that you will find the mile walk to the shops a bit of a drag". But Premier Travel were opening a bus service and when the estate was

complete there would be new local shops, a new police station and court house, a welfare centre and clinic

It would be good for Haverhill because without the vitality and prosperity of new people the town might fade away. The only people opposing it were farmers worried it take use up valuable farming land and that the new factories would attract agricultural workers off the soil.

The move to Suffolk was a life-changing experience for all those brave or lucky enough to take the opportunity: they knew they would ever be able to afford to go back to their old way of life in the Capital. It had benefits: "Most of your neighbours, like yourself, come from Islington, Shoreditch, Stepney, Bethnal Green, Finsbury, Poplar or Lambeth and you share your vast change of environment with them. In time more and more of your neighbours will be Haverhill people as the local council proceeds with its intention of mixing Londoners with their country cousins".

Some felt this integration had not been entirely successful. One lady said local people did not speak to her. But she was a Suffolk girl who had served in the Forces before returning back to her roots and now finds a jolly welcome amongst the 'Golden Girls'.

So what were your memories of starting a new life in Haverhill?

SCANS

News article 28 January 1960

149.01 : High Street Haverhill c1900

149.02: Market day c1950

149.03 : Haverhill in the 1960's

149.04 : houses on the Clements estate

149.05 : Queens Square shops 1981

Memories February 15th 2010, by Mike Petty

Yesterday being Valentine's Day prompted me to search my files for various snippets relating to love and marriage some of which prove that the course of true romance does not always run smoothly. We cannot however be responsible for the actions of our parents so I have removed the surnames to lessen embarrassment.

Some love affairs were kept secret:

In April 1929 the News carried a story of how Hector M., a freshman of Pembroke College had been staying at Miss Emily R's house with her brother, who was also a Pembroke undergraduate. The girl had left home one Saturday and motored to Chelmsford in her dad's car taking a quantity of luggage with her. There she met Mr M who left his own car in a garage there with the number plate missing. The two motored back to Trumpington but had since disappeared. Her dad feared the worst: "I suppose my daughter and Mr M must have gone away with the intention of getting married at Gretna Green". Emily was described as 'full face, fresh complexion, shingled curly hair' while Hector was a clean shaven young man with dark hair parted in the centre and brushed back. But when the News made inquiries at the blacksmith's cottage where many marriages had taken place they could find no trace of them. "It may be a joke, but if so it is a pretty poor one", the girl's father told a Press Association representative. But the young man's father could not see why so much fuss was being made.

In September 1930 the News reported: The secret marriage has just been revealed of a Cambridge girl Miss Rosa K of Kimberley Road to Reginald C, a millionaire colliery owner and shipping magnate. Her family had no idea of the wedding and the first the groom's family knew was when they saw a notice in the marriage column of a newspaper. Miss K, who is a pretty blonde, first met her husband when she was secretary to the Curator of the Botanical Garden to which he was a generous benefactor.

Some enjoy marriage so much that they do it again and again:

In January 1904 the Old Bailey heard the case of an Ely lady, Florence R. of Little Downham Road. Her first husband William had obtained a divorce nisi in 1887 citing Henry F. as co-respondent, but it was never made absolute. However Florence married Henry, or at least they went through a form of marriage, for as the first was not dissolved the second wedding was illegal and bigamous. It got worse: After Henry went away to South Africa Flo made the acquaintance of a man named B., whom she subsequently married. When Henry learnt of this he informed the police. Florence was sentenced to five day's imprisonment, equivalent to an immediate discharge.

Then to add to the complications Florence's mother married first husband William's father in the belief he was dead. William thus occupied this bewildering position: His father was his father-in-law. His mother-in-law was his step-mother. His wife was his step-sister and two other men had married his wife.

Sometimes it does not turn out as people imagine, as the News reported in July 1905:

Mr Prevett, the clever local Punch and Judy man was performing at a garden party near Cottenham and demonstrating the unhappy relations between Punch and his spouse with much vigour. At the conclusion of the show he was accosted by a lady who protested his manipulation of the dolls was too brutal and would have a demoralising effect on the poor innocent rustics. A short time after the lady married and quite recently was fined for assaulting her husband with a garden rake!

Others seem to be sure that men are to be shunned! This comes from January 1909: Harriet E. was a well-known figure around Mill Road, Cambridge. She usually wore a white veil and carried a portmanteau or bag in each hand and would walk along in a methodical manner until a certain shop was reached where she would have sixpennyworth of firewood carefully placed in one of her leather bags. She was so confirmed a man hater that she would not use money that bore the king's head. If she was given any she would throw it in the fire. She had never had a sweetheart and never wanted one, her inquest was told.

Other people advertise for a partner, as March 1909:

A fortnight ago the Cambridge Board of Guardians received a letter from a widow asking for assistance in obtaining her a husband. It was published in the News. Now she had received 78 replies. Several came from inmates of workhouses, some were musical and some expert in poultry keeping. One had a house, business and £700, another a pension. Two had the misfortune to have lost their legs, one from the knee down.

The most successful advertisement seems to have been a simple notice beside the village street: In April 1930 Mr Hewson C, a Horningsea bachelor, placed a notice on the front of his cottage. It read: 'S.O.S. Wanted a Wife. A real girl, not a church prude'. He described himself as a poet and farmer born in County Cork who had gone to sea and lived in the USA before coming to the village two years before. He had published one volume of poems but complained that with working in his garden and preparing meals, he had no time to write. When he married he would write a 'best seller'. The notice worked: he was inundated with

letters: 'They have come from all parts of the country, including Jersey. Many have come from London, from Mayfair as well as Hampstead, from servant girls as well as from girls who run their own cars. One letter enclosed a photograph of a delicate, refined-looking blonde, whom he declares he will probably marry'. By July he had apparently been successful: He sent a note: 'I am engaged to marry Miss A. F. from Fulham and will be married on September 23rd in London. I desire to thank the Cambridge Daily News for the kind publicity leading to such a happy result.'

More recently other means have been tried: In January 1981 a Cambridge student set up a computer dating service for lonely hearts in the university. For just 50p the unattached undergraduate was promised an introduction to the partner of his dreams. Confidential questionnaires drawn up by a student of experimental psychology were sent out and the results loaded on a computer. It matched them up to produce ideal partners and bliss ensues – they claimed. It was hoped the first couples would be paired off by St Valentine's Day.

Just in case it all went to plan and the couple planned to wed, the News in April 1981 had these hints. The prices might have changed a little over the last few years:

The least expensive part of a traditional wedding is the service. In an Anglican Church the basic charges for the ceremony without music add up to £25 plus an extra £3 for reading the banns. Extras such as an organist or choir cost £5 each. A Shire Hall register office ceremony costs £13. But a wedding dress averages £65, flowers £30 and wedding photographs at least £80. A Littleport firm now offers a video film for £85 but you need a video recorder to watch it afterwards.

If any of things rings any bells – wedding or otherwise – then let me know!

SCANS OF CHOICE OF ELY AND MILL ROAD PICTURES
A HORNINGSEA COTTAGE – NOT THE ONE WITH THE ADVERTISEMENT
PEMBROKE COLLEGE

Memories 22 February 2010, by Mike Petty

Jean Shanks has been in touch with some memories and also an enquiry. She emails:

"On 25th January, 2010 there was a photograph of my late father Leonard Lofts standing outside a newsagent's shop in Rose Crescent. I am now 82 years old and it was wonderful to see my Dad in the CDN. I was born seven years after the photograph was taken. Thank you."

She continues: "When I was a small girl of around nine years old I was with my dad on Midsummer's Common where I think we had been watching "The Bumps". I have a memory of him turning me away from a scene - not very pleasant - of the manual ferry sinking in the middle of the River Cam with a good few people on it with their bicycles. I have spoken to lots of people in the past and nobody seems able to throw any light on the subject. Can you help please".

The most dramatic story of a ferry sinking revolves around the Red Grind at Fen Ditton which capsized when it became overloaded following the ending of the May bumps in 1905. But this is obviously not the incident Jean is recalling.

Mishaps at ferries were not uncommon: in January that year Cambridge councillors were told of a fatal accident at Dant's Ferry a few days prior to Christmas when the breadwinner of a family was drowned. It was only one of many incidents for during that winter at least five persons had tumbled into the water at that spot. There was agitation for footbridges to replace

the chain ferries and two of these were built in 1927. One was at the Fort St George where the existing ferry which had carried people across the river for many years decided not to wait to be made redundant but sank shortly before the bridge was opened. However this cannot have been what Jean remembers either.

One ferry that did continue was the Horse Grind that crossed the river from Chesterton to Stourbridge Common until a bridge was opened there in 1935. A News article reported on its imminent demise: ““Old Alf” as he is familiarly known to hundreds, is still at the helm which he has held for the past 34 years. He will continue to propel his ungainly but faithful craft until it is finally docked. The Horse Grind, as its name indicates, at one time afforded passage for horse and cart as well as pedestrians and two ferries plied at the spot. As it the case of the ferries available to the public, it has been attached to a waterside hostelry. Its passing will leave only one such ferry remaining on the Cam: the ‘Pike and Eel’ a short distance further downstream.”

But none of this helps with Jean’s recollections of a ferry sinking in the mid 1930s. If so you can solve this mystery please contact me at the News and I’ll pass it on to her.

##

Antony Challis (jnr) contacted historian Allan Brigham with some interesting information concerning ‘Reality Checkpoint’, the lamp standard in the middle of Parker’s Piece.

Tony emailed: “As an established historian of Cambridge, I hope you will be interested in a more accurate account of the lamp post, commonly known as Reality Checkpoint. At the same time, perhaps rectifying an injustice.

“You are no doubt aware this is supposedly the oldest electric lamp in Cambridge. However, what is not generally known is that this is *NOT* in fact the original!

“The original post was torn down by American GI’s celebrating VJ, the end of the war with Japan. It was replaced by a local metalworks firm, George Lister & Sons, Cambridge. The work was done by foreman Mr Sam Mason, assisted by a young apprentice, Tony Challis, who did the iron scrollwork at the top of the lamp post. Mr Challis still lives in Cambridgeshire, and is also responsible for the ornate railings found at Grantchester Meadows.

“This is a little recognised fact, but one my family is rather proud of. Why: because Tony Challis is my father and as he approaches his 80th year, (and as it happens, his Diamond Anniversary), I feel it is only right that he should have his place in Cambridge history for his part in a local and well know landmark”.

From my notes it appears that in December 1893 Cambridge Corporation came to an agreement with the Electric Supply Company to erect the standard at a cost of £39 and the work was commenced early in 1894. The Corporation paid for the standard and for the first year the Company supplied the current free of cost. Following the damage in 1945 the lamp was redesigned and, according to the Table Talk column in the CDN on 21st September 1946, became the first fluorescent light in the country. It was repainted in bright colours by undergraduates in 1973 with the council’s permission.

But doubtless somebody will be able to add more memories of this important landmark. And when did it acquire the ‘Reality Checkpoint’ name

SCANS:

Jeans Shank's dad, Leonard Lofts, in Rose Crescent 1921

Fort St George ferry sunk just before the replacement bridge opened in 1927

Green Dragon ferry in mid stream

The Horse and passenger ferries at the Green Dragon c1905

Base of the lamppost on Parker's Piece – CAN YOU FIND A PICTURE OF THE ENTIRE THING PLEASE

Memories 1st March 2010, by Mike Petty

It's a long way from a palace in Bangkok to Mitcham's Corner, Cambridge. But that was the journey made by the grandson of the King of Siam in the 1930s.

Prince Chula Chakrabongse of Thailand had been educated at Harrow School where he had never quite felt accepted by the other boys, perhaps because of his oriental appearance. So when he came to Cambridge University in October 1927, as a man of his wealth and stature must do, he was determined to make up for that. There was only one college that would possibly be suitable: Trinity and his Country's emissaries were set to work to ensure his admission. But even his wealth and influence could not bend the rules and for his first year he would not be allowed rooms inside the college itself. He would have to live in a lodging house.

The Prince was allocated rooms above Arthur Shepherd's tailor's shop at 32 Trinity Street, where he was one of the young men supervised by Miss Davy, the landlady. His bedroom was on the third floor immediately opposite the bathroom he shared with three other undergraduates. If this was convenient it was offset somewhat by the fact that his sitting-room was on the first floor at the back of the house far from the street with a view of the grey walls of the college lecture room.

Nor was the décor to his taste. The room had ugly wallpapers, dark red curtains and armchairs and sofas covered in a hideous red plush. He immediately had it redecorated with a plain cream paper, the furniture was covered in a more modern kind of material in dark peacock blue and the early Victorian lamps replaced by some of a modern design. One wall was filled with shelves to take the collection of five hundred books he'd amassed whilst at school.

His table was quickly filled with letters – hundreds of circulars from innumerable university clubs and societies together with others from shops in Cambridge offering everything the new undergraduate could conceivably want – match boxes, tobacco jars and other utensils all decorated with his college crest. They were known as “freshers' delights”.

Prince Chula dined at Trinity where meals were served in three settings with the new arrivals allocated the 6.30 slot. He sat at the same place night after night when he talked to the same group and seldom spoke to anybody else. His friends were two boys who had known at Harrow, though he got to meet others once he started coxing for the college rowing team. He soon had a wider circle of acquaintances including one man recognised as ‘one of the bright stars of the intellectual firmament’; his name was Anthony Blunt.

Chula organised dinner parties in his rooms. Officially he was supposed to eat in college four times a week but provided he paid for the meal nobody bothered that he did not turn up to consume it. Instead he ordered food from the college kitchen which was served in his room by college waiters.

In his second year he was allowed a motor car although he did not care to drive. So the Siamese legation paid for an Avions-Voisin sports saloon capable of 70 mph complete with a chauffeur. In it he travelled extensively, motoring to Biarritz for the summer vacation or to visit his mother in Paris. By now he was sharing his accommodation – he decided he liked it much better than the main college – with his cousin Abhas and Manxman Smuts, a pedigree wire-haired terrier that he nicknamed Tony. It had a sweet expression and was most affectionate. It also learned numerous tricks, including walking in front of him in the street carrying the obligatory ‘square’, or mortar-board, in its mouth.

Of course His Highness did study, though this was somewhat secondary to his main reason for being in Cambridge. When he’d finished his three years he was allowed to stay on for another two to research eighteenth-century history. But by now Miss Davy had retired and the new landlady was less tolerant of his late lay-ins. So he moved to a lodging house run by Miss Stanley on Chesterton Road. There they had a garden so Tony could take a wife and start a puppy family.

Prince Chula left Cambridge in June 1932 and moved down a fine house in London where he wore his silk hat and tailcoat to the numerous balls that a gentleman was expected to attend during the season. There were problems back home where a revolution meant that he lost his immense annual income of £1,000 from the King. But this was something he could live with.

Much more tragic was the death of his dog in April 1933. The dogs’ cemetery at Hyde Park was already full up so he had Tony buried in a pets’ cemetery near Huntingdon. And, as a memorial to his friend, Prince Chula presented Cambridge with a water trough he had built, with permanently changing water. It was positioned at Mitcham’s Corner, not far from the garden in which Tony had been so content.

The Prince went on to marry an Englishwoman, set up home in Cornwall and establish a motor racing team. He also erected a second dog drinking trough dedicated to his four-footed friend, this one in Bodmin in a somewhat more peaceful setting than the original on Chesterton Road.

SCANS

Mitcham’s Corner, Chesterton Road 1963 looking towards the site of the dog drinking trough

Trinity Street c1930 - the Prince’s rooms were on the top floor

Cartoon of a wealthy undergraduate with chauffeur and sports car

The memorial to Tony, 1965

Prince Chula when cox for the First Trinity boat
Prince Chula aged 19

Memories 8th March 2010, by Mike Petty

The opening of Jamie Oliver’s Italian Restaurant in Wheeler Street marks a new chapter for a building that has served the people of Cambridge for over a century. For most of those years it was a public library.

Cambridge Free Library service was inaugurated on 28th June 1855 in rented rooms in the Friends Meeting House in Jesus Lane. At first people flocked to the library for the books but

it soon became clear that they also wanted to take them home to read by the light of their own candles. It took three years before a Lending department was established.

Readers also wanted newspapers though the Library Committee was reluctant to spend money on such things. They eventually conceded that papers could be allowed, but only if they were free. The proprietors of the Cambridge Chronicle and Cambridge Independent Press duly obliged and others agreed to supply copies of The Times and The Daily News that were only one day old. It had an immediate impact as Librarian John Pink recalled: "life was infused in an almost lifeless institution, a larger public quickly availed themselves of the privileges provided"

It was soon apparent that more space would be required and this was made available at the back of the Guildhall in June 1862. Even this was soon too small and in 1881 the Council agreed to build a new handsome domed Reading Room designed by George McDonell which opened on 14th June 1884. Here people flocked to read newspapers and magazines and to consult material from the Library's Cambridgeshire Collection that was displayed in cases around the room.

It was never the easiest space to keep warm. In April 1904 a reader wrote to the News: "Sir – I would like to know who is responsible for the very cold atmosphere in the Cambridge Free Library Reading Room. A few weeks ago I tried to enjoy an hour's reading, but the cold and draughts were so severe that, although a hearty vigorous man accustomed to outdoor work in all weathers, I caught a severe cold. In the recent cold snaps the room has been under 45 degrees all day long."

The next month it almost got too hot. A patrolling policeman, PC Winter, noticed smoke coming from a small window above the main door of a corn merchant's premises on Peas Hill at about half-past four in the morning. He aroused the occupants of neighbouring buildings and called for the fire brigade. They faced a formidable fight.

The lower floor of the lathe-and-plaster building was occupied by a shop and offices but the two floors above were full of corn, hay, straw and chaff. They were soon blazing fiercely with the street alive with rats fleeing for their lives. Happily there was little wind and plenty of water and when the flames had been subdued the domed roof of the library was still visible above the charred remains.

Following the usual delays the site was developed for new council offices and extra library provision. So things remained until 1939 when with the opening of the new Guildhall more space became available. The Reference department moved upstairs into the now-vacant offices and the Lending Library was moved into the domed room.

Other changes followed until by the time I started in 1964 the Reference Library was downstairs once more. There was a separate newspaper reading room which became a favourite haunt for gentlemen whose personal hygiene was not always of the highest and whose damp socks needed to be dried on the now-efficient radiators. Later this was replaced by a music department where one could borrow gramophone records. So things remained until the opening of a new Central Library in Lion Yard in 1975.

Now after a period as the Tourist Information Centre the former library has been transformed into a restaurant and people eat where previously they scanned the shelves looking for cookery books.

My own food memory dates back to October 1972 when I organised an exhibition in the Guildhall on the history of tourism. One of the displays came from the Old Fire Engine House at Ely who kindly produced a selection of traditional fenland fare including eel pie. But by the

end of the week it had passed its best and, not quite knowing what to do with, it I placed it on the library roof from the Saturday night till Monday morning. By then it had attracted the attention of half the cats in Cambridge!

It was always said that the old library was haunted by the ghost of its first librarian, John Pink. If he'd still there let's hope he likes pasta!

SCANS

Peas Hill following the fire 1904 with the domed roof of the library visible in background

Library users 1900 – 135.24

Sketch of library users 1905

Domed reading room 1930 – 141.36

Lending Library c1964 with the late John Franklin on the Enquiries desk

The Friends Meeting House in Jesus Lane where the library started in 1855.

The Central Library Wheeler Street 1972

We might also use a modern picture of the new Restaurant

Memories 15th March 2010 by Mike Petty

Orwell is a village of whitewashed, thatched cottages – or at least it was until several of them were condemned by the council as being unfit for human habitation and demolished in the 1960s. Many of their occupants were pleased to be rehoused in council properties in Meadowcroft Way and Fishers Lane, saying ‘the only place for old cottages is in pretty pictures on the sitting room wall’

With so much necessary change it is inevitable that the village streetscape will have altered. Recently members of the Orwell Community Archive Group have been seeking out and taking photographs of how it was, and how it is today. These have been displayed on the Cambridgeshire Community Archives Network website - www.ccan.co.uk - and now a selection of the images have been issued in a book funded by a National Lottery grant which has been distributed to each house in the village. There a few copies remaining for folk who have memories of Orwell

“Twentieth-century Orwell through the Camera Lens” covers a variety of topics– including shops, schooldays, the Horticultural Society, entertainment and sport. One of the largest pictures features the village football team which enjoyed ‘a season without parallel in the annals of Cambridgeshire village football’ in 1957-58, winning Division 1 of the Cambridgeshire League and gaining promotion to the Cambridgeshire Premier League. The picture appears on the website where each player is named. But amongst the faces proudly facing the camera there is one person missing: the club’s mascot.

His name was Keith Hunt and he has recently sent me a picture that does not appear in the new book. This is not surprising, for Keith’s picture is unique. It shows him as a young lad and was drawn and presented to him by Ken Robinson the Cambridge Daily News’ sports cartoonist. Ken produced regular sketches of prominent sportsmen that appeared in the Light

Blue special sports edition of the paper. Were you ever featured, or can you tell me more about this talented artist

Meanwhile in those days youngsters in Harston and Hauxton had nothing to do in the evening except hang around in the street. So a dozen of them decided to take action and sought the assistance of the Vicar the Rev **Hugh Mansfield-Williams**, to ask if he would organise a youth club. They were not members of his church, nor would the club have any religious emphasis. It was to be open to all, provided they lived in Harston or Hauxton.

Soon it had 145 members and each Tuesday between 90 and 100 packed into the village hall on youth club night. They arrived on motorbike, scooter, bike or foot. More would like to join: one week the Cambridge bus arrived almost full with city youngsters who wanted to spend the evening there only to be turned away.

So what was the formula for success? There was table tennis or draughts and a police officer attended, not to reprimand or lecture, but to teach the lads boxing. However the principal activity was pop dancing and the club had a gramophone to supply the music. It also had its own skiffle group who, according to the Vicar, 'appeared to achieve the accepted sounds with competence'.

Kids didn't have to be active: there was a canteen run by village ladies which sold soft drinks, tea, coffee and snacks. But if all they wanted to do was to prop up the walls, talk to one another and smoke then this was a legitimate and proper thing for the club to provide, said the minister.

One night a News photographer attended to take a series of snaps. Are you amongst them?

We had something similar in Stretham which flourished until the new Parish Hall was opened. This was just too large and impersonal a space compared to the old hall and somehow the atmosphere just never came back. Did you have one in your village too?

Copies of "Twentieth-century Orwell" can be obtained from Orwell Community Archive Group, 55 High Street, Orwell, SG8 5QN for £5 plus £1 postage

PHOTOS

The successful Orwell football team 1957-58
Ken Robinson's drawing of the club mascot, Keith Hunt

Sandra has a series of snaps of Harston youth club- SUP0218456 – SUP0218473

I suggest

459 – the Vicar signing kids in,
465 – playing draughts
461 – table tennis and dancing
458 – leaving at the end of the night

Memories 22nd March 2010, by Mike Petty

Dorothy Creek has written from Barrington to share her memories.

I was born in Grantchester in 1922 and as a child visited the 'town', as we called it, quite often, usually with my grandmother. We would go to the market, where the stalls were lit or warmed by gas-flares and Granny bought sweets from Mr & Mrs Jim Reynolds, always a friendly couple, who, to a child, never seemed to change from year to year!

I recall Coad's Outfitters tiny shop next to Woolworths in Sidney Street and Sainsbury's with its marble floor and chairs for customers. I loved to watch the assistants serve butter with the wooden pats.

From the market to Petty Cury, past the Fifty-shilling Tailors on the corner, with Nichols butchers on the opposite corner, down to Lyons for a hot drink and a bun, Then it was on past Dolcis shoes and over to Mac Fisheries to watch the fish in the tank below the marble slab. I remember the man who sold posies and buttonholes near there. Extra care had to be taken when crossing the road as there was two-way traffic and that included double-decker buses!!

Returning to Drummer Street to catch the bus home we would collect any shopping-bags left in "Jim's" care at the end of Christ's Lane and sometimes hear or catch sight of the couple who played a gramophone mounted on an old pram.

Life was rich with small pleasures, looked forward to for weeks, and talked over many times afterwards. I think that is why they are recalled so vividly

##

Mike Dawson from Chesterton has responded to my request for memories of Ken Robinson, the News sports cartoonist of the 1950s.

Your memories page today brings back memories of many years ago when I was a lad in Cherry Hinton. I lived in Mallets Road with my parents and sister at Number 22 and Ken lived with his family just along the road at Number 36.

He was a lovely chap; a real gentle man. As I recall, his day job was as a scientist at the University's Zoology Department. I can picture him now bouncing along in his brown brogues and Harris Tweed suit on the balls of his feet (he was one of those people who appeared to walk on his toes rather than his feet and heels) with his bushy beard, trilby hat and pipe stuffed full of St Bruno ready rubbed.

Back in the early sixties, he was one of the few people who had a car. There were several of us who were mad keen U's fans (then in the Southern League of course) and he was always happy to take as many as seven of us (including himself) to the Abbey in his Black Austin 7, to save us having to bike down Coldham's Lane and across the Common to the match. We always travelled through Teversham (long before Airport Way) on to Newmarket Road and parked in Elfleda Road behind the ground.

I played for both Colville School and the under-elevens City Schoolboy side, and remember sitting in his front room, along with all the other members of the School Team whilst he drew individual caricatures of us in the Black and Amber of United in exactly the same style as the picture of Keith Hunt which you show in last week's paper. To this day, it hangs proudly in my bathroom at home.

He drew many of the local sportsmen of both City, United and others which appeared regularly in the Light Blue. It was, of course, at a time when both clubs were doing well in the Premier Division of the Southern League and had a number of well known players, some of whom played for both clubs over the years (Brian Moore, Matt McVitie for example). 'Gentleman Jim' Sharkey was also featured by Ken. For those readers who don't know or cannot remember, Jim Sharkey played for the U's, and always turned up for matches dressed as a City Gent, complete with bowler hat and briefcase.

As far as I can recall, Ken moved down to the Bristol area with his family in the mid to late sixties, presumably for work reasons. However, he continued to have his work published for a while in the 'News after he left Cambridge until the end of the decade.

I can truly say that I feel privileged to have known such a kind and considerate man and that he figured in my early life for all too brief a time.

SCANS OF

Grantchester in the 1920s – 86.624

Nichol's butchers on the corner of Petty Cury – 101.69

Petty Cury c1950 looking to Market Hill - 9585

Market Hill 1920s – 129.61

Drummer Street bus station, 1920s – 6374

Coad's shop in Sidney Street at closure in 1958

Ken Robinson's sketch of Mike Dawson

Memories 29th March 2010 by Mike Petty

Recent stories of the cancellation of Strawberry Fair on Midsummer Common and that thousands of its supporters have vowed to hold an unofficial event in its place seem familiar. Strawberry Fair started as a free pop festival in 1974 and has since expanded into a massive event attracting thousands of people, proving disruptive to residents and difficult to police.

For centuries Midsummer Common has resounded to the sounds of an annual event that was hailed in 1887 as "probably best known fair in world". Once known as 'Pot Fair' it once

included auctions of china, pictures and millinery as well as a major horse fair. Local shopkeepers objected to competition from the traders: "Sir – every year our Midsummer Fair is visited by a number of itinerant merchants selling pots, pans, linoleum, furs, drapery and various oddments. They pay little rent and no rates and taxes and yet they take away hundreds of pounds" one wrote in June 1905.

By then there were other attractions. A report from 1900 describes the scene: Of roundabouts there are plenty and there are two resplendent switchbacks. Half-a-dozen shows include a menagerie and cinematograph exhibition and the remainder of the fair is made up of shooting galleries, coconut shies, toy and sweet meat stalls, cheapjack wares and drinking booths. There are no less than 15 refreshment saloons, some of which serve a double purpose in supplying thirsty ones and providing accommodation for dancers.

But even then there were problems: *Sir – is it not about time that the annual Bacchanalian orgy known as Midsummer Fair was abolished? On Saturday night men, women and even children intoxicated by drink were behaving like maniacs. There were 14 tents for the supply of intoxicating liquors whilst behaviour in the dancing tents is indescribable* 'A.J.L.B' complained in 1905

Such events have always been difficult to control. An engraving of 1777 shows a University Proctor dispensing justice at Pot Fair while at Stourbridge Fair the Mayor of Cambridge held a 'Court of Piepowder' in which disputes between merchants and buyers were settled on the fairground. To assist him keep of the peace the Mayor had eight sergeants who were known from their attire as 'Red Coats'. Should any quarrel or argument break out a shout of 'Red Coat! Red Coat!' immediately brought one of these officials to the scene. The sergeants also kept a careful watch for cheats and pickpockets and their constant cry of 'Look out about you there!' added to the noise and excitement of the occasion.

Noise was one reason that in 1931 the council decided to ban the fair from Midsummer Common. Instead the showman were offered the use of Stourbridge Common where Cambridge's other historic fair was held (although by then it was a very insignificant event). At the time people considered it extremely unlikely that it would ever return to its traditional home.

But the showmen were not to be bullied: they boycotted the new site and arranged a separate event on a meadow on Newmarket Road, opposite Ditton Fields. It proved a great success with thousands flocking to the alternative event. The only complaints were about the bus fares to the more-distant venue. The Showman's Guild also took steps to eliminate the 'undesirables' and show that fair folk were as sober and industrious as the rest. Next year Midsummer Fair was back in its traditional place. It was discontinued during the early years of the Second World War, reopening in 1943 and by 1953 was back in full swing. Showmen threatened to boycott the fair again in 1981 after a squabble with the council over a proposed rent increase. But this was resolved.

Time will tell whether Strawberry Fair will also return to the Cambridge scene.

Scans:

9831 Opening of Midsummer Fair 1972, policeman in attendance

9671 Policeman at Midsummer Horse Fair 1898

10090 World's fattest girl – Midsummer Fair 1920

Headlines from 1931

115.99 - The last of the fair – article 1931

84.597 Death Riders at Midsummer Fair 1925

141.52 University proctor administers justice, 1777

Strawberry Fair pic 1993 – News neg 33412934

Memories 5th April 2010, by Mike Petty

Last week the ancient church of Fen Ditton was filled for the funeral of Dan Jackson.

There were family, many friends, former colleagues and not a few of us who knew Dan best for the hundreds of articles he contributed for so many years to the Cambridge Evening and Weekly News. He wrote features, on fishing, on his extensive knowledge of antiques and on Cambridgeshire history including a series of ‘Down Your Street’ articles.

Seated immediately behind a pillar I had time to reflect on those who had sat in that pew before, wondering just who it was that had scratched their initials in the soft stone over the preceding centuries.

Probably the most memorable service to have been held in the church was that on Sunday May 6th 1849. That morning the roads and lanes had been thronged by a massive congregation with several hundred waiting for the doors to open. The crowds were so dense that the clerk had difficulty pushing his way through with the key. Almost instantly all 1,000 seats were taken, with people standing on them for a better view. The aisles were packed and even the altar table was occupied. The atmosphere was not one of religious peace: it was a hub-bub of bawdy talk

Outside people scrambled onto the roof of the side aisle so they could peer in through the upper windows, the glass of which was smashed so they could hear as well.

Meanwhile at the Rectory the elderly parson tried to get the service abandoned. But his young wife would not allow it. For she claimed she had been libelled by the parish sexton, Edward Smith, after he had consumed too much ale in a village pub. The matter had been taken up in the Ecclesiastical Court and the chap sentenced to say sorry in a public penance. This was the day and she was not going to be denied.

As the clock struck eleven the clerical party left for the church. It included the Rev A.H. Small of Emmanuel College who was to minister, Charles Henry Cooper the Town Clerk of Cambridge, the Rector and his lady. They took pushed their way through to take their place in the enclosed high pew reserved for them.

No sooner did Small start the service than there were calls of ‘Speak up, old boy’ followed by a chorus of jeers as one chap tried to clamber up a pillar so he could see more clearly, only to slip down again. The hymns were cancelled and the minister, now trapped in the pulpit, soon found that his text ‘Judge not, that ye be not judged’ was drowned by cat-calls, whistles and laughter

Excitement mounted as the time came for Smith to make his appearance. He forced his way to the front and started to read his recantation for the wicked things he had said about what had been found in the pond in the rectory garden. Then the hassocks started flying from every direction, one bursting and scattering chaff on those below. They were joined by a broom somebody had found in a cupboard and before long even the pews were broken into pieces and thrown in all directions.

The minister, rector and his wife fought their way out of the church back to the Rectory, which was soon besieged and every window broken. Meanwhile Smith was carried out high on the shoulders of men who claimed to be his supporters to the Plough Inn which was soon as full as the church had been, the revelry continuing long into the afternoon.

By contrast last week the gathering in the Ancient Shepherds, Dan's former local, was quietly reflective of the life of a man who had touched so many.

PICTURES

86.523 Fen Ditton Rectory 1930s

86.527 scene outside the church 1930s

104.95 Fen Ditton church 1880

104.97 Fen Ditton church from the river c1910

Fen Ditton aerial view of church 1977

Memories 12th April 2010, by Mike Petty

Andy Bush from Balsham has written asking about something that has perhaps disappeared from memory

He writes: "One thing that has always fascinated me is the ammunition testing site in the top of Lime Kiln Hill where the Caravan Club now has its site. I clearly recall, in the late 50's, going there to see buildings with dark rooms, weapons stands and the firing tunnels running into the chalk walls. There was a target plate with a fired round stuck halfway through it. I have never seen *any* information about this site. My father was a police officer in Cambridge for all his career, but he knew nothing other than it tested ammunition! Have you any information on this site, its history, purpose and life span?"

A Ministry of Supply small-calibre range for testing armour-piercing projectiles was established in Swann's Lime Pits before 1952. That year the County Council considered its development as an armament testing range and research establishment. Coun Rackham deplored the possibility of explosions taking place at the back of the adjoining school and said that the noise of the blasts ran along the ground and shook doors and windows. People have had to replace ceilings that have been shaken down, he reported. City Councillors raised no objections providing that any additional buildings were erected in the deeply-excavated position and that nothing larger than a six-pounder gun was used. But it was only to be fired in the morning & preceded by a warning.

The booming of the six-pounder gun caused complaints but Alderman Doggett said he had stood within three or four feet of the weapon and was not 'disturbed' – "although it was true he had his fingers in his ears". Councillor Cox agreed: he thought complaints of the amount of vibration from the gun – not much larger than an anti-tank rifle – were "stupid and fantastic".

But Councillor Finbow said the neighbourhood should not be subject to range firing morning, noon and night. He had a personal gripe: the whole of the ceiling in one of his bedrooms collapsed because of the vibration. Correspondents to the News confirmed that the bangs did crack walls, move brickwork, bring down plaster, crack windows and scare children, adults and animals. When doors rattled, knockers chattered, cracks appeared and were repaired, only for the plaster to be shaken out again they were at liberty to be concerned. – J.S. Read complained to the News. Despite this the council approved the use of the site by the Ministry of Supply for a period of three years. But what happened next, can you tell me more?

Norman Long from Littlehampton, West Sussex has appealed for memories of a plane that crashed in St Mary's Street Ely in August 1951. Oliver Silcock recalled the aftermath: "I remember it was sometime before 9am. I had asked my oldest son, Edward Silcock, to go to Mr. Fletcher's grocery shop for milk etc. He said he wouldn't - it was as well he didn't! – because a large bang, which made No. 3 St. Mary's Street (my house) tremble. I thought it was a bomb - the darkness and the hail of dust, earth rattling at the doors and windows, it was very frightening. Its sound was like a million hailstones hitting our roof. I remember I was afraid to move!!

"Some of the wreckage fell outside our front door so my son by refusing to go on an errand saved his life. A pram outside Joe Brand's shop was crushed and the King's Arms (opposite) had their pub windows and door damaged. People came from nowhere, but I was told not to leave the house because of the fuel that was everywhere, running down the street. A passer-by, who I knew, said the driver of that lorry had stopped to buy cigs at Mr. Cook's shop opposite the Church. Had he not, then the 'plane would have missed him - it was a grim sight. (Her sons ran out despite being told to keep in and told her the driver's head had been decapitated)

"I also remember the vicar of St. Mary's Church was also on the scene as the young airman was dying. I remember the second airman was taken to the RAF Hospital, Lynn Road, but later was taken to Fulbourn Hospital in Cambridge. The road was blocked off and RAF servicemen were on guard. It was a day to remember. This is a scribbled account but worth a mention. I guess if the plane's wing had come off I would not be writing this story" she told a Clacton newspaper in 2001

Fenstanton is a village used to heavy traffic, though now it thunders past on the A14. Back in June 1924 it was the scene of an unusual accident, as the CDN reported: As one of Thurston's traction engines was nearing Fenstanton the middle of the three trolleys it was drawing was noticed to be on fire. The flames quickly spread and the organ of the motor scenic railway, was soon well alight. As no water could be procured sand from the gravel pits was thrown over the fire but the flames proved too strong and the whole organ and the trolley upon which it was mounted completely collapsed. It is suggested the outbreak was due to a spark from the engine which found its way through the protecting wire gauze on top of the chimney.

Such incidents would be forgotten were it not for the vigilant of newspapers correspondents or local photographers who record the scene. Jean Ding has been collecting Fenstanton pictures for many years and will be staging a display in the United Reformed Church in Chequer Street Fenstanton on Saturday 24th April starting at 10 am. At a previous event one lady found a picture of her late granddad which she had never seen before. When Jean made her a copy on the spot she was moved to tears. So if this was your family home pop along and see what you recognise. And take along your old pictures too – you may have one Jean has never seen!

PICTURES

CHERRY HINTON CHALK PITS – A POSTCARD C1910

PHOTO MONTAGE OF THE ELY CRASH SCENE PUBLISHED IN THE ELY STANDARD AT THE TIME

DETAIL OF THE ELY CRASH LORRY

FENSTANTON PHOTO

TRACTION ENGINE IN FENSTANTON [NB NOT THE ONE MENTIONED].

Memories 19th April 2010, by Mike Petty

I've recently been puzzling over three boats

The first was brought to my attention when I was speaking to a meeting for widows in the Bateman Street building that was once home to Cheshunt College. David Peppererll from Stapleford had been cheering on the 'Stutes when he spotted something strange in the gravel of the terraces at the Glass World Stadium. He picked it up, took it home and gave it a good clean. What he'd found looked like a small coin, about the size of an old silver threepenny-piece. It had a picture of a three-masted sailing ship and some letters.

While waiting for the ladies to finish lunch I borrowed my wife's spectacles and peered at the small disk. I seemed to make out the words 'Reach Fen' & the name 'Lauer' on one side with a sailing ship and 'Ultra Plus' on the other.

Could this be one of the tokens that were issued by local tradesmen and farmers in the troubled times of the 1650s? That wonderful book, 'The Fenland, past and present' by Samuel Miller and Sydney Skerchly contains pages devoted to the various designs issued at Littleport, Brandon, Chatteris, Ely, Cottenham and St Ives amongst other places. There is no mention of Reach but in such an important place, scene of the great trading fair which attracted people from far and wide, somebody could surely have produced something similar.

It would certainly repay further investigation.

Then pausing at the News on the way home I was shown two other images of boats, this time in the form of old photographs sent in by Mrs M.H. Betts of Ditton Fields. They had been found amongst the effects of the late Harry Cross of Little Wilbraham. Both show river excursions from Jesus Lock probably in the early 1900s. The names of the boats can be identified, one was on 'His Majesty', the other 'Otter'.

Both were steam-powered craft which would make the excursion down to Baits Bite lock or beyond to the Five Miles from Anywhere at Upware – entrance to the river system that leads to Reach – or sometimes to Ely itself. 'His Majesty' sometimes towed a tender named 'Queen Alexandra', the 'Otter' had 'Otter Hound' to accommodated larger groups.

Such trips were very popular in the Edwardian era. In August 1905 the News reported how a number of fishermen and fireman had an enjoyable outing on board the 'Majesty' to Upware where they sat down to one of Host Peachey's liberal dinners after which the fishermen went fishing and the remainder had a trip to Ely, returning for tea and games. The return journey was enlivened by songs accompanied by Mr Sid Smith on his banjo. They reached home by 10 pm.

Next year Messrs Bullen, the boat builders of Magdalene Street, ran their first trip of the season in June when 'His Majesty' and 'Queen Alexandra' was packed with 84 people for a free outing to Ditton Plough where an enjoyable time was spent.

The steam-powered 'Otter' and her 'Hound' ran a excursion out to Upware on 25th August 1907 leaving Jesus Lock at 8.30 sharp continuing on to Ely. The fare on that occasion was two shillings for the complete trip.

I have several similar pictures but sadly I have no way of identifying which particular organisation had booked the trips depicted nor identify individual faces amongst those on board. Perhaps you will have a framed copy with the names underneath.

Once back home at my desk it was time to download the digital pictures I'd taken of David Pepperell's coin. Now largely magnified it was apparent that there was an extra letter 'P' in what I had deciphered as 'Reach Fen'. It now read 'Rech Pfen'. A short search on the internet confirms my fears. This was a Rechenpfenning token produced by Johann Jacob Lauer in Germany during the mid 1800s. It has the ship and five stars and crescent moon with the words 'Plus Ultra' ('Going Further').

But what was this doing at the Histon Football Club ground, how did it get there and where has it been in the previous 200 years?

PICTURES

THE TOKEN

TWO PICTURES SENT BY MRS BETTS

AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR A TRIP ON THE OTTER IN AUGUST 1907

ANOTHER PICTURE OF THE OTTER

BARGES AT REACH

FENLAND TOKENS OF THE 17TH CENTURY

Memories 26th April 2009, by Mike Petty

Whenever Cambridge folk get reminiscing about days gone by there is one man who comes readily to their mind. He was not a Professor, not a Minister but a Minder. And in May 1960 he found himself in the news

His name was Jim Wooders, he lived in Staffordshire Street and he spent his days guarding bags at the Drummer Street bus station. This what a CDN reporter discovered about him in May 1960.

Jim had been looking after parcels, shopping bags and cycles for people shopping in Cambridge for well over 30 years. He was to be seen in all weathers with the possessions of varying numbers of customers. When the first started there'd been objections from the Town Council and the police but all that was a thing of the past and he had a board proclaiming 'By kind permission of Christ's College'.

With the formation of the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company in 1931, Mr Wooders had found himself facing opposition. In those days the bus company had a left luggage department

which, unlike his, was indoors. But regular customers appreciated that there was no delay when they came to collect their belongings from Jim unlike the bus staff who might be busy organising tickets to fare destinations.

For the previous 12 years Mr Wooders had had an assistant and the two of them found themselves fairly well occupied, their busiest days being Fridays and Saturdays. Jim did not keep regular hours, but took the occasional Thursday off if he felt like it and always went home to Staffordshire Street for his meals. He enjoyed being his own master and had a profound contempt for all politicians which he demonstrated by refusing to vote.

By May 1960 Jim was 62 years-old and thinking of retiring 'in a few years' but meanwhile he loved his work. In warm weather his pitch was a very pleasant spot but it got a bit grim during the winter. However he never felt the cold and never wore scarves or gloves, saying he often felt colder indoors than ever he did in the open air. After spending a day looking after other people's possessions and talking to the passers-by, Mr Wooders went home 'to relax', his only spare-time interest being in reading newspapers

I wonder what he felt when he found himself featured in it!

Other people recalled by previous generations included 'Alfie' Lander a much-respected crossing sweeper at the junction of Sidgwick Avenue and Silver Street.

In her book 'Period Piece' Gwen Raverat recalled the lame crossing sweeper limping, all crooked, across the road with his broom. In those days in summer the thick white dust rose in clouds from horses' hooves, whitening the grass and trees while in the winter the oozy, jammy mud sloshed about and street cleaners like Alfie scraped it up in delicious soupy spoonfuls and threw it in their carts. The wife of a Trinity College Fellow would send him a covered plate of dinner every day and when she died remembered him in her will. According to Gwen one of the lady's maids married him and took care of him for the rest of his life.

Alfie died following an accident in December 1927 which prompted a correspondent to write to the News:

Sir – the death of Mr Alfred Lander has cast quite a gloom over the Sigwick Avenue – Silver Street bit of Cambridge. For many a year his familiar figure stood in all weathers under his big old tree, sheltered by the wall, generally accompanied by a robin or dog, his special friends. A casual passer-by might suppose he did nothing but stand there holding his broom, but he was a very useful man. To the best of his limited ability he was famous for going messages and taking care of this and that – and all this above and beyond his 'professional' work as a crossing-sweeper (the only unofficial one in the town). So afflicted, but such a simple, kindly and cheery soul; accident made him a cripple in his childhood, and life must have been a long struggle but of late things have been brighter again for him – A mourner"

Gwen Raverat also recalled another character who frightened her: "There was a most evil Blind man, with a beard, who sat in a little hole in the railings, which seemed to be specially made for beggars opposite the Bull Hotel in Trumpington Street. He always had a dog, but it was never the same dog for long". She included a sketch of him in 'Period Piece'.

This was probably George Randall who lived on Honey Hill and was recalled more charitably by others. He was a blind man who sold matches at the street corners, and he always had with him his faithful little dog, which guided him from place to place and kept a watchful eye to see that those who took his master's matches dropped a coin in the old man's tin mug. Randall thrived chiefly in Term time, when pitying undergraduates would give him helpful contributions. They would offer him as much as half a crown to go home out of the cold weather, but he always insisted on sticking to his post. But it was at best a very precarious

livelihood. A newspaper report at his death in July 1910 noted that he was a very tall man whose coffin was made seven feet long – a description that matches Gwen's sketch.

Who do you recall as Cambridge characters.

PICTURES

JIM WOODERS IN 1960 – SANDRA HAS PICTURE

SCANS

GWEN RAVERAT'S SKETCH OF THE BLIND BEGGAR

THE HONEY HILL AREA OF CAMBRIDGE, off Northampton Street, in 1904 George Randall's home

SILVER STREET c1900 looking to Gwen Raverat's house

THE BULL HOTEL, TRUMPINGTON STREET opposite which the blind beggar sat

Memories 3rd May 2010, by Mike Petty

Pottering around countryside to various venues I often find myself going over the same stretch of road time after time. Then a week or so later I'll be constantly setting off in another direction.

Within the last few weeks I've become particularly acquainted with the road towards Chatteris, stretches of which seem to be suffering more than most, especially in the vicinity of Mepal. In the past roads repairs were financed by the payment of a toll, though sometimes they were not quite what one might expect. Joan Robinson recalled one on the road from Somersham to Chatteris "I remember an uncle and aunt of mine used to go to Bedford quite often from Chatteris and they come to the Somersham Toll when it was 6d. It was 6d each way if you were not local and didn't live in Chatteris. The people that had the Toll, they were brother and sister Dyson, and he was very keen on his six pen'orth you know! He used to sit up and wait for uncle - the rogue – to go back in the evening, and uncle would deliberately stay as late as he could, you know, so he wouldn't have to pay anything, because half the time he used to leave the gate open. He was very keen and I remember one Sunday they came, and I went out to them and there on the running board (they had running boards, didn't they, for cars all those years ago), and there on the running board was the 6d and they must have passed it out of the window and Dyson missed it, and it had dropped on the running board - so he didn't get that one!" But this toll was not to repair a road: it was a payment to cross a bridge that was no longer there over a river than had dried up centuries before as the result of the drainage of the fens.

Charlie Short remembered the roads around Manea in his childhood: He knew every bump from his bike. "They were even worse than they are now and that takes some believing. The landlord of the Royal Oak in the High Street ran a taxi service in a horse-drawn carriage. There was another man who lived in Westfield Road who had a horse and cart and would take you to March. I remember one day by father went with him to fetch a clock back from the menders. The horse took fright over something and bolted and father put his foot in the newly-repaired clock! It eventually finished up in Cromwell School, Chatteris"

Charlie learned to drive a motor car when he was seventeen, it didn't take him long since he'd already been driving tractors for three years. He recalled various vehicles in the village including a big American car that pulled up at the village petrol pumps one day during the war. Charlie Setchfield served him, pumping the fuel with his hand-operated lever. But he hit

problems with such a thirsty vehicle and said “You’ll have to turn your engine off ‘cos you’re gaining on me!” He also knew the registration number of the first car in Manea - EB3.

Early picture postcards will sometimes show ancient vehicles but Bill Hunt from Ely has lent me a cutting of something more unusual. It may not have been the first car to be seen in Wilburton, but surely it was the first to be built in the village. The article, from Autocar of 17th August 1907 was devoted to Mr E. Everitt, a cabinet-maker in Wilburton who’d build his own two-seater motor car.

The frame he made of ash, the wheels came from an old tandem bicycle while two wheels from a lawn mowing machine provided the differentia. It was driven by a belt taken from a thrashing machine using wooden pulleys from the same source. The petrol tank was an ordinary two-gallon tin and it was steered by a tiller.

The vehicle was all hand-made except for the carburettor and 3½ horse-power Browne engine which was air-cooled with the help of a wooden fan driven by a leather bootlace. This remarkable machine really worked: the Autocar reporter testified that he had seen it climb a hill with two people on board – and the Wilburton hills are something to be marvelled at!

Meanwhile an older form of transport is being celebrated at Audley End where the stables built to impress King James I and later repaired by Sir Christopher Wren are now being opened to the view of ordinary mortals for the first time. They are reckoned amongst the finest in the country and in their heyday accommodated more than 30 pampered horses in what looks more like a magnificent country house than stables. Now they are home to a multi-media exhibition highlighting the importance of the horse and telling the story of the coachmen and grooms who looked after them. Together with authentic saddles and tack it will enable visitors to get up close to the reality of daily life in a Victorian stable in all its mucky, smelly glory.

This is the latest in a series of renovations English Heritage has established at Audley End complete with costumed interpreters giving a sense of life below stairs in Victorian times: the maids and butlers busy plucking game, making pastry, churning butter or washing laundry as they chat to visitors who have left their own horseless carriages in the nearby car park.

PICTURES

Wilburton Car
Manea when Charlie Short was a lad
Audley End stable block

Then supplement with choice of
Chatteris toll gate
March traffic in 1930s
Wilburton when cows were more common than cars

Memories 10th May 2010, by Mike Petty

As the football season approaches its climax teams everywhere are reviewing the past season. A lucky few will have extra matches to play to decide vital issues. But in May 1933 one Cambridgeshire team found itself splashed over the pages of the Daily Mail following their impressive battle with Barholm United of the Stamford & District League

Hildersham Rangers had not exactly enjoyed a successful season in Cambridgeshire League Division II. In fact they had not won a match. Their opponents were equally as bad, having conceded 152 goals.

The tussle between the two Never-Win Teams attracted great interest with a crowd of 5,000 people flocking to watch. Neither of the protagonist's home grounds could accommodate such numbers so a neutral venue was selected, the London Road ground at Peterborough. It was a reminder of the glory days when the old Peterborough and Fletton Football Club were at the height of their career.

Hildersham brought two charabanc loads of supporters, including the Rev W. Phillips whose son played at inside-left. Barholm could muster a crowd of 60 including their 'Fairy-Godmother', Mrs Hull.

The Cambridgeshire team in their smart royal blue jerseys were the first to appear on the pitch and received a great ovation. But it was eclipsed by the roar for Barholm in their black-and-white strip. The Mayoress of Peterborough, sporting her chain of office, kicked off. It was easily the best kick of the match, reported the 'Sunday Express'.

Hildersham started well and after ten minutes end-to-end play the Barholm goalie was doing what he did best, retrieving the ball from the back of his net. But this galvanised his team and by half-time Hildersham were 2-1 down. Following a pep-talk they equalised within four minutes of the restart when G. Whiffin slotted a cross just inside the post. Their jubilation was short-lived, within a minute they were behind again and moments later it was only the post that saved them. Now it was time for heroes and L.A. Day responded with a hat-trick. By the final whistle the score stood at 6-4 to Hildersham, though pundits reckoned it could have been 19-17.

After the match both teams were entertained to dinner at the Great Northern Hotel before the inevitable speeches. All agreed the match had been played in the best spirit: both had given their best with no scowls or dirty play. The referee paid the highest compliments to each side describing it as the best he had ever refereed – though he did somewhat spoil it by saying it was the first one he'd ever taken! He was Tom Webster, the Mail's famous cartoonist, who had officiated in a brown plus-four suit and whose analysis of the game was featured in the paper

Hildersham's skipper, H. Dawson, congratulated their opponents on their sporting spirit and was presented with the match football as a memento of the occasion. But of course it was Barholm who were the real victors: they returned home with the undisputed title of "Never-Wins"

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Then in July 1954 the News attempted to explain another strange game, this one held at the Cambridge City Football Club ground. Real American softball had arrived in Cambridge when the US Air Force Hospital Wimpole Park beat a team from USAF Molesworth entirely against the formbook. But for British spectators the game was a succession of shocks. "They saw an umpire hustled and pushed by players disputing a decision, two players somersaulting as they tried to catch a ball and some magnificent hits and catches that made it look like cricket. The game seems to be a glorified rounders akin to baseball. There was 'strike one', 'ball one', 'blunt' and a host of other expressions which were difficult to explain but easy to follow on the diamond-shaped field before the victorious team had notched up their win and were cheered again and again"— nothing like the spirit of the Hildersham match

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Another sport at which the winner loses is slow cycle racing. I have a picture of one race at a Pye Sports Day in the 1940s. Does anybody recognise a participant or do you have memories of such activity?

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SCAN

Cartoon of the Hildersham football match

Hildersham village was deserted on the day of the big match

Slow cycle racing at Pye sport's day in the 1940s

Softball match at Milton Road, 1954

Memories 17th May 2010 by Mike Petty

When the (mis)guided bus finally opens for business it is anticipated that hundreds will make the journey into Cambridge. My own feeling is that it will have exactly the opposite effect. For it will make the little town of St Ives much more accessible with its riverside walks to quaint nearby villages

It will not be the first time that people will have discovered its charms. In 1898 St Ives was described as "an ancient time-dimmed town and a drowsy old-fashioned town, delightfully unprogressive and little given to so-called modern improvement ... a place where the feverish rush of life seems stayed".

By then the commercial traffic on the river, once so busy, had virtually ceased and the towing path with its bridges, locks and fords was somewhat neglected, decayed and overgrown. It formed a perfect sketching ground for artists and soon groups of friends came for a week or two. Some stayed a summer and quite a number made the area their home.

Their paintings were exhibited in London galleries which spread word of the town's charm. Tourists were attracted to the area which soon developed into a riverside holiday venue, stimulating the growth of leisure boating and fishing. And such visitors increased the market for pictures, which in turn encouraged more artists to produce them.

Well over a hundred artists are known to have worked in the area around the turn of the century but by the 1930s almost all had gone, driven out by the harsh economic effects of the Depression and changing tastes in the art market.

Bridget Flanagan, who lives close to the river at Hemingford Abbots, formerly one of the centres of the artistic community, has been searching museums and galleries, libraries and archives and the walls of private houses to produce a wonderful illustrated guide to the artists who worked along the Ouse between 1880 and 1930.

One of these was Walter Dendy Sadler, a Royal Academician who bought a house in Hemingford Grey where he built an enormous studio from which he produced engravings from over 170 of his paintings which were hung in thousands of homes. Each day he went on a five-mile walk around the river to Houghton and St Ives, looking for models. Once he found a face he liked it was difficult to refuse him and unwary villagers were toggled up in period costume to be transformed into Regency squires, coachmen or parsons.

The rooms of Day's solicitors' offices in St Ives became the setting for a painting of a fashionable young man seeking a mortgage, Hartford church was used as the background for a christening scene while the Anchor Inn in his adopted village appeared in various guises.

Sadler's private life was unconventional. At 26 he had married an 18-year-old dark-haired beauty but within a year or two of moving to the village she commenced a dalliance with a local miller, causing a social scandal. The locals showed their severe disapproval by burning effigies of the adulterous couple outside the miller's house. Walter divorced his errant wife and turned his attention to other pursuits, initiating the Hemingford Cottage Garden Society with its annual flower show.

Bridget Flanagan has identified the scene of most of the pictures reproduced in colour in her book. But one is still puzzling. It was painted by George Gordon Fraser during a boat journey with friend from Bedford to King's Lynn in 1880, though a landscape he described as dreary and monotonous with clumsy and begrimed barges and ill-made, ill-fed, ill-bred and ill-clad agricultural labourers. The scene depicts a group cooking their supper on a fire outside a small wigwam, their boat moored nearby. In the background is a drainage mill and a wooden bridge. My own feeling is that it shows the scene at Wiggshall St Mary, but can you confirm it?

"Artists along the Ouse 1880-1930" by Bridget Flanagan is published by the author at 68 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots PE28 9AW, price £10 - ISBN 0-9540824-3-5

Pictures

The Broadway St Ives 1938 by William Watt Milne showing the Norris Museum home to many of the paintings

St Ives Bridge, 1889 by Frederick George Cotman

Pike and Eel, Overcote, 1901 by Garden Fraser [SUBS IT IS 'GARDEN']

Fishing from the bridge at Houghton Mill by William Kay Blacklock

The Fraser Brothers at Camp by G.G. Fraser

Tea time at the May Races, Ditton Corner, 1906 by Percy Robert Craft

Memories 24th May 2010 by Mike Petty

Fifty years ago the News reflected on the passing of dream that had tantalised many a young lad

For the steam train was being replaced by new diesel locomotives and the aura of glamour and fascination that had surrounded the role of engine driver seemed destined to be lost.

But for the driver himself things had much improved, as one explained:

The rattling, hissing, gritty foot-plate - where in cold weather they were frozen on one side and baked on the other - had been exchanged for the enclosed windowed cabin of the new engines with its upholstered driver's seat and armrests, its foot warmers, compact controls and

ashtray. It was like exchanging a job in an iron foundry for one in the control room of a modern factory.

Driver William Creek, who had worked with steam for 40 years and switched to diesels a couple of years earlier, said that he now slept better at night because of the change. It used to be rough riding on the steam engines where his insides were shaken up by the rattling. He could have sat down - on a wooden seat - but it was more comfortable standing up where he could take the jolting of the footplate on the balls of his feet. Moreover he used to have dials to watch which widely dispersed over the cab.

Speaking to fellow drivers William Thulborn, who had 41 years on steam and Driver Instructor Sidney Hutton who had helped to introduce the men at Cambridge to the new motive power, it became clear how fundamental the change had been.

One of the men said; "The diesel takes the art out of driving; there used to be a certain amount of pride in running a steam engine ... there is now something missing."

There was now no fireman, no one to talk to, no one to brew up the tea when you are sitting in your clean diesel cabin on a long run. You feel second to the machine, instead of the other way round. Some of the old personal skill you used to expend on driving steam has now been incorporated by the manufacturer in the controls and dials in front of you. You might change engines every day, he lamented

The fitters in the loco sheds had undergone an even more drastic change than the drivers. Instead of steam tubes, traction rods and dirty smoke boxes, they were now dealing with internal combustion cylinders and tappet springs. Already at Cambridge they were looking after 70 multiple railcar units and five diesel engines in German rail buses, though steam engines were still coming from other parts of East Anglia for daily servicing. The fitters had taken manufacturers' courses with Rolls Royce, English Electric, Spaxman of Colchester and with Wilson Gearboxes of Coventry, to fit them for their work on the new engines.

Gone were the days, for most of them, when they worked in the old black Victorian engine-shed behind the passenger station. Now they worked in modern factory conditions, in a warmed and strip-lighted hall near the Coldham's Lane bridge.

They stood in spacious pits with the carriage wheels at shoulder-height to work on perfectly-accessible jobs. Many of them had been fitters in the Armed Forces and gained more than a basic knowledge of their work that way.

They favoured the change: the work was not so physically hard. Until two or three years ago they were having to lift rods and big ends weighing a hundredweight or more out of the steam engines to work on them, or springs which weighed three hundredweight. The diesel parts were smaller, lighter and usually cleaner. The job needed more skills and this made it more interesting. The diesel engines which came in for servicing offered a greater variety of faults and they needed to think more for themselves.

But the interest in schoolboys in the business of railway yards was falling off. Diesel did not attract them. Smoother, quieter, without chimney, without the need for coaling and watering in full sight of delighted spectators, their registration numbers didn't seem worth collecting any more.

But the adult public, like the fitters and drivers, seemed please with the change.

Pictures

Crowds photograph a steam train
Diesel engine in the rain
Steam locomotive at Cambridge

Cambridge engine sheds showing steam and diesel locomotives
The huge wheels of a steam train

The article from CDN – Sandra is looking out the actual pictures used

Memories 31st May 2010, by Mike Petty

Toft Peoples' Hall was packed last Saturday for the annual meeting of the Cambridgeshire Association for Local History. Before the boring business session it was my pleasure as President to present the Association's awards to young people, authors and historians who have dedicated themselves to sharing their enthusiasm for the heritage of our county.

Amongst the latter was Anthony Day the fenland artist and Wicken historian, Mike Rouse of Ely, John Shepperson from Swavesey and a 94-year old who had driven down from Norfolk to collect a simple piece of paper in a frame, even though he already has a house full of certificates – including 34 world records!

I knew that if I permitted Ken Wallis to get into his stride then the timetable for the day would have gone to pieces. For once he gets talking he will hold a room spellbound until the caretaker comes to lock up, hours later. So instead I asked whether he would present the Young People's Awards to schools from Cambourne, Waterbeach and the Cambridge International School based at Cherry Hinton Hall. As I told the youngsters, they might never have heard of him, but their parents and grandparents would know that he was the man who had stood-in for 'James Bond' during the dangerous flying sequences in 'Little Nellie' the autogyro in 'You Only Live Twice'

Yet as he did so I noticed that the back of his head was streaming with blood from a serious gash. Had history repeated itself, I wondered.

For it was just a 100 years ago that Ken's father and his brother built themselves a flying machine in the back garden of a house in St Barnabas Road, Cambridge. Construction complete they had taken it to a field near Abington for test runs and its first flight. It hit a bump, rose into the air, then crashed heavily leaving its pilot feeling lucky to have escaped alive. Just weeks later another aviation pioneer, Charles Rolls, was killed in an accident, emphasising the danger of such mad-cap enterprise and the 'Wallbro' project was reluctantly abandoned.

Years later Ken Wallis decided to construct a replica of his dad's plane. There had been no blueprints for him to follow, just a few photographs taken by his mother and a tatty cutting from the Cambridge Daily News which described the machine in great detail. In August 1978 it soared off the ground like a bird. But then, Ken adds, he had the advantage of knowing how to fly. Indeed, he had landed at RAF Waterbeach during the Second World War, as he told Oliver Megginson, curator of the base museum who accepted an award on behalf of Waterbeach School for their research into the village. And, he reminded John Hamlin, whose book on Oakington Airfield received another certificate, he had established two of his world records flying his remarkable autogyro from that base.

Ken still flies his little machines from the field at his home, zooming into the air like some antiquated Harry Potter then taking his hands and feet off the controls and photographing the people on the ground who are in turn photographing him. Occasionally things go wrong, as one internet website reveals.

Could that have been the cause of the deep gash which prompted Peter Filby, one of the CALH committee, to ask him if he'd like treatment? No, Ken replied, nonchalantly: that morning he'd been standing on a chair at home putting something on a shelf when he fell backwards hitting his head against a wall. It was, he later told me, a long way down!

If I'd done something like that, I would have phoned for a paramedic and expected the visit of an air ambulance. But Ken just stuck a piece of paper over the wound and got into his car to drive to Toft. What a man! He must be the overriding memory of that day, eclipsing even the excellent talk by Anne Mitchell, the magnificent refreshments supplied by village ladies and the business session which concluded a truly memorable event.

See the Association's website – www.calh.org.uk - for a full account of the awards and contact them if you would to nominate a possible recipient in next year's ceremony

Pictures

Henry, Esme, Louis and Thomas from the Cambridge International School tell Ken Wallis about their project

Ken studies his latest certificate

The Wallbro monoplane built in a back garden in 1910

Waterbeach airfield where Ken landed his Wellington bomber during the war

The News report of the Wallbro accident 1910

Some of the other recipients of CALH awards

Memories 7th June 2010 by Mike Petty

The 'Matches, Hatches and Despatches' column of any local newspaper is one carefully scanned by very many people looking for names of friends or acquaintances who may have passed away

Some members of the community are accorded obituaries within the body of the paper and so it was on 4th June 1910 when the Cambridge Weekly News reported:

One of the most profoundly respected and widely-known characters in Bottisham and district passed away at the ripe old age of 66-odd years. Though carefully tended by a whole host of friends, not a single relative of the deceased was present when death took place shortly after 8.30 in the morning

Few Bottisham inhabitants have secured by sheer force of personality such an abiding reputation for imperiousness combined with a haughty good temper. For the past 30 years she had held undisputed sway, subject to occasional supervision by the Misses King in the Bottisham post office.

Anyone who entered during the past 30 years was immediately made aware that it is not the essence of politeness to put one elbow on the counter and lounge as though in a public bar. Through years of practice she'd learned to correct such bad tendencies by neatly biting a piece out of the offending coat and then scurrying off. It was rather summary treatment of course but she came from Australia and no doubt in her blood there always ran a strong strain of the bluntness of the hardly Colonial. It was also always rather unwise to leave letters on the counter as on more than one occasion she unofficially opened them, censored the contents and tore the paper to shreds.

But all was not quite what it seemed, for 'Pretty Poll' was a white and lemon crested cockatoo, the pet of the pet of the village post office, the autocrat of the counter and the terror of several generations of Bottisham children. Though owning a cage and the usual luxuries accorded to a tropical bird, Poll always preferred the counter as a promenade

Thirty years earlier Poll had been sentenced to death by its owner, a London lady, who probably found her pretty ways rather too expensive to be satisfactory. It was here that the kindly hand of fate intervened. The lady took the bird to a London chemist, Mr George King, who in his early youth lived in Bottisham. Poll immediately caught his eye. Exactly what passed between the two in that look is not known. It was silently agreed however, that the fates should be outwitted.

Mr King sympathised with the lady in her desire to compass the death of the white and lemon crested cockatoo. But he also mentioned that he thought he could find 'a happy home' as he phrased it for Poll. Eventually the lady agreed and Pretty Poll journeyed to the Bottisham Post Office to commence a further span of 30 years. Since that day all Bottisham had learned to know, love and respect Pretty Poll.

One great friend the bird had was a cat, which used to be on such familiar terms that she was frequently permitted to have the run of the bird's cage. Poll was an inveterate gossip and when the long afternoons in the post office became too dull she used to whistle the dog and call the cat with such human skill that caused it sometimes to positively cackle with laughter at the dog snuffing round for the owner of the whistle.

One shocking trick she once played the village parson was practically the only black spot on a blameless life at Bottisham. The incident occurred one Sunday afternoon when the clergyman called on the way to church. Poll, probably thinking that the visit had lasted long enough, caught up the parson's hat. The parson made a wild dash to make the bird drop it and Poll, taking offence, bit him on the lip. The wound was not very serious but he delivered his discourse that afternoon with a thick lip more in keeping with the features of a prize-fighter than a clergyman of the Church of England.

As soon as the death of the famous bird became known at Bottisham in June 1910, an informal lying-in-state was held which was attended by at least fifty children, curious to see at close quarters the governing manager of the shop who had always inspired them with much awe.

But it was not the end for Poll. She was taken to Mr Farren of Regent Street, Cambridge and expertly stuffed. Is the dead parrot still dominating some living room from her glass case, I wonder

My files also reveal parrot stories from Fen Drayton where 'Scruffy' used to be an attraction at The Three Tuns in the 1970 and a court case from St Ives in 1839 when Mary Huggins, a servant girl was accused of throwing Mr Hillyard's parrot into the pond.

One great Cambridge character was Miss Emma Louise Heffer who was regularly seen out shopping in the 1960s with Joey her parrot, perched on the handle of her basket. He also accompanied her to church and subsequently to retirement in the Evelyn Nursing Home where they both did a daily round of patients on the ground floor and inspected babies born in the Home's Maternity Unit. Miss Heffer died in the Evelyn in her 100th year early in 1974 while enjoying her favourite food – ice cream. Joey found a new home in the Cherry Hinton area.

Memories 14th June 2010 by Mike Petty

As the modern road network groans under increasingly heavy traffic pressures it is interesting to reflect on a major period of road and especially bridge construction. I have received an email about the 'Military Bridge' across the Cam on the road between Stretham and Wicken. It had been built in part, the sender believed, by Prisoners of War. So was it indeed a local 'Bridge over the River Kwai'. Well not quite.

During the early days of the Great War there were fears that the Germans would invade and land on the East coast. It would be essential to send men and machines from the Midlands to push them back into the sea. The problem was that there were few road roads running from the Midlands to the coast. So in the early months of the war soldiers arrived to build a 'Military Road' from Stretham through to Wicken from which there was already a road towards Soham and beyond. Part of the new road was constructed on a reinforced concrete raft, one of the earliest examples of such roadwork in the country. Its strength was tested in 1919 when a large section of the road was flooded following a burst in a river bank, but no damage was done.

As work progressed so folk in Wicken became excited. For the new route would bring military horse-drawn traffic and horses would need somewhere to rest and refuel. One of the attractions of Wicken are the large areas of open grass in the centre of the village and whilst horses chomped the grass their riders would patronise the local hostelries, thus benefiting the village economy. Sadly cavalry never actually came that, and had they done so they could have fed their horses on the grass that grew through the new road.

For although the military built the road they did not build the bridges needed to span the rivers Old West and Cam. For there was a dispute as to who should actually pay for them and although a pontoon bridge was put in place over the Old West it would be April 1928 before the actual bridges were actually constructed and the Cam finally spanned by an impressive central bow-string girder bridge of 100 foot span.

Nearby on the A10 Cambridge road another new concrete bridge was constructed at Stretham Ferry this time to cope with increasing traffic along the A10. Here its strength was tested by placing four traction engines on it. Then in March 1931 three steam lorries, two with trailers, representing a weight of sixty tons were used to test the strength of yet another new bridge over the Old West River, this one between Wilburton and Cottenham. It was an essential part of a new Twentypence Road intended to offer traffic an alternative route to Cambridge and several motor coach companies applied to run services.

Nor was this by any means the limit of bridge building. At Mepal the last of the wooden bridges erected at the time of the drainage of the fens in the 1600s was replaced as part of a project which saw two new concrete bridges spanning the Bedford Rivers.

At nearby Sutton Gault the main beams of the bridge were also found to be inadequate for loads exceeding three tons whilst at Queen Adelaide a bridge weighing 135 tons was lifted bodily to a different position across the River Ouse in July 1930. There large piles were driven into the river and four hydraulic jacks raised the old bridge and moved it to out of the

way. It was replaced with a new concrete bridge able to cope with the increasingly heavy traffic to the new Sugar Beet Factory.

There was great discussion at Clayhithe where a narrow toll bridge was replaced with a wider, free structure in 1939. But the greatest controversy was experienced in Cambridge itself where a new Fen Causeway was planned to cross the open spaces of Coe Fen. Despite great opposition the project went ahead and another essential, but largely-overlooked bridge was constructed.

But none of this answers the question as to whether any of the labour used in the construction of these bridges was that of Prisoners of War. Do you know?

Memories 21st June 2010, by Mike Petty

The recent warm weather has brought people out to celebrate the sunshine on Cambridge's commons. But it has also encouraged some to light barbeques and so damage the grass, every blade of which is precious to others.

But it is the college gardeners who have traditionally worked long and hard to ensure their lawns remain pristine even in the worst of weathers. So I thought I would reflect on the events of June 1910 – 100 years ago.

The end-of-year bumping races had been fought and won and it was now time to celebrate or commiserate. There were wild scenes in many of the colleges where bump suppers were held and bumps celebrated. It was customary for the authorities to grant permission for bonfires to be held in the college courts. So on the Saturday night fires were lighted and the frequent discharge of fireworks kept the fun going until the early hours of Sunday morning.

Jesus, who retained their position as head of the river, held a magnificent bonfire on the Close. Outside the railings in Victoria Avenue a large crowd, attracted by an enormous pile of old boxes dumped near the tennis courts, assembled in anticipation of some fun. It was however about nine o'clock before revellers arrived on the scene and set the pile ablaze by firing Roman candles into the heart of the inflammable mass.

Before this a splendid, if slightly private, display of fireworks had taken place in the college's New Court. Those outside on Midsummer Common were occasionally startled by the roar of a golden blade of rocket sparks cutting its way heavenward through the gathering dusk or caught glimpses of the ruddy glare of 'red fire' lighting up the courts and heard explosions of varying degrees of intensity from the bang of a good-sized squib to the diminutive snapping of the Chinese cracker.

Afterwards the display was a public one. By and by, when the flames were dying out, the crowd dispersed homewards on in search of similar amusement. This was found at the Sidney Street end of Jesus Lane where the Sidney men were celebrating the unusual experience of three bumps. It was here that damage was done: some of the flower beds were trampled and laid waste, every pane of a glass-covered passage which ran along the high wall bounding Sidney Street had been smashed. But there was still several college windows without a crack on them and the huge old oak gate still swung ponderously on its hinges, giving the lie to rumours that 'everything inflammable was consumed'. But there was no doubt something had happened: in the centre of one court there was a large patch of burnt grass where a bonfire had blazed.

Meanwhile at Emmanuel College a bonfire was lighted on the lawn in the front court of the college and the dons – perhaps more enthusiastic gardeners than at the other colleges – decided that something must be done. Ten undergraduates, including a popular member of the

college who was also a double blue, were informed that their presence in Cambridge was no longer required. They were to be rusticated for a week and only allowed back to take their degrees in the Senate House.

This resulted in a 'mock funeral', one of the biggest for many years. At a quarter-past six a string of about 20 hansom cabs drew up at the college gate and were promptly besieged by weirdly-garbed undergraduates, some in gowns, some in flannels and all in extraordinary good spirits. Many of the 'mourners' were in evening dress and sporting opera hats or old silk hats swathed with crape. One had a Teddy Bear on his head, another wore a big fluffy black beard.

Then to the cheers of the assembled crowd the 'corpses' emerged and clambered on to the roofs of the waiting vehicles. The procession moved off towards the railway station headed by four undergraduates bearing a broom draped with crape and followed by a dozen mounted mourners carrying placards bearing the words 'RIP'. Two members of the University Officer Training Corps were there in full uniform carrying their rifles reversed in the proper military attitude of woe while an officiating 'clergyman' wearing a voluminous white surplice gave a semblance of dignity to the procession.

The majority of the mourners were armed with some sort of musical instrument upon which a wailing dirge was produced – something similar perhaps to the sounds emanating from South African football stadiums today

Soon several taxis and a motor bus or two found themselves caught up in the cortege together with a hoard of cyclists and a crowd of small boys.

On arrival at the station there was just time for photographs and speeches before the sudden arrival of the London train brought an end to the proceedings. While the 'corpses' made the journey home – only to return in a few days – the 'mourners' returned to Emmanuel College to inspect the singed grass which had resulted in the premature finale to their friends' academic careers.

SCANS

Bumping race

Cartoon of Bonfire in college court

Cartoon of a mock funeral display

Detail of undergraduate playing 'a musical instrument on which a wailing dirge was produced' – was it a vuvuzela?

Photo of a mock funeral procession (not that of 1910)

Colour pic of Jesus college

Colour pic of Sidney Sussex

Memories 28th June 2010, by Mike Petty

When Charles Moseley first wrote of the place that he'd moved to in the 1960s he tried to disguise it

After all he had gone from the architecturally beautiful city of Cambridge to what everyone acknowledged was by no means a picture-postcard village. There was no medieval church, no picturesque pub, no duck pond. The approach was past concrete-slab council houses set bare and treeless on the top of a hill and were followed by a mixed collection of small, mainly

brick houses, sever of them tumble-down. Any once-thatched cottages had been re-roofed in tarred corrugated iron

But these were in better condition than the one he had mortgaged himself to buy. True it has roses round the door, as the estate agent had promised, but that meant the door could not be opened – and anyway the previous owner had nailed a collection of old nylon stockings around it in an attempt to stem the draughts.

It had two rooms up, two rooms down, a lean-to coal shed converted into a small kitchen and a bathroom. At the bottom of the garden stood an old corrugated-iron privy rattled by the winds that swept in from the surrounding fenland. At least it had a septic tank – he would not have to spread the contents between the rows of vegetables in the back garden like his neighbours. Only, he was to learn, the tank had not been constructed properly and he had to spend several unpleasant hours digging a trench by the light of a Tilley lamp on top of which the rain spat – a trench that filled with half-fermented sewage as he did so.

Charles had swapped Cambridge for community suspicious of strangers. One was George who offered him an apple as a token of welcome. He recalls: George was the dirtiest man I have ever known. His flat cap, a uniform mud colour, often made our hearts sink when it appeared round the gate. His clothes were never changed: jacket, waistcoat, flannel shirt open to the neck to reveal thick woollen vest. His toilet facilities were negligible, once his neighbour saw him peeing outside the back door and commented ‘It was the cleanest thing about him’.

One kept upwind of George, idly counting the fly-specks on his glasses while he told stories that went on and on about people that nobody knew anything about in an accent that was so thick as to be literally incomprehensible to an outsider, especially when uttered with a roll-up cigarette perpetually in the corner of his mouth.

There was one big event. It was the village fair which the Mayor of Cambridge visited in his motor car to open, distribute some coins to the assembled crowds and join in the fun before heading back to the real world telling tales of the quaint little village where flies buzzed around the horses paraded for sale.

Charles grew to love his new community and its tales of feuds and folklore. When the time came for him to move away he was no longer a stranger, indeed such had been the change in that village that people now pointed to him as one of its elders. Soon after he had moved in others had followed, driving the motor cars which made the village much more accessible than ever before. Houses sprang up on the gardens that had once provided food for those whose families had lived there for generations while old tumbled-down cottages became weekend retreats for Londoners. The place was now much tidier, with a Community Association and a village magazine but few residents now had any connection with the rich black soil that surrounded them. It was time, Charles felt, to write up his memoirs of a fen, full of folk and move on.

But he didn’t. He stayed on in the house he had made his home, in the village he had come to know and love. And when the time came to reissue his elegy for a changing community he felt it was time for him to finally, formally to reveal its name.

“Out of Reach: an elegy for a Cambridgeshire village” by Charles Moseley has been reissued by G.David at £8.99 – ISBN 9781906288389

SCANS

Mayoral procession at the opening of Reach fair in 1950s

Choice of various village pictures from the 1930s. There are more recent views in the News library

Memories 5th July 2010 by Mike Petty

As the end of term nears so many children and teachers prepare to move on to other schools. But some schools themselves prepare to close. One such was the Kimway School in Millington Road which was run by twin sisters, the Misses Mary and Elizabeth Macleod. In June 1960 they announced their intention of retiring

Kimway was linked to the first Cambridge 'school for gentlefolk', Llandaff School, which had been run by the Johnson family in Llandaff Chambers, Regent Street, one of the busiest of thoroughfares. Then a Miss Johnson became Mrs Berry and took the school to quiet, leafy Millington Road in Newnham where the major part of the premises was erected in 1907, shortly after the first houses had been built. Her successor, Miss M.A.Tilley, added a brick extension to the wooden building in 1927.

The Macleod sisters had started teaching in 1923 when Cambridge Children's' Classes were held in St Columba's Hall, Downing Street. From 1939 they moved to accommodation made available by parents before moving in 1941 to Millington Road where they inherited seven of Miss Tilley's pupils.

It was an area of Cambridge the ladies knew well. In May 1916 they had watched Sylvia Pankhurst give a violent 'Stop the War' speech to a crowd on Queen's Road. She had been heckled by a wounded Scotsman from the nearby Military Hospital before closing the meeting to much applause. Mary Macleod had played her part during the conflict in the Land Army sleeping in a tent with another six women, five being 'sweet girl undergraduate hefty types'. It had not been a pleasant experience: "with 150 girls to each of four mess tents and only one dish to serve from, sometimes the first get served scrub for seconds before the others have had any ... undisciplined girls refuse to obey orders", she wrote to sister Betty.

Perhaps her experiences influenced the school. At work or play the children were taught to be independent and accept responsibility; they also had to clean classrooms. When school meals started in 1948 the children helped with the washing up. But apart from the yellow shirts and green shorts or knickers worn for games, the school had no uniform as the sisters 'liked the children to be individual'.

Over 20 years more than 620 youngsters had passed through the school. At times 53 youngsters had somehow crowded into the three classrooms and the Assembly Hall which could become two addition rooms when needed. When things were busy the sisters needed help and assistants came from all over the British Isle as well as Australia, America and South Africa. Some stayed for only brief periods which was unsettling for staff and children alike. At one time the school was 'just like a matrimonial agency': the staff no soon settled down than they left to be married, mostly to curates called John

One part of their education the pupils enjoyed to the full was using gymnastic equipment that had been bought with money raised by staff and pupils. Before the war they had been allowed to play cricket on the University Rugger Ground and at other times they used Newnham recreation ground

Things changed with the implementation of the 1948 Education Act which saw parents take their children away to spend two years in elementary school in order to qualify for free places

at grammar schools later. The number of children from university families dwindled and most of the youngsters now came from outside Cambridge.

By 1960 there were just 18 pupils under their care. Their ages ranged from three to 11 years, though the sisters felt that three years old was rather too young to benefit from education. Pupils remained to take their 11-plus and try for scholarships or for places at the Perse.

Now all that was coming to an end. The wooden parts of the school had rotted away, the cost of heating, repairs and general maintenance had become increasingly expensive and King's College, to whom the buildings belonged, wanted to clear the site.

The Misses Macleod had no firm plans for their retirement: there would be more time for golf and reading – not detective stories or modern novels – though the additional domestic work they would have to undertake was not one they viewed with any enthusiasm. One problem to be solved was that of the Brownie pack which met at the school and would now be homeless. It had been Cambridge's first pack, started in January 1917 and was to continue from a hut in Elizabeth's garden until 1976

But it was not to be the end of education on the site. In 1963 the present Millington Road Nursery School was founded to meet the needs of the University, its visitors from overseas and the local community. In April 1988 there were over 40 youngsters many of whom were foreign children and it continues to attract children from all over the world.

Various of the Kimway's school records are preserved in King's College archives but do you have memories of the school or its sisters?

Pictures: article from the CDN announcing the closure of the school in June 1960
Sandra is seeking pictures of Millington Road or there may be prints in the News library

otherwise

Llandaff Chambers, Regent Street, one of the busiest thoroughfares
Newham Recreation ground 1920s

If you need more please come back to me

Memories 12th July 2010, by Mike Petty

Last week historians gathered at Cambridge Central Library to launch yet another book on Cambridge during the Second World War.

Why? Surely there are enough books on that particular topic already! There are accounts of the airfields, the Home Guard, the bombing raids, evacuees and Americans along with memories of those who fought against the Germans, the Italians and the Japanese.

Jack Overhill was a fighter: he fought for pacifism. He did not believe in the war or the politicians who waged it.

He fought to earn money by mending shoes in a small shop on Castle Hill, yet turned down work mending army boots as this conflicted with his pacifist principles.

Jack fought to bring up his family in a house off Lensfield Road that the council wanted to demolish as unfit for habitation. But at the same time he was renting out his other home on Shelford Road at Trumpington

He fought to put food on the table when times were financially hard, yet at the same time spent money on buying an Italian dictionary so he could revise for London University examinations he'd taken and failed time after time before.

Jack spent hour after hour after hour writing book after book about life in back-street Cambridge only to have them rejected time after time after time.

Added to all this he kept a diary, carefully jotting down things he saw and heard: "I saw two married women, whose husbands are in the army, walking along with two American soldiers. They were waisting one another, the heads of the women pillowing on the men's chests and were obviously heading for a secluded spot". Later the women and a mother-in-law parked themselves outside Jack's Saxon Street window to exchange confidences "all to do with their virtuous repulsion of the men they go out with. To get more detail I got up and came down to take a verbatim shorthand report of their talk, but unfortunately I couldn't hear them so plainly downstairs as upstairs..."

What Jack did hear plainly from his upstairs window was the sound of planes overhead and the crash of explosions. "Just then there were flashes in the sky and a whistle and I darted into the house knowing it was a falling bomb. Instinctively I wanted to avoid flying shrapnel, but there was the likelihood of the house collapsing to be considered. In the kitchen I crouched slightly with hunched shoulders as if I were about to take the whole weight of the house on them. I told the children to get under the table, shouting out... There was a terrific explosion and I hurried along the passage to see Jim [the dog] go under the table first, followed by Jack and Jess with Jock [the other dog] bringing up the rear, only partly able to get under, his tail and rump sticking out. ... we had to laugh, serious as it was. We went to the shelter till just after 10.00 when the 'All Clear' sounded and then came home to bed... There was another warning at midnight and up we got and went to the shelter again, this time till 4 o'clock ... [but] Big Jess (his wife) wouldn't come because of a woman down there who bosses about a bit. I shall stay with her in future if she doesn't go ..."

Night after night after night the sirens sounded, interrupting their sleep. Yet time after time the they were awoken without warning – it was amazing how loud bombs dropped at Linton or Oakington could be heard in Cambridge at night.

It was not just German bombs that caused damage: "When I arrived at Lensfield Road corner there was a big crowd. A Hurricane had crashed in an alley between two houses, knocking down part of a wall as it fell in a garden. It had got into a spin, partly straightening out over Sheep's Green (so Ted Clee the custodian at the Sheds told me) and crashed. The ammunition exploded ... As I type I can see part of the wrecked plane on a lorry. A soldier guarding it keeps shooing children souvenir-hunting away ... the distance it crashed is barely 50 yards away from the house"

Jack noted details others missed: "Billy Webb, a man of about 50, was threatened the other night by a Local Defence Volunteer with a rifle because he heard him say 'When are they going to stop all this', referring to the tank trap built on the bridge ... I saw two member of the Cambridge University Officer's Training Corps come out of the Pickerel Inn the other Saturday night, one of them letting off his revolver". Jack spotted the tanks and lorries hidden under the trees along Queen's Road, noted the army manoeuvres and heard of the signaller who complained of 36 trucks full of debris from bombed sites in London that stood near his signalbox: "They stank so much containing bits of human bodies. The debris was finally tipped into a refuse pit at Chesterton"

Jack kept his diary carefully, and carefully kept his diary. He took it with him each time he stumbled out of bed to the air raid shelter. He compiled it 1932 until just before his death in 1989. It is preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library alongside his few so-far published novels.

Jack Overhill had no doubt of their importance: they were books for scholars of the future. Now this has been appreciated. Peter Searby, formerly history lecturer in the University of Cambridge, has edited the volumes for the years 1939-1945.

It is not just another book on Cambridge at war. It is a unique record of a community with all its failings and frailties during a time of hardship and stress.

Cambridge at war: the diary of Jack Overhill 1939-1945, edited by Peter Searby, has been published by the Cambridgeshire Records Society and sells for £18 from Cambridgeshire Archives and Local Studies Office, Shire Hall, Castle Hill, Cambridge CB3 0AP. ISBN 978-0-904323-21-4

Memories 19th July 2010, by Mike Petty

An old name is soon to be revived on Chesterton Road when an interesting building starts a new stage in its career, this time as a public house

The “Tivoli”, was Cambridge’s sixth cinema when it opened in March 1925. A News reporter who was given a preview came away very much impressed with the attractiveness of the interior. It had comfort, excellent lighting and excellent decoration. Over 600 people could be seated in the body of the hall and gallery but if you wanted a private box for six people you might have one for the sum of 15s (75p), he informed readers.

On the first night it was hailed as “Chesterton’s super cinema” and had every justification for expressing itself in superlatives. With its courteous staff of brown-uniformed attendants it was elaborate, cosy, artistically lighted and efficiently ventilated. It also boasted an excellent orchestra and a screen sufficiently large to do justice to the most elaborate film productions, Sadly the evening was marred by one small technicality: the projection was not quite perfect, but this could soon be remedied

Not all the films it showed were professionally-made. In June 1927 the Tivoli gave a screening to “Grit” an undergraduate film directed by Mr Dennis Arundell and filmed on a little Cine-Kodak camera. It was believed to be the first serious attempt in an English University to obtain experience in the technique of film production and was one of the first amateur films to be exhibited in the country. It was a tale of how the stroke of a college crew was kidnapped so his boat might not go head of the river and featured some good views of Cambridge streets and colleges. More authentic rowing footage of the Oxford and Cambridge boat race was rushed to Cambridge to be shown on the evening of the 1930 event

That year a new sound installation manufactured by British Acoustic was installed when the first film featured Maurice Chevalier in ‘Innocents in Paris’ supported by the comedy ‘Talkie’

But not all films were appreciated. In November 1933 a recruiting film ‘Our Fighting Navy’ was withdrawn following lively scenes. Fifty undergraduate anti-war students, including Alan Turing of King’s College (later mastermind code-breaker at Bletchley Park), organised a protest against what they saw as blatant militarist propaganda. But a rival party, numbering about a thousand undergraduates, marched to the Tivoli with two bands playing war-time songs and carrying Union Jacks. Several tried to push their way in, a stink bomb was let off in

the vestibule and cries of 'Down with Hitler' and 'Heil Hitler' were heard above the general uproar until four policemen with drawn truncheons, managed to restore order

The cinema itself featured in one of the Cambridge Accident Prevention Council's road-safety films. 'Horse Sense' made in 1952 featured the adventures of a horse called Patch that escapes from its stable and wanders about the streets of Cambridge passing the Tivoli where children are waiting for admission.

Film star Diana Dors made a personal appearance but even she could not save the cinema. In November 1956 the Tivoli closed, with Associated British Cinemas claiming the heavy burden of entertainment tax had made it uneconomic. It was one of 180 cinemas forced to close that year, including the Playhouse on Mill Road.

The Tivoli was just one of Cambridge's cinemas, along with the Kinema, Central, Regal and Rex. The biggest was the Victoria that opened on the corner of Market Hill in 1931. In November 1952 it was one of the first to show three-dimensional films when cinema-goers wearing tinted spectacles saw fish swimming above their heads in the middle of the auditorium and ducked as a cricket ball bounced right out of the special screen that had been installed for the event. Up-to-date projection equipment was installed in 1967 with a second screen in 1972.

By then it was the largest cinema in Cambridge attracting an average audience of about 600 people paying £2.10 for their seats. But things were changing: 1982 marked the end of the children's matinee performances which had started in 1946 and once attracted two or three hundred kids. 1983 almost saw the end of the Victoria itself when fire destroyed the screen and part of the stage. It reopened as one of the best-equipped cinemas in the country with six-track stereo, a new screen and the new 70mm projector that was seen at full benefit in films like 'Ghandi' and 'The Star Wars' trilogy. It closed in 1988

But do you remember the Victoria cinema having a café?

In October 1931 'Varsity' reported that the new building incorporated a large bar and lounge, a commodious foyer and hall planned as a restaurant, not yet completed, that was probably to be converted into a dance hall.

My notes say this became the Victoria ballroom in April 1962 but can you tell me more?

Pictures

Tivoli, Chesterton Road shortly after opening
Diana Dors at the Tivoli in the 1950s

Victoria cinema queue 1947
Victoria cinema c1947

Leaving cinema after an all-night screening 1972

Artists impression of the Victoria 1967
Victoria cinema staff 1950s

Memories 26 July 2010 by Mike Petty

Ely is a city that has changed dramatically in recent years. New estates of houses have spread from the western bypass to the Prickwillow Road. The riverside where the mixed aromas from the brewery and sugar-beer factory once merged with the damp pong from the Ouse and was home to warehouses and scrapyards has been transformed with a park and yet more new homes.

Many of the present citizens have no recollection of the days when a Victorian Corn Exchange and public room dominated the market place. They disappeared in 1962 to be replaced with a development of lease-hold shops designed by Suburban Counties Properties of London who promised it would bring a 'new look'. It certainly did. The development attracted comment, little of it positive and some units remained unlet for two years causing concern to traders who felt it did not encourage new business or enhance the city centre.

At that time a new Post Office and a supermarket were being built just across the road. Both are now but memories but there is another new shopping development on the site of the old Cattle Market.

One lady who knows about Ely history is Pam Blakeman who has compiled a colourful record of the changes combining old and new photographs, some taken from the same viewpoint. Often it is hard to spot any differences, at others it is hard to believe it's the same place

Meanwhile another lady has been typing up newspaper reports covering the period when it was the Corn Exchange and cattle market that was seen as the future. The monumental task of copying the stories from the files of the Cambridge Chronicle was undertaken by Muriel Wallace in the 1980s and folder after folder of her handwritten notes are preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library. Now the period between 1820 and 1849 has been typed and indexed by Barbara Slade to reveal the fascinating life and times, aspirations and failures of the city. She has now produced seven volumes and continues her project hoping that shortly all of Muriel's notes up to 1860 can be made available to family historians and researchers. One story from June 1849 seems pertinent today with the threat of cutbacks to council services. Then there was a dispute about spending money on street cleaning which resulted in the sacking of all the scavengers and street-sweepers leading to Ely becoming choked with dust and filth. However rather than resolving the dispute locally one of the protagonists threatened to start legal proceedings. However badly the parish money had been spent, it is hoped little would be squandered away in settling the differences, the paper commented.

Two readers are seeking help with identifying old bandsmen

Bernard Openshaw was helping to clear a house in South Croydon when he discovered an old photograph album too interesting too dump. Now, more than 30 years on, he too is looking to reduce his clutter and the album has surfaced once more. It contains a number of studio portraits the majority of which come from Cambridge. One shows a military bandman and was taken in the studio of Herbert Mason while another from the same studio has the name 'Larkin'. Bernard would like to restore these photographs to the original family. If anybody has any clues then please email bandmivopenshaw@btinternet.com or contact me and I'll put you in touch.

Gillian Figures is on a similar quest. She has also been trying to learn details about several unnamed family photographs, probably all from Cambridge photographers. They are of young men believed to be from the Isaacson family who came from the Swaffham Bulbeck, Swaffham Prior area. The most intriguing photo is of a man and boy in some kind of uniform with deep pillbox hats with a pom pom on top and a sort of crescent shape on the front. The

boy is holding a flute while the man has three chevron stripes on his right sleeve. She wonders if it's of a drum and fife band but there is no other instrument shown except the flute.

There were a number of possible bands including the St Andrew the Less Temperance Society Youth Band, Holy Trinity Drum & Fife band and the Albert Institute. Does anybody have pictures showing a similar uniform or have you other suggestions. Email gillian.figures@me.com or drop me a line

And can you help Yvonne Stepney who is seeking any descendants of the Kitson family who lived at 13 Gothic Street. There was a Lily, Dorothy, Elsie and William but all her searches end in 1939. Once more you can email www.yvonne.stepnet@virgin.net or let me know.

Ely Through Time by Pam Blakeman – Amberley Publishing £14.99 – ISBN978-1-84868-530-7

Ely Chronicle: transcripts of stories from the Cambridge Chronicle, vol.1-7, 1820-1849 from Barbara Slade - b.slade@virgin.net - £7.50 each

Scans

Blakeman cover

Ely High Street c1905

There may be other Ely pictures to follow within the next hour

Snippet from the Cambridge Chronicle of 1849 relating to street sweeping

Photos of bandsmen from Gillian Figures and Bernard Openshaw

Memories 2nd August 2010 by Mike Petty

A recent Memories article has prompted Ann Waldock of Fulbourn to send me a copy of her late husband's account of his life as a cinema projectionist.

Albert's fascination with film began in the 1930s when he found a toy projector, a spring-wound thing with a battery-powered light. It was encouraged by his grandparents who lived in Royston and took him to pensioners' free nights at the town's cinema.

Albert recalled: "I can remember the old cinema which was opposite the police station back in the silent days. I went there a few times before it burnt down. One thing that fascinated me was how they pulled out the old tree stumps with traction engines (steam being another of my interests). While the new Priory was being built the town still had a temporary cinema at the British Legion Hall opposite the old Gas Works. At that time there was a First-World-War field gun each side of the entrance"

Leaving school at the age of 14 he got a job as maintenance boy at Fulbourn Hospital where he helped at the weekly film show for patients. Then he saw an advertisement for a rewind boy at the Regal in Cambridge at the princely wage of twenty-five shilling a week. From there Albert soon moved to the Central Cinema in Hobson Street in 1941 where he boosted his income by fire-watching, scrambling up on to the roof when the sirens sounded. He was too well aware of the danger of fire, the Central itself having been re built in 1940 following a fire the previous year

He became friendly with many of the men and women who worked at the Central. Bill Pearl, the cinema doorman/boilerman only had one arm but could rake out the ashes better than

many a man with two. When he de-clinkered the boiler at about nine o'clock Bill would pull the ash forward and pop in half-a-dozen good spuds which provided a well-cooked supper when the crowds left.

At other times Albert and his colleagues ate at Miss Pearson's Tea Rooms above Morley's Pawn Shop just across the road. He went there for breakfast, dinner and tea and found the food excellent. Amongst the other diners was Alf Dellar, a short tubby little old chap with bright shiny boots that suggested he'd been in the army. His prime job was as handbill deliverer but his main love was horseracing. Then there was an Italian operatic singer tutor who lived above the café - on summer days when the windows were open the din was catastrophic and Miss Pearson would slam the doors a few times in her temper.

Amongst the other Central characters at this time was Phyllis Barnes the second projectionist - a lovely gal, large and cuddly - and Miss Cathy Hyde, the manageress whose RAF Corporal husband came home for weekends to help her do the paperwork. Then there was old John Jee who had a publicity den in the circle void with thousands of film star photographs and posters.

One regular visitor was as a chap called John Foster who was always able to find a customer for any oddments somebody wanted to sell. Albert found a number of such items when checking the seats after performances. There were quite a few coins, chewing gum, gloves, scarves, buttons and something he describes as 'gentlemen onlys'. There were also numerous nuts bolts and washers as factory workers used to come straight from work in their overalls. It was not uncommon for those who lived on their own to come off shift, get their dinner, go to the pictures and fall asleep until the National Anthem signalled the end of the show and they were woken up just in time for the night shift.

Albert Waldock moved on to the Tivoli but didn't like it, so he switched to the Playhouse and then the Victoria in a career that lasted until 1999. Sadly he never completed his handwritten notes which are full of technical details that will prove invaluable to cinema historians. But in an earlier letter published in *Memories* in June 2004 he recalled that he later helped install the projectors at the Victoria for the first true 3D films to be shown in Cambridge.

Michael Knights from Cambridge saw many of the films screened at the Vic. He was taken as a four-or-five year old to see 'Mr Pastry', the creation of popular entertainer Richard Hearn in the early 1950s and became a regular.

Margaret Marrs from Trumpington remembers the Victoria's restaurant. She writes: "When I was working and before I was married (1952-1955) I used to meet up with friends or colleagues for lunch and we had a selection of eating places in those days. The Victoria was one, my recollection was that it was a large room upstairs at the cinema. Almost next door, on the corner of Market Street was the Scotch Hoose, still an eating house after several name changes over the years. Another regular place was between Burtons, then on the corner of Petty Cury and the International Stores on Market Hill. A staircase led down to the Venetian Restaurant in the basement. But I suppose the most regular was the Civic Restaurant at the St Andrew's end of Petty Cury, where you could get a nourishing meal cheap".

But were any other restaurants as full of characters as Miss Pearson's tea rooms? And what memories do you have of eating out in Cambridge in the sixties or seventies?

Pictures

Royston cinema after a fire June 1933 – Albert went there as a lad once it was rebuilt

Fulbourn Hospital 1960s – Albert helped show the films for patients

Children at a Cambridge cinema 1953

Entrance to the Victoria restaurant 1964

One of the projectors at the Victoria cinema 1951 (I'm not sure that its Albert)

Albert Waldock (centre) with Victoria cinema staff early 1950s

Hobson Street showing the Central cinema – there may be a better copy in the News library – Roz is checking

Advertisement for films in Cambridge cinemas 1956

Memories 9th August 2010, by Mike Petty

Last week the News carried a report about a man who had become trapped in a well near Little Paxton whilst trying to rescue a much-loved dog. Just 100 years ago there was a similar story, this time about an incident in Wentworth near Witchford.

The Cambridgeshire Weekly News of 12th August 1910 reported how a tragedy had been narrowly averted by the prompt action of a villager, Jonas Whetstone. He'd heard a noise coming from a well by the roadside and on looking in was surprised to find a young woman clinging desperately to the brick sides and in imminent peril of drowning in the 30-feet deep water below. It was no easy matter from him to effect her escape but he succeeded in doing so.

The eighteen-year old girl, Harriett, had been in service in London and recently returned home to visit her parents in the Hillrow area of Haddenham. She had come over to Wentworth to see her young man but he had refused to speak to her. This rebuff proved too much for the girl who, losing all control, jumped into the well. When rescued she was handed over to police and appeared in court charged with attempting to commit suicide.

Sadly all too often such attempts were successful and at other times criminals have tried to hide the bodies of their victims down the well. One such incident took place at Walsoken Marsh near Wisbech in 1885 when a drunken husband attacked his wife with a billhook. Thinking he had killed her he put the body into the water where she recovered her senses, but drowned.

Sometimes well water was warm: in January 1841 a Longstanton farmer struck water just 5½ feet below the surface which maintained an even temperature of 65 degrees even on cold days whilst a second well drilled 14 yards away produced exceptionally cold water.

But it was often not drinkable. In 1910 the County Medical Officer of Health reported that Croxton well was polluted and was not worth spending money on, while although five wells at Willingham were contaminated there was no better supply available. In 1924 numerous wells at Soham were found to be polluted with sewage and unfit for drinking purposes. The Newmarket Medical Office had a list of 41 wells all of which had been condemned. As long as they were available to the public they would be a potential source of water-borne diseases, he warned. However many parish councils opposed proposals to introduced piped water during a period of recession.

In July 1957 the News sent a reporter to investigate the situation in Duxford. There were 63 known wells in the village but the previous year 40 had dried up and 13 others were unsatisfactory. Dr J. York Moore of Sawston, who had been monitoring the situation for some time said the wells had been drying up earlier each year - in August 1955, in July 1956 and June 1957. One had stopped working in June 1956 and had not been used since.

Miss Harriett Hewitt, then 74-years-old, lived in a four-roomed cottage in Ickleton Road. The well she shared with some of her neighbours had dried up and she had to go once a day to a pump about 250 yards away to fetch water. "If I want extra water, then I have to go twice", she declared. "I think it is terrible". Mrs Pamela Jones, a housewife with two small children who lived in St John's Street, obtained her water from a pump about 200 yards from her home. "I have to go about three or four times a day", she said.

Today one can buy bottled water with added flavours such as apple, lime or elderflower. This too was something our forefathers knew all about – only it was somewhat different. In 1889 one correspondent to the Cambridge Daily News described his village's water as '*covered with a green, slimy substance, and full of living creatures and to add to its high flavour most of the liquids from the adjoining farmyard closets and pig sties are drained into it*'

Many wells which once stood at the back of cottages have been forgotten. Ralph Warboys recalled in 2003 how there were once about 56 in Oakington and Westwick 12 most could not be located. His father discovered one when driving a sow past the 'White Horse' after the old boards covering the hole gave way and the pig fell in. Have you had a similar incident?

Scans

Choice of views of Wentworth 1930s

News report on well story 2010

CWN report 1910

Body taken from well at Walsoken 1885

Well at Wicken c1900

Well at Abington 1945

Memories 16th August 2010 by Mike Petty

Barry Moore from Milton has kindly shown me some photographs that seem to fill a gap in Cambridge's recorded history. But they also open up other questions.

The pictures show a market stall and shop occupied by the firm of W.Delph and son whose 1934 billhead proclaims them to be wholesale and retail fruiterers, florists and nurserymen.

Two pictures show their stall on the corner of the market near the junction with Petty Cury. Neither is dated, though there are clues. The more recent photograph contains advertisements for Australian apples and pears and was taken in about 1935. It is not the fruit that gives this clue but the building work taken place in the background where scaffolding surrounds the white Caius college student accommodation on the corner of Rose Crescent. It was part of the massive development of central Cambridge that would also see the rebuilding of much of Sidney Street and the north side of Petty Cury

The other is obviously older, probably about 1904. It shows a most neatly-presented range of apples, plums and other fruit together with asparagus and greens together with two young men manning the stall. The stall carries the name 'W. Delph & Son' and then, partially obscured are the words 'Also at 39 Market Hill, opposite.

Now it gets interesting, for the building opposite the stall was Cambridge Guildhall and a third picture shows 'The Guildhall Fruit Stores' occupying part of the building. Its entrance was right beside the support for the canopy which sheltered councillors and visiting dignities who arrived to meet the Mayor. So how did a fruit shop come to occupy such a site.

When the building was first constructed in about 1790 it was not a Guildhall at all: the town's offices were in an older building behind. It was built as a Shire Hall whose upper storey provided space for the county justices to meet. The arches underneath were open and provided an extension to the market. Only later were they bricked in. An engraving of 1800 shows the Shire Hall with the open arches and the Guildhall behind looking remarkably unchanged by 1910.

As well as fruit and veg, Delphs were florists with a nursery on Madingley Road. They specialised in wreaths and crosses. One of the photographs shows a giant wreath bearing the words 'Their Name Liveth for Evermore'. It was displayed, Barry believes, over the Guildhall clock in November 1919, as part of the commemoration of the first anniversary of the signing of the Armistice. The wreath was made by Fred Etheridge, Barry's grandfather, who lived at 24 James Street where he continued to make wreaths after his retirement

By 1919 Delph's had moved to no.36 Market Hill the centre of three shops occupying a tall building between the Guildhall and Union Street, the road leading to Peas Hill. Prior to that they traded from Union Street itself. Both these buildings were demolished in the first stage of Guildhall enlargement.

Barry's photographs thus enable us to track down something of the story of W. Delph and son. Registers give other clues. It seems that a William H. Delph married Ellen Buxton in Cambridge in September 1880. He died in December 1919, just days after that wreath was placed over the Guildhall clock.

But there must be more to be told. Can you help tell it? And can you add to the story of Cambridge's fruit sellers?

Pictures

Two views of market stalls

One shows building work on the north side of the Market Hill c1934

The other is c1900 and advertises the business when it was underneath the Guildhall arches

The shop underneath the arches

A giant wreath outside 36 Market Hill, placed around the Guildhall clock

Photograph of the area c1910 showing Guildhall, arches, canopy, clock and the building alongside

An engraving of the same scene in 1800

Billhead from the firm 1936

Memories 23rd August 2010, by Mike Petty

I received a letter from Ron Ryder recently. Ron has been a regular correspondent over the years, sharing his memories of Pye, Chesterton, the Brunswick School and gas masks amongst other topics.

This one is particularly poignant for it came with a note from his daughter to say that Ron had passed away and that when sorting through his papers she'd come across this letter. It was probably the last he wrote and he never actually got around to signing it

It reads: "I was interested to read about the old Victoria Cinema on Market Square, Cambridge. I have fond memories of the Restaurant area which could be used for evening clubs etc. The Cambridge Camera Club was formed there by Frank Watson who worked in Campkins Camera Shop, Rose Crescent". Ron enclosed a photograph of one such meeting taken about 1952. (The posters on the wall both advertise films that were released that year).

Ron continued: "It shows Frank Watson who must have hired a film about photography to keep us entertained for that night. In those days we did our own developing and printing, mixing and weighing all our chemicals. It was all black-and-white photography and we put on several exhibitions of our prints in the Victoria"

He included a list of names of members which reads like a who's who of Cambridge photographers at that time including Norman and Francis Hall, the President of the Club. Perhaps you can identify the faces most of whom, like himself have now passed into history. As well as Ron himself it shows Miss Johnson, Ken and Mary Bowyer, Miss Williams, John Scoon, Dr Bottomley, Roy Moss, Stan and Doris Moore, Mr Coulson, Roy and Freda Green and Briscoe Snelson.

Their pictures from the past that was their present still bring pleasure to so many and Ron shared a number of his photographs in Memories over the years. They included a rare snap of the Cambridge Air Raid Wardens in the Ramsden Square area of Cambridge showing his father H.J. Ryder and brother Cyril as well as head warden Mr Winkworth, H. Dennison, Mr Mallyon & Mr Brown. Another of his photographs shows a group of Royal Engineers taken at Cambridge station in October 1939

I'm always delighted to see such snaps as so much care went into taking, developing and printing them. If you find any when sorting through papers please ensure they are preserved for future generations. The Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library is always happy to add to its files and I'm also delighted to share them through 'Memories'

A photograph I featured recently in Memories showed a well at the back of a cottage in Great Abington. It brought back memories for Dr Aileen Adams of Cambridge who emailed: "I recognise the site as the front of the cottage I lived in from 1960 to 1991. I knew there had been a well there and also I was only too familiar with the walnut tree shading it – too familiar in that it gradually grew out of all proportion and tilted towards the road and had to be cut down eventually as a potential danger, in spite of having a preservation order on it. The cottage had been named "Gilding Cross" when I went there. I understood that it was soon after 1945 that an architect took over these cottages together with one further down the road with a view to improving them. This he did, making them comfortable and convenient but keeping their charm. At this time the cottages were not scheduled, but some years after I moved in they gave Grade 2 status to them. It seems there were original four cottages in the row and he turned them into two houses. Certainly I was very

happy there for over 30 years before moving into Cambridge after I retired.

SCANS

Cambridge Camera club members at a film show at the Victoria cinema restaurant in 1952 from Ron Ryder

Ron Ryder pictures of

Ramsden Square Air Raid wardens

250th Field Co Royal Engineers leaving Cambridge station, Oct 1939 showing B.W.Gurner, sapper Percy Taylor, Cpl Taylor & Sapper Ernie Baker

Brunswick School group including a very young Ron Ryder, who has just passed away aged 90, in the second row

Brunswick school was new when Ron went there

Briscoe Snelson picture of well at Great Abington

Memories 30th August 2010

With the news that the Guided Bus will not now arrive this year we can all settle down for a long wait before the new vehicles whisk us smoothly to wherever we wish to go. Some passengers complain this is nothing new, waiting a long time for a bus only to have three arrive at once.

But in August 1960 one News reader recalled when there had been only seven buses in the whole of the Cambridge area, three of them were just 14 horsepower, the others a more powerful thirty. They comprised the fleet of the Ortona Motor Company in 1912

Harry Bevan knew all about them, for that year he started as a driver on the Number 3 bus to Sawston. It was a route he drove five times a day for seven years, carrying both parcels and a steady stream of people. He was allowed 50 minutes each way and by using the maximum speed of 12 mph ensured he always had time for a good smoke break at the end.

Harry soon got to know his passengers. One evening he noticed one of his regulars sitting on the wall at Emmanuel College eating an enormous pork pie. Harry stopped and picked him up to take him home on the bus. They got as far as the 'Green Man' at Trumpington, when the passenger insisted on going for a drink. Finding it impossible to dissuade him Harry and his conductor followed him inside and so did another passenger travelling on the top deck.

Unfortunately the top deck passenger owed the other man some money and when he refused to hand it over 'he gave him a fourpenny one and floored him', Harry recalled. So for the rest of the journey they took the regular passenger (an ex-boxer) in the driving cab and let the victim keep his place on the top deck, out of harm's way.

It was difficult to get a driving licence: Harry had to wait till he was 21 before he could take his driving test and get a special licence from Scotland Yard, who issued them at that time. Then he had to have a separate licence for each vehicle he drove. The first double-decker he drove on coming to Cambridge from London, was one which in 1908 used to travel from Station Road Corner to the Rock Hotel on Cherry Hinton Road and back via Blinco Grove. It was not allowed to go through the town because it was a menace to shop signs.

One night Harry drove one of the lesser-powered buses up to the Rex Skating Rink on Magrath Avenue and picked up some undergraduates. The vehicle was licensed to carry 26 passengers but by the time the students had clambered up on the top deck there were about 50 onboard. Undaunted Harry drove off down the hill at a steady ten miles an hour when the coupling shaft broke. The passengers dismounted and many of them patiently stood by while Harry crawled under the bus to repair the damage. When it was fixed they all jumped aboard again to continue the journey.

The Great War saw men and some buses called up for the front and bus conductresses came into their own. They were only used in town since on country services there were heavy parcels to be delivered. As the war dragged on men became so few that they actually thought of appointing women bus drivers – but it never came to that and when the men returned most ladies gave up conducting.

There were concerns about a lack of competition. In 1921 the Cambridge Borough Council signed an agreement with Ortona allowing them a monopoly of buses on the streets of Cambridge for a payment of £250 a year. “They have had a jolly good picking. There are no workmen’s tickets, no children’s tickets, no cheap tickets, which you get in any other town”, one councillor complained. The Mayor said the streets were already so congested that it was not possible to have competitive services in operation.

Until 1925 the main bus terminus was outside the Senate House but then Drummer Street was brought into use. It soon became overcrowded and Ortona claimed all of the side nearest Emanuel College leaving the Christ’s Pieces side for the others – and if an independent parked on the wrong side there was trouble. 1931 was the crunch year for many companies with the introduction of the Road Transport Act and in that year Ortona itself was taken over by Eastern Counties Omnibus Company, the familiar green buses which could by then take you to Peterborough for 3/- or 5/- return – were replaced by red ones

But it was not just a change of colour that upset drivers and conductors. In 1932 they complained that the old Ortona bus company had a sort of family arrangement with the workers but with the formation of Eastern Counties the men had suffered cuts in wages. There were also changes in working conditions. A midnight meeting of 200 employees instructed the Transport and General Workers’ Union to open negotiations for wages of 1s 4d (07p) an hour for drivers, 1s 2d (06p) for conductors, for a 48-hour week with double time on public holidays. There was outrage when the secretary of the Busmen’s Union, George Proctor, who had been leading the negotiations, was made redundant. The Company piled up pressure, restricting overtime but increasing the size of buses which added to the workload of conductors and demanding faster times from the drivers.

The Second World War saw modifications to buses, one was equipped to run on gas and others redesigned to allow 30 standing passengers. Some were painted in grey camouflage painting with the windows covered over apart from small peepholes. The bus headlights were masked and drivers had to grope their way through blacked-out streets.

All this Harry Bevan experienced. He retired in 1948 with many good, and some bad memories, a few of which he shared in an article in the News fifty years ago. His reminiscences gave a wonderful insight to the everyday problems of driving a bus. Did you drive one and have you tales to tell?

Pictures

Bus in Chesterton

Bus Cherry Hinton Road – early double deckers were not allowed in the town centre

Ortona fleet when Harry drove
Double decker similar to those Harry drove
Bus corner Petty Cury
Congestion in Emmanuel Street
Harry's article from August 1960

Memories 6th Sept 2010 by Mike Petty

I met Pam Haswell the other evening when speaking to Peterborough Family History Society and now she has emailed seeking help tracking down an ancestor's police record.

William Caunt (her first cousin three-times removed) was born either 1842 or 1844 in Rippingale, Lincs, the illegitimate son of Anne Caunt who was the sister of her great-great-grandfather Stephen Caunt. He is listed as a Police Constable in Cambridge in the censuses between 1871 and 1901 and is shown as retired by 1911. He died in 1914 and is buried in Mill Road Cemetery, Cambridge with his wife Sofia Caunt nee Frost.

That bit she knows and Pam has checked all the usual internet sources and censuses. They show, for example that in 1871 the 17-year-old William was lodging in Paradise Street and listed as a Police Officer.

But there are mysteries. I have volumes of the Spalding's street directories of Cambridge for 1898 and 1904 but there is no mention of William Caunt. However the 1904 Directory has been fully indexed in a digitised version published by The Cambridge Explorer in 2001. It reveals William's address then as 11 Rose Cottage, Mawson Road. Further checking in the volumes available at Lion Yard Library would enable Pam to investigate a little further, should she travel down from Peterborough.

Spalding's Directories also include a list of Cambridge Borough policemen and Caunt is not amongst them.

But in January 1932 Mr H.P. Brown of Hooper Street sent the Cambridge Chronicle a copy of a picture of the Borough Police force taken in the Corn Exchange together with a list of names. There on the front row is a PC 'Gaunt'. Mr Brown thought it had been taken in 1878 though other readers at the time put the date as between 1883 and 1885.

Pam would be interested in finding out about his service, what sort of uniform would he have worn in those days and anything else about the police at that time in Cambridge.

One man who recorded his memories of policing at that time was Inspector Ernest Haylock who served in the Cambridgeshire force between 1895 and 1923.

In his early days police worked entirely on foot and even when bicycles were introduced they were not allowed to use them at night. He had a monthly half-a-crown (12p) boot allowance out of which he had to tip and hobnail them. This ensured villains could hear a policeman coming along the road a mile off, his feet crunching up the bad country roads. He carried a bulls-eye lamp, a heavy, clumsy old thing but often it had gone out when he most needed it, especially on wet nights. When alight the smell was awful if it was not filled with good Colza oil but this cost fivepence a pint and each officer was allowed just a shilling a month for oil.

There were of course the lighter incidents. One constable had been on duty all day in the tent at Caxton Races looking after the trophies and had taken a little 'refreshment' to while away the time. It was customary to give the policemen a taste of champagne at the end of the day

but this reacted with his previous beverages and caused him to be sick in the trap that carried him back to Cambridge. Sadly he was sitting opposite the Chief Constable at the time.

On another occasion when Ernest was a constable, he and a colleague were warned by their Superintendent that they were not to take the route back past Wimpole Hall where a ball was in progress. But of course they decided to call round at the kitchen where they knew the cook and others of the staff would be. Whilst there one of the young gentlemen came out and invited them to join the dance so they took off their hobnail boots and hopped around in their socks.

Little bits of fun such as this and the odd pheasant or a golden sovereign from the 'squire' at Christmas (to help pay the house rent) helped life along and as the men were in uniform most of the day and night, they did not need to spend a lot on their civilian clothes.

When Inspector Haylock decided that he was ready for retirement, having served more than a year longer than the statutory requirement of 26 years approved service, the Police Committee were upset to see him go. Indeed they asked the Home Office to pass new regulations requiring policemen to continue on to the age of 55. Had they been successful Ernest would have had to continue to plod the beat for a further six years.

Ernest's memories were recorded by Arthur Almond and published in the Cambridgeshire Local History Council Bulletin for 1978. But do you have similar stories – and do any of them mention William Caunt. If so email Pam - pamhaswell@yahoo.com – or drop me a line

The Cambridge Explorer interactive CD-Rom of the 1904 Cambridge Spalding's Directory is available online for £10 – www.cambridge-explorer.org.uk

Pictures

Named photo of Cambridge police sent to the Cambridge Chronicle in 1932
Cambridge policeman outside house in Park Street wrecked by gas explosion in 1896
Trumpington bobby with his bike
Police outside Cambridge police station c1890
Police with Macedonian gypsies 1904

Memories 13th September 2010, by Mike Petty

I have a terrible memory for names and faces. Yet when I saw a lady in the Cambridgeshire Collection the other week something seemed familiar.

Was she from Sweden, I asked. "No, Finland", she replied – "I met you in 1971" In those distant days Anna-Liisa Vasko was a student who had come over to Cambridgeshire investigating our local dialect. She had spent much time tape recording folk in places where their distinctive regional ways of saying things still survived, visiting 15 Cambridgeshire villages from Bassingbourn to the borders of the Isle of Ely, beyond which another colleague was doing the same.

Anna-Liisa was interested in the way people spoke, not what they actually said and the recordings went back to the University of Helsinki with her. Now some of the results of that research have been published on the University's website.

Her report on 'Cambridgeshire Dialect Grammar' is a detailed analysis of nouns and pronouns, propositions and adverbs, illustrated by examples of their use. But there are also actual snippets of the tape recordings of people from Doddington, Elm, Swaffham Prior and Willingham.

One of her main contributors had been the late Dennis Jeeps of Willingham whose impressive collection of photographs has been preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection. Anna was browsing through a box of them when I interrupted her. It was something she could have done from home in Helsinki for since Dennis' death the pictures have been digitised and placed on the 'Old Willingham' website so they are available to anybody with a computer. (<http://oldwillingham.com/>)

Out at Cottenham two men were compiling a similar record of that village and filling school halls with their regular slide shows. Both Francis Garrett and Mervyn Haird have now passed away but their legacy lives on.

When Mervyn died his slides remained in the magazines in the order he showed them, his notes identifying streets, topics, schools and many of the faces shown were meticulously filed. It was all ready for deposit in the Cambridgeshire Collection but only when his widow, Cynthia, was ready.

Mervyn was a remarkable man in many ways, not the least of which was photography. He had inherited a large collection of old glass negatives taken by two early Cottenham photographers that he had developed and printed in his garden-shed darkroom. To these he had added hundreds of pictures he took himself either by walking the streets or by borrowing and copying postcards and snaps lent to him by villagers. It was a community-wide enterprise and the pictures were shared with the village through books and of course those packed-out shows.

But he had kept up to date with modern computer developments and together he and his wife had attended evening classes to learn how to scan his images and save them to disks, to enable digital copies to be made. It was a project he never completed, one she wanted to carry into fruition.

Cynthia enlisted the assistance of Hugo Brown from Wilburton who has spent the last four months scanning, digitising and indexing the magnificent Cottenham archive of pictures. And last week an invited audience was amazed at the result. There is now a DVD that you pop into a computer and gives instant access to some 1,500 images – about half the entire collection. On your laptop you can recreate the old slide shows street by street – it will take something over five hours just to click through them all.

But then there are the categories – all pictures of ploughing, farming, bicycle-making or buses together with images of the village at war or at play. And if you are searching for people then a simple click on an alphabetical listing will take you to any school group or gathering that shows them.

Copies of the DVD of the Mervyn Haird Collection an interactive photographic archive of the village of Cottenham have been deposited in Cambridgeshire Archives and local libraries. But they are also available to anybody willing to invest £15 in a piece of the past presented in the format of the future.

The community of Cottenham helped Mervyn Haird compile its pictorial history, now it has been returned to them. There will be a public presentation at Cottenham Village College on 15th September at 7.30 to which all are welcome. If you can't get along then copies are available from www.cambridge-explorer.org.uk

Anna-Liisa Vasko's study on Cambridgeshire Dialect Grammar can be read and heard online at <http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/journal/volumes/04/index.htm> while her 2005 report "Up

Cambridge : prepositional locative expressions in dialect speech : a Corpus-based study of the Cambridgeshire dialect” is available to read in the Cambridgeshire Collection.

Dennis Jeeps’ pictures can be seen online at <http://www.oldwillingham.com>

Pictures

The cover of the Mervyn Haird Collection DVD

Cynthia Haird at the launch, in front of a photo of her late husband

Mervyn Haird

One man and his dog and dinner – Burgess’s butcher’s shop, High Street, Cottenham

Cottenham cricket team set off for a match at Stretham

The Three Horseshoes public house

A Willingham lady in her cottage about 1870 – students from Helsinki University investigating Cambridgeshire dialect would have loved to have spoken to her!

Memories 20th September 2010 by Mike Petty

Richard Collis from Stapleford would like help tracking down something of the history of a building that was once an essential part of the world-famous Stourbridge Fair held on the common off Newmarket Road.

Formerly the Fair used to attract merchants from Venice and Genoa with their silks and velvets, Flemish weavers with their linen, Spaniards with their iron, Norwegians with tar and pitch, wines from France and Spain and – sometimes – Greece. They would arrive in early September at King’s Lynn and journey down the Ouse and Cam to Cambridge. They would not be alone, from all over England tradesmen with their packhorses and wagons would be negotiating the atrocious roads; from Halifax, Leeds and Rochdale came cloth, Birmingham sent iron and brass, Sheffield cutlery, Nottingham & Leicester glass & stockings. Lancashire wool would probably be bought by Norfolk manufacturers, hops grown in Surrey and Kent would be destined for northern breweries.

It was all something that had taken place since time immemorial - in 1211 King John granted the income from the tolls, rents & other payments to support the Lepers’ Hospital established near by. This had been swept away by the Reformation, along with the neighbouring priory of Barnwell, and since then the town and the University had squabbled about who was to administer it and have the income. They reached a compromise that inevitably caused disagreement and friction – one year the mayor would proclaim the fair, next year it was the University’s turn.

The Corporation turned out en masse – councillors, officers, members of parliament in a grand procession mounted on horseback and bedecked in official robes. They all arrived at the Garlic Row, near the old chapel and read out a Proclamation, then went to the court house and read it again. Here instant justice was administered for with so many deals being done and with people always coming and going there was no time to wait for judgement in a few weeks time. After that the Mayoral party set off again to a coffee house at the centre of the fairground where they read the proclamation once more and washed the dust from their throats. After that it was off to the Rose tavern or some other hostelry for a hard-earned feast of game or venison.

It was similar when it was the University's turn. Then Bedells and Proctors, Taxors and Commissary, the Vice-Chancellor and the rest usually started at the Senate House eating a variety of cakes and washing them down with mulled wine and sherry. They all travelled in their carriages or on horseback, read the proclamations and then headed off to a building called the Oyster House where they dispatched their business and a supply of oysters. Then they transferred to a partitioned off section called the "University Dining Room" where there were more barrels of oysters with ale to wash them down. After that they took a turn around the fairground while the dinner was prepared.

The cooks got it out as quick as they could but it was some time before the University gentlemen actually got to eat it for they first had to push their way past the other customers of the Oyster House who weren't too keen to let them through. It was a feast, typically a large dish of herrings, then a neck of pork roasted and a leg of pork boiled. There was an enormous plum-pudding, a pease-pudding, a goose, a huge apple-pie, and a round of beef. By the time they finished the room was sweltering hot and there were not a few bluebottles and flies attracted by the prospects of left-over food.

It was this Oyster House where Richard remembers his grandfather, J. Lee living in the 1950s. It had by then been divided into two flats and was well past its best. It was infested with rats and the basement steps led down to a flooded cellar. Upstairs was an abandoned dance hall with a stage, glass chandeliers and panelled walls decorated with enamel plaques advertising Wills Cigarettes.

It was here that in June 1906 dancing and conviviality reigned supreme. Formerly the centre of a mass of stalls the Oyster House was then a lonely building whose gable windows were decorated with fairy lights. Inside a crowd crammed around the bar counter or made their way to the upper floor. The stairs were carved and wide like those of a prosperous mansion and lead to an extensive room with bare floor and white-washed walls. A harpist could be dimly seen through the haze of tobacco smoke and a concertina joined in the melody. Dancers swirled around, girls with girls and youths with youths with no conventions of the ball-room. The crowded state of the room occasioned several awkward collisions and the harpist called out "Git back there and give the dancers a charnce, carn't yer".

In 1986 Pauline Anderson, who lived in Garlic Row before the War, remembered the building in earlier days. There was no paint on the doors or window frames and never any lights in the house. The upper windows were broken and rags fluttered at smashed windows through which the bats flew at night. It was home to "Goatee" Brown and his wife, a grey-haired, brown-toothed old lady who wore a sack tied round her waist. They lived on the ground floor in a room with full of stuffed birds and animals under a glass dome and where the table was decorated with fruit and flowers.

Sylvia Clark recalled in November 2000 how she used to go there for a score of eggs each Sunday morning when Mrs Brown would say "you've got such a good mother and I've got so many eggs – I'll give you 24". Another visitor recalled that the living room had a dirt floor but a pot in the corner was full of sovereigns.

By 1957 the building, which dated from 1707 and was originally known as the Tiled Booth was scheduled for demolition. It was pulled down in 1960.

Stourbridge Fair had disappeared into the history books long before that. Following a lingering decline it has been abolished in 1934. There are very few pictures of it so if you have snapshots or memories please let me know

PICTURES

A sketch of the Oyster House made in 1864

Photograph of the Oyster House 1958

Cutting from the News of Jan 1957 announcing its intended demolition

A Stourbridge Fair booth 1832

Memories 27 September 2010, by Mike Petty

Fifty years ago a Cambridge rock'n'roll group stood on the edge of stardom. In August 1960 they were hoping to be offered the chance of turning professional.

They were fully equipped: they'd invested up to £148 on guitars, £98 on drums and they'd been given an amplifier. They had been out for their stage clothes of grey trousers and black shirts and were saving up for new gold lame jackets.

They'd even got a name – The Redcaps.

The original group had been brought together two years earlier but only bass guitarist Neddy Bishop was still playing. For one reason or another the rest had dropped out and the band now consisted of Neddy, Robin Bailey on drums, Jimmy Graham (lead guitar), Graham Smith (rhythm guitar) and vocalist Tony Clark, average age 19

While they waited for fame they continued to earn their livings as electrician, painter, baker or shop assistant. One evening each week they spent rehearsing and polishing up their repertoire. Mostly they played tunes from the hit parade but two songs had been written just for them.

Saturdays were the busy days with evening performances in Cambridge, Newmarket or as far afield as Anglesey – the Welsh one, not the Abbey near Lode. They journeyed to venues in a two vehicles, the performers in a friend's car, the equipment in a van. On arrival in strange venues they had a short rehearsal, just to get the feel of the place, then took a short rest before their three-and-a-half hour performance.

Wherever they went they liked to mix with the audience and play their requests. Sometimes they encountered hostility – their first performance in Newmarket had been a bit sticky as was that at Daddy's Night Club in Cambridge.

Then, gig done it was time to pack up the van and head home, each member richer to the sum of £4 for their evening's work.

Sadly the Redcaps, like Forever Amber, the Burnettes, Prowlers, Sundowners and Vikings never really hit the big time. At least not first time round. Now they're trying again. For these bands together with Blues Anonymous, Those Without, Little Women, the Chequers and more are teaming up again for a Roots of Cambridge Rock concert at St Paul's Church next Saturday, 30th October. From 7.30 the joint will be jumping as up to 250 people pack in for a very special evening of musical nostalgia.

One thing will be different – the musicians will not receive the same generous fee that they could expect in 1960. With tickets priced at only £5 and a strictly limited capacity it is most unlikely they'll afford those new gold jackets on the proceeds! In fact all the proceeds are going to the Alzheimers Society, Parkinson UK and the Syd Barret Fund. If you want to be there then email Warren Dosanjh - rootsofcambridgerock@gmail.com - for your tickets.

One place where music blasted out in those distant days was Cambridge Corn Exchange. But that was not the main attraction. People flocked from all around to go roller skating. Saturday morning was the children's morning and with its yards of bunting, the otherwise sombre building had a carnival air. From the very young to the really quite grown up they were tumbling about, wobbling precariously round the perimeter or pirouetting stylishly in the centre. Some of the girls swooped round in short costumes while the run-of-the-mill dressed for the rough and tumble in trousers. The rink was run by J.W. Harris, who had another one at Hunstanton. It was managed by Mr Lloyd Worth who had been a professional in the skating business for 53 years. He organised classes for kids aged three to sixteen, some of whom were saving up for their own set of expanding skates which cost over £1 17 6 – (£1.85) nearly half of what the aspiring pop stars earned for their performances.

Did you go roller skating at the Corn Exchange or within yards of the beach at Hunstanton. Do you still have those skates – the wheels always came off mine for some reason. I made Stretham school history by being the first to skate in the playground – and the first to be told off for skating across the wooden classroom floorboards to get outside! Well it's nice to be remembered for something!

PICTURES

Poster for the concert

60's Cambridge groups

Chequers

Forever Amber

Quadrant

Recaps

Aspiring musicians at the Freebooters youth club

Roller skating in the Corn Exchange

Article on roller skating from Sept 1960

Memories 4th October 2010, by Mike Petty

Did you have Squish for breakfast when a child.

If so was it made by Keiller, Cooper or Chivers? Or did you prefer the more upmarket brands – Ticklers was absolutely pure, Cairns probably the best. But an own-brand variety produced in Green Street Cambridge was of the finest quality, prepared with only a small proportion of sugar

'Squish' was the colloquial name for marmalade and many families made their own from Seville Oranges. To do so you needed jam jars, jam pot covers and wooden spoons. However to do the job properly you also needed a marmalade machine. It was clamped to the table top, oranges were fed through and as the handle was turned they were sliced thinly with the juice and rind caught in a bowl set below. It could process three oranges in a minute and sold for sixteen shillings a sixpence in 1913.

But not everybody could afford or needed their very own machine so many families rented one for sixpence a day. As late as the 1950s a delivery van would bring it to the house and collect it again when the job was done.

It was just one of the services available from Matthew's grocery shop in Trinity Street.

These days one is used to supermarkets delivering shopping to your door. But Matthew's did that a century ago. They had stables for eleven horses in Green Street for their fleet of delivery vans with motor vehicles taking over in the 1920s. Most deliveries were free, except for firewood, dog biscuits, oil, soda, sand and salt and mineral water.

Nor did you have to journey into Cambridge to shop. Matthews's had a telephone installed in the 1890s so that customers could phone in their orders. Or you could write in – any order arriving by the first post would be delivered by midday. Apart from Thursday, that was early closing day.

For those who did visit the shop in Trinity Street there was a large range of goods, including wines. Whilst one is used to such a choice in the supermarket of today, Matthew's was different. They sold medicated wine, sacramental wine and a vast selection of ports, sherries and burgundies. But as well as bottles they had barrels of choice vintages bought from their own suppliers which was bottled, corked and labelled in their cellar. They also bottled Finest Old Jamaica rum and several varieties of cider, some specially recommended for their medicinal properties. Then there was the beer brewed by Bailey and Tebbutt of Cambridge, Tollemache of Ipswich or imported from Germany.

If you preferred tea or coffee then there was a vast choice which could be consumed in the shop's own café just along the street. It was hailed in 1913 as the finest in the Eastern Counties with its snow-white table linen and spruce waiting maids. Perhaps you still recall the Palm Court atmosphere, the wicker chairs and the tinkling piano of the 1960s. Floral china was used to serve tea and two-tier stands, complete with paper doilies, were carried carefully to the table with a selection of fancy cakes. 'It is the quiet refinement of the place that makes it so attractive to so many', one customer noted on the back of a 1950's menu preserved amongst the firm's archives.

Sadly Matthew's is now just a memory. Having served generations of dons, undergraduates and Cambridge residents for 130 years it finally closed in 1964. [SUBS – IT DID CLOSE IN 1964 THOUGH THE TITLE SAYS 1962]

But the memories still survive amongst former staff and customers. These and the firm's papers have been sifted and sorted by Judy Wilson, a member of the Matthew family, to produce a tribute to a remarkable Cambridge grocer and the way they adapted to a changing retail world.

It will be published at a reception on the site of the old premises – now Heffer's Bookshop – on 19th October after which it will be available to purchase for £12.99 by personal callers, by post or by internet – www.cambridgegrocer.com.

And – as one would expect from a company that was always in the forefront of up-to-date methods – it will also be available as an e-book. I'm just not sure that it will be delivered to your door by one of their horse-drawn vans

'Cambridge Grocer: the story of Matthew's of Trinity Street 1832-1962' by Judy Wilson – ISBN 978-1-874259-02-2 £12.99

PICTURES

MATTHEW'S DELIVERY MEN 1920'S

MATTHEW'S DELIVERY VAN 1920's driven by Mr Bass

MATTHEW'S BAKERY STAFF 1937

THE CAFÉ, 1937

SHOP FRONT 1964

SHOP IN TRINITY ST 1890S

CUSTOMERS 1950s

ADVERTISEMENT 1922

Memories 11th October 2010, by Mike Petty

“In the evening of Thursday the 2nd of July, the lofty wooden bridge over the Cam ... frequently called the Mathematical Bridge broke down. It had been in a decayed state for a considerable time, and boards had been put up several days previous to its falling in, to prevent persons going over. The bridge was erected in the year 1768, from a design by the late Mr James Essex, an eminent architect”

In these words the Cambridge Chronicle of 12th July 1810 recorded one incident in the story of the bridge at Garret Hostel Lane.

The same issue of the paper also contained proposals for a new cast-iron bridge at Silver Street. It would be almost alongside the other Essex bridge, the wooden structure he had erected at Queens' College to designs by Etheridge some 20 years previously. This was rebuilt in 1902 and is itself now known as the “Mathematical Bridge”

The collapse of Garret Hostel Bridge caused a particular problem. For whereas the college bridges were principally for college people, Garret Hostel was for everybody. It had been given to the town by King Henry VI so that people could have access to the river after he had closed many of the other lanes to build his new King's College.

Time after time Garret Hostel Bridge needed repair and the bills were shared jointly between Trinity Hall and the town of Cambridge. Finally the college had contributed their half of the expense of building Essex's 'Mathematical Bridge' on the understanding that they would be free from all future claims. So the town paid for it to be patched up. It was soon in trouble again – a wooden bridge just did not have the permanence required.

In 1835 tenders were sought for a cast-iron bridge similar to the one at Sidney Street. The contract was awarded to the Butterley Iron Company and the work undertaken by Finch's iron foundry, a Cambridge firm famous for such work. The result was a fine bridge in the Gothic style which featured on as many postcard views as some of its older college neighbours. Despite their earlier agreement Trinity Hall contributed over a quarter of the cost of £960 19s 6d with other colleges joining in.

But by 1959 settlement had caused the cast iron to fracture, making a replacement essential. This time it was not the college but one of its students who picked up the bill. The Trusted Family had been associated with Trinity Hall for 50 years and Sir Harry Trusted, Q.C., decided that a tangible way of recognising the link would be to fund a new bridge.

Designs were approved in January 1960 and work soon began. A temporary timber gantry was constructed alongside which was used as a working platform while the cast iron bridge and its masonry abutments were dismantled.

Next steel tubes 40 to 50 feet long were driven into the gault clay beneath and filled with concrete after which the curved framework, which had been prefabricated off the site, was erected. Then once water pipes and ducts were in place the whole bridge was formally handed over by Sir Harry Trusted on 24th October 1960.

The new structure was designed to be an honest example of twentieth century craftsmanship. It was exceptionally light for its 80 foot span but nevertheless strong and rigid.

Soon fit young undergraduates were soaring over it on their bicycles. But others were puffing and panting. A News reporter watched as a lady pushed her bicycle, its basket loaded with laundry, up the high approach ramp. A gentleman followed, pulling himself up the slope with the help of the elegant bronze balustrade.

Nobody wanted to hurt the feelings of the man who very kindly gave the bridge to the town but many felt it was something like the presents that Aunt Edie gave for Christmas. It just wasn't quite right.

However as one lady said at the time, there's nothing they can do about it now, of course. Others were more positive: it was an ideal training ground for mountaineers.

Fifty years on it still taxes the muscles of all who cross it.

PICTURES

Garret Hostel

wooden

5173 Garret Hostel wooden bridge 1785

Cast-iron

5175 the replacement Garret Hostel cast-iron bridge, 1838

6870 the bridge in frost c1895

61.34961 Garret Hostel postcard view c1905

6950 Garret Hostel bridge side view

Latest

View of the present bridge – News picture.

Queens'

6547 Queens' Mathematical bridge 1830s – contrast with 5173

136.87 Queen's bridge c1905

Silver Street

100090 The cast-iron Silver Street bridge c1890 – contrast with 6950

News article about the problems of crossing, December 1960

Memories 18th October 2010, by Mike Petty

The search is on for memories of one of the forgotten groups of the sixties music scene

Brian Chambers was part of Haverhill pop group, The Vulcans. They played from 1960 to 1968 at various halls including the Dorothy in Cambridge, where they were one of the resident bands, as well as the Victoria Ballroom, American Air Bases and summer seasons at Clacton pier.

The group comprised Brian, Douglas Spells and Peter Bruty on guitars with Richard Turner on drums and singer Peter Goodwin. Sadly Douglas has passed away but other members were reunited recently when they were filmed by Neil Lanham for a new DVD capturing the sounds of the sixties. Now the hunt is on for any more photographs or – if possible a recording - of the lads in their heyday. If you can help ring Neil on 01440 730414 or email n.lanham@btconnect.com

In their time the Vulcans supported top acts, including The Shadows – a talented group of musicians whose one-time lead singer, Cliff Richard, last week marked his 70th birthday with a series of concerts.

In a lifetime of travelling light – or at least it was in the early days when artists carried their own equipment with them in a small van – Cliff visited Cambridge on a number of occasions

It was in November 1959 that the News reported how the 19-year old baby-faced star and the hit parade's latest top-notch, took Cambridge by storm on his first performance. Excited teenagers, predominantly female, packed into the Regal cinema and clapped, screamed and wailed in readiness for their idol. Cliff, dressed in a 'shocking pink' jacket with matching tie, performed his remarkably successful hits 'Living Doll' and 'Travelling Light'. He was accompanied by the Shadows featuring drummer Laurie Jay in place of Tony Meehan who had undergone an appendicitis operation. It was a triumph from start to finish – he could do nothing wrong with an audience which was in a buoyant mood from the beginning of the programme.

For that audience had been well prepared by supporting acts like the Vulcans. First on stage was the Tommy Allen Group who got off to a rousing start with a basic rock beat. They were followed by the Landis Brother who soon had the girls yelling for more. Then there was recording star Al Saxon dressed in a shiny grey suit whose singing and ability with the trumpet and banjo earned him thunderous applause. He was followed by The Southlanders, then Roy Young from 'Drumbeat' and Peter Elliott, a singing star from the 'Oh Boy' programme whose Frank Sinatra approach provided a contrast to all that had gone before.

Sir Cliff's latest album features just this sort of song – did he remember them from all those long hours of waiting in the shadows backstage before bursting into the spotlight?

He certainly had a long time to fill. Cliff appeared for just fifteen minutes of a two-hour concert when he returned in May 1960. His first three numbers were drowned by the screams of teenage girls, his fourth was barely audible and the rest of the time he unsuccessfully tried to make himself heard over a crescendo of stamping feet, clapping hands and screaming voices. He returned in 1962, one of a number of pop stars including, Adam Faith, Billy Fury & the Everley Brothers..

Many people have their memories of these performances. But does anybody recall a visit in February 1976 when, in his capacity as an evangelist, Cliff visited Holy Trinity Church. Some 700 people were packed in, but more than 100 had to be turned away even though they had queued in freezing conditions. Earlier in the day 500 others attended an evangelistic concert he gave with the Brightwater Group at Lady Mitchell Hall, Sidgwick Avenue. The News photographer took pictures of him preparing and sneaked a snap of an audience that seemed not to be quite as enthusiastic as those that he had previously attracted. Were you one and call you tell me more?

When he returned in October 1977 a News reporter was far from captivated: "Cliff Richard, pop superstar and hot gospeller, fervently preached a message to the converted. Unfortunately the message was hammered home between every song. He talks about his religious beliefs so much that I was bored beyond embarrassment. Why couldn't he just sing?" But then he

delivered Elvis' "Heartbreak Hotel" and his own unforgettable early hit, "Living Doll" and just before the end really started rockin' up a storm with two heavy beat numbers, real vintage Richard rock 'n' roll, and all was forgiven.

So what do you remember?

PHOTOS

The Vulcans – left to right Richard Turner, Brian Chambers, Douglas Spells and Peter Bruty

Pictures of Cliff at the Lady Mitchell Hall February 1976 & audience

NOTE: CEN NEGS ARE 2947636, 294766, 29747633, 2947615 – THEY WILL BE BETTER QUALITY

Cutting of his first visit 11 Nov 1959 & audience May 1960

Crowds outside Regal cinema with advertisement for Adam Faith and other pop stars who performing in 1961

Memories 25 October 2010, by Mike Petty

Barnwell Junction station, alongside the Leper Chapel on Cambridge's Newmarket Road, seems the perfect model of a small Victorian railway station with its lacy wooden canopy and the initials of the Great Eastern Railway intertwined among the cast iron legs of its platform seats. It gives the impression of something built to last, something well preserved and still in perfect working order

At least it did 50 years ago in September 1960 when the News sent a reporter to take a look.

In those days it was the gateway to the Mildenhall line and a succession of small railway stations – Fen Ditton halt, Quy, Bottisham, Swaffham Prior, Burwell, Fordham and Isleham. The line had opened in June 1884 when four trains made the return journey each day with passengers conveyed either first, second or third-class in second-hand carriages.

For a while takings were steady – indeed in 1909 one robber even thought it worthwhile to burgle the Junction's ticket office. He entered the waiting room where he obtained a poker and forced the booking office window. After smashing the till he took cash and stamps before making his way to the stationmaster's office and helping himself to a meal of bread and cheese.

By 1960 things had changed. Peak period for passengers at Barnwell was just after eight-fifteen when the morning train from Mildenhall steamed in, sometimes picking up as many as eight or nine people to make the short commute into Cambridge. It returned at 4.43 – punctual to the minute. That was it as far as daily services went, although there was an extra return train on Saturdays and occasional Sunday excursions to Skegness or Yarmouth.

But it was the freight traffic which really mattered with the Junction handling as much as 30,000 tons of merchandise and minerals a year. Sugar beet, grain and potatoes from local farms, malt from the Barnwell Maltings together with scrap iron and materials from the railway's own engineering depot were shipped out whilst motor and diesel oil, fertiliser and seed grains came in.

Its one porter, Mr Bidwell, kept the platform swept and was also gardener, handyman and weekly replenisher of the oil lamps in the semaphore signals while Mr Heinrich looked after the booking officer and did the accounts.

Two signalmen, Mr Ellum and Mr Wright worked shifts to keep the signal box open till nine at night. Beyond the station outer platform stretched the main railroad from Cambridge to Chesterton where it divided with one line running off towards St Ives and another continuing to Ely and beyond. Up and down those main lines 180 trains passed daily, passenger and freight depending for their safety on the Barnwell signalmen.

The box itself was a period piece, a minor gem of Victorian engineering. Its windows reached almost to the floor, there was linoleum and pieces of carpet underfoot, a stove and wooden lockers worn smooth with time. It had a row of polished brass indicator dials, gongs and bells, polished wooden boxes with moving needles in them and 34 great signal levers moving with well-oiled efficiency in their cast-iron mountings.

Not everything went so smoothly. Tragedy had struck in January 1960 when the morning train from Mildenhall collided with a Great Ouse River Board lorry at a crossing between Worlington and Isleham. It had been twenty minutes late and the driver of the lorry probably never expected it, nor could he see through the steamed-up windows of his vehicle.

By then there was speculation about the line's future. If you lived on Newmarket Road and wanted parcels to be sent by rail, then this was the obvious place to bring them. But how many people would spend sixpence on a ride to Cambridge Station to arrive at 8.20 in the morning and then be faced with a further ride into the city.

Others argued that from Barnwell a wonderful world waited to be explored. The morning train was timed to connect up with the Fenman and with services to the north, to Clacton or even Hunstanton.

But it was not to last. In October 1961 there was talk of closure. Councillors were concerned about increased road congestion as people took to the roads instead of rail, but the passenger service was not covering its cost, let alone meeting the charges for maintaining the track.

The Junction station's days were numbered and the final passenger train made the journey from Mildenhall to Cambridge on the 16th June 1962. The line remained open for freight for a couple of years more before the track finally became silent. Since then many of the old village station buildings have disappeared or been converted into homes.

But did you use the Barnwell Junction station or the line that led through it. Have you a tale to tell?

SCANS

Steam locomotive at Barnwell station c1955

Trainspotters had little to see at Barnwell – but do you recognise them

Pictures of stations at Fordham, Burwell and Swaffham Prior

Memories 1st November 2010, by Mike Petty

Winifred Stearn, (nee Oakett) has been reminiscing about life in the village of Hilton during the 1930s.

“The memory I shall always have of Hilton is the free and easy days of childhood, going anywhere in the fields (except when they were put down for hay), blackberrying,

watching the sheep-dipping around the drift, iron hoops, tops and apple-scrumping: Ken Daws would ask Mr Fred Furniss if he could pick up the fallers from the ground, and of course he did not go on his own!

“I remember the lovely Sunday roast, cream teas (cream cheese, too, which was made by hanging the curds in a muslin cloth on a pipe outside to drip), the old folk next door sitting outside and pleased to talk to anyone going by, the great big horses going by with their loads of corn, manure and whatever the season dictated, children blowing bubbles with the clay pipes the farm workers used to smoke with.”

In those days most people had a garden where they grew their own vegetables and kept chickens, milk was brought from the farms and rabbits were free to be caught.

Winifred's father, Arthur Oakett, had been born in the village in 1877 but had left to join the army, serving twenty five years in the marines. He'd married and had nine children before he was widowed. Then when on the point of retiring in 1927 he heard that the shop in Graveley Way was up for sale. He bought it along with the cottage next door and moved the family back to Hilton where he set up as a grocer.

Win recalls the shop well: “We sold vinegar from a barrel, dates from a big block on the counter covered with muslin, dried fruits, sugar which had to be weighed, biscuits, sweets, tobacco, oranges, pickled onions, shoe-laces, cottons, pins, cheese, bacon, and skimmed milk from our two cows. There was also a cabinet of medicines for everyday ills: the brand name was Walfox

“Later Dad took on the Post Office work, too, when the other shop found they could not cope with it. Often people came to the back door after we had closed down for the day or on Sunday mornings. On Sundays it was illegal to sell stamps.

“Those days some people would have goods ‘on tick’. They would send one of their children carrying a slip of paper with a few wants, then it would be recorded in a book and the mother would come in on Saturday and settle up along with the rest of her shopping. Sometimes they would pay up and leave some over for the next week. Often it got out of hand and became embarrassing. Of course if they moved away (‘flitted’) dad lost out altogether. Some customers lived in tithe cottages, so this could easily happen”.

Winifred's eldest brother was a trained boot and shoe repairer and as boots and shoes were all leather those days he was kept busy. He also dealt with the horses' harnesses and farmers' leggings.

Hilton was largely self-sufficient. It had three public houses: the White Horse and the Prince of Wales at the top of the High Street and the Old George in Graveley Way. This was a real country inn, always a lovely fire for the men in the evenings, and a very popular feast at week ends and other holiday times. The publican was Mr Tyler.

The blacksmith was Mr Rule, Mr White was the village baker supplying the entire village with bread and employing a boy to go round with regular orders. The bake house was at the back of Park Villa facing the green: the smell was enough to whet one's appetite and after he had done for the day the ladies could bake their fruit cakes in his ovens.

The butcher was a Mr Furniss who sold lovely joints of meat, mostly beef. The Oaketts used to have a big joint for Sunday, the remains of which were eaten cold on Monday (wash day) and then made into cottage pie or rissoles for Tuesday using a hand mincer clamped to the table.

In those days there were no dust carts and household rubbish was buried. Winifred remembers: “We had a big hole dug in the field next to our house, which has now been built on. One of the houses in Graveley Way now has this rubbish pit dug deep into the garden. The owner wondered why his tree would not grow, until we explained. Down there are old teapots, ginger beer bottles, glass bottles with marbles in them, tin boxes, old saucepans and all sorts of things. As we owned a shop, some fairly unusual things were put down there. Other people would sometimes ask if they could put their things in it. Guess there are quite a few bygones down there”.

Valerie Pinto encouraged her mother to set down these fascinating memories: do you have similar recollections of other local villages that we can share?

PICTURES

Young Win

Arthur Oakett – Win’s dad – outside the shop

Old George Inn kept by Mr Tyler
School children 1920s

Choice of pictures selected by Roz from News Library files

Memories 8th November 2010, by Mike Petty

Roger Cork from Stretham has lent me a photograph he found in a charity shop. We know when it was taken for it carries the date 6th April 1946 – which was a Saturday.

We also know it shows Cambridge, though how many will recognise just where?

Roger does for he grew up in the area and has supplied notes on what it was like at that time.

The main part of the picture is framed by Perne Road across the bottom, Cherry Hinton Road to the left, Coleridge Road across the top and Perne Avenue on the right.

In the centre is Lichfield Road bending around to join Coleridge Road. Coming in from the left are Neville and Cowper Road with Coniston Road beyond.

There were very few cars in the street that Saturday although Perne Road had been constructed in 1932 as part of a ring road that became a casualty of the war. Houses had been advertised for sale in September 1933 when they’d been described as well-built and in an attractive position on the beautifully-made new ring road. Prices varied from £690 to £710 and homes could be acquired for £50 down, paying off the balance at £1 weekly. The CDN had carried pictures of the new estate on the front page of its paper of 3rd October 1935 among headlines chronicling the developing crisis in Europe.

The new houses had generous plots which the aerial view shows that many new owners had cultivated to eke out wartime rations.

There was however nowhere to drink. The vacant plot opposite had been purchased by Tollemache Breweries in 1937 but it was to be 1959 before The Weathervane public house opened, the first to be built to serve new Cambridge housing estates. Around 2,500 new houses had gone up in the area since 1936 accommodating about 9,500 professional and working people. It was a respectable middle-class area and undergraduates would not be

tempted to enter it, the brewery had convinced magistrates. The pub was designed as the sort of place one could bring a family for a pleasant drink with its bright contemporary decorations, skirting heating and low fireplaces. Nobody knew why the name had been chosen and it has since changed to The Mariner.

By 1946 the War had ended and returning soldiers needed somewhere to restart their lives.

Prefabricated houses were constructed to try and relieve a massive post-war housing shortage. It is these which dominate the centre of the photograph on the newly-constructed Lichfield Road.

Intended for only short duration, they became part of the city scene for many years. A social committee was set up which organised a fete and sports on Lichfield Road recreation ground in July 1950. Attractions included a miniature railway, Punch & Judy show, treasure hunt, bran tub & a mother and father's race. The highlight of the proceedings was a tug-of-war between the "Lichfield Peacocks" and the "Golding Canaries".

But the picture shows reminders of the conflict that had ended just a year or so ago. The nearby dark Nissen hutted buildings were Government Emergency Food Stores which were guarded twenty-four hours a day.

During the war a pill box on the corner of Hartington Grove had defended the junction of Cherry Hinton and Coleridge Roads.

Coleridge Road had appeared for the first time in the Spalding's Cambridge Directory of 1924-25. It was constructed of reinforced concrete after Jesus College had acquired the route of the old Newmarket Railway and developed what they called the Station Building Estate. They offered freehold land in open and healthy surroundings, with ample garden ground at prices from £225 to £250

By 1946 there were significant buildings on the east side of Coleridge Road including the National Fire Service Station which after the war was used as a garage for Civil Service cars with about 20 Vauxhall Wyverns that had to be taken back every evening.

Beyond, on the corner of Golding Road, was a static water tank that became an unofficial swimming pool for Roger and the other youngsters. They defended their home territory with frequent fights between the Cherry Hinton Roaders and invading groups of youngsters from Mill Road. The battlefield was the old allotments across the road, an area that was also being fought over by the corporation anxious to obtain it for use as a housing site. Now it is occupied by Sterne Close

Roger can spot his old home in Hartington Grove at the top left of the picture and their orchard that backed on to Morley Memorial School, Blinco Grove

But what can you see that jogs a memory?

SCANS

The aerial photo taken in April 1946

Detail of the Emergency Food Store and prefabs in Lichfield Road

Gardens off Perne Road

Advertisement for Perne Road houses in October 1934

Photo of the new Perne Road estate October 1935

Prefabricated houses in nearby Golding Road, taken just before demolition in 1972

Memories 15th November 2010, by Mike Petty

As the long winter nights roll in once more, one issue facing young people is how to spend their time. Trapped in their centrally-heated bedrooms surrounded by technical wizardry of games console, computer and i-pod it must be difficult to know what to do next

But how did youngsters amuse themselves in the 60's in rural Cambridgeshire.

Fifty years ago in November 1965 youngsters at Bourn congregated at a youth centre in an old RAF hut. On Monday and Thursday evenings 15-21 year-olds made their way on foot, motor-cycle or car while buses they had organised for themselves toured neighbouring places like Haslingfield, Eversden and Comberton to bring more kids in. On a good night as many as 90 boys and girls turned up.

The building had been successively an officers' mess, a YMCA and a primary school, each of which had left its mark. There was a communal lounge-hall with a fire around which youngsters enjoyed a drink – cups of tea and chocolate biscuits together with home-made wine made by some of the girls. There was a semi-quiet room where the skiffle group practiced, a room for the motor cycle and sports car group and outside workshops equipped with wood-working tools.

They had talks from footballers, from a Pye engineer who gave a demonstration of stereophonic sound and answered questions for hours, from a beauty expert who spoke to the girls about cultivating their appearance. And there were weekly film shows using a projector lent by local bachelor Captain Hudson, some of them home-made using the Captain's cine camera.

The atmosphere was of ease and leisure, of pleasant untidiness, of people standing around enjoying themselves. Its success was down to the club leader who lived in the village. He had plans for a camp in the Lake District and a four-day Continental holiday. But there were concerns for the future of the old RAF building and for what would happen to such clubs when the personalities who had established them decided that the time had come to retire to their own firesides

There was a similar club that year in the isolated Fenland village of Wicken. Apart from the occasional visit of a travelling fair there was little to occupy youngsters. On a cold winter night, the windows of the Hall were almost the only glow within sight, the record-player the only sound. Thursday nights, Youth Club nights, were looked forward to with enthusiasm. Powerful motor cycles stood parked in the dark outside, their owners playing table tennis and miniature billiards.

There was a darts board, a stove, a canteen hatch and a very few girls sitting in a group. The record player standing on the platform at the end of the room played 'pop' songs. There were visits from undergraduates who gave informal lectures, classes on ballroom dancing or debates on topics such as 'The girl that I marry must be ...' in which the lads ranked such attributes as 'passionate', 'a good dancer' or 'kind to mother-in-law'

The Wicken club had 21 members, only four of whom were girls. Most of the boys worked on the land, a few were still at school. There was nothing else for them in the village and just the cinema and dance hall in Soham.

It was organised through the Village College. The club leader, a man in slacks and pullover, with a whistle on a cord round his neck, was trying to encourage support of the older people like the schoolteacher and parson. But parents were reluctant to let their daughters attend because of a previous bad reputation the club had gained.

In our village of Stretham there was a youth club organised by the rector in the church hall. We too had the table tennis, record player and talks and for a while it flourished. But then a grand new extension was opened. It was heated by overhead electric fires rather than the old coke stove, it was bigger – too big, and brighter – too bright. And the atmosphere disappeared. Or so it seemed to me.

What were your experiences?

PICTURES

Bourn youngsters near war memorial, May 1968 – ref SUP0166319 – Sandra has made copy

Stretham youngsters at the opening of the new village hall in 1961

Wicken in 1961 – the lads seen sitting beside the pond had little to do on long winter nights

Wicken fair c1965

EXTRA STORY IF NEEDED – OTHERWISE I'LL USE IT NEXT WEEK

Recent Memories articles have sparked recollections for various readers.

James Faircliffe writes: Your article on Barnwell Junction brought back some interesting memories. I used the Cambridge-Mildenhall line quite often in the 1950s when I needed to get between Burwell and London. One particular incident at Barnwell Junction has always stayed in my mind.

I was travelling on the early train from Burwell to Cambridge to make the onward connection to Liverpool Street. As you say, the Mildenhall - Cambridge early train was designed to connect with the Fenman, British Railway's crack morning express, and woe betide those responsible if this prestigious train ran late. But on this occasion our little train was running about fifteen minutes late.

Nonetheless the Barnwell signalman was not going to allow the Mildenhall Line passengers to miss their Fenman connection. As our train arrived at Barnwell, where we joined the main line from Ely to Cambridge, I saw the august Fenman - which had been on time - ignominiously standing at its signal which was firmly at 'danger'.

As the branch-line passengers entered the train in their usual leisurely manner it was obvious that the Fenman was unhappy at being delayed: the unscheduled stop had allowed the pressure to build up and it was showing its displeasure by vigorously blowing off steam.

However this did not impress the Mildenhall train driver, who, having been given the 'right away', sidled out of the station onto the main line and proceeded gently towards Cambridge.

Now, the signalling was such that, for safety reasons, the Mildenhall train had to clear the 'section' of track ahead before the Barnwell signalman could allow the Fenman to proceed, further extending its delay.

The final insult to the Fenman was that the Mildenhall train came into Cambridge to the same platform as the Fenman needed, making it wait at the station outskirts while the Mildenhall train was shunted off. So I caught my London Connection, and the 'Fenman's pomposity was somewhat dented.

SCAN OF BARNWELL STATION IN THE 60's, SHOWING THE SIGNAL BOX

Memories 22nd November 2010 by Mike Petty

AE. Disbrey - NOTE – I HOPE TO BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU THE CHRISTIAN NAME BEFORE PUBLICATION - from Cambridge writes:

“My mother, Margaret Northrop, was born in 1894, the third child in a family of six girls and two boys. They lived in a small house at Harston, one in a row of twelve. It had a living room with a large walk-in pantry, the stairs went straight up into the front bedroom which then led to the second bedroom. There was no back door, just a small front garden with a bucket privy.

“How did they all manage? As soon as they were old enough, 13, the children went off to live in domestic service. Two girls went to London, one to Shrewsbury where she married the son of a former Mayor. One son went off as a boot boy at a local big house and my mother went to Letchworth.

“At the end of 1904 there was a prolonged period of cold weather. The ground was frozen hard and for my grandfather, who worked on a farm, there was no work. In those days it was ‘No work, No pay’. He applied to the Guardians who offered him some money but said that the family would have to go into the workhouse. This was considered a great disgrace, and grand dad decided that they would manage somehow. So it was sparrow pie for Christmas. They were more numerous then, mother recalled, and were easy to catch but the devil to pluck.

“After that things seemed to improve for the family. Grandfather started up a carrier's cart business. He had a flat top wagon and horse doing local carting and running in to Cambridge twice a week to do people's shopping. We have a wedding photograph when one daughter married in 1913 showing him in a bowler hat, Grand ma dressed up and six bridesmaids with big Edwardian hats.

“Things went downhill later. Grandfather liked a drink or two and when he died in 1926 the family were hard up again. Like others of her generation, my mother had the life-long fear of the workhouse. When she was getting frail in her 80's she would say ‘You won't let them put me in the workhouse, will you’, although the workhouses had long since gone. One daughter died in her 50's but all the others lived until well into their 80's, and one reached 94. So perhaps sparrow pie for Xmas didn't do too much harm!”

Sparrows were a pest in the early years of the 1900s and villages organised Sparrow Clubs to encourage their extermination: that at Great Chesterford killed 2,845 in 1927. An article in ‘The Boy's Friend, a monthly journal’ issued in 1866 gave hints as to their capture as did various books on field sports. The young birds once skinned and cooked were a welcome addition to frugal diets and until the time of the Great War sparrow pie was a regular item in

many rural areas. The birds were bonier than the boniest fish but what little meat there was was good and they made a rich and nourishing gravy

More memories of sparrow pie are included on a film DVD entitled 'Common Ground' that tells the story of Victorian fen life in all its aspects, harsh, funny and bleak. One of the poignant scenes is that of the old folk, too frail to work in the fields who were condemned to wait alongside the babies under the hedges until the day was done. The film was produced by The Field Theatre Group based in Littleport and features a cast of local folk and recollections of local people. It is a remarkable production that would prove a welcome addition to the stocking of anybody with a DVD player. It costs just £10, plus postage from thefieldtheatregroup@hotmail.co.uk

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Mary Perry emails: Memories flooded back when I read your article on what young people did fifty years ago. I remember going to Bourn Youth Club a few times, but I was eleven in 1960 so it would have been later. The thing that interested me was your mention of Captain Hudson. I grew up in Caldecote, off the main road near Hardwick Woods. Captain Hudson lived further along from us so I knew him well. He was eccentric in our eyes but very kind and would help in any way he could, he was very involved with village matters. My mother told me he had been educated at one of the top schools in the country. On one occasion he let us young teenagers camp out in his field, also he used to teach us ways of 'surviving in the wild', how to make fires without matches etc.

What did we do otherwise? Well, we spent a good deal of time in the woods and I knew it like the back of my hand. In the winter months, twice a week, Mr Oddy came to the village hall and showed films. I remember watching A Town Like Alice with my mum and brother. As we got older and had cycles we would go around the villages to see friends from school, in the holidays we earned extra money fruit or potato picking. A very simple life!"

There was also the occasional visit from a travelling fair – John Carter snapped a picture of Caldecote youngsters with the coconut shy man in August 1954.

Pictures

A Cart outside a village pub at Harston in the 1920s

Youngsters with the coconut shy man at Caldecote – where Mary Perry grew up - in August 1954

The cover of the Common Ground dvd based on reminiscences of Littleport folk

Land work remained unchanged for generations: hoeing peas at Starlings farm, Littleport 1965; the women are Alma Heaps, Tressa Rolfe, Mabel Clift, Joyce Brown, Elizabeth Oxborough and Rose Crowe

Memories 29th November 2010 by Mike Petty

Christmas is a time when for making contact with old friends and remembering times gone by. Charlotte Jordan from Oakington has been rereading a letter from abroad that arrived at her former home in St Ives many years ago.

Her father, John Harrison, was a basket maker and willow-grower at Filberts Walk and during the war quite a few Italian and German prisoners-of war were billeted with the family. Although enemies they became great friends. Charlotte remembers the thick winter coats they

made for the family, their hand-made rag rugs about the house and the letters that they sent after their repatriation to their home country

The Italians especially were very jolly, always singing very loudly at Mass on Sundays. They took long walks in the afternoon to Fenstanton, Holywell or the Common at Hemingford Abbots. Although too young to have personal memories she recalls local people saying how much they missed them.

The family treasure one letter, dated February 1946 written by the Italians just before they went home.

“Before we leave it is our duty to thank you for all your past kindnesses. Really we are unable to explain all our gratitude for all you have done for us. We are sure we will never forget the years we spend with you. Really we don’t know what we are feeling on leaving you, but we are happy to think that now we are finally on the way back to our own country. On this occasion we want to wish you and your family all the best. Hoping that in the coming future, when many things will be changed, you will remember and forgive us if we have done any thing wrong”. It was signed by Carlo Pavesi, Mario Pazi and Zepito Pesseri. They posed for a snap before they left together with another of their countrymen, Desiderio

The Germans remained somewhat longer and many played a vital role during the great floods of 1947, an incident recalled by another snap. In a letter, now crumbling to pieces, Johann Schroder, told of his experiences after the ship that finally took him home left Harwich for the Hook of Holland

“The sea was very raw and I feed the fishes three times. We arrived at the transit camp Munsterlager. There we must stay for four days. Our nerves were nearly finished, you will understand that. The food was very bad, I could not eat it. The journey went on and I arrived home in my village of Tondorf just before 12 o’clock pm. My people were well and they were very happy to see me again. I work in summer and autumn on my sister’s farm till I married on the 20th of November. My sister where I live with got that time a very bad sickness”.

Johann then seeks information about his former hosts. “How is your family? How are the workmen? Is St Ives still the same place as it is when I live it. Tell me please the news from there. I can’t forget England and the lovely place St Ives. I always remember the grateful family Harrison. I thank you very much for all that what you have done for me. I never felt like a prisoner when I was with you. Please don’t look after the mistakes in this letter, it is the first which I write in English. With the best greetings to you and your family, your father, Margaret, Walter and the other workmen, Mrs Walls, Mrs Daniels and their family”

Do you have mementoes of German or Italian prisoners of war?

Doris Wright of Cambridge recalls the immediate post-war days in Cambridge and the importance of prefabs such as those in Lichfield Road. “My husband and I lived there from 1951 to 1963. He was allocated a prefab because he had been in Papworth Hospital for two years and Dr Phillips, one of the head doctors at the Shire Hall, was allocated 10 per year for people coming out of hospital. It was a lovely road to live in. Food was still rationed but on Sundays a crowd would get together and we would share out what we had. So many lovely memories”

Michael Knights was a neighbour. He lived at no.118 Lichfield Road from 1953 to 1958 and recalls: “I went to Morley Memorial School and along with children from Lichfield Road and Golding Road attended the very large 500+ strong Sunday School at the Cherryhinton Road Congregational (now United Reformed) Church. Lichfield Road was a very friendly place, neighbours looked out for each other”. Mike also tells me that he was one of the audience in

1976 when Cliff Richard gave the concert at Lady Mitchell Hall that I featured in Memories on 18th October. He was part of the Youth Group at Arbury Road Baptist Church and biked there. In October 1977 Cliff gave another concert at the Kelsey Kerridge Sports Hall when his backing band was Dave Pope and the Athenians. Both were great and very enjoyable, he recalls

Scans

Italian PoWs billeted with the Harrison family, St Ives

114.08 - St Ives from the river 1935

9157 – The Broadway, St Ives in the 1960s – fondly remembered by Johann Schroder

Lichfield Road prefabs 1946

5783 – Morley School pupils 1950s

Papworth Hospital 1950s.

Memories, 6th December 2010– by Mike Petty

Snow in winter? Whatever next!

Extremes of weather always make headlines at the time - and are then forgotten.

Many Christmas cards will carry views of stagecoaches stuck in the snow, a reminder of the great storm of 1836 when snow, almost unparalleled in living memory and accompanied by a severe wind from the north-nor-east caused drifts so big as to form impenetrable masses. The road from London to Cambridge was completely stopped up and many passengers were stranded at Puckeridge. There every bed had been taken and upwards of forty people were compelled to pass the night as comfortably as possible on chairs at the Bell Inn.

The Lynn Union coach from London had finally forced its way into Cambridge some 22 hours late. Even then the journey had only been possible by taking the horses off the coach and driving them through the snow to beat out a track for men to clear. By the time it had reached Barkway the snow had been level with the top of the coach yet the men who should have been clearing the roads were snug and warm in the Wagon and Horses at Barley refusing to work until they were paid.

Even so, old men contended, it had not been as bad as the January of 1814 when the whole country, from Land's End to the Highlands of Scotland had been blanketed in a dreary, deep expanse of white.

Nobody now recalls the very great frost of 1895 which lasted from January to March, the heavy snow of April 1908, or 1916 when trainee soldiers fought snowball fights with townspeople on Parker's Piece

Then there was 1927 when snow began to fall on Christmas day & led to most complete stoppage of road & rail traffic since the coming of motor car. Many of the main roads in the county were blocked with snowdrifts from six to ten feet deep. Trains, motor buses and cars were held up and travellers stranded. The wheels of the mail vans were equipped with chains

with the result that hold-ups were uncommon, though one van on the Histon – Milton road had to be dug out.

The Ortona motor buses had a terrible time in the blizzard. Two got trapped in snowdrifts out Newmarket way, another near Teversham corner, a Willingham-bound vehicle got stuck near the Five Bells on the Huntingdon Road, a Caxton bus ground to a halt near Toft and passengers for Saffron Walden were stranded near Whittlesford station. Another bus got nearly to Sawston before it had to be dug out while the Fulbourn service could only get as far as the Robin Hood at Cherry Hinton.

In early 1947 the snow seemed as if it would never stop, reaching up to touch telegraph wires. All roads to Ely were impassable as drifts piled ten and twelve feet high brought road traffic to a standstill. But children rejoiced in freedom from school and indulged in tobogganing, snowball fights and building snowmen Villages cut off by snow included Elsworth with waist-high drifts in the village street. When the thaw finally came it came quickly and melting snow, further diluted with heavy rains, caused extensive flooding.

We forget the heavy falls of January 1962, but probably not the great blanket of snow which started at the end of the year. For this was the great freeze. Until the end of December Cambridge – like now - felt itself fortunate to escape the worst of the weather that was sweeping the rest of the country. But it was not to last. By January 1st 1963 drifts up to seven feet deep meant the city was cut off for the first time in living memory.

Temperatures remained below freezing for days and the River Cam froze, prompting skaters in their hundreds and cyclists by the score to turn out on to the river. By 20th January Cambridge police station was turned into a temporary boarding home to accommodate 15 people cut off by blizzards. Two days later the temperature was 32 degrees below freezing. Next day the city's water mains froze and fuel supplies of all types were under pressure. A brief thaw saw Parker's Piece turned into a lake, quickly turning into a skating rink when it froze again. The bitter conditions continued throughout February with air frost on 27 nights and the Lent bumps were cancelled for the first time in 136 years. It was March 6th before spring-like weather arrived with temperatures soaring into the 60's.

In January 1977 heavy snow hit again as the worst weather for 14 years caused nationwide chaos and led to wide scale disruption on the roads and railways. Thousands of people were late for work as hard-packed snow, freezing fog and black ice made driving treacherous. Many trains were late or cancelled despite an all-night fight against the Arctic conditions by British Rail who called in their full cold weather emergency procedures.

Two years later in January 1979 the Botanic Garden recorded 4½ [FOUR AND A HALF] inches of snow – the biggest fall since 1963. The situation was compounded by a strike of municipal workers. Ungritted icy roads produced a nightmare tangle of cars and lorries which choked all main roads into the city for up to three hours in the worst traffic chaos for decades. Dozens of car drivers abandoned their vehicles and walked into work while thousands of schoolchildren waited in vain for buses which failed to get further than the road outside the bus depot. The traffic only began to move again when council workers broke picket lines outside the Mill Road depot and brought gritting lorries back into action.

It all seems too familiar, the same old stories time after time. Probably by the time these Memories appear we shall already have started to forget last week!

But which winter do you recall?

Pictures

Snow being tipped into the river at Quayside Cambridge in 1963 while the smoke from Electricity Generating Station chimney shows the company was striving to keep the home fires glowing

Cars under snow at New Square Car park, 1963

A stagecoach trapped in the snow

JC201 Aftermath of an accident in the snow – but can you say where?

JC270 - Snow covering the railway turntable at Cambridge station in 1950s.

143.98 – deep snow in Arbury Road 1963 photographed by Sylvia McCann

snow plough 1947

Memories 13th December by Mike Petty

Peter Sumner from Cambridge is looking for information on an interesting potted meat container he discovered in an antique shop. The circular ceramic pot is stamped 'Finest Quality Home Made Potted Meat. Sturton Brothers, Cambridge'

A little research shows the firm was established in Fitzroy Street in 1839 by Joseph Sturton who ran it for 40 years before passing it on to other members of his family.

After his retirement Joseph devoted his time to public service. An ardent Liberal, he was elected to the Borough and County Councils. One of the main issues of the day was the housing of the working classes and about 1868 he bought a large plot of ground. Rather than develop it himself he made small plots available to working people, allowing them to pay off the cost in instalments of as low as a sovereign. In less than five years the whole of the land he'd purchased had been sold off and 'Sturton Town' was part the Cambridge landscape

Meanwhile the shop in Fitzroy Street was experiencing exciting times. One night in September 1898 people living nearby were startled by a loud crash and discovered that one of the shop windows had smashed. Investigations showed that number of hams and cheeses had been stored in the window and one had become dislodged. It rolled down into the glass, completely wrecking the window and fell out onto the street. Police and remained on guard until Mr Sturton arrived and had the window boarded up.

Then in July 1902 the firm was summonsed to the Old Bailey Central Criminal Court under the Official Secrets Act. Richard Sturton testified that they had tendered to supply meat and vegetable rations for the War Office. Having been successful they'd delivered the goods and submitted their bill. Shortly afterwards they received a letter from a clerk in the Supply Depot at Woolwich Dockyard who'd offered to supply details of the prices being quoted by rival firms. This would enable Sturton's to increase their tendered sums, earning hundreds of pounds extra. In exchange the clerk requested ten percent of the profit.

But the Sturton family was not one to indulge in such practices. Richard went straight to the Cambridge Chief Constable and, following his advice, started a correspondence that ensured the clerk ended up in the dock where he was found guilty.

Next year there was more excitement: In February 1903 thousands of Cambridge people witnessed the spectacle of a fire at Laurie and McConnal's in Fitzroy Street. Despite the valiant attempts of the fire brigade, cheered on by the crowds, Laurie's was destroyed. But Sturton's shop next door was saved from the blaze.

Then in October 1907 history the shop was again fortunate after fire broke out in the back yard of their shop close to a number of paraffin barrels and tanks containing oil. Fortunately the blaze was quickly spotted by William Meeks of Maid's Causeway who climbed over the wall and opened the gates from the inside, allowing others to attack the flames while they awaited the arrival of the brigade.

Joseph Sturton died in November 1910 but the business continued to trade in Fitzroy Street until the 1950s – do you remember them

Peter Sumner had travelled all the way out to Norman Cross near Peterborough where I was speaking on the site of a Prisoner of War Camp where thousands of Frenchmen were incarcerated during the Napoleonic War. En route some of them were held overnight in a lofty thatched barn in Shelley Row, Cambridge. It was later occupied by a blacksmith, Henry Herring Smith who could clearly remember the French prisoners using it as a resting-place. He recalled that they made dominoes and dice out of bones which they sold to people as curios. The barn was demolished in October 1909.

Similar memories have been sparked by a recent article on Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War.

Stephen Bull from Bar Hill recalls: One such camp on the outskirts of Elsworth housed Italian PoWs who were employed by local farmers. They were not renowned for hard work, preferring to sit around and watch other people do the jobs! Despite their reputation my father, John Bull, developed a good rapport while working with them on Church Farm in Boxworth. The Italians used to engage in craft work making useful objects and toys from odd pieces of available material which came to hand. They gave my father a delightful wooden toy dog (a 'Spotty-Dick') for his two children, one of the few toys we possessed during the War"

Paddy James emails: My mother and I moved to The Lane, Hauxton for a year in the early 1940s. We walked through flower meadows to the Mill and paddled and picnicked by the river - now the scene of that awful pollution. My mother wasn't very happy with the school and we moved to a big house on Newmarket Road in Royston, where she was housekeeper to the Misses Langton. I carefully carried home their egg ration from the shop one day, put them safely on a chair and then sat on the chair to change my shoes - oh dear! I fled to the comfort of the baby goats from a rather cross mum. We used to get a lift on a cart to Cambridge from Hauxton. As we drove we passed prisoners of war - I thought they were Italian - in brown uniforms behind a wire fence - they used to smile and wave at us

Pictures

Sturton potted meat pot

Fitzroy Street c1900

Contrast with Fitz St c1970 - Sturton's shop was on the left beyond Lauries

Fitzroy St 1961 – Sturton's shop was in centre of buildings on right hand side

Sturton St 1964

Shelley Row barn 1909

Fire article 1907

Memories 20 December 2010 by Mike Petty

Jason Prociuk has emailed for information about an ancient engraving of King's College chapel, a building very prominent at this time of year with its famous service of lessons and carols

He has acquired a piece of Irish linen on which is printed a view entitled 'Kings College & part of Clare Hall in the University of Cambridge'

The artist was Peter Spendlowe Lamborn an engraver and miniature painter who was born in Cambridge in 1722. He studied engraving in London then returned to his home town where he married Mary, daughter of Hitch Wale of Little Shelford, with whom he had three sons and a daughter. Both Mary and Peter exhibited at the Society of Artists in London to which he was elected fellow in 1771.

The view that Jason has is a copy of one of four originally published by subscription in December 1765. The price at that time was fourteen shillings, to be paid in stages as the work was completed. Non-subscribers would pay four shillings more.

Lamborn produced another view that is more interesting. It shows the old bridge of King's College which was removed as part of the landscaping of the Backs in 1819. Instead of the present lawns sloping down to the river there was a high wall rising sheer from the water. These were lowered in 1775 when the stone gateway shown to the east end of the bridge was replaced by an iron gate.

A line of barges is shown making its way towards Mill Pool. With so many bridges to pass under the bargee could not hoist the sail and as there was no path along the bank the towing horse is having to wade down the middle of the river. The cargo was probably coal and on arrival at Silver Street there would be gangs of men anxious to earn a penny or two by hoping to unload the fuel into the riverside coalyard, now part of Darwin College.

Such supplies were essential to keep the college chimneys smoking during winter weather. But during periods of prolonged cold the fenland rivers would freeze, trapping the barges in the ice and leading to a fuel shortage similar to that being experienced by heating oil customers this year. And the men who depended on casual work had no income, adding to the harshness of the season.

Peter Lamborn issued various other topographical illustrations including a view of Chesterton church from the river. His biggest job was to engrave most of the 48 plates in a History of Ely Cathedral by James Bentham which was published in 1771. In one of these he depicts the Lady Chapel with the rest of the cathedral removed – thus saving himself hours of painstaking work engraving the adjacent wall.

At his death in Cambridge on 6th November 1774 Lamborn was living in Free School Lane though his wife and children were settled on the farm that he had purchased at Little Shelford. He was buried two days later at Great St Mary's, Cambridge

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May Tiplady from Histon has written to share her memories of wartime prisoners. At that time she lived on a Chivers estate out in the fens. It was a small community accessed by a private road with its own shop, school and chapel. The nearest doctor was at Lakenheath about four miles off.

May recalls: "I was quite young when the first Italian prisoners of war were bussed in to work on the land. They had a double-decker and we watched out for it at the end of the day, standing in our gateway to wave and call out 'Hello'. The bus never stopped but they made and gave us presents. There was a big elder bush opposite our house and they tied string onto the gifts and hung them in the bush as they passed. I still have a chalk boot they made with a lizard lying across the front of it.

"Later in the war we had a group of German Pows who lived in a remote farmhouse on the estate. They looked after themselves and were provided with food, tobacco and supplies but were not allowed to have money. Each year the Sunday School went all round the estate carol singing. Although the farmhouse where the Germans lived was some way away from the nearest house and along a rutted cart track it was decided we should go and sing to them. So, leaving our bikes but taking our torches, we all set off to walk a good half-mile.

"We sang two carols which they came out to hear. There were 12-14 men and one who spoke English said they were sorry they had no money but they would sing to us. They sang 'Silent Night' in German, in harmony. It sounded lovely.

"It was a perfect setting, a quiet still frosty starlight night and it is something I will never forget. When I hear that carol now I always think of them"

John Carter from Cambridge has lent me a picture of carol singers that was taken in the very early 1960s. Do you recognise anybody?

Pictures

Lamborn prints – the one of King's mentioned by Jacon [SORRY I DO NOT HAVE A BETTER COPY THAN THIS ONE, CAN WE PLEASE USE IT VERY SMALL]

A barge passes under King's College old bridge about 1770

The Lady Chapel, Ely Cathedral

Chesterton from the river

John Carter's photo of carol singers – but who were they

Memories 27 December 2010, by Mike Petty

Boxing Day 1910 was devoted to sport.

There were good crowds for the Cambridge Town and Cambridge United Football matches and the Cambridge Whippet Racing Club meeting was also well patronised.

But for many the highlight was provided by the Cambridge Costermongers

These were the men who sold fish, fruit, vegetables or poultry from barrows. As a class they were noted for their general improvidence, pugnacity and love of gambling. Victorians had

commented on their total want of education, their disregard for lawful marriage ceremonies and their ability to 'swear like a costermonger'.

Boxing Day was the time to reflect another side to their character.

This was the day that saw Newmarket Road and the neighbourhood in holiday mood and the whole population of the district turned out en masse to watch husbands, brothers, sons or friends distinguish themselves.

Quite when the tradition of the Costermonger's Marathon Race to Bottisham and back started is uncertain. But today it is a tradition that seems to have disappeared from memory

The rules were simple: each competitor had to wheel a costermonger's barrow from the corner of East Road to the Swan public house Bottisham and back, a distance of nearly 13 miles.

In 1910 some 15 competitors lined up and with the previous year's winner Sam George now acting as a judge, the favourite was Tom Nunn.

Tom was strong in the opening stretch and before the Paper Mills were reached he was forging his way to the front closely followed by Ben Warren. By the new Cemetery at the corner of Ditton Lane he was in the lead and setting a cracking pace. Nunn then kept up a continual unbroken trot until he had a lead of nearly a quarter of a mile as he passed Quy church. By the time he got to the Swan at Bottisham he appeared as fresh as ever.

On the return route he met other runners, less fit or less impetuous, some struggling along gamely. They were being urged – or jeered on – by spectators. "Yer won't do it", one boy told a perspiring coster, "yer can't train on beer". One of the more colourful characters known as 'Black Sam' stuck to his task though he never looked like a winner.

But out at the front there was drama. Tom Nunn had over-estimated his staying powers and began to flag badly before half the homeward journey was completed. Ben Warren passed him somewhere between Quy church and the Teversham turning before showing a turn of speed that it was impossible for Tom to match. At the Cemetery he gave up the struggle and rode home on a passing vehicle.

From then on Warren was so far ahead that he could go as he pleased, completing the course in the record time of one hour, forty-four minutes.

Second home was J. Smith followed by J. Pilman and then a man named Kelly. Each was awarded a cash prize ranging from 25 shillings down to half-a-crown, the fourth man took a special prize of goods to the value of five shillings, given by Messrs Walker and Sons.

All the other competitors who finished within 45 minutes of the winner's time also took home two-and six, so Messrs Chilvers, Bourn, S. Melopop, G. Carter, Esau James, Sanfield and B.J. Adams had some reward for their effort.

But Ted Nunn did not go home empty-handed. Although he never completed the course he received two special prizes of five shillings given by Charles Hunter and Mr Preston to the first man reaching Quy church and Bottisham Swan.

The main beneficiary was Addenbrooke's Hospital for collections made at the start and along the route raised nearly three guineas for their funds

Ben Warren was obviously proud of his achievement and. posed for a photograph along with the other costermongers. Twenty-five years later he sent the picture to the Cambridge Daily News who published it as a reminder of past days. By then Ben was one of the few left alive and the race itself had died out with the coming of the Great War.

But do you have mementoes of the costers and their marathon?

Pictures

Report of the 1910 race

The 1910 runners – sent to the News 25 years later
Costermongers prepare for the start of a race – pic from Cambridgeshire Collection

Swan public house Bottisham, where the runners turned
Quy church

I have included pictures showing costermongers barrows in Regent St, Bridge Street & Petty Cury

Memories 3rd January 2011 by Mike Petty

I was sitting watching television the other evening when my eye was caught by a light in the sky. I watched as a flaming ball drifted from beyond the trees opposite. It was followed at intervals by three or four others. The mysterious apparitions were Chinese lanterns launched from a villager's Christmas party, simple but strange

On New Years Eve 1910 people flocked to the centre of Cambridge to watch other lights. Amongst them was a News correspondent whose prose captured the spirit of the occasion and related the same old events that had been reported for almost a century. It deserves to be reprinted 100 years later

People began to arrive on King's Parade at about 11.30. Some of them came from the Theatre, others from parties and dances. It was really quite an ordinary night, but there seemed to be a new atmosphere, an atmosphere of increased good-fellowship and sincerity.

There was a time when steaming punch was the staple diet on such a night, but either the making of it is lost or the secret is applied by very few. But wassail of a modern sort there must be. A glass (or glasses) in the old year has a wonderful way of linking up memories and good things when cemented by a glass (or two) in the New. And so many a pocket on King's Parade bulged with a small something-or-other, or hid, until the proper moment should come, a flask imprisoning a spirited old fellow called Johnnie.

Not so much as a gramophone lent a cheery sound to the still night but the ardour of youth tires hard. It struck some bright lad that he would be nearer the show end of the rockets if he climbed the blind stays fixed to a shop on the 'K.P.' His example was followed by his companions and the blind, resenting their behaviour, swung out its arms and landed the passengers on the ground once more

The life of 1910 ebbed slowly out. It died precisely at midnight, peacefully and without the tears that marked the last days of its old age. The air was crisp and exhilarating. It was a healthy time for the arrival of the New Year

Ten minutes before the new Ambassador of Time was expected the bells of Great St Mary's Church pealed out their insistent ding-dongs which echoed away over the house tops and round and round the alleys and courts.

In the last second of 1910 there was a faint hiss, and a long stem of golden light shot suddenly into the sky. Straight up it went, and when it had grown to its full height it flowered, bursting into a cluster of beautiful stars. Before it had faded a louder hiss had signalled the departure of the second rocket. "Whish" sang the flaming herald of another year as it flew higher and higher into the air. And then it seemed to light a star hung between heaven and earth that sailed away, trailing with it three more stars, in bridal colours, changing in hue as they drifted away.

There was much cheering, the sound of which floated out on the still night air to the watchers in the suburbs, and hearty congratulations and good wishes were exchanged. The ceremony and the cheering over, bed was the only immediate sequel. The year was dead and life was leased to his successor for a year

But sadly in his excitement the reporter forgot to record just what he had witnessed

The tradition of setting off two rockets from the space in front of King's College dated back to 1815 when Isaiah Deck, a chemist, had decided to it would be an appropriate way to celebrate victory at the Battle of Waterloo. It was repeated as a way of marking the New Year by three generations of the Deck family until 1913 after which it was banned during the Great War. It did not restart.

The News pressed for its return: "there are many losses we could submit to with less regret than the loss of the rockets and the abandonment of a celebration which was based on good fellowship", it lamented.

In 1922 the custom was revived but it was thought no longer safe to use Kings Parade for the launch and the ceremony was transferred to Parker's Piece. That year a thousand people assembled to watch the rockets. But it was not quite the same atmosphere, numbers dropped off as people found other attractions such as dances on New Year's Eve. So it was that 1929 arrived uncelebrated by any rockets and one of the most celebrated of Cambridge customs fizzled out.

At last people could sleep peacefully in their beds. [SCAN]

Scans

6220 – King's College 1908

7327 - King's College at night – on New Years Eve the sky was lit by two rockets

9046 – Kings Parade 1887

8843 – crowds in King's Parade 1887 – more gathered on New Years Eve

9515 – Deck's shop opposite King's College gate

7249 – King's College gateway 1852

7158 – King's Parade 1887

Memories 10 January 2011 by Mike Petty

This Monday should be a red-letter day in Stretham.

For our village Post Office is expecting its first post-Christmas delivery of second-class stamps. If they arrive we can at last despatch those thank-you letters for any slightly-disappointing presents received from Auntie Flo. Instead we've had to buy a first-class stamp and ask the Post Office to take their time over delivering it.

Paradoxically in the old days, when letters were the essential means of communication, a post office without stamps would not have presented too much of a problem.

For at the bottom of Red Lion Street – subsequently renamed 'Chapel Street' at a time that the Parish Council was dominated by Methodists - there was a small shop run with a sign on the wall announcing that it was licensed to sell postage stamps, thus saving customers the long plod up the hill. The sign was shown in a picture taken during the floods of 1912 and remained long after the shop had closed down in 1963

There was another way of paying for postage. For outside the Post Office itself there used to be two machines that dispensed stamps if you deposited the appropriate coins in the slot.

Such machines were once quite common. But when did they start?

Certainly when Buntingford's new post office opened in April 1929 it was hailed as the most up-to-date of its kind in Hertfordshire with automatic stamp machines that were lighted at night by electric strips. They were still going in 1966 for the new Post Office in Ely had a number when it opened that October. A photo in the News Library shows similar machines outside the Post Office in Newmarket – do you recognise any of the people queuing?

Sadly the technology did not always work properly – something a News reporter discovered way back in March 1925: 'The stamp machine attached to the door of the General Post Office in Petty Cury, Cambridge is such a boon that I hesitate to complain. But on no fewer than five occasions I have found the penny slot fail to act correctly. On the first occasion the machine delivered me two penny stamps for one copper. I was wondering what to do when another purchaser came along and slipped a penny in the slot without result, so I handed one over. The next time I received no stamp for my penny, and wiped that off as a loss. On the third occasion I got two stamps for the price of one, so cried "quits". For those who like a little speculation these stamp machines are ideal'

The problem had not been resolved by October 1933 as a correspondent complained: "Sir – needing a stamp for a letter I hied down to the G.P.O. feeling certain its automatic machines would duly deliver the goods. The nimble penny did function, but the halfpenny, though absorbed into the digestive machinery of the apparatus, obdurately refused to pass out the little bit of green paper. Obviously a serious crime as that of obtaining halfpennies under such circumstances was a matter for our every ready Borough Police. An officer detailed to investigate proceeded to test my story twice, with the result that the Revenue was again the richer, and he, alas, the poorer by the sum of one penny".

Now there are so many rules and regulations regarding the size of envelope and thickness of the contents that it is difficult to be sure you've put the right value of stamps on a letter.

In May 1960 when letters were posted to overseas destinations with insufficient stamps the Post Office made up the correct amount, then notified the sender requesting him to return stamps to cover the cost. This service was greatly appreciated and few failed to comply. I'm not sure that the same facility applies today!

PICTURES

Stretham Post Office in the 1920s
Shop in Red Lion Street Stretham 1912
The stamp sign was still there in 1968

Cambridge Post Office on the corner of Petty Cury c1920

Ely Post Office at opening in 1966

Newmarket Post Office in 1970s
Detail of the stamp machines

A general pic of stamps

Memories 17th January 2011, by Mike Petty

In February 1957 there were scenes of great dignity and solemnity as 250 clergy from around the region journeyed to Ely Cathedral. They were joined by Mayors and other officials including the chairman of Ely Urban Council Coun W. Ruane to witness a ceremony steeped in tradition, as the Rt Rev Noel Baring Hudson was inducted, installed and enthroned as the 64th Lord Bishop of Ely.

The service was essentially the same as that performed at the enthronement of Bishop John Morton way back in August 1479. Morton had by no means been the first Bishop for that distinction belonged to a Welshman, Bishop Hervey of Bangor in 1109 after the new See had been carved from the Diocese of Lincoln.

John Morton had been a civil lawyer at Oxford in the 1450s before becoming involved in the Wars of the Roses and suffering imprisonment in the Tower of London. Like many of the early Bishops he played a significant part in national life but, unlike many, Morton is also remembered in the local area. He supervised the making of a new river between Peterborough and Wisbech that is still known as Morton's Leam and is also associated with the roadside cross at Stretham from which he is said to have walked barefoot to take up his appointment.

Over the centuries various Bishops of Ely have been involved in controversy.

Bishop Wren was imprisoned in the Tower of London during the Civil War only to be restored to his position at the Restoration. He had upset many of his congregation – including Oliver Cromwell - when he forced through reforms of services and imposed changes to the layout of churches. These included the railing-in of communion tables, something that had a practical as well as religious basis. For at Tadlow a dog had entered the church during the sermon and ran away with the loaf of bread that had been prepared for the holy sacrament. Some parishioners ran after the animal and took the bread from its mouth, returning it to the table. But the Minister did not feel it proper to consecrate it and, as there was no other bread to be had in the village, there was no communion that Sunday.

Later Bishop Bowyer Edward Sparke achieved national notoriety by promoting members of his own family to the richest positions, including appointing his ten-year-old son to be joint Registrar of the Diocese.

One constant issue facing Bishops has been the struggle to ensure that church buildings are kept in repair. In June 1947 an Advisory Committee on the Care of Churches appointed by Bishop Edward Wynn reported that eight churches were in danger of partial collapse. They included the fine medieval towers of Soham and Orwell, the interesting chancel of Hatley St

George, the roof of Caxton and almost the whole church of Wicken, which was splitting in half.

But Bishop Wynn had also realised that new churches were needed to serve people living in the expanding housing areas of Cambridge. This was one of the challenges that faced the newly-enthroned Bishop Hudson. He had graduated at Christ's College, been wounded fifteen times during the Great War, gaining both the DSO and the Military Cross, then served as a Missionary Bishop in Borneo before being appointed Bishop of Newcastle in 1941 and then Ely.

One of his first duties in his new post was to minister at the laying of the foundation stone by Princess Margaret of the new Nicholas Ferrar Church on the Arbury estate, renamed the Good Shepherd at its consecration in 1961. Others churches followed including St Stephens, St Martins and St James.

But as new churches were opened others in Cambridge were no longer needed, he felt. They included the small St Peter's on Castle Hill, St Michael's in Trinity Street and St Clement's which was clearly redundant with few worshippers. With active evangelisation All Saints could justify its purpose as a parish church but St Botolph's would probably be taken over by Corpus Christi College as a library and Great St Andrew's might be bought by the City to develop, it was believed in 1958

The challenges that have been faced by Bishops of Ely over the centuries have now been recorded in a new book edited by Peter Meadows, Keeper of the Ely Diocesan Records at the University Library. "Ely, Bishops and Diocese" is published by Boydell Press, ISBN 978-1-84383-5400 at £29.95

Pictures

103.42 An early engraving of Ely Cathedral with notes on the Bishopric

344e Ely dignitaries at the Inthronement of Bishop Hudson 1957

344c Scene during the inthronement of Bishop Hudson 1957

344cA detail of above

59.225 The Queen with Bishop Peter Walker in Ely in 1987 when she distributed Maundy Money - His death was announced last 6 week

123.39 The Bishop in Wulfstan Way at the dedication of St James' church in 1955

9047 St Michael's church in Trinity Street survived a fire in 1849 but was considered redundant in 1958

8998 St Clements Church, Bridge Street – here in 1830s – was considered redundant by 1958

104.25 The Good Shepherd Church being built to serve the Arbury estate

Memories 24th January 2011, by Mike Petty

Alan Attlesley has emailed to say that he's doing some research on King Street Cambridge as it was in the 1960's. He believes that close to Malcolm Street there was a courtyard containing almshouses called Wray's Court. There may well have been another such courtyard nearer to Manor Street, he feels. Can anybody confirm this, he asks?

There were three sets of almshouse in King Street one of which had been endowed by Henry Wray in 1634. They were intended for four widows and widowers of the parish of Holy Trinity but have since been demolished.

Henry Wray had been a bookseller who'd lived just off Sidney Street in a Court named after him. It was sketched by News artist, the late Lewis Todd, in 1954 who captured an image of a quaint row of houses with a young girl, later identified as Christine Rae with her doll's pram and the family's black cat, Tim.

But appearances can be deceptive.

Writing in June 1999 Mrs Joan Goody told me that as a young married woman just after the War, she'd been delighted to be offered the chance to move into one of the houses in Wray's Court. That is until she & her husband Felix saw it. The yard might have looked quaint but the buildings were in very poor condition and occupied by old people. The houses had no back door, no water, no light except gas and just two toilets for all the residents, some of whom could not get out to them!

Joan's house was on three floors and had a basement full of cobwebs like upside down umbrellas – she threw buckets of water down it to force a way through. Overcoming their initial revulsion she and her husband stripped many layers of wallpaper, one layer containing pins and needles placed there by a long-dead seamstress. With blistered hands they decorated and made the place look something like a home. Only then did they discover to their horror that they had not, after all, got the house. The person who'd made the offer had no rights over it. That decision had to be made by a Committee and they would need references. The couple wept.

The Trustees of Wray's Charity, who administered this court and also maintained the almshouses in King Street, were impressed by their hard work. They told her Joan could have the house subject to certain conditions: there was to be no washing hung outside – this was after all part of 'old Cambridge' and admired by visitors – and they were not to have children. But when a baby came the Trustees relented and said they could stay provided it was not heard to cry. However the pram was never to be on view.

As the other elderly residents died or moved away so more young families moved in. One of these were Mr & Mrs K.P. Harris. They worked hard to create a "little Palace" even scrubbing the cobbles, for now babies would be crawling around (despite the committee!), though the washing lines were still confined to the basements.

The young community bonded together, organising child-minding so that each could have spare time. But then the City Council said they couldn't live there as the properties had no back doors and the occupants were re-housed in various parts of Cambridge. The Yard was demolished for the building of Sainsbury's in about 1972.

But can you tell me more of Wray's Almshouses in King Street

Intent on getting full value from his email, Roger has another question. He writes: "Do you know whether Cambridge ever possessed a 'noon day cannon?' When my family moved to Cambridge from Ely in 1957, we dug up a hedge at the bottom of the garden and found such a cannon. I've often wondered about it's history and how it got there.

Can anybody help? Write to me at the News and I'll put you in touch.

Pictures

King Street in the 1960s

Sidney Street – the entrance to Wray's Court was on the left

Wrays Court as seen by Lewis Todd in 1954

Wray's Court sketched by R.G. Genlloud in the 1930s

Photo of Wray's Court – NB the original print is in the News library 'Sidney Street' file

Memories 31st January 2011, by Mike Petty

I have just returned from a few days away in Lacock, the National Trust-owned village in Wiltshire that has formed the backdrop for many film and television programmes, including Harry Potter and Cranford.

It was altogether charming and – out of season at least – not overwhelmed with hordes of other visitors. Residents pointed out some of the apparently now world-famous sights that we might otherwise have missed, spoke happily about the ghostly lad who sat on the step of the upstairs lounge in one of the hotels – a gem of a room that locals insisted we inspect - where a partly-started jigsaw was waiting to be finished.

The Red Lion was welcoming and relaxed, though the barmaid did confess that the previous night she'd forgotten to lock the inn door and had walked back in her pyjamas to ensure we slept safe in our beds! We sat beside a roaring log fire, dined by candlelight but breakfasted without toast. For in all that old-world building there was no toasting fork so when the electricity supply failed the cook was restricted to what she could produce on the gas hob. Sadly without the modern electronic wizardry we could not pay the bill!

Such are the problems affecting innkeepers. Out at Linton in 1895 the landlord of The Swan, complained to the new Parish Council that the noise of the water carts filing up at the village pump opposite his hotel was waking his guests at 8:30am every morning.

Even Linton can look less than its best on a cold winter day, as a photographer discovered when he snapped the scene in about 1905. His view showed the trees gaunt against an overcast sky and a man standing beside the fence on the right. A picture postcard apparently shows he was still there several weeks later when the sky was bright blue and the trees in full leaf.

Or was he?

Comparison of the two pictures shows that they are one and the same but that the second has been hand coloured and somewhat retouched, with a branch removed to improve the composition.

Such attention to detail is typical of the care devoted by local historian, Garth Collard who inspired generations of young historians at Linton Village College and also established the Linton Local History Society, work for which he was awarded the MBE in 2007

One problem of quaint narrow streets is that they were not designed for motorised transport. On January 11th 1911, Mr WM Willis, of 15 High Street, photographed a mishap as a wagon load of sacks of grain overturned. The narrow width of the main street, the bad state of the road and the high load all contributed to the accident. Vehicles found it difficult to turn into Linton's High Street from the Cambridge Road, so the County Council purchased The White Hart Inn (behind the fallen load) for £225 and pulled it down in 1912 to widen the road.

Another photographer snapped an army tank in the High Street in 1939. The buildings behind date from the 17th century and were very dilapidated. There was a cesspool to the rear which was shared by all five cottages but this overflowed every three weeks in 1937-39.

And just what was the peculiar machine snapped in 1918 outside the Crown. At first sight it looks built for war, but seems to have been designed for agriculture with caterpillar tracks that spread the load more evenly, preventing it getting stuck when the ground became muddy.

These are some of more than 4,000 images which Garth Collard carefully documented before in 2009 he suffered a major stroke which has severely affected his researches.

But now through the assistance of Hugo Brown of the Cambridge Explorer much of the collection has been published for all to share. For over 1,700 photographs dating back to 1850 have been produced on a CD-ROM together with a selection of maps, directory entries and a series of indexes that even identify individuals shown on the many school groups. It is a remarkable interactive digital encyclopaedia of Linton life, an essential research source for anyone with a computer.

But what if you don't have a computer?

To ensure that history can be shared with as many as possible Hugo Brown has also produced a second version that can be viewed on a television from any standard DVD player. It is a constant succession of over 750 high-quality images, one blending into another, that makes its way throughout the village to the accompaniment of music from the 1920s and 1930s. The whole film runs for 110-minutes jogging memories even for those who have never visited Linton since the snapshots, photos and ephemera capture a way of life that has relevance to whatever place we each trace out roots.

For Hugo Brown this has been a work of love as he lived in Linton in the 1980s and spent many happy years in his youth wandering the streets with a camera recording scenes for posterity. A few have been included on the CD-ROM.

He may not be a Harry Potter, but has certainly devised a wizard way to appreciate history!

Garth Collard's Interactive Archive of Linton CD-ROM is £15, the Linton DVD costs £12.50 from The Cambridge Explorer at 13 High Street, Wilburton, Ely, CB6 3RB or via their website www.cambridge-explorer.org.uk

Memories 7th February 2011 by Mike Petty

Last week a crashed lorry load of feathers near St Ives brought traffic chaos to Cambridge. It forced many vehicles that would normally have gone along the A14 and M11 to grind their way through the city instead.

It is difficult to remember what conditions were like before the building of the two major roads that now bypass Cambridge

Until the Northern Bypass opened at Christmas 1978 those travelling from the Midlands to the coast made their way into Cambridge along Huntingdon Road then turned left down Victoria Road to feed the mass congestion at the junction with Milton Road that was known as Mitcham's Corner. Here the long articulated lorries tended to squeeze smaller vehicles out of the way before they crossed over Victoria Bridge.

Victoria Avenue was always an area of comparative calm between Jesus Green and Midsummer Common. But with jams that seemed to go on and on there was often a great deal of time to appreciate the view of the cows placidly grazing, whilst drivers overheated along with their engines

Next came the turn at Four Lamps roundabout into Maids Causeway and the long, increasingly less pleasant trek down Newmarket Road past the entrances to East Road and Coldham's Lane then out beyond the Gasworks towards Barnwell Bridge, the Pye Factory and finally the open road. Beyond lay the hold-ups in Newmarket – but at least one was clear of Cambridge!

Things had eased with the opening of Elizabeth Bridge in July 1971. Its origins dated back to before the building of Victoria Bridge in 1890 and there had been many delays that would make the present Guided Bus saga seem insignificant before the scheme was finally finished. However once opened it transformed the Cambridge traffic scene, making it like motoring on Sunday morning, every morning - at least for a while.

The new bridge's approaches had carved their way through previously tree-lined avenues from Milton Road and Chesterton and Newmarket Road was dualled to speed the traffic out of town.

Meanwhile those wishing to make their way from Huntingdon to London in the 1960s found their way to the traffic lights at the bottom of Castle Hill before continuing along Northampton Street and Queen's Road towards Fen Causeway – a route that had been constructed to ease congestion in 1926 despite profound opposition – and on to the leafy queues of Trumpington Road ahead.

The alternative was to cut through the historic heart of the city by squeezing down Magdalene Street and across the Cam to the comparatively broad Bridge Street where old properties on the west side had been demolished in a road-widening exercise before the Second World War.

Then it was right to the narrowness of Trinity Street, out into the sunlight of King's Parade and along past the Fitzwilliam Museum. This was one of the routes to be cut as planners sought to restrict through traffic in the 1970s.

With the heavy vehicles removed motorists could once more reclaim the Cambridge streets, except when accidents or road repairs brought everything to a halt again.

What do you remember about that crawl through Cambridge?

Victoria Road
100.72 traffic in Victoria Road in 1968

Chesterton Road
149.16 junction Victoria Avenue 1960s

Victoria Avenue
6537 Victoria Avenue 1960s
110.62 a lorry sheds a load of apples at the Four Lamps roundabout in 1957

Newmarket Rd
140.56 the junction of East Road and Newmarket Road in 1962
8989 Newmarket Road before widening – contrast with 152.98

152.98 Newmarket Road after widening 1987
9734 traffic jams in Newmarket Road Oct 1966

Bridge St
109.28 traffic crossing Magdalene Bridge in 1960s

Memories 14th February 2011, by Mike Petty

An email from G.M. Robinson of Wilmslow has sent me ferreting for information on the earliest days of golf in Cambridge.

Although Lord Dunedin told a meeting of the Cambridge Golf Club in King's College that he had played on Midsummer Common in 1869 the first actual course seems to have been established on Coe Fen in 1873. It was opposite the Botanic Gardens; three of the holes were on the fen and four on a strip of grass on the other side of Trumpington Road, which proved somewhat inconvenient!

After some time an effort was made to play on Sheep's Green but this was too marshy so a Cambridge University Golf Club was established on Coldham's Common in 1875. It was a far from ideal site. Noted golf writer Bernard Darwin described the approach to the course as being down the most depressing of Cambridge streets, Newmarket Road, and through the most unattractive slums of Barnwell. One turned down a particularly black and odorous lane, crossed a railway bridge and reached a flat, muddy expanse of grass of which the only features were a railway line and some rifle butts. There was also a particularly pungent smell which he believed to proceed from the boiling down of deceased horses into glue.

On arrival at the club-house he was at once surrounded and nearly swept from his legs by a yelling mob of caddies of most villainous appearance, who were supposed to be under the control of a well-meaning but superannuated policeman. Anyone who played there regularly soon found himself made over, body and soul, to these ruffians.

There were in addition an irregular body of younger deprecators who earned a precarious livelihood by stealing or retrieving balls. They enjoyed considerable opportunities because there were a good many muddy ditches – the only natural hazards. Sometimes they would return the errant ball to its owner for a penny, sometimes they would stamp it into the mud, pretend to hunt for it with a great show of energy and pocket it at their leisure when the owner had abandoned the search. This was an easy matter for the mud was of the softest and thickest and the ball would frequently bury itself on alighting without any help from human foot.

Writing in 1913 Charles Tennyson recalled that the grass grew in rank tufts that nowhere seemed to aspire to the dignity of turf. But despite this the club were never permitted to cut hazards or otherwise disturb the surface. Nor were they allowed to play during May term because the grass was removed for hay. Even in winter lean cattle wandered dolefully about it, crouching their gaunt bodies on the bare pastures the golfers called their greens but which in fact differed from the encircling morass in that they were occasionally visited by the mowing machine during the winter terms and had been worn by concentrating trampling of undergraduate feet into a delusive evenness of surface

There were no very short holes, the ground was undulating as a result of the extensive extraction of coprolites from the 1850s and the other hazards were a road, several footpaths, dry ditches, two burns and various bushes. But the main problem was the town rifle range which ran down the middle of the course and, when in use constituted a very real danger, for at two or three holes an errant golf ball had often to be retrieved under rifle fire. This was

occasionally supplement by a machine gun, the shells of which hurtled over their heads with a kind of flapping hiss, peculiarly disquieting to a man of peaceful temperament.

Despite all this the course flourished. In 1887 was enlarged to 18 holes and a clubhouse and cottage built on the site of an old inn. But in 1894 came news that the Great Eastern Railway would be laying a new line over the Common, adding more distractions for golfers to contend with.

It is this that may have prompted Messrs H.J. Gray & son of Rose Crescent to establish an alternative. The Cambridge Chronicle of 18th January 1895 carried a notice that would in a few days open a golf course in Grantchester Meadows. The arrangement of links at a distance so convenient for the town ought to give a considerable impetus to this favourite sport, the paper commented. The nine-hole course was formally opened for play on Thursday Jan 31 with a ladies course due to be laid out in a few weeks. But in February a memorial signed by a number of residents at Grantchester was presented to the Council complaining that it interfered with the pleasantest walk round Cambridge and it soon ceased to function.

Another course was laid out on the Gog Magog Hills in 1901, which continues to flourish to this day, but the golfers from Coldham's Common moved to Whitwell Hill Coton where a club room opened in 1906.

Here too they suffered from the activities of avid ball-collectors. In October 1910 three labourers were charged with stealing nine golf balls and an overcoat from Charles Willmott, a groundsman at the University Golf Links at Coton. The men had gone to the fields adjoining the course and picked up the balls which they sold to an athletic outfitter of Downing Street. It was not a great success and the University Golf Club made arrangement with Royal Washington and Newmarket Golf Club for their members to play on 9-hole course at Worlington

After the golfer had departed, Coldham's Common continued as a shooting range. But by 1933 this had ceased and there came a suggestion that it be turned into a municipal golf course. The various firing points and the lower portion of the butts could be used in the construction of a very sporting course, providing work for the unemployed. The idea came to nothing and the Common became a more peaceful place free from either errant rifle rounds or golf balls

Can you add more to the story of early Cambridge golf – contact Mike Petty at the News

PICTURES

Coldhams Lane 1880

The railway being constructed across the Common

Coldham's Common 1914 when army units assembled there

I have found a number of other general images of early golfing scenes – can you see if you can supplement them please

Memories 21st February 2010 by Mike Petty

Next Thursday marks a melancholy anniversary for the congregation of St Paul's Church on Hills Road, Cambridge. For 70 years ago, on 24th February 1941, nine people were killed and many injured as a result of a severe air raid on that area of the town

On the night of the bombing, high explosives dropped along Hills Road and up to the railway bridge caused mayhem. Residents of the Blantyre Home for the Blind were severely shaken by a bomb which caused damage but no injuries. The Cambridge Daily News reported that there was hardly a window in the locality which remained intact. One of those damaged was the East Window of St Paul's Church

Details were censored at the time but Ken Fisher, who later worked from the First Aid post on the ground floor of St Paul's School in Russell Street, has recalled that he 'heard a plane start a bombing run and the first of a stick of bombs whistling down'. He had been chatting with a group, but had dived into a passage. He later returned to find the group 'ripped to pieces' by the third bomb.

Jack Overhill recorded in his newly-published graphic diary, 'Cambridge at War', that on "hearing that Hills Road had got a pasting, we went to have a look. The scene was people, cars, wardens, police, wreckage and glass smashed all over the place and little craters in the road. We couldn't find out about the casualties".

One of the survivors was Joyce, a seven-year old girl then living at the Cottage Home, an Orphanage for Girls run by the church, whose staff and girls regularly attended services. Her testimony has only been tracked down recently

"I haven't thought much about the war, but this is what I remember. The searchlights, gas masks, sirens, debris on the way to school and learning how to quickly get under the desks with arms wrapped around our heads. Drill was frequent as were drills to quickly don gas masks. I kept my mask until the rubber completely deteriorated

"I do recall a little of the night of the bombing. We all trooped down to the kitchen where grey, lumpy mattresses were spread on the floor. I remember the sound of the air raid siren. We sang the hymns 'Eternal Father Strong to Save' and 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus'.

"After the 'all clear' we returned to our bedrooms. My bed was next to the window and was covered in shards of glass. I'm pretty sure I also remember that the window had some kind of metal grill on it. I think our chimney was hit, as I remember black soot in what may have been the parlour'

Another testimony comes from a Canadian Forces Padre, Bob Sneyd who was staying in Cambridge and worshipped at St Paul's church, whilst his wife, Ora, remained in Canada. They had made an application to adopt little Joyce and take her back to Canada. Bob was concerned that the little girl had been awakened during the night with broken glass falling all over her bed.

But the next morning brought news that the immigration authorities in Ottawa had sent definite permission for her to go to Canada. Bob was just about to leave Cambridge on the 12.57 train but got a taxi and was able to visit the Cottage Home on his way to the station to tell Joyce the wonderful news.

He also called on Mr. Lee at St Paul's Rectory who gave him a piece of stained glass from the shattered window, that was almost literally warm from the intensity of the raid.

The names of those killed in that raid are recorded on the church's Second World War Memorial plaque:

Bertie Ashman, Age 42, (Civilian, St John's Ambulance, Fire Watcher.)
Sidney Harold Brittain, Age 50, (Civilian, Greengrocer, died in Addenbrooke's Hospital.)
William John Frederick Day, Age 29, (Sapper, Railway Construction Company, Royal Engineers)
Lucy Sybil Gent, Age 60, (Civilian, Air Raid Warden, W.V.S.)
Maurice Herbert George Lambert, (Age 34, Civilian.)
Frederick Dennis Charles Negus, Age 19, (Civilian, Home Guard, died in Addenbrooke's Hospital.)
Petica Corsolles Robertson, Age 57, (Civilian, Air Raid Warden, W.V.S.)
Kathleen Ada Irene Thaxter, Age 24, (Civilian, Fire Watcher.)
Ivy Florence Woodcock, Age 29, (Civilian.)

By the time the conflict was over, 23 names of servicemen had been added to the memorial which was unveiled eight years after the War and dedicated by the Bishop of Ely, Dr Edward Wynn. Since then the church has continued to conduct annual Remembrance services.

The shattered East Window remained as a reminder of the bombing and it was to be December 1958 before the War Damage Commission authorised its replacement.

But the story does not end there, as Simon Brook has been telling me.

Whilst preparing for the 70th anniversary of the Hills Road Bombing, the question arose as to what had happened to the glass piece from St Paul's old shattered window.

His research led to Toronto where Nancy Mallett, the Cathedral archivist and Stuart Mann, the Diocesan director of Communications published articles in the Toronto Anglican Newspaper.

Incredibly these were seen by Fred Sneyd, the brother of Joyce, the little girl who had survived the bombing all those years before and together they have filled in the details

Bob Sneyd, Joyce's adopted dad, had later accompanied the forces to France on D Day, where he had conducted funerals of soldiers killed on the battlefield. He had brought back the two Union flags he used during the services which are now displayed at the Calvary Baptist Church in Toronto on either side of a colourful Memorial window

The window is composed of ninety shards of stained glass that Bob had collected from bombed-out church windows in France, The Netherlands, Belgium and Germany as well as 37 English Cathedrals, Abbeys and Churches including St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey.

The beautiful panels have diagrams with reference numbers to identify each fragment. Amongst them all are two from Cambridge. One is from the Holy Sepulchre, the famous Round church, damaged during a raid that wrecked the Union Society building alongside.

The other is from the Victorian church of St Paul whose congregation still remember the night of devastation that cost so many people their lives. They will be holding a service of remembrance and reconciliation for the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Hills Road on Sunday 27th February at 10.30 when all are welcome

If you can add to the story of that fateful night then Simon Brook would be pleased to hear from you. Email him at brook215@ntlworld.com or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch.

Choice of

123.05 St Paul's church floodlit in October 1955

139.36 St Paul's church from Coronation Street in 1973

St Pauls c1910

Joyce – the little girl who was adopted

Bob Sneyd and his wife

The Cottage Home

St Paul's interior showing the plain glass that replaced the bombed-out window

St Paul's replacement window

Members of congregation of St Pauls inspect the memorial window in Toronto

Memories 28th February 2011 by Mike Petty

Should Cambridge Guildhall be converted into a hotel? This is one of the proposals currently under discussion. It is an issue that was also discussed in 1932: why should such a large employer be based right in the middle of the town where parking was difficult. It would be better to relocate to the corner of East Road and Parkside and replace the old Guildhall with shops on the ground floor and offices and flats above. Only by a split vote was the suggestion vetoed.

In those days there were a number of hotels in the town centre. The most famous was the Lion in Petty Cury. There had been an inn on the site in 1493 and in 1689 the Earl of Bedford and dined there on a menu that included solamagundy - a hot salad of boiled chicken, wild flowers, fruit and potatoes - as well as carp stewed with perches, a dish of tongues, udders and marrow-bones, a jowl of sturgeon and whipped syllabubs

The hotel – sometimes known as Red Lion - had flourished during the great era of stagecoaches when it had room in the inn yard for a smithy and numerous stables.

In 1894 the Lion was taken over by a lady who had already made a reputation for her hospitality. Mrs A.A. Moyes had come to prominence as landlady at the Bath Hotel in Bene't Street whose Bath market dinner was the talk of the county. As success grew more space was necessary and she'd been contemplating extensions before being offered the opportunity of taking over the Lion, following the death of the proprietor, her late husband's father

Mrs Moyes made the Lion an institution. In 1903 it was extended by the demolition of part of the former Falcon Inn, with a raised corridor lightened with large stained-glass windows linking the extension to the main hotel across Falcon Yard

It became the headquarters of visiting sportsmen and athletic teams while companies such as the Cambridge Railway Building Works and the local branch of the United Kingdom Commercial Travellers' Association chose it for their staff meals.

Such functions were well served by William (“Little John”) Parish, so called because he was barely five-foot tall. He was head waiter to two exclusive University dining clubs, the True Blue Club and the Beef Steak Club, which were both limited to a membership of five. Each met every term with members of the True Blue Club wearing powdered wigs, blue knee breeches and buckled shoes and Beef Steak members sporting black coats and tails with silver buttons and buff waistcoats.

“Twelve to 15 courses we used to carry and they took two-and-a-half hours to serve. And, mind you, nothing less than a magnum for the table”, his contemporary Mr W. Levett - “Just William” - recalled in 1952. He also he reminisced about some Very Important Diners ranging from barons to Sultans and Prime Ministers. “I’ve served most of them ... Balfour, Asquith, Lloyd George (he used to live here almost), Baldwin – and Churchill”.

Each visitor was made to feel that he or she was the only person Mrs Moyes delighted to honour - so they came back time and again. To generations of undergraduates she was a good friend, indulgent to the extravagances of youth but firm and capable in preventing lapses into hooliganism.

Not everybody repaid her kindness: in June 1906 she had to take an undergraduate to court after he reneged on payment for the hire of three horses - he had tossed up with two friends and lost. But she lost the case, the court deciding that such hire was not a ‘necessary’ and, being under 21 years of age, the lad was not liable to pay it.

She was alert to new technology. In 1904 the Eastern Vacuum Cleaning Company demonstrated the benefits of their machines by cleaning carpets in the coffee room and the commercial room. “The carpets are rich, large carpets, so large in fact as to be almost unwieldy under the old method of beating, but under this system they have been cleaned in the most perfect manner and not a particle of dust can be found. Out of one carpet 28 lbs of dust and dirt was extracted and now the whole of the hotel is to be dealt with in similar manner”, the News reported

The former coach entrance yard from Petty Cury was covered with a glass roof and the rooms became shops for travelling salesmen who laid out samples in the yard where buyers from the big stores come to inspect the goods that were despatched by rail.

The practice died out with the increased use of the motor car and the Lion responded. In 1936 a reporter commented: “On market days its spacious yard resounded to the echo of hundreds of hooves and of the wheels of carts and carriages. Today its yards are now filled with cars”. By 1950 over 80,000 motorists were using the Lion Hotel yard annually and the Council, in their new Guildhall just down the Cury were planning a new central car park.

By then the Moyes family had moved on. They sold up in February 1938 after more than 80 years and in 1961 the Lion was purchased by a property company in the single largest property transaction the city had see. Two years later the hotel closed, though the bars remained until 1968 when the demolition men moved in and the building became history

Do you remember it?

61.20460	Lion Hotel 1964
104.46	Lion Hotel covered with political posters 1874
152.49	Petty Cury with Lion Hotel on right 1963
6841	Demolition of Lion Hotel 1969

6850 Lion Hotel foyer formerly part of the inn yard 1933
8950 The glazed archway over Falcon Yard 1964

Newspaper report of the Moyes family retiring, 4 Feb 1911

Memories 7th March 2011 by Mike Petty

There may be dramatic changes to Peas Hill if new plans by the Arts come to fruition. The Theatre hopes to form a grand new foyer area stretching along to St Edward's Passage with bar and restaurant facilities as well as an additional performance area seating 100 people

But few know that Peas Hill has a connection with drama dating back some 140 years. In 1871 W.B. Redfern created a new and elegant bijou theatre accommodating 170 people in rooms previously occupied by a draper at no.9 Peas Hill, near the present Barclays Bank. It opened with a burlesque entitled 'Bombastes Furioso' together with a farce and a short concert of vocal and instrumental music.

For several years the Bijou Dramatic Club provided the only dramatic performances in Cambridge that were given with any regularity. As time went on the club found that the old Peas Hill theatre was not big enough for them and they finally removed to an old skating rink in St Andrews's Street, on the site of which the New Theatre was later built. The old Peas Hill premises were pulled down in August 1923.

At about this time King's College decided to build a hostel on the corner of Peas Hill and St Edward's Passage. Once the plans had been drawn up an irregular piece of land occupied by old sheds and wine cellars remained and Lord Keynes, the bursar, realised that by careful planning a theatre could be dropped into the vacant space.

Building started 1935 and the theatre plus restaurant opened just 75 years ago in February 1936. When it came to a name the suggestion of the 'Fishmarket Theatre' was canvassed but rejected and 'The Arts' became part of Cambridge life.

The new building attracted rave reviews: 'It is a beautiful piece of work with furnishings in autumn leaf and includes a restaurant and café bar. The stage has facilities for quick scene changing with a lift large enough to raise a full-size grand piano from the orchestra pit, while the cinema and sound apparatus are of the very latest type with facilities for the reproduction of gramophone records. The fresh air supply can be warmed or cooled while the main heating by water-fed radiators is instantly adjustable to meet the vagaries of the English climate', the News reported

The Arts opened with a gala performance by the Vic-Walls Ballet Company, which included Margot Fonteyn, followed next night by the World Premier of a new GPO film unit production 'Night Mail'. This showed the work of the Royal Mail night train from London to Scotland with plenty of novel-angle shots and some quick-fire doggerel synchronised with the train beats. Since then it has survived various challenges to continue to bring high-quality arts events of various types.

Not all dramas are acted out on a stage. In June 1935 John Saltmarsh, an eminent Fellow of King's College, recalled that on part of the Arts site and hidden behind a more modern front was a tall old house with a curious cruciform tiled roof and a picturesque gable with carved wooden ornaments. It had been the scene of tragedy when Frances the daughter of Samuel Spalding, town-clerk of Cambridge, had wandered into a garret in a remote part of what was then the family's home. The door slammed behind her and she could not escape. Her parents searched frantically but failed to find her the girl before she starved to death. "One of the

attics in No.6 has an evil reputation still, and ghostly fingers are sometimes heard to tap on the window”, Saltmarsh recorded in *The Cambridge Review*

The new extension will incorporate nos.4/6 Peas Hill, recently home to the Cheltenham and Gloucester Building Society. Formerly two separate cottages it was for a while The Sugar and Spice coffee house. The Cambridge Antiquarian Society’s photographic survey includes a photograph taken in 1935 as demolition removed the adjoining premises at no.3, a roomy rambling building built around a massive chimneystack, that had been home to Shrive’s basket makers, where clothesbaskets and wicker children’s chairs used to hang outside their shop.

Next door, at no.2, was Fletcher’s the butcher’s, a building on three floors with low mean rooms above the shop, arranged round a central winding staircase. By 1935 it has been derelict for many years; the condition had to be seen to be believed, and the seeing was attended with some personal risk, Saltmarsh commented. After rebuilding it became the new home to F.O. Sennitt, the butcher, egg and poultry dealer who had supplied butter in yard-long strips to the colleges which sold it on to undergraduates at a penny an inch. Sennitt added a fish side to the business and in April 1951 invested in one of the new refrigerated display cabinets avoiding the swarms of flies that had been so much a feature of the area in previous years.

The building on the corner of St Edward’s Passage had been Coulson’s draper’s shop which was badly damaged by fire in December 1900. Despite the efforts of Captain Greef and the Fire Brigade the flames were not extinguished until the entire stock of goods in the shop had been completely destroyed & the front of the shop badly damaged. The cause of the fire was blamed on the overturning of one of the incandescent burners in the shop window. Later, after rebuilding, the ground floor was occupied by G.P. Reece a sports shop with a wide range of Automodels equipment and was subsequently home to University Audio.

Who knows what future years will see for this small area of Cambridge

Do you have memories of the area or its shops

107.17 Arts Theatre & no.4/6 Peas Hill when Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society in 2005

106.87 line of buildings from present Arts Theatre to corner of St Edward’s Passage before redevelopment in 1935

10120 no.4/6 Peas Hill when Sugar & Spice in 1935 after demolition of adjacent buildings

8940 nos.3 Peas Hill – Shrive and no.2 when Fletcher. Butcher, taken about 1910

6255 nos.2 when Fletcher’s butcher & 1 Peas Hill beside St Edward’s Passage in 1908

5261 Painting of the haunted house, 1935

Memories 14th March 2011 by Mike Petty

My recent article about the Lion Hotel has resulted in a letter from a man who knew it far better than most.

Fred Guy from Cambridge writes: “I was the last licensee of the bars until it closed in 1968 for demolition. I moved to Cambridge in 1963 with my wife and young son from London to help my in-laws to run the bars on behalf of Tollemache and Cobbold and moved in while they were auctioning off all the contents in 1966

“I took on the license and run it till it closed. Security was very difficult when you think we had well over 100 derelict rooms and out-buildings as well as a derelict ballroom on the first floor that would have accommodated 500 to 600 guests at one time. Most of the top floor was staff accommodation and by the time we left pigeons had occupied most of them!

“The bells for the boots and hostler were still hanging on the wall and when I see the pictures of the plush lounge it is difficult to imagine many years ago horse and traps passing through to the stables at the rear. We still walk through into Petty Cury and think this was our main entrance with Lyons tea shop opposite.”

I was one of those evading Fred’s security as I wandered around the dilapidated Lion early in the morning of 7th May 1969 to take snaps of the demolition in progress.

Another former Cambridge coaching inn was the Blue Boar Hotel in Trinity Street which closed for the last time in April 1986. It had been an inn for some 400 years as in 1693 churchwardens off All Saint’s Church, just along the street, spent two shillings “for beer at the Blue Boar on ye Queen’s birthday”.

A London-bound stagecoach set off from its doors in the 1750s and at the turn of the century the landlord John Mount advertised speedy coaches to and from Stamford, Birmingham, Norwich and Ipswich. It was also a base for the “Union” and “Beehive” which travelled at a more sedate pace – they were slow coaches.

The journey to Cambridge could be hazardous but the greatest danger was as the coach arrived. For the entrance to the inn yard was quite low and outside passengers had to duck as they went under it. One who did not was the Rev Gawen Braithwaite, a Fellow of St John’s College. The New Monthly Magazine for December 1814 recorded “As he was entering the Blue Boar Inn on the roof of the Ipswich coach, he was so much crushed (owing to the lowness of the gateway) as to cause his death in a few hours”

By 1899 the Blue Boar was in a bad way, both structurally and otherwise so Trinity College, the owners, allocated £3,000 for repairs, employing Coulson and Lofts to carry out the work. Although the firm kept to their part of the budget the total bill soared and in 1903 the College took the architect to court, only to lose their case

The old Inn yard with its extensive stabling was rebuilt as a dining room and the entrance courtyard covered in with a glass roof to form an entrance lounge.

In 1909 it was praised in an article in the “Town and Country Illustrated” magazine. “The coffee room is a model of what such an apartment should be, the smoking lounge is so luxuriously furnished as to make an after-dinner cigar even more of a pleasure and visitors who desire to enjoy a quiet ‘hundred-up’ find every provision made for them in the billiards room which contains two excellent tables. For lady guests there is an excellent drawing room looking out to the King’s Parade”, the magazine reported.

It was remodelled in 1936 with a new Georgian cornice and canopy installed with flood-lighting producing a beautiful effect. Internally structural alterations, redecoration and refurbishing made the hotel a place of comfort and restful beauty with every modern refinement to ensure the enjoyment of residents who have a choice of gas, coal or electric fires in the bedrooms, the News reported. An advertisement also promised central heating in the corridors which was particularly relevant since although there was running hot and cold water the bathroom was ‘within easy reach of your bedroom door’,

It became part of the Trust House Forte group in 1943 but started to fall below their standards: few of the bedrooms had private bathrooms, many had a poor view, it was difficult

for guests to be set down or picked up and, with the loss of the inn yard, parking was non-existent.

Trinity however needed extra student rooms and designed a modern replacement which retained the historic façade with a new restaurant and wine bar.

The closure of the Blue Boar in 1986 was much regretted. City MP Robert Rhodes James missed it: he frequently took coffee there before his Saturday surgeries with constituents, while early-arriving commuters and shop girls from Eaden Lilley would gather there to sit in comfort while they waited for their businesses to open

It marked the end of 33 years service for the Blue Boar barman, Eddie Brauerski who recalled that Prince Charles had called in for breakfast whilst an undergraduate at Trinity College. He had also served film stars and television personalities including James Mason, Cyril Fletcher and Nicholas Parsons and in one month Margaret Thatcher, Harold Wilson, Edward Heath and Jeremy Thorpe had all dined in the Blue Boar's restaurant. They sat at the same table – though not at the same time

Did you ever stay there or use its facilities – what do you remember.

PICTURES

8995 Mike Petty picture taken 7th May 1969 during demolition of the former entrance yard, looking towards Petty Cury

36 02 22a – advertisement for the Blue Boar, February 1936

61 Blu – the covered-in courtyard c1900

1880 advertisement from 'The Traveller's Guide to Cambridge'

7943 Trinity Street in c1890 showing Blue Boar in centre

8550 Trinity Street in the mid 1970s showing Blue Boar and traffic warden doing his rounds – the hotel had no parking

There are also two pictures that appeared in the CEN on 15 April 1986, one shows the front of the hotel, the other – neg 2268 86 8a shows some of the people who gathered there for coffee before starting work. Sandra has looked these out for me

Memories 21 March 2011 by Mike Petty

There are areas of Cambridge that vary immensely in character.

Many people know East Road as a bustling street lined with shops, pubs and a modern University.

By contrast West Road, also lined by modern University buildings, is quiet and largely unexplored

Both areas were open fields until the early 1800s but then two Inclosure Acts laid the foundation for their transformation.

While the East or Barnwell Fields were quickly built over to provide homes for the families who flocked to the town to find work, the West fields remained largely pasture with only a

dozen or so gentlemen's residences built away from the Castle Hill to the north and Newnham village to the south

Much of the land beyond the Backs was owned by eight colleges whose need for houses for academic staff grew rapidly once rules that forbade fellows to marry were revoked. From 1870 to 1914 a 'bicycle suburb' grew up with the building of Cranmer, Adams, Sylvester and Herschel Roads to the west of the new Grange Road where an earlier house, 'Pinehurst' was demolished to make way for the erection of two blocks of modern up-market flats with 'all-electric' kitchens in 1933

Such houses were isolated and bereft of any public transport. Despite their affluence few residents had carriages and it was the coming of the bicycle that allowed easy access to the town centre and its colleges.

A favourite route was Burrell's Walk though this was closed when the land alongside was taken for a large military hospital to care for wounded soldiers during the Great War. The adjacent fields were filled with wooden huts that were later converted to emergency accommodation for families caught in the immediate post-war housing shortage. These were cleared for a Memorial Court for Clare College and a massive new University Library whose dominant high tower was used by Pye to test the robustness of its valves used in proximity shells during the second world conflict.

Once more western fields was requisitioned to aid the war effort, this time for a massive aircraft repair factory to the south of Madingley Road where Sterling bombers were patched up in hangars built on St John's College land. This proved an ideal site and a massive campaign had to be fought before it was finally handed back to the college. One compelling argument was that such a facility would have needed the construction of a housing estate to accommodate the workers and this would destroy the rural amenities of that side of Cambridge.

Post-war planning controls were introduced to ensure that Cambridge remained a university town. But while industrial development was restricted, the city's largest business – that of education – has transformed west Cambridge with the relocation of the Cavendish Laboratory and establishment of the Veterinary School and departments of Engineering, Computer and Mathematical Sciences in the former pastures.

Earlier a new Sidgwick Avenue site was established with striking architecture such as the award-winning (and technically flawed) glass History Faculty building and the recent, much-praised glass Law Faculty. And there have been new colleges such as Robinson, Wolfson and Clare Hall

Many residents can recount the changes to the area around East Road. But how few ever explore the western fringe of the city, an area that has seen as dramatic a transformation?

Cambridge's West Side Story has now been very well-researched by Philomena Guillebaud. But she would love to hear from anybody who knew the area in the past, especially if you were one of those whose families were housed in the old First Eastern General Hospital buildings.

"Cambridge's West Side Story: changes in the landscape of west Cambridge 1800-2000" (ISBN 978-0-9567294-0-8) is available from Cambridgeshire Archives at Shire Hall for £12 or by email – philguill@aol.com for £14 including postage.

Pictures

Pinehurst flats advertisement June 1933

Veterinary school, opened 1955

Colour view over Eastern General Hospital

Eastern General Hospital huts

Robinson College construction 1979

Queens' Road c1900 – millions know the colleges to the east of the road, but few explore the streets to the west

View of Cambridge from the west about 1620

University Library opened 1934

History Faculty building was praised for its architecture – seen under repair in 1984

Memories 28th March 2011 by Mike Petty

“The undertaker’s eyes were mournful and sad, and his clothing was of the deepest black, save for his socks (he wore no shoes), which were of the brightest scarlet”

The deceased was an undergraduate from Emmanuel College and his funeral procession was one of the largest seen in Cambridge. But it was not what it appeared. The corpse seemed very much alive, alternately laughing and mopping eyes. He was seated in a four-wheeled carriage, neatly dressed in correct London style and with a bowler hat set at a somewhat more jaunty angle than befitted the occasion.

For this was a ‘Mock Funeral’ for a lad who had transgressed against the rules “having displayed a somewhat unnecessary and irresponsible exuberance of spirits” and been asked by the authorities “if he would mind spending a short space of time elsewhere, only returning when in a quieter and more sober state of mind”

It was hardly a major news event - there had been others in 1904, 1907 and 1910. But in March 1911 a CDN reporter was given the space to cover it in detail. His light-hearted report is well worth reprising, a century later.

At the head of the funeral procession was a hansom cab. Seated on the top with legs dangling over the side, was the undertaker. His mournful calling seemed to have cast a settled gloom over his countenance. In his hand he waved a long whip (an emblem of his mournful trade), with a bright handkerchief to match his wonderful socks tied to it.

In front of the ‘hearse’ was a four-wheeler filled with disconsolate mourners who made strange noises through bugles of many shapes and sizes. Behind it were nine carriages filled with loudly lamenting mourners as slowly the solemn, sorrowing pageant wended its way to the station.

There the deceased descended from the hearse amidst cheers and bought a first-class ticket for St Pancras. He was then carried to the end of the platform. Silence was called for and the undertaker ascended a luggage truck. “My friends”, he said slowly and solemnly, “it is indeed a bitter and sorrowful occasion that calls us together. I will now call upon the deceased to say a few words”

At that the corpse ascended the truck amidst cheers: “Dear friends, I thank you one and all for your kindness in coming to – (there was a break in his manly young voice) – to my funeral. I would ask you to cheer that most dignified and respectable association, the Proctorial body” (Cheers)

Speeches over the 'mourners' took the deceased back up the platform on their shoulders, a guard of honour with three somewhat antiquated rifles proceeding in front. At length the train steamed in and the departed got into a first-class carriage. He leaned out of the window. "Kind friends" he said, "I will tell you my story". All fell silent in anticipation – but at this point the ticket collector touched the 'corpse' on the shoulder.

"Your ticket, sir", he demanded. The deceased emptied his pockets but could not find it. Again he leaned out of the window. "Dear friends", he remarked, "When you carried me about you lost my ticket for me". The dear friends cheered. He bought another ticket and then with the big placard fastened outside the carriage the train started to move. The three antiquated rifles fired a salute, by proxy it is rumoured, the final notes of the last post wailed mournfully through the station, and he was gone – for a week

The 'mock funeral' would be followed a few weeks later by another but then was overtaken by the Great War during which the station would frequently be filled with bodies of young men who were, if not dead, were seriously injured, being brought by train for treatment

By the time the tradition was revived in 1930 things were more financially difficult, for the young 'body' was this time deposited in a third-class compartment where gifts of fruit and rhubarb were solemnly handed in. When two lads were end down in 1962 for failing their examinations they were pulled through the streets in a sports car. Perhaps you remember it?

And no, this was not an April Fools story – it really happened, just as an undertaker called Merry used his horse-drawn hearse as an ambulance to take patients to hospital, and published a photographer as an advertisement!

Some other funeral snippets reported by the News

August 1903

Sir - An exciting scene occurred at 11.30 pm when the small-pox hearse was just reaching its destination and turning round previous to receiving the body of a young man who had died that morning. The night was very dark and the hearse overturned on its side, the smashing of glass and the bumping of the vehicle on the road causing a great commotion. After some delay it was righted again, the body duly deposited inside and it rumbled and groaned off to the cemetery, grating on the road with its iron-shod wheels in the dead of the night in a most unpleasant manner. Any private firm would have an India-rubber tyred vehicle for such work but Cambridge Corporation have apparently yet to discover that such 'luxuries' exist – 'Mill Road'

May 1905

A Cambridge lady has patented a coffin to minimise the possibility of premature burial. It contains an electric bell, the button of which is fixed near the hand of the occupant with the bell on the top of the grave. There is also a glass plate in the lid together with a hammer to allow the person to break out, though it is hardly conceivable that anyone would have sufficient strength to scramble to the surface

January 1909

On Friday night a man died in an East Road Lodging House and the landlady was naturally anxious to relieve her house of the body at the earliest moment. She had no knowledge of the man's relatives and a 'parish burial' was ordered. The undertaker said she had wanted to put the body in the yard covered up with clothes but he had removed it at his own expense. However relatives complained that the coffin was too small and the body laid on bare wood with the feet sticking to the pitch. All there was to cover him was a piece of thin stuff which did not meet in the middle

May 1909

Two spinsters, aged 50 and 30, appeared in court charged with stealing carnations value sixpence from a grave in Mill Road cemetery. The custodian said he saw them take the flowers from the side of the grave of Trooper Truscott; he took the ladies to his house, locked the door and sent for a policeman. They were respectable Sunday school teachers who had known the deceased well and picked up flowers that had dropped from a wreath to take home and press in remembrance of him. The custodian was legally correct but for him to lock them up, send for a policeman and cart them through the streets to the police station was very regrettable

Pictures

Mock funeral cartoon

8917 – a mock funeral in May 1911

5822 – Mr Ellis Merry, undertaker of Abbey Walk used his horse-drawn hearse to transport invalids to hospital, as this posed picture taken about 1900 demonstrates

104.64 – a mock funeral in 1962

104.66 – a sombre procession in St John's Street 1904 – but was it for real or a Mock Funeral

8815 – during the Great War Hospital trains brought wounded soldiers to Cambridge for treatment

Memories 4th April 2011, by Mike Petty

In the spring of 1911 two military heroes were battling for the support of Cambridgeshire youngsters.

Lieut.-General Robert Baden-Powell, the famous defender of Mafeking, had propounded his 'fad' – peace scouting for boys as a means of instruction in good citizenship – before a large audience at the Perse School Hall in February 1908. The idea took off and by June 1910 a Cambridge Boy Scouts Association was inaugurated to appoint scoutmasters, register troops and patrols, encourage the movement and work in co-operation with other boys' organisations. The movement flourished and in May 1911 Baden-Powell returned to inspect a rally of 500 Boy Scouts on the University Officers Training Corps Parade Ground in Grange Road.

It was a bitterly-cold, dull afternoon but could not dampen the enthusiasm of the lads who welcomed their Chief. They demonstrated their skills in mending clothes, boxing, Morse signalling and baking bread. Amongst the speeches and cheers was one for Corporal Stone of the 1st Cherry Hinton troop who was presented with the Boy Scouts medal for saving the lives of his two little sisters and brother from fire.

That night about 150 of the Scouts slept in the Corn Exchange. It was a disturbed evening for just after a supper of cocoa and buns a blaze broke out on Cambridge Market Hill and the lads' fire-fighting training was put into practice for real.

There were troops from Cambridge, Cherry Hinton, Trumpington and Grantchester, Soham and Newmarket. But not, it appears, Histon.

Histon did however have a scout troop dating back to July 1909. Like the others they learned Morse signalling, first-aid, swimming, physical training and religion. They too recognised

bravery, presenting a life-saving badge to William Gifford for rescuing another lad from downing

But their scoutmaster, Douglas Bowles, felt General Baden-Powell's organisation smacked too much of military training and had decided that Histon should go their own way. A lad should learn not to destroy but to save and preserve life, to raise the down-trodden and deliver the oppressed. Bowles wanted to inculcate chivalry, offer a full training in civil discipline and encourage study and the powers of observation. He would teach the boys to follow an outdoor life and inculcate a sense of responsibilities towards their neighbours, country and world.

Others also had their reservations about Baden-Powell's Boy Scout movement including his former London Commissioner, Sir Francis Vane, who set up a National Peace Scouts Association. Its aims echoed those of the Histon group and in March 1911 Sir Francis came to inspect them.

He found their signalling and ambulance work was excellent and their drill good. Above all the lads were polite – a most important aspect of scout life. Indeed he was so impressed that he proclaimed Histon not only the First Peace Scouts of All in England but the First of All in the World, gave them the title of "Sir Francis Vane's Own Troop" and presented his personal crest as their badge.

Then in June 1911 Sir Francis invited a contingent of six of the Histon Peace Scouts to London to take part in coronation celebrations of King George V. They travelled by train, tube and electric tram, went down the Thames to view Tower Bridge and the Houses of Parliament and on their way to the British Museum helped two City policeman to push a broken-down motor bus from a busy thoroughfare to a side road.

But on the great day it was found that no special arrangements could be made for the boys to view the Coronation Procession and after an attempt to get places in Trafalgar Square failed they gave up any hope of seeing the King and went to the Zoo instead.

Perhaps this disappointment was deeply felt for by January 1913 the Histon Peace Scouts had switched allegiance and became the 4th Cambridge District Troop (Baden Powell's). Under the continued command of Scoutmaster Bowles they spent a weekend camp at Longstanton, where they repulsed a surprise attack from the Longstanton troop.

But by then the adventure was almost at an end. Owing to business pressures and health problems, together with the scarcity of officers and other difficulties, Scoutmaster Bowles found it necessary to disband the troop which merged with the Histon Boys Brigade.

Today there is a Histon Scout Group once more. Its website shows it continues to rise to challenges. In December 2008 during a hike to Rampton "we trudged through mud and cow poo, got stuck three times in the mud and the conditions also filled our shoes with iced water with every step". They celebrated the successful conclusion of their mission by feasting on sausage rolls and (dry) Bread and singing tales of Scouts of long ago

But did they realise just how long that history dated back and how important a place in the history of Scouting their predecessors had once enjoyed.

Pictures

Scenes at the Scout rally in Cambridge 1911

140.71 Scouts in Sidney Street Cambridge where flags fly for the Coronation of King George V – Histon Peace Scouts went to London to see the procession, but ended up at the Zoo instead

5202 parade of Scouts turning from Bridge Street into Jesus Lane probably part of the 1911 rally

Headline from Cambridgeshire Weekly News 26 May 1911

Memories 11th April 2011, by Mike Petty

Ram Yard off Bridge Street was an unlovely mass of bricks and timber. “Several of the buildings show no sign of occupation by night – there is one of two storeys which is occupied as a shoemaker’s workroom. Another gloomy pile, now unoccupied, was, I believe, a blacksmith’s shop. The whole block is uniformly hideous and obstructive. No one has a good word to say for it and its removal would be a matter of little inconvenience to a very few residents” a correspondent to the News claimed in 1900

But some did appreciate it. Whilst at Trinity College Lord Byron, the poet, had a collection of monkeys, mastiffs, geese, cats and peacocks. But his favourite was a tame bear that followed him around like a dog. However house-trained it may have been the college refused to allow the bear in his room, so Byron had found it lodgings in the stables at the Ram Yard where it dined on bread and milk.

Ram Yard was a narrow cobbled lane taking its name from an inn which once stood on the north side of the entrance in Bridge Street. It ran alongside Round Church Street by which it was separated by a row of buildings. The first of these was occupied by a hairdressing business established by Joseph Przyborsky about 1856. It was continued by his son, Alexander who shaved his first customer when nine years old and built up a first-class reputation, while a ladies hairdressing saloon was opened on the first floor.

The 1904 Cambridge Street Directory lists a number of tradespeople in the Yard including Susan Wilson, a seamstress, Henry Harvey a gasfitter and Elizabeth Clark an upholsteress together with a stables and a couple of pubs. One of these was the Golden Fleece, an old beer-house attached to Brown’s billiard rooms, which years before had been a celebrated resort of University billiard players. They have long since gone

Later occupants included Sid Maltby a cobbler, had his workshop in Ray Yard. He had a sign on his wall that read ‘The devil wants your souls to ruin – Sid Maltby wants your soles to mend’. Sid made sandals for most of the Jewish evacuees from London who were evacuated there during the war. Ironically the Yard was hit by German bombs in July 1942 when premises that had been used by Cambridge Christian Spiritualist Church since July 1931 were totally destroyed, a brass cross being the only thing saved. The Blue Barn Café was also a casualty

Jean Potter lived in a house just behind Przyborsky’s between 1951 & 1952. With her husband, a policeman, she rented a downstairs flat with half-panelled walls whose sitting room, bath and kitchen windows looked out into Ram Yard. They were never short of company as two police beats passed their walls so the coffee pot was constantly hot to revive passing Bobbies.

Jack Vickery, who managed 'Thrussells' shoe repair business lived next door. His home had a paved yard and as he was a keen gardener Jack lifted all the slabs and planted flowers, creating a little haven of colour. It was wonderful to live in the centre of the city, his daughter recalled in 2000 although there was one problem: "The yard light went out at midnight and if I was too late back on a Saturday night from the 'Dot' or the Guildhall dance, I had to run down this 'black hole' to get home!"

Molly Sekulla worked as a tailoress for R. Buttress & Co of St John's Street between 1946 and 1956. They had premises at 5 Round Church Street and in Ram Yard where the room was above the Cambridge University Cruising Club. Molly and some other dozen or so employees undertook bespoke tailoring, making men's and ladies' suits, blazers, University scarves, ties, gowns and hoods as well as zephyrs – old fashioned tee shirts – which were trimmed in college colours for the boat races.

Another resident was Tim Eiloart, an undergraduate who had given up his studies to try and fly a balloon across the Atlantic in 1958. The attempt failed and he rented a bed-sitting room from the Cambridge University Cruising Club. It was there that he conceived the idea of a company that would harness the brains of Cambridge University to solve the problems of British Industry. With a small team he formed Cambridge Consultants which has gone on to play a significant part in the development of the Cambridge Phenomenon

Ram Yard was swept away when Round Church Street was widened to provide access to the new Park Street car park which which opened in October 1963.

One building survived: Cambridge's last thatched cottage in Clement Place continued to provide a home in the city centre until it was demolished in 1972 for an extension to the car park. [SCAN & PIX FROM FILE]

Do you remember Ram Yard – write to Mike Petty at the News

Pictures

- 105.99 An unfinished painting looking out of Ram Yard towards Bridge Street in 1905
- 10105 Ram Yard was narrow and dark, even on bright days, 1937
- 7717 Ram Yard as seen by R.C. Genlloud in 1933
- 153.74 Ram Yard was to the left of the central block, with Round Church Street on the right, March 1961
- 153.85 Ram Yard during demolition

Clement Place thatched cottage

Choice of

- 8565 drawing in 1954
- 1002 photo May 1961
- 7205 the cottage with Park Street Car Park being constructed in the background

Memories 18th April 2011, by Mike Petty

Jo Edkins from Gwydir Street has been recalling some old Cambridge booksellers.

"A long time ago, I remember hearing a rhyme about Cambridge bookshops in a Cambridge folk club. I've only just remembered what all the shops were. It should be sung to the tune of Frere Jacques - it fits very well!

William Heffer, William Heffer
Bowes and Bowes, Bowes and Bowes,
Galloway and Porter, Galloway and Porter,
Deighton Bell, Deighton Bell.

Heffer's was described by one 1920s American visitor as "one of the most thrilling bookshops in the world". Its shop in Petty Cury was a book lovers' paradise being widely praised when it was remodelled in 1929, the front design successfully combining an old-world impression with a modern style. In the basement were 'remainders' at reduced prices while the ground floor was devoted to the latest publications and an extensive foreign literature section. A wide range of second-hand volumes occupied most of the first floor where connoisseurs of original editions would find much to interest them at prices from £5 to £250. On the second floor were oriental, foreign travel and fine art books while higher still one could find Heffer's own publications, many of local interest. There was also a special reference department and out-of-print books service. When it closed in 1970 as part of the Lion Yard redevelopment some 90,000 books were moved to its new site in Trinity Street

Bowes and Bowes shop on the corner of Trinity Street had a heritage of bookselling, publishing and binding that went back as far as 1581. In 1807 it belonged to John Nicholson, son of the celebrated 'Maps' who went his rounds of the University with a moveable stall laden with textbooks calling out "Maps and pictures". Later Kingsley and other literary men held 'tobacco parliaments' on religion and politics there, Wordsworth reclined there, Thackeray dined there and Tennyson first read "Maud" in the shop. The spy Donald Maclean who defected to Moscow regularly bought books from Bowes and Bowes as did another former Cambridge student and fellow traitor, Kim Philby. Frank Reeve, the manager hesitated over the first order and checked with the Foreign Office to see whether it was permissible to trade with a traitor. The name of Bowes and Bowes continued until it changed to Sherratt and Hughes in 1987 and the site now houses the Cambridge University Press bookshop

Galloway & Porter's business originated with Arthur Cox in 1890 and was purchased by Sidney V. Galloway who relocated it to King's Parade. In May 1902 C.P. Porter joined him in partnership and the move was made to Sidney Street. In 1927 they carried a large supply of scholastic books with clients ranging from queens to factory boys and including foreign and colonial libraries extending to every part of the globe. The business continued until May last year, although by then it was only a shadow of its earlier self.

John Deighton became proprietor of a bookshop in 1778 when he joined up three separate premises on the corner of Trinity Street and Green Street. It changed its name after George Bell and William Smith became proprietors. They stocked new titles, rare editions and books from private presses with the Green Street windows featuring second-hand volumes and publisher's remainders. It was bought by Heffer's in 1987

One name missing from Jo's rhyme is that of Gustave David who came to Cambridge in 1896 and started his career with a stall on Market Hill where he traded on weekdays. On Saturday however he had a pitch on Peas Hill, just a short distance away from the shop he opened in St Edward's Passage in 1906. But by 1959 street parking in the area was restricted and motorists objected that the stall took up as much space as any car. So David moved his Saturday selling to his weekday site. By 1912 his shop was described as an institution, ten years later the University gave him a gala lunch at Trinity College – he preferred that to an Honorary Degree - and he was much mourned when he died in 1936.

In March that year Dr F. Carr of Sawston published a poem printed on antique paper with two admirable sketches of David and his stall by his son, Mr Hubert David. It included the lines

And in that time when present folk are sped.
And Peas and Market Hills they'll haunt no more;
When others, daily loitering in their stead,
Buy other tomes to add to their own store:
Ghost feet to himward being surely led
Shall find one bookstall on the Stygian shore.

It was published at a shilling and found a ready sale amongst friends and customers (the words are almost synonymous, the CDN commented) of one of Cambridge's celebrities.

But what do you recall of Cambridge booksellers and what was your best buy?

Pictures

Heffers

152.47 - Heffer's shop in Petty Cury 1964

Bowes

128.88 – view from Trinity Street to King's Parade showing Bowes and Bowes on the left
c1910

9079 – advertisement c1910

Galloway

243 Galloway & Porter shop, Sidney Street c1932

Deighton Bell

7478 Trinity Street in 1870s, showing Deighton Bell's shop on corner of Green Street

David

84.219 David's stall on Market Hill 1920s

8571 book browsers outside David's shop, St Edward's Passage 1956

Memories 25th April 2011 by Mike Petty

One of the controversial issues in Cambridge at present is the proposed removal of the public toilets from the ground floor of Lion Yard to an upper level.

Traditionally they were sited underground.

In 1901 an underground toilet was constructed at Hyde Park Corner under the shelter where people waited for the horse-drawn trams – Cambridge's first 'guided bus'. It could be a dangerous place to wait. In November 1902 two horses attached to a farm cart became restive while passing a flock of sheep in Hills Road and dashed off at great speed. They crashed into the shelter, dislodging the railings around the entrance to the public convenience and breaking the stonework in several places.

The central island was removed in 1957 to make way for new traffic signals. Other underground toilets were constructed in the mid 1920s at Mitcham's Corner and at the junction of East Road and Newmarket Road, all of which have gone.

Only Market traders now have the convenience of the remaining underground toilets below Market Hill. They made news around the world in 1924, when just after the discovery of the

tomb of Tutankhamun, many treasures (including old pots), were 'excavated' from the Gentlemen's lavatories as part of an undergraduate rag dubbed 'Toot-and-cum-in'

They had also hit the news during construction.

When in 1902 the news of peace in South Africa was announced undergraduates decided to celebrate in their traditional way, with a bonfire. The entrances to Market Hill were partially barricaded by police but from every quarter the sound of penny trumpets assailed the ears and the demeanour of the crowd announced an intention to "Maffick". The crowd started setting fire to newspapers and sticks, which the police trampled out. A bottle of mentholated spirits was added, which singed one bobby's boots. Police reinforcements arrived and after a lusty tussle they drove their adversaries back.

Meanwhile another fire had started on the other side of the Hill and the police had to withdraw.

At the time work was under way on the construction of the underground toilets and this was too good a source of fuel to be ignored. The wooden fence surrounding the excavations was dismantled and soon flames rose up to 25 feet. Then the grads turned to the underground lavatories themselves. For 30 minutes half a dozen students were engaged in hauling up the framework of the doors until every bit of combustible material was deposited upon the fire.

The square was lighted up as if by day until, perspiring and weary though happy, the grads melted away as midnight approached and the flames died down. By dawn nothing could be seen except a heap of ashes and a wilderness of wreckage which attracted crowds of onlookers.

One name associated with the relief of Mafeking was that of Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scout movement. He was in Cambridge in May 1911 to inspect a rally during which he awarded a medal to a young lad named Herbert Stone who had used the training received in the Cherry Hinton Boy Scouts to save his two little brothers and his little sister from being burnt to death at Rydal Villa, Hartington Grove. The window curtains had caught alight in their bedroom and spread to a chair containing the youngsters' clothes, then to a chest of drawers. Herbert stamped and beat the flames out just in time: the iron work of the large double bed in which the three little ones lay asleep was singed, as was the counterpane. Herbert's hands and feet were scorched and large holes were burnt in the feet of his stockings.

I published the details of Herbert's actions in one of last week's 'Looking Back' columns which brought an instant response from Bob Stone of Swavesey. For Herbert was his uncle and amongst the family treasures is a photograph showing him with his brothers, sister and that medal – a medal which is in the shape of the Swastika, later to be adopted by the Nazi party during the Second World War. Herbert went on to have an adventurous life despite being wounded during the Great War when a German prisoner he was escorting pulled a bayonet and sliced off part of his ear

But there is another mystery. For also in the picture is Hub's sister Molly who also helped in the rescue by bringing wet towels. She is shown wearing an award presented by Baden-Powell, though this seems not to have been reported at the time. Sadly the badge itself has disappeared over the years. Any more information would be welcome.

Pictures

Scout photo: Herbert Stone wearing his Boy Scout, Swastika medal; alongside is his sister Molly who also received an award and in front are his brothers and sister who were rescued from the fire.

Hartington Grove as it was when Herbert was a lad

Headline reporting the rescue in April 1911

9614 Crowds inspect the wreckage of the Market Hill toilets after the Rag
152.58 Market Hill showing one of the underground toilets and the central fountain

61 Our Lady Catholic church showing the shelter

Memories 2nd May 2011 by Mike Petty

Do you have memories of Cambridge bookshops, I asked. Yes replies Mrs A.C.G.Brown of Chesterton who has written me a wonderful letter recalling her life in the book trade.

She was recruited as one of the original members of staff when Heffer's opened their Children's Bookshop in Trinity Street in 1969. It had light, moveable red tables and seats so children could sit and read undisturbed. Downstairs there was a big distorting mirror in one corner which gave an unusual perspective on life – but the Cambridge book world itself was full of unusual people.

Mrs Brown had spent her first few weeks in Heffer's old shop in Petty Cury where her colleagues were acknowledged experts in their fields. They included Mr Parassas, a Rumanian, who ran the theology department while Mr Gibbs from Balsham was an experienced bookseller: E.M. Forster and many of the older customers always asked for him personally. He had his eccentricities and never returned faulty books to the publisher but hurled them into a den behind the counter. In the basement was a lady described as "a strange bird... knowledgeable, highly prejudiced with her own way of doing things. She had a tic in one eye, which made her look as if she was winking"

There were also characters in other Cambridge bookshops including an assistant at Deighton Bell who was extremely beautiful in a classic, forties way of whom it was said 'she eats little boys for breakfast'.

One of the most memorable was the late Derek Gibbons who had a passion for antiquarian books and a truly scholarly knowledge of them. He became a firm favourite with book buyers, despite – or perhaps because of - his reputation for having been 'the rudest bookseller in Norwich'. He refused to sell to Germans or Japanese and if anybody he disliked looked as if they might come in would shout 'Nothing for you today' and put up the 'Closed' sign'.

After a period in Mill Road and Green Street, Derek moved to St Edward's Passage where he established 'The Haunted Bookshop' inventing the name "because then Americans will come in to ask why, and stop to buy the books".

Derek's ploy worked and as the building had previously been a lodging house former puzzled undergraduates were also constantly visiting to enquire about its supposed notoriety. In 1997 a cable television company even made a broadcast from the shop during which a psychic sensed a female presence. Various people claim to have seen her and testify that her appearances were accompanied by the smell of violets. The shop even features in books on Cambridge ghosts one of which explains how it was named after Derek had seen the charming apparition of a young girl with long flowing fair hair at the top of the stairs. But perhaps there is a little truth somewhere for, as Mrs Brown remembers, Derek was in love at one point with a blonde American girl who he referred to as 'the blonde ghost'.

##

Mention of Cambridge's last thatched cottage in Clement Place, off Round Church Street has brought memories for two readers.

Katharine Free from Cambridge writes: "My maternal grandparents lived at Number 10 Clement Place, which was the thatched cottage, for very many years. There was no water, gas or electric supply when I knew it as a child. A brass tap in an enclosed yard provided water. Opposite the cottage was a large coal shed and next to it an outside chemical loo. Indoors, a black lead stove provided heating by an open coal grate, with an oven to one side and a tank on the other for heating water, while a large black kettle sat on a trivet, to be swung over the hot coals when boiled for tea making. Lighting was by oil lamps and candles. It was a very cosy home, with two fairly large rooms downstairs and four bedrooms upstairs, approached from the living room by what we called 'the staircase in a cupboard'.

"Clement Place itself was quite wide, with tall houses up steps on the right hand side and terraced cottages behind small front gardens or yards on the left. On washdays, sheets swung on lines stretched across from house to house and woe betide anyone who left a mark while dodging in between them!"

Her cousin Betty Dickerson from Madingley Road was born there over 80 years ago when one half of the cottage was home to her grandmother Clara Slater with Mrs Camps next door. It was low and dark but had a garden with a wash-house and coal yard and there were stables nearby. From there it was a short stroll with her elder sister to Park Street School or Mrs Arnold's sweet shop. Betty has a sketch of the old house that was drawn by Lewis Todd, the News' cartoonist, and sent to the family as a calendar in the 1950s.

Pictures

Derek Gibbons taking coffee at Blue Boar – pic used in Memories 14th March 2011 – originally published 15 Apr 1986 – neg 22 688 68a, Sandra is finding picture

6256 St Edward's Passage 1909, the 'Haunted Bookshop' is half-way down on the left

8565 Clement Place thatched cottage drawn by Lewis Todd

154.39 Heffer's bookshop in Petty Cury c1965 with Lion Hotel beyond

Memories 9th May 2011 by Mike Petty

The recent news of the theft of 200 supermarket trolleys from Tesco in Fordham Road Newmarket left me reflecting on other occasions when such mundane items have been in the news.

They played a major part in the Jubilee celebrations of June 1977 when amongst the attractions of rustic games, music, a river boat procession and fireworks on Midsummer Common was a supermarket trolley race for women that was won by a team from Robert Sayles.

But there have been regular complaints of trolleys being discovered far from their rightful place: in August 1980 Tesco stores at Bar Hill paid out £40 to recover stray trolleys impounded by angry parish councillors. They had been dumped around the village and despite protests the store had failed to recover them. So workmen were sent on a trolley round-up and recovered 40 from roads, play areas and ditches. They were then locked in a

barn and an invoice was sent to Tesco to cover the cost of the operation. The store said the price was 'fair under the circumstances'

However trolleys had been around long before that in the form of a basic flat platform for moving various objects and in this capacity have been featured on a number of occasions

In 1927 police were alerted by the management of the Rendezvous cinema in Magrath Avenue after their placard trolley, which toured the streets of Cambridge advertising the week's films, was seized by a party of merry gowmsmen. They pulled it in triumph down Hertford Street and Magdalene Street before trying to dump it in the river at Quayside. It first fell on to the landing stage but with undampened ardour the undergraduates finally consigned it to the cold depths of the Cam before going on their way rejoicing. [PICTURE OF MAGRATH AVENUE SHOWING THE REX CINEMA IN 1964] [PICTURE OF QUAYSIDE IN 1930S WHERE THE TROLLEY WAS DUMPED. IT ALSO SHOWS THE CHIMNEY OF THE ELECTRICITY GENERATING STATION MENTIONED IN THE THOMPSON'S LANE SNIPPET]

Horse-drawn trolleys gave scope for even more drama. There was much excitement in Saffron Walden in 1897 when a horse attached to a Great Eastern Railway trolley bolted from the goods yard. It went at a rapid pace up the Station road, down South road and Fairycroft road before the animal turned the corner and ran across East Street into the front of the house of Mr W. Samuell, harness maker, doing considerable damage. The trolley was broken and the iron axle snapped in two.

Next year came a similar event as a trolley belonging to Mr E. Beales, carter to the G.E.R., was being driven along the Fordham Road, Newmarket, when the animal bolted, apparently without cause. The efforts of the driver to check the animal were futile and the trolley collided with the stone steps of the Jubilee Clock Tower, then ran between two of the buttresses and a lamp-post where it became wedged.

Not all trolleys have been horse-powered. In 1923 a huge boiler mounted on a trolley towed by two heavy traction engines that was being conveyed to the Electric Light Company's works off Thompson's Lane sank into the tarmac after the road collapsed under the strain of the 40 ton combined weight. It took several hours before the boiler was extricated. [CHOICE OF PICTURE OF THOMSON'S LANE 1930S]

Then in 1924 there was excitement at Fenstanton after one of thee trolleys being towed by Thurston's traction engine caught alight. It was carrying the organ of a scenic railway and the flames quickly spread. No water could be procured so sand from the gravel pits was thrown over it. It was no good: the whole organ and the trolley upon which it was mounted completely collapsed. [PICTURE OF FENSTANTON IN 1920S]

Then there have been tea trolleys, though by February 1983 the tea lady was thought to be a dying breed. One in five had been forced to pack their tea bags because of the recession and the sight of a tea trolley on a Cambridge office floor was reckoned to be almost as rare as a Cambridge United away win

And of course the sweet trolley has also featured in many a restaurant review. In July 1975 a News food critic decided to push the boat out: At the Ferry Boat inn at Holywell we decided on avocado vinaigrette, & prawns and scallops in batter with tartare sauce at 75p and 85p. From a wide choice we selected coq au vin, the cheapest meat course at £1.95 and a steak au poivre at £2.30. Vegetables cost an extra 25p a portion and we shared the sauté potatoes, garden peas and mushrooms. The sweet trolley bore a choice of deserts, all priced at 50p. We ended with coffee and a brandy and cointreau which, with a bottle of Gevrey Chambertin brought the bill to a total of £11.50. *Perhaps he should have*

collected the News 'Dine for a Tenner' coupons! [CHECK THE NAME OF THIS CURRENT PROMOTION]

[PHOTO OF THE FERRY BOAT AT HOLYWELL IN ABOUT 1967 OR PAINTING OF THE FERRY BOAT BY G.W. FRASER IN 1902]

SANDRA MAY HAVE PICTURES OF SUPERMARKET TROLLEYS

Memories 16th May 2011 by Mike Petty

Yesterday Stretham celebrated Feast Sunday, part of a tradition of village life and the time when relatives return home from all parts of the country

In my childhood there used to be a parade of decorated floats right around the village led by the village bobby and a local band. From the backs of lorries or tractor trailers children - and adults - dressed as 'Red Indians', people from other lands or cavemen endeavoured to collect money in nets at the end of sticks. Sixpences, threepenny bits, even farthings – it really did not matter as long as there was something to add to the funds for worthwhile causes such as cancer research or the blind.

Such parades owed their origin to the Friendly Societies who supported their members through illness and unemployment in the days before social security or free medical care. At Waterbeach the Shepherds, Foresters and Victoria Benefit Societies combined for an annual parade from the Green through the High Street to the Baptist Chapel, where a united service was held. When in 1893 Addenbrooke's Hospital issued an appeal for financial help to maintain and improve their services the Societies responded to the call by linking their parade with a collection for the Hospital. So 'Hospital Sunday' came part of rural life

Stretham procession paused half-way for a united service when the pews were packed with a most colourful and seemingly multi-ethnic congregation. This alternated between the parish church and nonconformist chapels in the days when the village had such things.

A second element of Feast week used to be a funfair, an event eagerly looked forward to. Newspaper correspondents report how at Histon in 1900 there were roundabouts brought by Messrs Barker and Thurston, shellfish and confectionery stalls and dancing in the public houses. In Rampton one of the traction engines pulling the amusements hit a tree on the Green in 1912 - it could still be seen to be leaning years later. There was a rock stall, toy stall, coconut shy, swinging boats and shooting range - halfpenny a shot at clay pipes - or for the same money you could get a strip of liquorice, about 15 inches long.

But even then there were laments: "Village feasts have sadly degenerated of recent years, and that of Milton is a striking example", a correspondent complained in 1899. "Years ago merry-go-rounds, shooting galleries, and coconut shies were erected, but this year there are only a couple of stalls on which cheap toys and indigestible looking sweets are exposed for sale. In the licensed houses musicians play interminable polkas which are danced more or less gracefully by country maidens and their swains"

At Stretham the stalls were set up in the village streets, prompting complaints that were echoed at Fulbourn in 1901: The booths and stalls standing in the road were a great nuisance. The people in the caravans were not of the better class; they were a dirty lot and their sanitary arrangements were very bad. Little bags of filth were left about the street and proved very objectionable. Fulbourn was a respectable and clean village and it was a disgrace they should have such a state of things.

With so much fun and amusement it was little wonder that people journeyed from their own village to visit the neighbouring feast. Rampton would be packed with people from Cottenham and Willingham who walked or cycled to get there. Things were not always peaceful: writing in 1957 C. Barlow recalled how at Madingley feast “Lolworth men usually came over for a cricket match in the afternoon and in the evening the men of Girton visited the Inn. This was the time when all the children were chased indoors and the door locked. The curious went upstairs and watched from their bedroom windows while the gentlemen of Madingley and Girton enjoyed their annual battle after the Inn had closed – the men of Girton were great fighters in those days. Sometimes there was a ‘Dancing Booth’, a large tent where one could dance all the evening for one shilling – one dance cost twopence. Music was provided by a concertina and ‘fiddle’.”

Feast celebrations went on for a number of days but Thursday morning was the saddest of the week; on the way to school children would see the wagons all packed up and ready to go, on returning at dinner time the Green would be empty with just the memory to last until next year.

The travelling fairs have largely become memories themselves and it is some years since one came in the right week. So now there is a village fayre with a dog show, ox roast, stalls and dance performances along with sports events, recalling the tradition of the past

Outsiders are welcome at the Feast but it is afterwards when streets are empty and front rooms full that a feast of food and a feast of memories combine to unite families on this most important day in village life

PICTURES

60.297 Children at Stretham feast 1972
MP1358 funfair at Stretham 1975

SP253 Feast in the street at Stretham c1900

MP1201 collecting money at Stretham feast c1972

P110 Soham Hospital Parade 1910

7443 Littleport feast c1920

MP1815H feast parade Stretham 1974

Memories 23rd May 2011 by Mike Petty

What do you remember of life in 1986?

It was a period of financial hardship. Libraries were threatened with closure and Ely Cathedral started charging for admission. Newlyweds were told they stood no chance of buying their own homes because of rocketing prices – houses in Cambridge averaged £57,000 – and farmworkers were pressing for an increase in their minimum wage of £89.70 for a 40-hour week

But youngster on the Arbury estate had other concerns: “We did a survey of the 30 pupils in our class and found out that 30 pupils had televisions, 20 pupils had radios, 20 pupils had

video-recorders, 14 had micro-computers, 12 had telephones, 11 had music centres, 10 had electric cookers, six had micro-wave cookers and five had Citizen Band (C.B.) radios. Nearly everyone in our school wears training shoes. Adidas was the most popular followed by Dunlop, the least popular was Donay. Most people spent between £10 and £20 a pair, some spent £30 and some only paid £5" [PHOTO OF ARBURY YOUNGSTERS AND THEIR TRAINERS 1987]

These details were recorded as part of an attempt to capture the essence of life by a 'Domesday Project' pioneered by the BBC. The country was divided into 'Domesday Squares' and schools and community groups asked to record what it was like to live, work and play there.

It was to be a contemporary rather than a historical survey and it used the latest technology developed by Cambridge-based Acorn computers, creator of the BBC Micro-computer that was then transforming teaching with pupils at Netherhall School leading the way [PHOTO OF NETHERHALL SCHOOL PUPILS AND STAFF WITH THEIR COMPUTERS – PLEASE USE THIS]

But very few ever got to see the fruits of all of their hard work. Not all the material was submitted – many squares are unfilled. The information once processed was published on a Laser-Disc which could only be read on a machine that was too expensive for schools to buy. Then the Discs started to deteriorate leading to fears that they would become unreadable. [BBC ERROR MESSAGE, FROM WEBSITE]

Now some of that information gathered in 1986 has been reformatted on a new 'Domesday Reloaded' website enabling those young historians to at last look back on their work of 25 years ago.

Bar Hill

We found that 64% of our sample moved to the village because the housing is the cheapest in the area, but still very convenient for Cambridge. There is also a high proportion of young and ambitious professionals who tend to stay two or three years and then move on. We hope that once the building stops, which it will do soon, the flow of people leaving the village will be balanced by those moving in. Even though so many people were forced to live here because of the high price of housing in our area, 87% of our sample is very happy living in Bar Hill. [PHOTO OF BAR HILL CHILDREN AT OPENING OF PLAYGROUND IN 1989]

Caldecote

Caldecote is nicknamed 'Tin Town' because of the way the earliest buildings were made. Some were old railway carriages, some were little more than shacks with a timber frame covered by sheets of corrugated iron. Gradually these have been replaced with permanent brick houses of very individual style. We used to live in Cambridge but a year ago we moved to Caldecote. We bought some land with an old reinforced concrete bungalow, disgustingly filthy. We started to build a new bungalow. We built the lounge and bathroom first then knocked down the back lobby and moved in

Littleport

The biggest shop in Littleport is the Co-operative supermarket, while there are newsagents, chemists, butchers etc. The main factory makes Burberry coats and employs many people. Mr.B.Wright has run his saddlery for 51 years repairing and selling leather goods as well as tarpaulins, sports and PVC articles. Thornhills Bakery, its factory dating from 1933, supplies five shops in the area. There are 10 workers making 80 different varieties of cakes. Lees Builders employ 8 people and a bulldog called Clementine. There are several lorry depots. [PHOTO OF BURBERRY FACTORY THAT CLOSED IN 1986]

Youngsters from Bottisham and Little Thetford were amongst those analysing agriculture:

“Farming is the principal industry. Farms are well mechanised with tractors, combines etc. Crops grown are wheat, barley oats, sugar beet, potatoes, carrots, feed beans, rape and a little maize. Only one farmer keeps cattle and pigs, and there is no dairy farming. Citizens band radio keeps isolated households in touch with their families working on the land.”

“In the past there were large numbers of men employed on the land as well as work for the seasonal worker (mainly harvest time). Today, however the opportunities are not as good. As farming has become more and more machine intensive the numbers of men required has been drastically reduced. Their output has actually increased at the same time as one man can do much more work with the help of machines. Also the number of farms in the area has declined leaving fewer but larger farms thus reducing the opportunities still further”.

[PHOTO OF FARMWORKERS PROTEST IN BROAD STREET ELY 1987]

Some youngsters looked further back:

Chatteris - Fen Houses

We went to visit a typical farmworkers cottage. It was at the end of a track in Langwood Fen, surrounded by arable land. The hut was cramped and dark and bare and had been deserted since 1958. It was made of a brick base with corrugated sides and roof. Inside the walls were made of wood, painted in dark brown at the bottom and a slightly lighter brown at the top. There are only two rooms plus a pantry and an out-house. The main room has only an iron cooking range. The people had no mains water supply so they drank boiled water collected from the roof. For washing they used river water. A large family probably lived here in considerable discomfort, without any of the things which we think today are necessary for life, not even a lavatory!

Now the BBC is inviting people to update their information. How will things have changed in the past 25 years:

Lion Yard Shopping Centre

“There are many different shops ranging from restaurants to Early Learning Centres. There are balconies leading to the courts and to W.H. Smiths. On one balcony teenagers breakdance and gyrate to a cacophony of sound from their stereos. By the Red Lion stand buskers playing their instruments hoping for someone to drop pennies in their cases. There are tramps and drunkards ‘dossing’ around drinking beer and there is even a tramp laying on a bench covered in newspapers. There are also a lot of shoppers. Lion Yard is a busy place” [PHOTO OF LION YARD 1985]

Were you Domesday reporters and what do you recall?

BBC Domesday Reloaded website - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday>

Memories 30th May 2011 by Mike Petty

A recent story sparked Memories for Val Burton from Fen Drayton. It featured an incident reported in the News on 28th June 1924 when one of Thurston’s fairground attractions was being moved from Cambridge after Midsummer Fair:

As one of the tractor engines was nearing Fenstanton on the way to St Ives, the middle of the three trolleys it was drawing was noticed by some workmen in a gravel pit nearby to be on

fire. The alarm was at once given but the flames, assisted by a stiff breeze, quickly spread and the organ of the motor scenic railway, which was on the trolley, was soon well alight.

Captain Giddings of the St Ives Fire Brigade and the police from Fenstanton arrived on the scene, but as no water could be procured, sand from the gravel pits was thrown over the fire. Despite these efforts to cope with it, the fire proved too strong and in less than half an hour the whole organ and the trolley upon which it was mounted had completely collapsed

No definite explanation can be given for the origin of the fire, but it is suggested that the outbreak was due to a spark from the engine which found its way through the protecting pieces of wire gauze on top of the chimney and set fire to the tarpaulin cover over the engine.

An eyewitness of the occurrence described it as 'the quickest thing I have ever see' All that remains of the organ and trolley is a heap of heat-twisted metal, brittle springs and discoloured cog-wheels lying on the left side of the road. The hedges on the near-side were considerably burned but serious damage to the tarmac was prevented by throwing sand upon it.

Beside the organ of the motor scenic railway, several hundred pounds' worth of other machinery was involved in the fire, and personal property belonging to the workmen was also destroyed. The total damage is estimated roughly at £2,500

But Mrs Burton can add more

'Our grandfather, Tom Desborough, was the foreman at the nearby gravel pit and later that year his employer, Mr Allen of Fenstanton, had a bungalow built for grandad and his family to save him walking from Elsworth (father was 16 at the time)

Father used to tell us that the remains of the Thurston's fire were buried under the bungalow. Although we had to have the property demolished 16 years ago no metal work or ash was found, just sand (no footing) on which the pebble dashed concrete blocks stood – no wall insulation either, no wonder it was always cold and damp

Grandad Tom bought the bungalow and eight acres for the sum of £100, when Mr Allen went bankrupt, an awful lot of money in those days. We often wonder how he managed to pay for it. Father never passed on any details as he took it all over when he got married. Grandad continued to live with us in the old bungalow until he died in 1953. Times were hard but my sister and I have happy memories of Grandad Tom. Thank you for reminding us

All this took place outside the village, opposite the present Travel Lodge, but various other travel-related stories have been reported from Fenstanton itself:

In June 1910 John Holley, a village farmer, was driving from his home when the axle of his trap broke. The wheel came off and frightened the horse, causing it to bolt. Mr Holley was thrown to the ground though his fall was somewhat broken by his coming down on the cushion of the trap which was cut into two parts. The gig was practically demolished. The horse continued its wild course along the road until stopped by Mr Burgess's yardman, a man named Jefferies, at considerable risk to his own life

In December 1910 a chauffeur in charge of a motor car had a very unpleasant experience. He was driving from St Ives to Fenstanton but when he had got to the White Bridge the water in the road was so deep that his engine stopped and he had to remain in the flood all night. PC Beecham saw the car with its powerful light just before two o'clock but did not think anything was amiss as the chauffeur did not sound his horn to attract attention. The car was discovered next morning and a horse had to be obtained to drag it out of the water.

Although they might not notice a stationery car, police were very keen to spot those which were travelling too quickly.

In October 1908 an Essex motorist was convicted of driving his car through Fenstanton to the common danger. Frederick Leith of West Mersea said he'd driven for 10 years and had never had an accident or been convicted of speeding before. He'd travelled through the narrowest part of the village at about 12 mph but had accelerated as he approached the open road.

However an old man, William Hewson, claimed he'd been doing 20 mph, which he considered dangerous. This was confirmed by a policeman undertaking a speed check just down the road. He had timed the car over a measured distance of 328 yards which was travelled in 24 seconds. This equated to 29 miles 1,680 yards an hour – all this in the days before speed cameras

PICTURES

Choice of general motoring engravings from the Cambridge St Andrew the Less church magazine of 1904

154.57 :one of Thurston's amusements [NOT THE ONE MENTIONED]

6575 Motor car with a Cambridge number plate c1905

Roz has found a view of Fenstanton from News Library

Memories 6th June 2011 by Mike Petty

Last Sunday afternoon I was taken punting along the Backs by a group of active young Americans who soon realised that such apparently sedate activity is far more strenuous than it appears from the bank.

As we navigated our way under the Bridge of Sighs we encountered battling flotillas of other punts intent on occupying the same foot of Cam.

I enjoyed the sight of familiar landmarks from unfamiliar angles and overheard unfamiliar 'facts' being conveyed to unsuspecting tourists by chauffeur punters. But many of these young men know far more about the colleges that we were passing than those of us who have never had the opportunity of prolonged residence within their courts.

For colleges are not just architectural jewels in the Cambridge landscape. They are and have been homes to generations of men and women each of whom will have memories of their time at University.

Now a glimpse of some of the people who have lived, taught, studied and served within the walls of St John's College has been published in a massive 750-page book that chronicles the college's first **500** years.

Throughout that period there have been many Johnnians that have influenced the world far outside the college gates – such as anti-slave-trade pioneers Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce or Sir Harold Jeffreys. He was a lifetime Fellow and Plumian Professor of Astronomy who achieved an international reputation and won many medals. But he was also

a keen photographer and deposited in the Cambridgeshire Collection are some of the photographs he'd taken of the great snowfall of February 1916, when he was an undergraduate and the college was home to Army Officer Cadets, planning for war.

Not all students were academics: Cecil Beaton confided "I'm really lucky to be up here without having passed the exam & I'm awfully lucky in getting these nice rooms and they are so central. I am glad Daddy has such good whisky, because I think that's the reason that Armitage allows me here".

Then there was a one-time Senior Wrangler who was "reported for various acts of insanity as well as spreading rumour that the Junior Bursar was 'marking down all the Fellows gradually for the asylum', for inciting undergraduates to throw one of his colleagues into the Cam for contemplating divorce".

There are reflections too of the relationship with Trinity College next door which climaxed in 1922 with the decoration of the pinnacles of St John's New Court with 18 of that college's wooden lavatory seats. In comparison more recent undergraduate japes such as suspending an Austin car under the Bridge of Sighs in June 1963 seems positively simple. Although its arrival may have been due to students, its removal was down to some of the army of men and women who have been the backbone of the college over the centuries.

Porters, bedders, kitchen managers – some of whom made fortunes by lending money to undergraduates at extortionate rates of interest and booking it down as 'goods supplied' in their kitchen accounts - have kept the ship afloat. And they too have their place in the history, including a once-regular face in the City Library, Bill Thurbon who joined the college as an office boy in Easter 1920 at the wage of 15/- (75p) a week and became Bursar's clerk. His photograph is featured in the book alongside that of long-dead Fellows.

One of these is a colour study of a profoundly dejected Professor J.E.B. Mayor reflecting on the loss of the manuscript of the Latin dictionary he had been working on for 60 years. After advertising all over Europe for its return, he discovered that it had been used by his bedder to prop up the broken leg of a chest of drawers and had been in his own room all along!

There is little fear that this new history will suffer a similar fate: there are just too many fascinating details of college life to allow it to gather dust for long!

Do you have memories of St John's College – write to Mike Petty at the News

St John's College Cambridge: a history, edited by Peter Linehan is published by Boydell Press at £50 ISBN 978-1-84383-608-7

PICTURES

124.94 Punting on the Cam: a postcard of c1905

136.84 St John's College Kitchen Bridge with undergraduate relaxing beside river c1910

151.69 St John's college bridges seen from Trinity

6365 College staff removing an Austin car suspended under the Bridge of Sighs in June 1963

7415 The New Court whose pinnacles were decorated with wooden toilet seats from Trinity College

9153 Magazine produced by Officer Cadets based at the college in 1917

Mayor – Prof Mayor whose long-lost manuscript was found propping up a piece of furniture in his room

The cover of the book

Memories 13th June 2011 by Mike Petty

Seventy-five years ago a Cambridge Band made the headlines. The News of 6th June 1936 reported:

Friends of the Cambridge Town Silver Band will be glad to know that they are to give another broadcast on Saturday afternoon, June 14th. This will be on the 'National' wave length but all B.B.C. stations are taking the programme. On the last occasion the band opened with an original item by the conductor (Mr Robert E. Austin) called 'Cambridge Bells' which featured the melody of the Roman Catholic Church chimes. This time they will start with a new military march of Mr Austin's composition, which he has called 'Cantabrigia'.

The programme will be of a much more ambitious nature than the previous broadcast, as the BBC programme directors are insisting on bands performing a definitely higher class of music than heretofore. But Mr Austin has put forward a programme which, while not 'highbrow', is good music, catering as far as possible for all tastes

Broadcast over the Band boarded a coach to return to Cambridge where that evening they played at a promenade concert on Christ's Pieces. Despite the threat of rain more than 200 people turned out to enjoy a programme of marches and waltzes including 'Cantabrigia' and a selection from 'The Two Foscari' with which they had won the East Anglian Championship

The Cambridge Town Silver Band was one of the earlier incarnations of what is currently the City of Cambridge Brass Band. Under various names it can trace its roots back to 1910.

Their earliest days were recalled in January 1973 by Stanley Brown of Teversham. He was one of five members of that family who formed the nucleus of the band in which his father had been a leading light. The lads played cornet, baritone, euphonium, trombone and tenor horn. Stanley had started playing just after the First World War, meeting for rehearsals twice a week and playing at engagements on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. These ranged from local sports and fairs to promenade concerts and garden parties. The highlight of the year was a visit to the Crystal Palace for the national brass band competition

They were always short of good first cornets and towards the end of the 1920s advertised for a new man. Along came an out-of-work pattern maker from Oldham who hadn't had a job for seven years. His name was Leonard Lamb, and he played like a dream, Stanley recalled. With him in the band they achieved their best performances ever in winning sections of both the national and East Anglian brass band championships three years running. Leonard later went on to become musical director of Fairey Aviation Band.

By then there was more harmony in the local music scene. After a dispute amongst the members over a failure to attend rehearsals and over-drinking, a number had gone their own way and started the Cambridge Albion Band. But they reunited in 1927 and decided to buy a complete set of new triple silver-plated instruments made by Messrs Hawkes of London. This would greatly improve the tonal qualities of the band and there was not another in the eastern counties with such instruments, they claimed

The Band enjoyed considerable success with prestigious concerts involving such guests as Harry Mortimer, Richard Baker, Sir Vivian Dunn, George Chisolm, Maurice Murphy, Ifor James, James Shepherd, Phillip McCann, Peter Skellern and Rod Franks.

In 1979 the band competed for the first time against the elite of the brass band world in the national championships at the Royal Albert Hall. It has regularly appeared on national and local television and radio, including an unforgettable appearance in the BBC's "Best of Brass" series, broadcast from the Assembly Rooms in Derby. One of their most memorable concerts was held in Ely Cathedral in 1981 when they played a specially commissioned work composed by cathedral organist, Dr. Arthur Wills, entitled "Symphonic Suite: The Fenlands", thought to be the first large-scale composition for organ and brass band.

Now they hope to reprise one of their earliest pieces. They have the BBC's master recording of 'Cambridge Bells' from the 1936 broadcast. This is on a 78 rpm record which they do not play for fear of damaging it. Now they would like to find a copy of the original score so that it can be performed again.

With your help 'Cambridge Bells' may once again be heard. If you have a copy of the score or can add more to the Band's history email please email manager@cambridgeband.co.uk. Or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch

Pictures

Albion Band – started after a dispute over rehearsals

Band 1964 – City of Cambridge Band when they competed at the National Brass Band Championships in London, 1964

By 1984 it was called the Cambridge Co-operative Band

The present City of Cambridge Brass Band

Roman Catholic church c1910 – its chimes were the inspiration for 'Cambridge Bells'

Memories 20th June 2011 by Mike Petty

Alan Cunnington has a picture that is causing him some puzzlement. It shows a group of policemen and court officials in front of the Assize Court on Castle Hill, Cambridge

There will be few who still remember this structure with its grand frontage with a row of figures along the parapet representing Law: Justice, Mercy & Power along the top. It had opened adjacent to the County Gaol in 1842 on the site of the Norman gateway of Cambridge Castle. It was the place for official proclamations, the site of assizes and general quarter sessions and the centre of County administration until a new County Council was established in 1888.

The Assize Courts were not the most convenient of buildings. There were complaints that when the jury retired to consider their verdict they were taken down a flight of cold stone steps into a narrow chamber of sordid aspect, dimly lit by three barred windows and furnished

with two bare wooden forms. The justices did not want the retiring room to be too comfortable but there must have been times when juries made up their minds hastily to escape from that dungeon. A new room was built with a lavatory in 1908 but the court was still illuminated by gas and silver-tongued barristers had to halt while the custodian, armed with a long pole, leant from the dock to light it.

Things got worse in 1925 when a fire broke out in the Grand Jury Room at the front of the building destroying woodwork and furniture and causing smoke damage to other parts of the structure. As repairs were put in hand another problem was identified. Dry rot had attacked the floors and was spreading up the walls and plaster into the roof

By 1952 the whole of the structure was pronounced to be unsafe and liable to collapse at any time. The County Architect had no doubt that demolition was the only answer. But some City Councillors objected. Dry rot did not necessarily involve the demolition of the whole structure of an affected building – none of the Colleges had resorted to such drastic remedies, though many of them had been affected over the years, they argued.

At least the façade of the Assize Building with its Italian style portico supported on columns should be preserved: the Mayor suggested it should be taken down and used as a ‘Marble Arch’ for the new Spine Relief Road then being proposed. But it was to no avail and the building passed into history. Its site is now the car park for the Shire Hall that was built in place of the County Gaol in 1932

Alan’s photograph probably shows the scene at the opening of an Assize and since the Judge’s officials and the policeman on the left are wearing black armbands it was probably taken just after the death of King Edward VII in May 1910.

Alan is researching police history and thinks that one of the officers in the front, Pc 60, was Jim Keep who joined on 7th December 1907. The other officers are Pc20 and Pc44 – a number that was first allocated in 1851 though there is a big gap in the records until 1919 when Pc Yeomans had it. The other officer, Alan believes, is from the Isle of Ely, as the two forces shared the four Assizes every year with two being held at Cambridge and two at Ely.

If you can tell him more then please email Alan at his website <http://www.thebadgerslair.com> where there are various early pictures of Cambridgeshire bobbies.

Another reader, Jane Gilmour, also seeks assistance in identifying a group picture. It was taken by H Wallis who described himself as an “Art photographer” and worked from 47 Burleigh St Cambridge around 1910. Nobody will recognise the faces but can you place the building in the background

A Memories picture of an Austin car suspended under the Bridge of Sighs has brought a response from Roger Jordan who worked for St John’s College for 44 years. He was pictured on the left-hand side of the group retrieving the vehicle. Roger recalls: “At a later date the students suspended a Bond three-wheeler in the same fashion but it was down & away before the press were notified. Some of the best feats were on the “Wedding Cake” (E staircase New Court pinnacles), varying from a canoe to chamber pots even a Union Flag. It was quite a regular thing to retrieve these things with just a ladder & going hand over hand (no health & safety those days). The students on seeing us up the Wedding Cake & getting these things down would take us to the buttery for a beer”

Pictures

140.38 Castle Street c1814 showing County Gaol and remains of old Castle gatehouse
1646 The Castle gatehouse that was demolished for the Assize Courts

7132 The Assize Courts shortly after erection in 1842
Shire Hall the Assize Court stood on the site of the present Shire Hall car park
154.68 Alan Cunnington's picture

154.40 a mystery picture c1910 – can you recognise the building?

Roger Jordan helping remove a car from beneath the Bridge of Sighs in June 1963

Memories 27th June 2011 by Mike Petty

The Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary at Westminster Abbey in June 1911 was attended by scenes unprecedented in the history of the Empire.

And Cambridge too celebrated in style.

Shops in the town centre were decorated with flags and bunting which were battered by blustery winds. This did not deter immense crowds of people deciding for themselves which tradesman had done the best. Most endorsed the judges' choice of Stetchford Dairies' premises though the Dorothy Café was a very close second. Here elegant flowers, ferns and foliage plants, red geraniums, night marguerites, Canterbury bells and blue lobelias decorated the frontage along with feathery spays of asparagus fern in the midst of which gold, red, blue and green electric lights gleamed like jewels

In Petty Cury nearly all the houses were decorated, and strings of flags and banners spanned the street. George Stace, the Mayor, illuminated his shop with coloured electric lamps and a large crown made of coloured electric lights. The Home and Colonial Tea Stores had its fascia hidden by crimson and gold hangings while the Empire Meat Company's electric EMC sign was surrounded by shields and flags

Mr Vawser's shop front was almost hidden by garlands and loops of paper flowers but Boots the chemists adorned their upper windows with real ones.

The Maypole Dairy Company combined celebration with commercialism plastering their window with numerous small Union Jacks on which were printed advertisements for their leading lines. But there was no doubting the patriotism of the German Fair which covered the front of its building with coronation bells and rings of colour crinkled paper enclosing small medallions of the King and Queen.

In Sidney Street the Gas Company showrooms featured circular pictures of the King and Queen with the letters 'G.R.' and two large stars all beautifully lit by gas jets. Not to be outdone John Johnson used coloured electric lamps to outline his windows. James Owners featured a fine East Anglian flag as the centrepiece of a string across the street while Sidney Sussex College adorned their railings with lines of coloured maps and streamers

Coronation Day itself dawned early for lads of the Cambridge Boys' Brigade and Boy Scouts who gathered on Parker's Piece before marching behind the Brigade's band for a service at St Andrew the Great. Then they made their way to King's College chapel to form a Guard of Honour for the arrival of the Corporation, Board of Guardians and representatives of the Ancient Order of Foresters.

Meanwhile members of the Territorial Forces together with the Royal Army Medical Corps, Volunteer Fire Brigade and 80 postmen and telegraph messengers assembled on Market Hill before making their way to King's. Service over they followed the Cambridgeshire Regiment

band along Trumpington Street to Addenbrooke's Hospital where musicians from the Gordon Highlanders who had been entertaining patients played them past

All headed to Parker's Piece which was packed with a crowd of some 10,000 people. They watched as soldiers of Cambridgeshire Regiment in their scarlet-coloured uniforms raised their rifles and fired, the puff of thin acrid smoke vanishing into the air as the dry rattle of the discharge ran from right to left along the first rank and then back along the second.

Piece proceedings concluded with the National Anthem and 'Three Cheers for the King'. But the Military involvement was not done. The scene shifted to Jesus Green where mounted detachments of the Royal Horse Artillery, Hussars and the Loyal Suffolk Yeomanry took part in a tournament featuring tent-pegging, lemon-cutting and other equestrian feats. The finale was an attack on a convoy by a party of savages which bravely beaten off by the Cambridgeshire Regiment together with the Artillery's 18-pounder guns

Still the celebrations were not done. Nearly 5,000 children wearing Coronation colours assembled at their schools before marching in orderly ranks to Parker's Piece where seats had been arranged around two platforms. The sky was dull and a brisk wind blowing but it could not spoil an entertainment of clowns, jugglers, acrobats and trick cyclists. Later grown-ups made their way to the Guildhall for a musical celebration featuring the Magpie Concert Party and a speech by the Mayor, newly returned from London where he had been watching the actual Coronation proceedings.

Nor were the villages any less patriotic. There was a luncheon at Chittering with a Coronation mug for each child, a packet of tea for each wife and a useful tool for every working man. Caldecote had swinging boats, coconut shies and sweet stalls together with a weighing machine with each guest's weight being chronicled on neat little cards. Conington played cricket and held sports until heavy rain interrupted proceedings. They tried again next day but again the weather was unkind and so was not until the Monday evening that the celebrations were concluded with dancing on the lawn of Conington Hall.

Elsworth flew a flag from the church tower – the first seen in many a year, Fen Drayton held a knife-and-fork tea and danced till late while at Cottenham there was a church service and parade. Linton had a procession followed by sports, a fancy dress competition and a decorated cycle contest.

But it was not just for the young. At Fen Ditton 82-year-old Harry Martin, who proudly boasted that he had worked on one farm for 73 years, joined the guests for a meat tea in Mr Wright's barn then participated in the concert featuring Mr Fitzherbert's gramophone. He enjoyed himself as well as any of the juniors

And so Cambridgeshire celebrated a new reign that was to see the world through a turbulent period in its history. The events of that day in June 100 years ago have been largely forgotten – but do you have a memento of the occasion?

Pictures

101.69 the corner of Petty Cury and Guildhall Place seen from Market Hill

7027 Petty Cury with Lion Hotel in centre, right

9141 The Gordon Highlanders band entertained patients at Addenbrooke's Hospital

Ely Burrows Cecil Burrows with a decorated bicycle at Ely – similar events took place across the region

Linton Decorated bicycles

Ely Market Place Coronation parade at Ely Market Place – present News office in background

St And – St Andrew's Street decorated with flags

Photo of the Coronation parade in London which was attended by the Mayor

Memories 4 July 2011, by Mike Petty

Last week our village became festooned with colourful posters announcing the arrival of a Wild West show. Then a big tent arrived and both young and old flocked to an entertainment that included musicians and tight-rope walkers. 'It was really good, exciting' was the verdict from two parishioners at widely-different ends of the age range.

Such travelling performances have long been a highlight of rural life. In 1925 Christopher Marlowe described one such show at Chatteris:

"A crowd was already gathered about the entrance to the tent, in front of which was a table where a very fat man, with a bloated face, was haranguing the youths of Chatteris and bidding them roll up in 'undreds' to witness 'this absorbing, this utterly arresting and magnetic drama,' after which 'there will be a mouth-organ competition for them as fancies theirselves.'

"This had the desired effect, and there was an immediate scramble for the sixpenny places. Now the overture, thumped out on a vile piano, announced the beginning of the drama, and a man having carefully blown out all the lamps save the two for footlight purposes, the curtain was pulled aside to reveal a miniature stage. Everything was explained to us by a prompter in the wings, who apologised for the lack of scenery and told us what the articles were supposed to be

"The evening passed merrily enough. Chatteris had not revelled in such excitement for a long time, and as we all trooped home, about eleven o'clock, we heard such comments as 'Twern't arf bad, mother. I reckon as we'll go agin next week'

But neither of these could compete with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show that arrived at Ely in September 1903. Stables were quickly erected for 500 horses while wigwams were pitched for the Indians. From the burning sands of the Arabian desert, from the eternal snows of the Ural Mountains to the torrid plains of Uruguay, Cossacks, lancers, cavalrymen and foot soldier had come to the fens.

And the men and women of the fens came to marvel flocked to see them

The programme opened with 'The Spar-Spangled Banner' played by the cowboy band. Then came New South Wales horsemen, Mexican cavaliers, Arabs from the wastes of North Africa and the gorgeously war-painted and feather-decked Indians - Sioux, Ogallallas, Brutes, Uncapappas, Cheyenne and Apache tribes. Close behind were the US cavalry.

Once assembled all cheered as a figure with flowing grey locks, riding a superb horse, swept into the arena. This was Colonel W.F. Cody, Buffalo Bill himself, the world-renowned scout who knew more of Indian warfare than any man living.

The programme continued with Japanese jugglers, galloping gauchos and even a man jumping through space on a bicycle.

But it was the cowboys who stole the show. They rode bucking broncos, demonstrated wonderful sharp shooting and the lassoing of a horse-thief. Firing their six-shooters they drove off the Indian attack on a wagon train crossing the plain and the Deadwood Stage got through, even if peppered by arrows thicker than porcupine quills

The performance climaxed with Custer's last stand at the Little Big Horn with red limelight effects redolent of bloodshed and slaughter though the 'whoop' of the Indians was not nearly as terror-striking as expected.

Then it was over. Horses were fed and watered as tents were dismantled ready for a start for somewhere else.

A few months later, in June 1904, they were back.

This time the first of three special trains pulled into Cambridge station just after three in the morning and many people rose early to line the route to Dennis James' field on the Huntingdon Road. By two that same afternoon the audience were in their seats and the show was on. A second performance followed six hours later before the spectacle moved on once more

By contrast the showmen who visited our village had a more leisurely time: they arrived on the Sunday evening, performed for three nights, then drove away in convoy.

As before the Wild West had come and gone but will live on in the memory of those who had been there and seen it for themselves.

Pictures

Various pictures from the newspaper advertisement for the Cambridge show in 1904

A train arrives at Ely 1902

Chatteris High Street c1910

The tent at Stretham 2011.

Advertisement for the Tyana Wild West Show from their website

There are various illustrations of Wagon trains, The Deadwood Stage and the Battle of Little Big Horn on the net

Memories 11th July 2011 by Mike Petty

Pymoor is an small community at a bend in a road deep in the fens close beside the great Bedford Rivers that run parallel through the landscape.

Each year it holds an agricultural show where very large and very modern pieces of farming machinery compete for attention with heavy horses, ancient tractors, vintage lorries and much more. Amongst all the stalls was one from the Pymoor Community Archive, a group dedicated to preserving a pictorial record of the past, who featured a series of old photographs, including one that particularly caught the eye.

It shows men crossing the mighty Hundred Foot River about 130 years ago. They have moored two boats in the stream and laid wooden planks between them so they could walk to the washland beyond. Who were they, what is their story? Sadly their wonderful website offers no clues.

One who might have known was Gwendoline Stevens. She was born in 1911 at the nearby Hundred Foot Pumping Station where her father was the engineer: "I was fascinated by the big diesel engine ... my father would often let me watch him go round and adjust the drip

feeds. He told tales about local people, talking as much to himself as me because the sound of the big engines was monotonous and the atmosphere stuffy, and keeping awake was something of a job. Especially during the times of high water when he would run the engine for a day or two nights, having only a brief break for sleep while his stoker took over”

As years passed that young Gwen herself married a drainage engineer, Cyril Clarke, and they had a daughter. She also grew up in a fenland pumping station, this one beside the Old West at Stretham.

“If a 100 hp beam engine could have been considered a toy, that was how I saw it”, Diana recalls. From her father she learned old ways of the fen such as catching eels with a gleeve and the complexities of working a steam engine – secrets that were normally closely guarded: “you mustn’t go high on that con-rod and when she starts to judder you must adjust that or she’ll stop, and you don’t want her to stop, you’ve got to keep moving one way or the other ...”

There was more to the job than just pumping: the drains had to be kept cleared of weeds. “Two men would be stationed on either side bank with a chain saw as wide as the drain itself and with polished wooden handles. They would lift it over the boundary fences and then making sure they had a good firm foothold on the sloping bank would start to pull it across the Drain and back in a steady rhythm. The cut weed would at first bob up in the air, then tumble sideways to lie on the surface from which it would be raked with a very long-handled rake and piled on the edge of the fields so that the farmer could plough it in”

Diana also observed the farming routines: chopping out and singling sugar beet – back breaking work often conducted by women on hands and knees straddled over the rows of seedlings with the black dirt getting up their sleeves and into the nails so they ended up more like a coal miner than a farm worker.

As a girl during the summer holidays she joined her mother picking plums and apples at Everitt’s orchards in Wilburton – Rivers, Czars, Victorias and greengage. The kids were not allowed to climb ladders but any fruit that had fallen was theirs to gnaw at, ripe or not. They made dens in the wooden fruit boxes, were chased by wasps, covered with dust, sticky with fruit juice and exhausted by knocking off time. Then it was home on their bikes to allow their weary mothers to cook the evening meal for husbands at half-past four.

Diana married and left the fen but has never really broken free from the black soil of her childhood. Now she has been listening again to tape recordings she made years ago of her parents talking about their grandparents. To these she’s added her own in a booklet entitled ‘Parallels’

In its page are Ted Lowe the one-handed carrier who was such an asset that the village collected money to replace his horse when it died, Charlie Parnell the butcher, Cruger Gillett, the pig-man who boiled surplus potatoes for the saddle-backed pigs he reared – potatoes the children would steal and eat. Then there is Finchey, a dear gentle old horse keeper who was always welcoming to a child with not much to do.

Percheron horses were used to pull the cutter-binder, to plough and draw carts. But are these memories from Diana or her parents – or from the youngsters who stood captivated at this year’s Pymoor show as the mighty monsters demonstrated their strength once more.

“Parallels” is available from Diana Cockrill at 57 Smitherway, Bugbrooke, Northampton NN7 3PT for £10 including postage. ISBN 978-1-4520-8113-7

Pictures

Boats: men cross the Hundred Foot River

PC03 – marvelling at machinery at Stretham steam pumping engine, once worked by Diana's father

MP0308 – Cyril Clarke, Diana's father, with an eel gleave

Pymoor Show – tractors at this year's show

Percheron – horses at the Pymoor Show

140.45 – Hundred Foot Engine worked by Diana's grandfather

MP1925 – wooden fruit boxes at Everitt's orchard, Wilburton

Memories 18th July 2011 by Mike Petty

Last week the News reported the conviction of a gang of burglars who had targeted dozens of local homes. But despite the distress they caused their victims these lads had nothing on two villains of over 200 years ago.

After an early life of petty crime Richard Kidman had decided to learn some trades. He took up clock-making, plumbing and glazing which gave him ready access to college buildings. His accomplice William Grimshaw also knew his way around the colleges - for he was a chimney-sweep

Together over the next four years they conducted a series of robberies which defied the vigilance of the police and kept the whole of Cambridge in a continued state of amazement and alarm.

Their first robbery took place in August 1796 at the treasury of King's College where the college plate had been locked up for the summer. Using his clock-making skills Kidman made a copy of the key, stole the silver and locked the door up again. It was several weeks before anybody knew it had been pinched. Grimshaw used the same method to let himself into the buttery at St Catharine's College and a Fellow's room at Trinity.

Now they were ready for something bigger. Kidman cut keys to the great iron gates at the back of Trinity College and let himself in. He left with a sack so full of silver that he could hardly lift it.

A robbery of this magnitude caused a great alarm and Bow Street Runners stopped every cart on the turnpike road to London. In Cambridge police searched Kidman's house where they found tools of all sorts. Rather than raising their suspicions they came away full of admiration for his skills as a clockmaker! He was a good bricklayer too - for the High Constable actually leaned up against a wall in the cellar behind which he'd just bricked up the college silver!

The burglars became bolder: Emmanuel Master's Lodge, Caius Combination Room and Christ's College were robbed successfully, though they were disturbed during a second break-in at Emmanuel College and fled leaving their booty behind. Then Grimshaw climbed down a chimney he'd been employed to sweep at Trinity and carried off the treasure in the soot bag.

But all the while they were planning their biggest ever robbery, an enterprise which required all their courage and skills.

One night they entered King's College, stole the key to the outer door of the Chapel and let themselves in. Once there they worked on the interior locks. But these being antique were a real challenge and it took a week, returning each night, before they had opened all the locks except one. But by now Grimshaw had had enough - 'the place looked so awful, that he

trembled every time as if he had the ague'. His panic communicated itself to Kidman and they abandoned the robbery.

This might have been the end of the story, were it not for the man who was helping to dispose of the loot. He encouraged and chivvied them to return. Eventually Richard went back, cracked the last lock and found a treasure chest. He picked it up, shook it, then panicked and put it down again before letting himself out empty-handed. Once more he was pressured to go back and this time brought out a locked box containing gold and silver.

The robbery of King's College Chapel caused outrage and every college increased its security. It didn't prevent the pair removing sackfuls of treasure from Gonville & Caius College, though it took six weeks of undetected nightly raids to accomplish.

Things then quietened down but in January 1801 the house of an Alderman was entered and a considerable quantity of plate stolen. The old suspicions were immediately rekindled. Police searched Grimshaw's property in Newmarket Road but found nothing. They then arrested and interrogated Kidman; after a week he cracked.

Back went the police to William Grimshaw's house, this time they decided to pull it down, brick by brick. As they did so they revealed hidden cavities containing the Alderman's silver together with various items of college plate he'd not disposed of.

The trial took place at the County Assizes. Grimshaw made no defence and the judge sentenced him to death. At this he broke down, begging for mercy and bringing tears to the eyes of the jurymen. It was no avail: too many colleges had been robbed to allow for any mercy in this world. He was hanged at Cambridge castle on 28th March 1801.

Kidman was transported to New South Wales for life. But he was back in Cambridge within seven years where he settled down to his old job as clockmaker and died in January 1832

Pictures

SCAN 9050 - A SOMEWHAT FANCIFUL PANORAMIC VIEW OF CENTRAL CAMBRIDGE. IT SHOWS SEVERAL OF THE BUILDINGS ROBBED

SCAN OF HANDBILL OF GRIMSHAW'S DYING WORDS

SCAN 1640 – KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL FROM KING'S PARADE 1820's

100.56 - Trinity College 1813, the scene of various robberies

7327 – King's College chapel was robbed at night

7254 – Grimshaw climbed down college chimneys

100.20 – police finally got their man

Memories 25th July 2011 by Mike Petty

Ely's history has come under the spotlight as never before with the production of major works by its two principal lady historians

Both acknowledge the assistance of one man. Reg Holmes was a railwayman who'd devoted many years to researching the city's past, delving deep into its ecclesiastical documents and amassing a considerable collection of books and illustrations that lined the walls of his home in Fieldside.

Anne Holton-Krayenbuhl consulted him in 1984 when researching the story of the ancient former Three Blackbirds public house in Broad Street. Reg had introduced her to a remarkable survey compiled on behalf of the Prior by Richard Hildersham and Thomas Hervy who back in January 1417 had worked down each street, road or lane recording details of the residents.

For centuries copies of this ancient document have been preserved amongst the Cathedral archives and in the British Museum, its significance appreciated by a handful of scholars able to decipher the ancient handwriting and translate the medieval Latin. People like Anne. For the rest of us it was literally a closed book.

But now the text has been published for the first time with a reproduction of the Latin script on one side and her translation on the other.

It shows that starting with the stretch from the High Bridge to Castle Hithe the clerks had continued to Potters Lane, Baldock's Lane, Winfarthing Lane and Liles Lane, past the gate to the Bishop's vineyards and an old mill near Turbutsey.

And in Broad Lane John Dunham, Margaret Frank and John Brewer lived near Thomas Hervy – one of those who compiled the survey - who rented a building that that later became the Three Blackbirds, the property that had sparked Anne's initial interest

Fast forward over 500 years to 1933 and the Ely Red Book Directory repeated the exercise, once more conducting a street-by-street survey. This shows that in Broad Street a Mr Holmes had a workshop only two doors away from the residence of Thomas William Blakeman, the owner of a Leather Factory.

Thomas and his wife Hannah had a daughter named Pamela who attended Ely High School and later became a teacher at the City of Ely College. She became a Blue Badge Guide and a Trustee of Ely Museum and in 2009 was awarded the Freedom of the City.

Pam Blakeman had been inspired to take up a keen interest in Ely's history by Reg Holmes and on his death in 1983 Reg had bequeathed her his entire collection of local photographs, ephemera and research material.

Now she has spent months working with Hugo Brown of Wilburton to ensure that much of that material can be shared with other researchers. More than 1,700 pictures together with half-a-dozen maps and other items have been linked with detailed indexes to unlock the story of Ely as never before.

They show that in 1903 a man named John Durham was landlord of The Rifleman public house in Back Hill literally just round the corner from the Broad Street property rented by his namesake of 1417!

This wonderful resource has been produced on a CD-Rom that can be searched by anybody who has an interest in exploring the past.

And a computer.

But what if you don't have a computer?

Now over 700 of Pam's most interesting pictures have been compiled on a DVD that can be played on a television.

Old pictures merge one into the other, some even changing colour before your eyes. For nearly two hours it takes you down memory lane to every area of Ely – its river, roads and railways, the shops and market, pubs and hotels, schools and sport, people and events. And then there is the Cathedral itself.

Here the soundtrack switches from dance music of the twenties to the sound of the organ as pictures of the past explore the interior and exterior magnificence of the building that has dominated the city for centuries, with some engravings depicting it as it was when Richard Hildersham knew it 600 years ago.

The topography of medieval Ely edited by Anne Holton-Krayenbuhl is published by Cambridgeshire Records Society – ISBN 978-0-904323-22-1 at £18

Pam Blakeman's Ely DVD and An interactive archive of Ely are published by Hugo Brown (The Cambridge Explorer) at £12.50 and £15 – www.cambridge-explorer.org.uk or phone 01353 749434

Illustrations selection

Broad Street – ancient houses in Broad Street

Market Place – Ely Market Place 1930s

Cathedral 1 – engraving of cathedral c1720

Riverside – colour postcard from river c1905

Topog cover – cover of Anne Holton-Krayenbuhl's book

Blakeman – covers of the CD and DVD

Reg Holmes – the man who inspired both historians, Reg Holmes

Quayside - 1909

Station Road – a decorated arch welcoming people to the Agricultural Show in 1887

Memories 1st August 2011 by Mike Petty

As children start on their long summer school holidays many will wonder just what to do with their time. In the past this was not a problem, for the 'Harvest Holiday' was meant to be just that: an opportunity for farmers to take advantage of young muscles to help in the busiest time of the year.

In 1952 Cambridgeshire Conservative and Horticultural Society asked the County Council whether arrangements could be made for schoolchildren to assist in the potato harvest. There was a shortage of labour and food was more essential than education in the case of boys between 14 and 15. The County MP agreed saying: "I don't think it does any harm to children that they should lend a hand in gathering the potato or any other harvest"

In September 1953 the News appealed for people to accommodate 800 German students who were coming to help farmers harvest potato and sugar beet crops. Traditionally families from London had journeyed into the fens to help with the fruit picking at places like Friday Bridge near Wisbech and this developed into working holidays with one farm camp in 1968 expecting between 400 and 500 visitors during the peak harvest season, each bringing their own Wellington boots and thick gloves. They would recover their £6-a-week accommodation costs by piece-work in the fields, picking strawberries, gooseberries or raspberries and later plums, apples, beans and potatoes, with the farmer supplying packed lunches, sheets, blankets and pillows.

But there was another group whose importance has been largely forgotten: these were the gangs of Irishmen who came over in numbers to supplement the workforce in the years following the Second World War.

As Rex Sly of Crowland recalls: “One of them would find suitable men who wished to pick potatoes and gather around him a 'Paddy gang' of between four and six people. They would come over to one of the Fen towns and frequent the pubs where farmers went to look for potato pickers. Certain pubs were renowned as 'Paddy pubs'. I remember going around some of these with my father looking for Irish labour in the 1950s”.

Most farms provided accommodation to house these gangs either in empty cottages that were called 'Paddy kips' or 'Paddy huts'. These huts were usually purpose-built in nearby paddocks or in the farmyards. They were constructed mostly of brick or were ex-Second World War Nissen huts and often only had one room, similar to the army barracks-type accommodation. Inside would be beds or bunks, table and chairs and a calor gas or solid fuel cooker. Toilets were often soil type outside and washing facilities were simple.

They were very basic even in those days, Rex recalls, yet the occupants always appeared to be of good humour, especially after returning from the local pubs. They could earn good wages on piece work and most of their earnings were sent home to their families in Ireland.

“I remember their needs were simple but I do also remember they never skimped on food: hard work requires calories. They would buy good joints of meat and invariably have flitches of very fat bacon hanging from the ceiling, and they ate copious amounts of it for breakfast and lunch.

“Beer was a very important part of their diet, keeping the local pubs going with a good trade. It was a common sight to see droves of these men on a Sunday, which was a day of rest, going to a local Catholic church in the towns. Publicans knew this and after Holy Mass they made them very welcome in their 'tap bars'. One local pub down at the bottom of a long fen road was reputed to bring a bath tub into the bar and fill it with beer. When the Irishmen arrived they could fill their large jugs directly from the bath and replenish their pint glasses much quicker than they could get the beer out of the barrel.”

By the 1960s potato harvesting machines were being used extensively on the black fen and silt soils but where potatoes were still being grown on the heavier fen soils, and clods were difficult to separate from potatoes, handpicking was still carried out by the Irish labour force into the 1970s.

Entry into the Common Market in 1972 greatly increased the profitability of cereal growing which influenced the heavy land farmers to cease growing potatoes. This was the start of the demise of the Irish labour in the Fens and one of the last gangs of Irish potato pickers was noted at Bourne Fen, Lincolnshire in 1973

In his latest book Rex has charted the changes in agriculture from land reclamation, small-holdings and horsepower to aerial spraying and multi-national workforces, interviewing smallholders and drawing upon his own experiences to pay tribute to the families who fight to feed us all.

Did you help out in the harvest fields or do you have memories of Irish potato pickers – write to Mike Petty at the News

‘Soils in their souls: a history of fenland farming’, by Rex Sly is published by The History Press at £14.99 – ISBN 978-0-7524-5733-8

Irish: gang of Irish potato pickers on farm near Bourne, Lincs in 1973

Friday Bridge agricultural holiday camp 1950s

Rex Sly, farming historian

128 - farming today harvesters from Eastern Europe

Gangs harvesting salad cabbage at Manea in 2010

7498 women and children picking strawberries at Aldreth in Victorian times

Memories 8th Aug 2011 by Mike Petty

This week a new chapter in the story of Cambridge transport begins with the opening of the guided bus to St Ives, Huntingdon and beyond.

It is not a new concept. Cambridge had a guided bus system back in Victorian times, only then it was called a tram.

The original scheme ran smoothly, in contrast to the protracted hold-ups of the modern version.

The proposals were first aired at the end of November 1878 when two groups, each called the Cambridge Tramways Company published their plans. One proposed a line from the Station straight down Sidney Street to Huntingdon Road with another branch from Hyde Park Corner to Newmarket Road.

The other had a more modest route from the Station, along Lensfield Road and Trumpington Street as far as the Senate House. It was this that was agreed though soon it was extended to include another line down Regent Street to Christ's College

The first step was to obtain an Act of Parliament a process that had completed its legislative passage within nine months.

Even before that work had started on the arduous task of installing the track along Hills Road and by September the section to Christ's College was complete. A test vehicle ran on 13th October 1880 and a fortnight later came its official inspection. The Town Clerk, Improvement Board Surveyor, Company Directors and others joined the Board of Trade official on the first run. There were no snags and the new route was declared ready to go less than two years after the scheme had been mooted.

The official opening on 28th October attracted great interest and the following day 801 people travelled in the six tramcars that ran at fifteen-minute intervals from the Post Office to the station. Next month the line from Hyde Park Corner to Market Hill was opened to be followed a short while later by a track along Gonville Place to the Tramway shed off East Road. Other minor extensions followed until the route was complete. It was not all plain sailing: the turn from King's Parade into St Mary's Street was somewhat sharp, causing timid passengers to fear that the tram might topple over and had to be realigned

One concern was over the time it took to get from the station to the town centre. It was not that the trams were particularly slow but as there was only a single track they had to pull into passing places when meeting an approaching tram. Passengers could board anywhere along

the route, which led the calls for designated tram-stops, and delays could be cut by the issue of season tickets or the installation of an honesty box into which fares could be dropped.

The speed was literally one horse-power and that single animal which found difficulty pulling the weight of a fully-laden tramcar, especially after double-deck vehicles were introduced. On Saturdays, when the crush was at its worst, it was not unusual for passengers to jump off and give the animal a push to get it going. Letters poured in from animal-lovers but the RSPCA decided they were well-stabled and looked-after. The Company experimented with two-horse working and later came suggestions that the trams should be electrified. But the prospect of overhead cables disfiguring the streets were too horrendous to contemplate

When competition came in the form of horse-drawn omnibuses the Company countered with horse-buses of its own. Motor buses were launched in 1906 and despite initial problems flourished under the name 'Ortona' whose successors are now running along the Guided Busway to St Ives

Inevitably there were accidents: in August 1900 the driver of Great Eastern Railway van was killed after colliding with a tram along Gonville Place, the custodian of the Perse School for Boys was knocked down as he tried to cross the road in a heavy rainstorm and 12-year-old Florence Ebbon died after falling as she got off a tram.

The main problem was the track.

The basis of the permanent way was a six-inch deep concrete bed upon which were laid transverse wooden sleepers to which the steel girder rails were fastened. At its opening the track was described as 'of so permanent a character that the heaviest locomotive may pass over it with perfect safety'. But vehicles were damaged by crossing and recrossing the lines and cyclists suffered many upsets.

It was the cost of maintaining the lines that proved decisive. The Tramways Company negotiated a fee for the Corporation to repair the roads but it was a charge its competitors did not have to meet and prices rose at a time when its income was falling.

By 1912 the Street Tramways Company was fighting for its existence and two years later gave up the struggle

The final day, 18th February 1914, was the busiest the trams had ever seen: they were packed as people took their children for a last ride. The last tram left the station at 6.25pm guided by Ephraim Skinner who had driven for the firm for 34 years.

The vehicles and horses were sold off. But Cambridge had not seen the last of the tramlines. For the expense of removing them was not something to be incurred as the country drifted to War and sections of line were discovered during road repairs in July 1927 and November 1976.

The Cambridge Street Tramways epitaph was written by Will Thomas of the Black and White Concert Party

Who killed the Tramways?
I said the motor bus,
For there wasn't room for both of us
I killed the Tramways

Now other 'poets' are praising its successor

Pictures

- 100.81 Horse tram gets involved in a University procession outside the Senate House
- 141.53 The last trip in February 1914
- 149.81 A souvenir postcard
- Market Hill – a tram waiting to return from Market Hill
- 133.08 Aerial view of Market Hill showing tramlines beside Gt St Mary's church
- 140.59 Tramlines in St Andrew's Street 1911 showing one of the motor bus competitors

Memories 15th August 2011 by Mike Petty

News of the outbreaks of unrest in London and other cities has spread around the world. It is of course nothing new. Various local villages have seen 'riots' over the centuries with Littleport always being cited after the outbreak of disturbance in 1816.

But there was another at Fenstanton in April 1789 after the Rev John Hammond, a retired minister, refused to allow his labourers time off to join in celebrations for the recovery of 'mad' King George III. Other villagers were incensed at his lack of patriotism and threatened to break his windows. So the Reverend determined to defend his property. He locked his gates and doors and stood guard with a loaded blunderbuss and bayonet. Alongside him armed with a scythe attached to a long pole stood his servant who had bolstered his courage by an excess of liquor. The sight of this drunken man put villagers 'into bodily fear' and they called the constable who had to read the riot act before peace was restored.

Some of the worst outbreaks of unrest took place in 1830 when agricultural labourers felt themselves under attack through the lowering of wages and the introduction of agricultural machinery.

Disturbances broke out across Cambridgeshire. At Balsham 200 farm labourers met demanding increased wages and there were similar gatherings at Horseheath and Shudy Camps. As the situation worsened one of the county's Members of Parliament travelled home so he could be on hand should the situation deteriorate into the full-scale riots that people feared.

Farms were set on fire at Coton, Bassingbourn, Somersham, Eaton Socon and Pampisford Mills. Elsewhere between 40 and 50 men assembled in Sawtry and started to demolish two threshing machines which were seen as the cause of much of the problem. They were joined by a larger group from Upton and Alconbury who wrecked machines at Alconbury Hill, Stukely Lodge and Monk's Wood. Soon the mob numbered between 200 and 300 who continued on to Buckworth while others made their way to Stilton.

But now landowners organised to defend their homes and after several skirmishes the ringleaders were sent under escort to Huntingdon gaol. There a number of special constables had been sworn in and despatched to the villages where insurrections had occurred. Under cover of darkness they surprised and arrested 25 of the labourers who had been involved, together with three poachers who happened to blunder into their path.

Then just when things seemed to be quietening down came rumours that a large body of rioters were on their way to break open Huntingdon gaol and liberate the prisoners. Several active young men formed themselves into troops of cavalry and infantry, 60 of the principal farmers also came forward while 300-400 men were sworn in as special constables.

At March the magistrates were told that a gang of 200-300 agricultural labourers, headed by a number of poachers, were approaching from Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire, destroying property as they went. Everybody considered the labouring population of the town to be as peaceable, loyal and satisfied as any in the country. If March rioted, nowhere was safe. People were urged to come forward to be sworn in as special constables. Soon 400 were prepared to fight and an alliance was formed with Whittlesey pledging that should one town be attacked the other would come to its defence.

Meanwhile in Cambridge itself over 800 respectable townspeople assembled at the Guildhall to be sworn in as special constables after rumours that an attack would be made on the colleges and the University Library burnt down. But in the event, not the slightest disturbance occurred and the episode hardly rates a footnote in the history of the town.

Magistrates had been placed in difficult circumstances; they were literally in the front line, being prominent landowners in areas threatened with conflagration. Some sympathised with the labourer's case and recommended the establishment of a uniform rate of wages and the discontinuance of threshing and other machinery.

But the Government insisted that all magistrates demonstrate a firm resistance to such demands, especially when accompanied with violence and aggression. Notices were issued warning of the penalties for various offences: it was death for setting fire to any church or chapel, house, stable, coach-house, shop, mill, granary or any building carrying on any trade. It was death for any persons who riotously or tumultuously assembled together and by force demolished any building, bridge or wagon-way. It was death for any who set fire to any stack of straw, hay or wood.

Such sentences proved effective in both quelling the riots and stoking up resentment.

Who knows what the answer is this time.

Pictures

135.84 Huntingdon in the 1830s
2703 Threshing machines were attacked
2401 Coton was one of the villages affected by riot
Fenstanton – pamphlet about the Fenstanton riot
Incend – arsonists set fire to stacks
151.07 March in 1822
129.72 A farm worker with a scythe – used as a weapon at Fenstanton

Memories 22nd August 2011 by Mike Petty

With farmers' fields filled with massive machines Lorna Delanoy has been reflecting on harvest times in years gone by.

She writes: "Mechanisation has changed the Fen Farming scene completely in my lifetime. When I was a child, the Summer Holidays, all six weeks of them, were known as the Harvest Holidays. My Granddad was one of a team employed to 'take the harvest' at the Hinton Hall estate, six miles from Ely. Fields were much smaller than they are today but still they took families days to harvest. 'One man went to mow' was a popular song and it really did portray the fact that in years gone by a gang of mowers was needed, each man with his own scythe to 'mow the meadows'."

P.H. Emerson in his book 'A son of the fens' published in 1892 described such work as if told in dialect by one of the harvest-men:

Tuesday night a boy came and told me Mr Gilbert was going to begin harvest in the morning so Wednesday morning I got up soon and met Joe, for he was going along to do a harvest for farmer Gilbert too. We went to the blacksmiths and bought our scythes – three & six each – and they weren't good neither, I slit too that harvest. I got a pair of gauntlets and a big straw hat from the shop.

We went back to the blacksmiths to grind our scythes. All the gang were there – lord and all – some of them fitting new sticks to the scythes and some of them putting in tacks and some of them making grass nails and fitting them.

Joe and I began to hang ours, after we ground them, so I took my Fanny – we always named them after our fancy girls or wives, and I hung her. Joe he hung his full length, but I took mine in two inches. There was a younker there that couldn't hang his so I say 'I'll hang it for you Josh'. 'Do bor', he say. I hung it and he took it and said 'Ah bor I can mow with that'

Then away we go with our baskets strung on the end of our scythes and our reap hooks in our hands. We went into the piece to make a beginning. Bor that were a bad piece. There were thistles and dindles and foul grass and clover– we didn't like that.

The lord he cut in first. He started in the gate and he began to cut. We always round off the corners for the cutter. We set down our things just inside the gate. There were eight of us beside the lord and his chummy what tie up after he start in. We cut two or three sheaves and tied them up – just to make a beginning, and then we took off our guddles and rub bags and laid them together and covered them up with wheat so that shouldn't rain – that was unlucky to leaves them rubs uncovered. If you do that would be bound to rain.

Next morning we begun in earnest. Five o'clock. We started in and cut the corner round with the scythe. Bor that were a bad piece. There were a lot of funky places and all – it was 'Here come Mr Funky' all day – that's where it gets beaten down by the rain.

'That cut none too fit', says Joe. 'That's rather ripe – that might have been cut a'fore,' say another. 'Am I to have this spell, or will you' I ask Joe. 'I think I'll have the first spell mine's a new scythe, I want to get her an edge'. 'How does she do it' I asked as I was taking off after him. 'I think she'll come to an edge. I think you'd better have a whet'.

And so we'd turn up and sharp, then start on again a little bit further. Then I say 'Let me have a try to see how she hang' and he said 'alright, I'll have another sharp then you can have a try.' He'd stop and sharp and I'd take her and mow a stroke or two – 'Bor that hangs like a fiddle, I think though she's ligging at the point a little. Where are our other chummies'. There they be, they're holding up their hands – beer-o. We'll go and get some cocoa

Time we're after that the cutter comes and the lord get up on it. He started on the left side of the piece and go round and round to the right till he come up with nothing. We had to follow and tie up directly the cutter started.

So we go on tying up till noontime when away come the wives and the little girls with the dinners. Then we make a little house with the sheaves and start to get our dinners at half after twelve. Half after one the lord would get up and off things and away we'd go. And so we'd go on till fourses – and then away would come the old girl with fourses at half after four to five – most of the old girls would come because they'd done work at home. They'd bring baked pears, apples, bread and butter, cucumbers and plum cake.

We was allowed half a hour for fourses and after that we wouldn't cut no more. Some of us would go shocking, and some of them racing to see who could get to the end first, shocking

up, whilst others hauled in sheaves. We'd stop till nine o'clock shocking. And after that we asked the lord 'What time in the morning'. 'Well', he say, 'that all depend on the weather. If that's a dry morning we'll be here at five'. 'Aye aye' we all say. And then he say 'John you go and get the horse up of a morning and I'll come and help you to yolk'. 'Alright', John say, 'four o'clock?' – 'yis'. And then he'd say 'Night y'go lads. 'Night y'go we'd answer and off we go home.

Does any of this strike a chord with you. Did you wield a scythe in the harvest field – sent me your memories

Pictures

049 man with a scythe at Haddenham 1968
123.65 Lolworth men, Mr Bert Martin and Mr Fred Peppercorn wearing medals for nearly 100 years service - Two elderly farmworkers in harvest field, with medals - CDN 15 Jul 1955
5642 farmworkers with scythe c1890
MJP1252 Stretham farmworkers returned to the old-fashioned scythe to bring in the harvest c1950
Mp0246 'Docky-time' in the harvest field

Memories 29th August 2011 by Mike Petty

Residents of Herbert Street and Springfield Road are planning a Street Party and are seeking assistance from News readers who may have memories of the area.

Mary Burdett is leading the research into its history. She writes: "I moved to Herbert Street in November 1974 and have lived there ever since. From the start, my neighbours were very friendly and I got to know many of them, particularly the older ones, who walked down the road to the Chesterton Road end to catch buses into town.

"There was a corner shop called "The Patchwork Orange" which sold patch-work items handmade by the proprietor. Other businesses in the road were Ginn and Sons' Builders Yard, at the Milton Road end, now replaced by modern terraced houses, and the mill (currently an architect's offices) in which a loom was used to weave samples for potential buyers elsewhere".

She continues: "People I remember are Mr Proctor at No. 8, Mrs Pomeroy who used to feed her black toy poodle on beef steak and Mrs Royston who walked her elderly Sheltie dog down the road every day. My next door neighbour, Mrs Martha Langley, who died around 1985, aged over 90, used to tell me that she could remember the time before houses were built on Gilbert Road".

Mary has trawled through Directories which show that many of the residents of Herbert Street she had met in her early days there had been living there for many years before - it was quite a settled population. They also reveal that there has always been an eclectic mix of occupations with residents such as a minister of religion, boat builder, coal porter, tobacconist, dressmaker, classics tutor etc. And so it is still today.

Herbert Street, linking Chesterton and Milton Roads, was part of a massive expansion of housing following the enclosure of the Chesterton fields from the 1850s and was probably named by Francis Thoday the builder after his son Herbert Searle Thoday who was born about 1854.

One of its first residents was a policeman, Walter G. Turrall who had reached the rank of Chief Superintendent by 1863 when records show that his weekly pay was three pounds week soaring to four pounds and nine pence by March 1872. His income was boosted by that of his wife, Ann, who was employed as a female searcher at the police station

Some details of his duties have come to light. In 1867 he was sent down to London to make enquiries about a man accused of drawing on false cheques at Mortlock's Bank. Later that year he was praised for the way he had ensured that Guy Fawkes Night had been peaceful, enforcing a magistrates' ruling banning fireworks.

His colleagues prevented potential disaster in January 1907 when a shed caught fire in Springfield Road. It was spotted a policeman who sprinted from Ferry Path to tackle the blaze. He was followed within three minutes by four others, including a sergeant and the danger was soon averted. It gave the lie to a common complaint that a policeman on night duty in Chesterton was as rare a sight as a dead donkey.

When a News photographer visited Herbert Street in 1967 he found motorists were using it a handy place to park and youngsters had less space to ride their bikes. But were you one of them or do you remember their names. And can you add anything to the story of Herbert Street and Springfield Road or the folk who have made it their home.

Mary has several specific questions:

When was the corner shop last used as a grocers? She knows from the Trade Directories that it was still in use in 1965/66 with Mr W. Nunn.

When were the car showroom and flats at the Chesterton Road end of Herbert Street built?

When was the road closed at the Chesterton Road end, turning the road into a cul de sac?

What was Bindon House? It is mentioned as being number 54 in Herbert Street.

You can email her at mryburdett@gmail.com or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch

Pictures

154.70 Herbert Street 1967 – NB THIS IS THE ONLY PIC I HAVE ACTUALLY SHOWING THE STREET

Herbert Street links

152.73 Chesterton Road 1963 – view from near the junction with Herbert Street

and

9135 Milton Road 1920s looking towards junction with Herbert Street – on right in distance

map of Herbert Street / Chesterton Road junction 1886 – the houses to the left of the junction were replaced by a car showroom

07 01 05 1907 report of a fire in Springfield Road

Directory lists occupants of Herbert Street in 1898 and 1974 – who knows their stories?

Memories 9th September 2011 by Mike Petty

James Greenwood was born in 1832 and began a career in journalism. He wrote novels, children's books, short stories and collections of journalism. Then his brother, who was editor of *The Pall Mall Gazette*, suggested James spend some time as a tramp. The ensuing articles entitled "A Night in the Workhouse" were published in 1866 and caused a sensation with their graphic descriptions of the casual wards where men and women found a bed. General Booth, of The Salvation Army, called it "The beginnings of the reform of our poor law"

Greenwood wrote and lectured as the 'Amateur Casual' for the next thirty years, producing further observations of the poor districts of London. All this is well documented.

What is less-known is that in August 1911 he turned his attention to Cambridge, contributing an article to the Cambridge Weekly News entitled 'A Night in Cambridge Casual Ward'

He noted how Cambridgeshire roads were filled with men and women tramping from place to place. The 'Weary Willies' and 'Slippery Janes' were "padding the 'oof', most of them intent on going 'Tater pickin' on the big farms in the fens.

But out of every hundred 'travellers' along the 'Lone Main Drag' only 10 percent were genuine unemployed actually seeking employment. Of the others about a third were ex-soldiers, many, even in their tattered garments, still well-set-up stalwart men, from whom a solid regiment might be drawn. Then there was a sprinkling of women and children, poor souls, degraded – lost! The puny babes in soap-box vehicles, mounted on disused wringing machine wheels, loll inert in uncomfortable positions, drugged often to quietude by sips of beer or spirits.

According to Greenwood the vagrants visiting Cambridge could be divided into four classes.

First the 'Gagger', a vagrant of the first water, a capital judge of human nature, whose modus operandi was to 'pull up' benevolent-looking personages or undergrads in the streets and 'pitching the fork' – telling a pitiful tale – ask for alms

Second came the 'Griddler', an obnoxious way-farer, who, taking up a position in some bye-street, clasped tightly the lapels of his well-worn coat, and in a raucous voice hurled on the air such ditties as 'Oh, where is my wandering boy tonight?'

The 'Moucher' or door-thumpers were well-known to Cambridge householders. Carrying a small tin can - his 'drum' he termed it - this vagrant warily appeared at the back doors of people's houses with a pitiful appeal for tea, hot water or food.

The last class of roadster was the genuine unemployed man seeking work. But owing to pride or of experience, they often went hungry, and not finding work, gradually drifted into the ranks of the regular tramps. The ancient 'Weary Willie' said "Once a tramp always a tramp" and "once a man gets a taste of casual ward life he seldom loses it". From Ely workhouse in the shadow of the water tower, they plodded past the gaunt exterior of Chesterton workhouse, preferring the comparative luxury of the one in Mill Road

Greenwood joined an old weather-beaten tramp as he plodded along from Ely. "Lor matey", he said "Cambridge 'spike' aint such a bad 'un. Yer'll find it pretty free and easy an' the work ain't nowt"

Six o'clock saw Greenwood with four other "roadsters" invading the sacred precincts of the Police Station opposite the University Arms, where they needed to procure a ticket of

admission to the 'Spike'. He was required to furnish particulars of name, age, occupation, destination, birth-place and height, all of which were registered in the 'Books of Casuals'

Then he joined the column of men crossing Parker's Piece, attracting curious glances from visitors not used to a sight that was all too common to local residents. As he made his way along Mill Road Greenwood purchased a pennyworth of tea and sugar from a kindly grocer. Then on arriving at the Workhouse lodge he handed in his small possessions, supplied further information to the porter and then underwent a cursory search.

In his article he records what happened next:

"Round t'yer left an' in'ter the first door' directed one of the inmates on duty, and I found myself in the bathroom, where, if required, each 'Weary Willie' could indulge in the pleasant luxury of a hot bath. But the 'reg'lar' is no lover of cleanliness. 'Lets the cowl inter yer bones', he says

"Receiving my supper, 8ozs of "dry rooty", alias bread, I and my tramp friend, brewed two pints of strong, milkless tea. Then I was shown to my bedroom, a small cell furnished with a bedstead, straw bed and three dingy rugs as a covering. Here I consumed my meal and listened to the conversation of the occupants of the other cells as they compared notes between their meals. About 7.30 I undressed and arranged my bed, creeping between the dingy rugs with no little trepidation.

"At 6 o'clock the next morning I was aroused and, quickly dressing, received 8ozs of bread as my breakfast. Then we washed, sat about or talked of the coming 'drag' (journey) until 7, when the porter arrived, marshalled us in the yard, and allotted to each a task to be performed in return for the accommodations provided by the ratepayers.

"Six reg'lar vagrants were put to stone breaking, and so small was their tasks that most of them finished within two hours. Others were set to pick oakum, or to work the pump, while I, with three young vagrants, were ordered to clean the establishment. My share consisted of washing out ten cells and cleaning a long passage, and this task I managed to finish just after 9 o'clock. Then I was free to depart."

Such was the regime of Cambridge Casual Ward at Mill Road Workhouse. "It is certainly governed in a humane manner, and there is a lack of the bullying element among the officials so often found in such institutions", he concluded.

But was his reporting accurate, do you have memories of tramps – or have you padded the roads yourself

Write to Mike Petty at the News

Pictures

The former workhouse at Ely

The former workhouse in Union Lane, Chesterton

Mill Road workhouse c1900 and as Ditchburn Place in 1990

Two views of Mill Road c1905

A tramp receives food from a kindly housewife

Memories 12th September 2011, by Mike Petty

Doubt still surrounds the future of one of Ely's most dominant buildings, the magistrates' court on Lynn Road.

Its interesting, and largely forgotten history dates back to 1820 when Parliament passed an Act for the construction of a new Sessions House together with Houses of Correction at Ely and Wisbech.

It was to replace one of the two prisons in Market Street – then known as Gaol Street. While the former Bishop's Gaol still stands and is home to Ely's Museum, there was also a Bridewell next door. This had been built in 1651 and was in a poor state of repair: inspectors in 1811 described how it included a 'strong room' which had 34 iron bars across the floor to which inmates were chained.

The new Sessions House with its white portico front was designed by Charles Humphrey of Cambridge and completed in 1821. Edward Christian, one of the Chief-Justices of the Isle - the man who had sentenced the Littleport Rioters to hang just five years earlier - praised the elegance and beauty of the structure. As well as 'a handsome and commodious new court room' the building housed a chapel and prison infirmary.

Behind it was erected a prison for those convicted of larcenies, misdemeanours and other minor offences as well as debtors owing less than 40/-. Those owing £10 or above continued to be placed in the Bishop's gaol.

The new gaol had 16 single cells for criminals together with dormitories for debtors and women. There were four day rooms warmed by stoves in severe weather, although the convicted were allowed fuel only on Sundays. It was entered through the Keeper's house from which there was a partial inspection of the four exercise yards.

But conditions were quickly condemned. In 1827 the Chief Justice described it as one of the most ill contrived and inconvenient places he had ever seen. There was no room for the proper classification of prisoners or means of keeping them clean and faulty drains meant that the exercise yards flooded. It was too late to remedy these evils but it was a great misfortune that the building had been left in its present state, he commented

It was also too easy for prisoners to escape – one simply slipped away from the line of convicts returning from chapel on Sunday and hid in the Governor's coal cellar before calmly walking off. Even so the prison became overcrowded, though conditions eased after the Bishop's Gaol closed and some inmates were transferred to that building.

In 1842 plans were made for a larger gaol attached to the east side of the earlier building. It was designed by James Basevi the architect and comprised two storeys with cells in three tiers opening onto a lofty corridor with cast iron staircases leading to galleries.

Ely at last would have a gaol fit for purpose.

Instead it proved a disaster. The design was flawed: one woman prisoner simply climbed on the roof and dropped down into the street.

But there was something worse. At first the dampness of the new brickwork prevented its occupation by prisoners, who were removed back to the old gaol until it dried out. Then the inmate's health deteriorated and symptoms of scurvy appeared. The medical officer reported "As long as they were in the new building I had the greatest difficulty to keep them from sinking". In order to improve conditions ordered that the prison's doors and windows should be kept open!

He added: “My assistant noticed an unpleasant odour prevailing in the cells, but being deprived of the organ of smell myself I could not detect it”. On examining the water closets it was found they’d been wrongly constructed.

Slowly things improved. By 1852 the prison was in good repair but several of the water taps leaked and the cells were not as clean as they should be. Corridors were lighted with gas and some light in the cells would enable prisoners during winter to work to proper hours instead of passing at least 13 hours in bed.

The most graphic account of conditions comes not from an Inspector but a reporter who visited in February 1876. He described a cell with its bed strapped to the wall, a simple gas light and shelves filled with books of a religious character. There was a tread wheel and a hand-crank set in a wall which prisoners sentenced to hard labour had to turn 10,800 revolutions each day. If this proved too easy, the gaoler would tighten the screw to make it harder.

The gaol closed in 1878 and the site is now home to East Cambridgeshire District Council offices, one of whose windows are covered with bars.

Justice continued to be dispensed from the Sessions House until earlier this year, when the Magistrates court closed. Now the current occupants of the old gaol will help decide its fate

Pictures

Side: ECDC offices from the rear of the Sessions House
Barred window

Front: the imposing frontage of the Sessions House

Lynn Road: the old Bishop’s Gaol, now Ely Museum, next to the Sessions House

Chain: prisoners were chained to the floor in the old Bridewell in Market Street

Screw: prisoners on hard labour were made to turn a hand crank all day

ECDC – front of ECDC building

Sessions engraving : view of the building shortly after erection in 1821

Exercise: the exercise yard flooded above shoe height

Memories 19th September 2011, by Mike Petty

Harry Bye from Ely – who is still riding his bike at 94 – has shared his memories of the tramps that were once a common sight on the Fordham to Exning Road in the mid 1920s. His family lived at Plantation Stud, Snailwell and regularly met them while fetching milk from Harry Smythe’s farm near the railway bridge.

Harry recalls: “We presumed they were walking from Ely to the White Lodge Workhouse on the Exning Road at Newmarket. We often had some call at our house for food and drink and,

though we were poor, my parents mostly gave them some bread and cheese or dripping, or even some stale buns. When my grandmother was staying with us once a lady who had been sleeping in some bushes called round for some food and drink. As she left after thanking us, gran said 'That was Old Kate'. She is often around when race meetings are on. She's a tipster'. At that time I wondered what the meaning of a tipster was".

One man who knew tramps better than most was James Greenwood. Writing in the Cambridge Weekly News in September 1911 he described conditions in the kitchen one of the common lodging houses on Cambridge's Newmarket Road where they sought shelter for the night

"A flaring gas jet lights up the squalor of the place – a dirty stone floor, a fly-infested ceiling, rough-hewn tables and forms strewn with the debris of the last meal. At one end a fire, with a huge cauldron of water swinging from the hook above it, sends out a stifling smoke. In this kitchen a score of human beings, male and female are assembled. The air reeks with a conglomeration of odours – the sharp smell of the humble bloater mingling with the pungent scent of frying onions and the reek of strong tobacco".

Amongst them was 'The Man with the Bible' – an itinerant hawker. His 'Bible' consisted of a small box in which his 'swag' comprised pins, needles, cottons, combs and studs. He'd bought the needles for a shilling a thousand and sold them at ten for a penny while a gross of studs, costing him a shilling, were sold at a halfpenny each. The lowest in this class of trader was the man with the 'stretchers', or bootlaces, which he hawked as an excuse for begging in the crowded bars of public houses. Pedlars were supposed to carry a 'brief' or 'docket', an annual licence obtained from the police, but often they did not.

Then there was the 'Mush-fakir' or umbrella mender, ('mush' being the Romany term for umbrella and 'fakir' meaning patching up). He was seated on a low form and by his side sat his mate, a harsh-faced woman of about forty years of age, puffing meditatively at a well-blackened short clay pipe. Things were hard, he complained:

"Mush-fakin's about played out. If it warn't few the owd lass, who on the quiet does a bit of 'mouchin' (begging), Lor knows wer' we'd be. Nowadays there ain't many fowks as wants 'mushes' repairing. They goes inter Cambridge town an' buys a smart-looking 'mush' fer about one an' 'levenpence 'apenny, an' when it gets brokken or blown out they chucks it away an' buys another un. Now I can remember when blokes round 'ere town giv' a quid an' more for a 'mush'. They takked care on 'em then, an' when the poor owd 'mush-fakir' came round 'ad 'em looked to an' repaired. Lor', some of them owd 'mushes' lasted a 'undred years"

Mush fakirs often also worked as scissor-grinders. In August 1898 an itinerant umbrella maker and scissor grinder was sentenced to three weeks hard labour for stealing tenpence from Kate Taylor, domestic servant to Mr William Cutlack, of Littleport. She'd given him a pair of scissors to grind for which he charged 2d and then he'd replaced the handle of an umbrella for 1s.6d. But the man had gone off without giving her change from the half-a-crown she'd paid him.

Probably the most famous umbrella-carrier in Cambridge was the Rev Charles Simeon who as a young man had attracted great opposition when appointed vicar of Holy Trinity church in Market Street. The parishioners boycotted services and the wardens locked the church doors leaving the congregation out in the rain. But Simeon overcame their hostility and remained minister for 54 years. He was depicted by Robert Dighton in 1836 – carrying a brolly.

At various times Cambridge undergraduates have adopted umbrellas as a fashion statement: Edward Moden in a cartoon postcard of about 1905 depicted 'The New Arrival' with a neatly rolled umbrella. A correspondent to the News in 1927 described grads wearing

knickerbockers and carrying an umbrella while the Varsity Handbook of 1957 commented that an umbrella 'adds character to your appearance when neatly rolled' and along with a duffel coat and tweed cap, gave a touch of affluence.

But of course they have a practical use.

In May 1910 the News told how 49 years earlier several undergraduates had been overtaken by a heavy rainstorm while walking along the Madingley Road. There was every likelihood they would be thoroughly drenched until an old lady living in one of the brick-built cottages noticed their plight and took them in. Before they left the kindly old dame insisted upon one of the young men accepting the loan of her umbrella. It was returned the next day with a substantial gift in recognition of her kindness. That undergraduate afterwards became King Edward VII

If any of this prompts memories, write to Mike Petty

Pictures

Charles Simeon with his umbrella

An undergraduate with umbrella, 1905

The shady side of Newmarket Road in 1928

Snailwell when Harry Bye was a lad

A scissor grinder

Two views of Holy Trinity church in Market Street.

Memories 26 September 2011, by Mike Petty

Bruce R. Johnson, Pastor of the Scottsdale Presbyterian Church in Arizona has emailed seeking details of a meeting that took place in Cambridge in 1943

It was a course for RAF Chaplains that was held at Magdalene College from 23rd November to 2nd December, one of a number of Chaplains Schools that were addressed by such academics as C.S. Lewis of Magdalen College Oxford. He was later to become Cambridge University 's first Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature and to make Magdalene College, Cambridge his home for the last ten years of his life

Lewis' connection with the Chaplains schools has been recorded by its former Commandant, C.H.F. Gilmore who recalls that initially the Academic had difficulty in communicating with his audience. But then a remark about prostitutes and pawnbrokers being forgiven in heaven had caught the men's' attention and the rest had gone swimmingly.

There are seven photos of the Chaplains meeting at Magdalene preserved in the RAF Chaplaincy Branch Archive at the RAF Museum, London. They were taken by Stearns, the Cambridge photographers, and it is the whereabouts of the original negatives that Bruce was seeking to track down

For over 100 years the name of Stearn was synonymous with photography in Cambridge. Thomas Stearn and his wife started their business about 1867 and the firm continued at number 72 Bridge Street until their merger with Eaden Lilley's photographic business in 1970 after which the bulk of their negatives was destroyed.

Despite the shortage of photographic material during the Second World War Stearns had continued to record the local scene - a scene which now included many of the organisations evacuated to the safety of Cambridge.

But Central Cambridge itself was not a safe place to be. Following a bombing raid in July 1942 the Union Society building, just down the road, had been badly damaged and flying shrapnel gouged holes in the stonework of Whewell's Court, opposite Jesus Lane, just a few doors from Stearn's premises. After this the firm sent their glass plate negatives to be processed by a firm at Brighouse, near Leeds.

Here they remained forgotten until a memorable day when I joined an Eaden Lilley driver and took a trip to the Midlands. Box after box of large glass negatives were loaded into the back of a van and brought back to the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library. They include views of the Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment with a Bofors gun on Parker's Piece, D Flight of the RAF at Pembroke College and various Home Guard groups.

Bruce knows the names of those attending the Chaplains' course who posed at the front of the Pepys Library at Magdalene. They include the chaplain seated on the far right, Herbert Thomas Yeomans who later became Vice Principal of the School, the first Commandant, Wing Commander (Rev.) Charles Gilmore and the school's initial Principal (wearing vestments) Canon (and former Olympian) Sidney Ernest Swann. Also shown is W. C. R. Stewart who commanded the No. 2 Initial Training Wing at Cambridge

What he may not appreciate is that for one of the others, it was probably not the first time he had been photographed by Stearns. For E.J. Strover, seated one from the right on the front row, had attended Selwyn College and rowed for their Second Eight in the Lent races of 1905. Selwyn's Boat Club history shows that they dumped their cox, fully clothed, into the icy waters of the Cam after his poor steering robbed them of a bump. The treatment worked and they went on to make five others. This had been a most unfortunate year for the Bumps, for in May three people had been drowned when the ferry at the Plough Inn, Fen Ditton, had overturned

After University Strover had joined the army. He was based with the 3rd Brahaman, Indian Regiment at Singapore in 1912 and fought with them during the Great War. By then he had learned to fly and joined the Royal Flying Corps, being shot down by Anti-aircraft fire over Loos in 1915. He later served in Mesopotamia with the Sikh Infantry, being promoted to Major in 1921. Later he became rector of Lawford church near Manningtree in Essex where his widow was buried in January this year, aged 106

If you can add similar details about any of the people shown on the photograph, or have memories of life as an RAF Chaplain, then Bruce – and I – would love to hear from you.

You can email bruce@scottsdalechurch.com or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch.

Pictures

Chaplaincy course with names

Detail of Strover

Selwyn college which Strover attended

Cambridge Home Guard group photoed by Stearns

A bump
Stearn's shop, Bridge St
Union Society after bombing in 1942

Memories 3rd October 2011 by Mike Petty

Margaret Scott contacted me from the picturesque Oxfordshire village of Rochester-on-Thames where she has been clearing out her attic of her home. There she has rediscovered some old glass negatives taken by one of Cambridge's most important photographic firms, Scott and Wilkinson.

The Scott family's story has yet to be thoroughly researched: it is complicated with three members of that family marrying an equal number of Farrens, another Cambridge photographic and artistic dynasty.

David James Scott first started as a photographer in partnership with a Mr Wilkinson at 47, St Andrew's Street Cambridge in 1884. They bought an existing business from H. Faulkner White for £300 and worked together for five or seven years before the partnership was dissolved and David continued trading as Scott and Wilkinson.

When the Cambridge Graphic was launched in 1900 as the town's first photographically-illustrated weekly newspaper it was Scott and Wilkinson who took their large well-reproduced pictures covering topics like the opening of the new Police and Fire Station in St Andrew's Street, just across the street from their studios.

The Scott and Wilkinson name appeared on a wide variety of pictures varying from University ceremonies to portraits, groups of amateur skaters to views of stately homes for estate agents' brochures. They also issued an album of photographs of central Cambridge depicting the usual classic sights as others have done before and since.

The business flourished but by the 1930s more folk had their own cameras and professional portraiture was seen as a luxury during a period of depression. In September 1932 the firm relocated to 59 Regent Street for a short time but then ceased trading.

However it was not the end of the family's connection with photography. The original premises in St Andrew's Street were adjacent to the New Theatre and the Cambridge Daily News offices. In 1933 the paper expanded, installing new Linotype presses to enable it to publish a 24-page weekly edition. Pictures were to assume a greater importance so the News took over the old studios to expand their photo-engraving department bringing the whole process from the first negatives to the finished halftone blocks all under one roof. David's son, William Scott joined the paper and managed the department until his death in 1954.

Amongst the negatives stored in Margaret's home, and now brought to Cambridge where they will be offered to the Cambridgeshire Collection, are some most interesting and unusual images. They include scenes of the construction of the University Library in May 1932, the interior of the Playhouse cinema in Mill Road and the YMCA in Alexandra Street along with views of Grantchester and Trumpington

Some in a box labelled 'Emmerson' record a river trip on the motor boat "Will 'o 'th' wisp" journeying down the Cam and Ouse to Prickwillow. At Upware they photographed a group of cyclists, apparently on a Botany outing, crossing the river on a chain ferry for a drink at the 'Five Miles from Anywhere'

Amongst the views of bumping races is one which shows a group of young men who have climbed a tree to get a better view of the proceedings. Almost certainly this was taken in June 1927 when the News reported: One of the largest crowds in memory witnessed the last of what may go down in history as the "Microphone Mays". Both banks of the Cam at Ditton presented the spectacle of an unbroken line of sightseers. There were three men up a tree at Ditton Paddock; they and their friend on a microphone were telling all England what was happening and theirs was truly a romance of the tree tops.

If you have other Scott and Wilkinson pictures I'd be delighted to share them through the Memories page. And if you can add more to the family's story then Margaret would be delighted to hear from you. Contact me and I'll put you in touch.

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Photos

Will o th wisp – a view from the cabin during a trip into the fens
Upware Ferry – a group on a Botany outing cross the river at Upware
Upware – arriving beside the Five Miles from Anywhere
Playhouse – interior of the Playhouse cinema, Mill Road
Bump broadcast – an early outside broadcast, June 1927
William Scott, front left, and another photographer
And1 & And 2 = choice of St Andrew's Street showing Scott and Wilkinson's studio
UL – groundwork in progress at the University Library May 1932

Memories 10 October 2011, by Mike Petty

Longstowe is staging a village history fair at the village hall next Saturday afternoon, 15th October. There will be plenty to jog the memories of those whose families have a connection with the small village, just south of Caxton..

Exhibits will include photographs of 20th century people and events, the old school record book and Sports Club history, together with accounts of farming and railways.

Longstowe won the 'Best Kept Village' competition in 1976 but life in the community has not always been idyllic

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In October 1935 the chairman of the Parish Meeting described conditions: 'The housing position at Longstowe is scandalous for there have been no working men's cottages built for over 70 years. There are three families living in one house and several others where the sons and daughters are married and living at home with their parents. Two old thatched cottages had been condemned but last week one of the tenant's daughters got married and is living with her parents with her husband in the condemned house as they have nowhere else to go'

But South Cambs Rural District Council had already been taking action, applying to the Government for permission to acquire a site for the erection of two three-bedroomed council houses to be built by Messrs Wisbey and Son for a cost of £600, including paths, drains and lighting

It was no use having houses if there were not the facilities to support life. At Longstowe in 1935 part of the parish had to depend on water collected from the cottage roofs. This was inadequate and of unsatisfactory quality. Half the residents had to go half-a-mile for drinking water and mothers complained they are unable to wash their children's clothes. However Hunts Water Company said the village suffered no special hardship when compared to other

places. During the drought the villagers only had to fetch water a matter of 500 yards and improvements would need a new mains.

Water supply in Longstowe was still an issue nearly 20 years later in February 1954. One councillor said: "During this spot of bad weather I was ashamed to see children going along before school early in the morning, carrying sacks containing bottles of water for cooking and for washing. Some are having to walk over a mile". It had been hoped to start the scheme in 1952. If the consulting engineers were no good why not throw them out and get some new ones, he asked. But the engineers complained the plans had been changed so many times it was not fair to blame them for the delay. Water has now been connected so visitors will be able to enjoy a cup of tea.

There had been improvements: in 1935 the post office had started a second delivery of letters, there was a public telephone and the County Council had spared a little tar and gravel for the roads – though sadly not enough to actually finish the job. Yet village men tramped the roads looking for work.

One thing the village did have was a school, though it was expensive: it cost £26 a year for nine years to educate every child, yet when they left some could hardly read or write their own name.

And it had its own railway station on the Cambridge to Bedford line. But this was closed as part of the Beeching cuts in the 1960s. In December 1972 the Old North Road station house complete with booking office, waiting room and goods shed was sold by auction for £23,000. Part of its story will be included amongst railway memorabilia on display. The organisers of the display will welcome more material. If you can assist then phone Dick Murden on 01223 719628 or take it with you when you visit the exhibition on Saturday afternoon

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The discovery of negatives taken by the Cambridge photographers Scott and Wilkinson has sparked interest.

The other evening I spoke to a meeting of Peterborough Family History Society where I met Pam Haswell. She'd contacted Memories a year ago seeking information on William Caunt, one of Cambridge's earliest policemen. I could tell her that in January 1932 Mr H.P. Brown of Hooper Street had sent the Cambridge Chronicle a copy of a picture of the Borough Police force taken in the Corn Exchange in the 1880s together with a list of names. There on the front row was a PC 'Gaunt'. Now I was able to inform her that amongst the negatives preserved by Margaret Scott is an even earlier picture of what appears to be the Cambridge police force. A copy is already winging its way to her via the internet and she will be waiting with magnifying glass poised to see if she can identify him

Jim Neale from Burwell has emailed to say that the picture of groundwork at the University Library in 1932 interested him as his Grandad Neale worked as a bricklayer on the building. "I remember my Dad saying that my Grandad was one of the last to be laid off, so must have worked at great height on that rather precarious scaffolding! He was born in 1879, so would have been 53 when work started. He biked miles to work and helped to build Airfields all over the country during WW2. He died aged 84 in 1963, and still rode a bike on his 80th Birthday"

SCAN OF LOLWORTH

10206 - COTTAGES SOUTH OF RAILWAY 1928

133.21 – LONGSTOWE STATION c1905 – IT WAS CLOSED BY Dr BEECHING

133.19 – A PROUD DAY – LONGSTOWE IS AWARDED THE ‘BEST KEPT VILLAGE’ ACCOLADE IN AUGUST 1976 – CAN YOU NAME THE FACES

133.20 BONFIRE TO CELEBRATE THE KING’S JUBILEE IN 1935

Scott & Wilkinson pictures:

Scaffolding at Cambridge University Library – Jim Neale’s grandfather was one of the bricklayers

An early picture of Cambridge Police that will interest Pam from Peterborough

Memories 17th October 2011 by Mike Petty

Last weekend crowds gathered at Duxford airfield to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the de Havilland Tiger Moth. But it was just over 100 years ago that Cambridge became part of the aviation age.

At 5.30 pm on 10th October 1911 PC Naylor, was on duty near Sheep’s Green when he heard a droning noise in the sky. Looking up he saw something phenomenal: a flying machine.

Aeroplanes had been glimpsed over Cambridge before: in June five had been seen making their way to the army manoeuvres being held at Hardwick. But this large monoplane was very low and the engine sounded as if it were misfiring. It skimmed over Lensfield Road well below the top of the spire of the Roman Catholic Church, just cleared the house-tops in Regent Street and descended in the north-east corner of Parker’s Piece. It landed gently, like a huge bird, and came to rest after running about 20 yards or so.

A young man, with keen, clear-cut features, wearing an airman’s helmet with ear-flaps, and a short, khaki-coloured, woolly overcoat, cycling knickers and shoes, stepped out of the well of the machine just behind the wings, and climbed down to earth. He was quickly recognised as Mr W. B. R. Moorhouse, formerly of Trinity Hall, and now of the firm of Radley and Moorhouse who had established an aeroplane factory on Portholme Meadows, Huntingdon.

A contingent of police were quickly on the scene and the pilot, confident of their ability to keep his machine safe from the ever-increasing crowds, sought a little much-needed warmth and refreshment in the University Arms. There he gave the “Cambridge Daily News” an account of his adventure. He had been heading for Huntingdon but had got lost and followed a railway line. It was only when he recognised the smoking chimneys of the cement works at Cherry Hinton that he realised where he was. “It was so dark by this time that I could hardly see my way. When I got over Cambridge I recognised the Piece and came down. I don’t think I could have gone a mile further: the petrol tank was absolutely dry.”

By now the Mayor (Ald. George Stace), who had distinctly heard the roar of the machine as it passed over his house in Lensfield Road had arrived, and had a short chat with the airman. Later in the evening the aeroplane was wheeled across to the corner of the Piece, near the University Arms, where it remained during the night, covered over with a tarpaulin and guarded by policemen.

The News reporter described the Bleriot poised lightly on its pneumatic-tyred wheels with its tail pointing towards Regent Street. With its graceful white wings extended, and its long frail-looking, slender tapering body of light, thin woodwork braced together by a network of steel wires, it looked for all the world like a huge dragon-fly. At the extremity of the body was the rudder, and a short distance in front of this were the small elevating planes. Immediately behind the wings was the well, protected by canvas, in which was the aviator's seat and his control levers. At the head of the machine was the engine, a seven-cylindered "Gnome" of 50 horse-power, which when going revolved and so helped to keep all the cylinders cool. Behind the engine were the petrol and oil tanks and in front was the double-bladed propeller, or, to give it its proper name, tractor. The modern machine remained the centre of attention to thousands of people until a late hour.

Moorhouse spent the evening in the New Theatre and the night in the rooms of a college chum. He was up early an unimpeded takeoff. But crowds had gathered and it took more than 20 Inspectors and Constables to clear the Piece. Photographers took snapshots as three mechanics who had arrived overnight from Huntingdon wheeled the machine round. Moorhouse took his seat, and two men hung on to the rear of the fuselage while the third started the engine. One or two pulls round of the propeller and the engine started to bark, slowly at first, but rapidly increasing, until the explosions seemed to merge into a continuous roar, and the engine and propeller were spinning round at terrific speed. The whole machine trembled violently, and tugged and strained to get free. The blast of air flung backwards by the whirling blades was like a miniature tornado. Leaves, straws, pieces of paper, were sent flying far to the rear, and the men hanging on behind had all their work cut out to hold her.

At last Mr Moorhouse gave the word "Let go," and the machine darted forward across the turf at a great pace, heading slightly to the left of the electric light standard. After running about 120 yards the wheels lifted off the grass, and the whole structure inclined gently upwards. A few yards and she was wholly clear of the ground, and soaring gracefully away. There was something awesome in the sight. One seemed to be looking on at the birth of some strange new thing of wondrous possibilities - the dawn of a new era in the history of mankind.

Within couple of days Moorhouse was back, this time gliding over Dant's Ferry to land on Midsummer Common, disrupting several football matches that were taking place. He left the machine almost at once to take afternoon tea with an undergraduate friend, giving crowds – and police – just time enough to assemble before taking off, circling over Chesterton and heading off back to Huntingdon once more.

Cambridge had truly entered the aeroplane age, though neither Parker's Piece nor Midsummer Common would become regular landing strips.

Pictures

Two views of Moorhouse's Bleriot plane on Midsummer Common October 1911

153.05 the first landing was on Parker's Piece where the plane was parked for the night beside the University Arms

147.58b a pilot's eye view of the approach to Parker's Piece

Regent the plane crossed Regent Street at below the top of the spire and landed on Parker's Piece. The pilot took refreshment at the University Arms

Memories 24th October 2011, by Mike Petty

Recently Cambridge University elected its new Chancellor. Voters poured into Cambridge from around the world, donned their academic gowns and proceeded to the Senate House to

make their choice from four nominated candidates: a grocer, an actor, a lawyer and a Lord. Now Lord Sainsbury has succeeded Prince Philip in the ancient post.

The contest attracted considerable interest, but nothing compared to that surrounding the Chancellorship election of 1847. On the death of the Duke of Northumberland the senior members of the University had nominated Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria. The Prince indicated that he would accept, provided he was unopposed.

But another group of academics had already approached Northumberland's brother-in-law, Earl Powis. He had been educated at St John's and had served as an MP before being elevated to the House of Lords. Albert had neither distinction.

This placed the Prince in a dilemma. It would not be proper for a Royal to indulge in a contest that he might not win. But the arrangements had already been put in place and the only way he could stop them was by declaring that he would refuse to accept the position of Chancellor if elected. Such a declaration he did not deem it respectful to the University to make.

So the election went ahead. For three days voters flocked to Cambridge in a variety of conveyances from all directions. Two gentlemen from Bury St Edmunds braved the weather on Newmarket Heath in an open gig, returning the same day, one voting against the other. Omnibuses bearing the name of the rival candidates ferried their supporters from the station where no less than 10 special trains were laid on from London on one day alone. The railway company announced that should the Prince be victorious they would construct a grand new carriage to bring him and the Queen to Cambridge for the ceremony

There was an immense rush of voters and electors queued to enter the Senate House where one academic was knocked down when a crowd broke down a barrier.. There were dukes and bishops, senators and lawyers, cabinet ministers and country curates pushing and bawling and striving for entry. One man claimed to have brought up 100 voters for the Prince and paid the expenses of many of them. Some votes were refused and arguments broke out over whether now-eminent men had indeed completed their University studies decades before.

Inside, despite the bitter cold, the Senate House galleries were crammed with undergraduates cheering and jeering, blowing horns, howling like asses and showering peas, wood and halfpennies on those below as they declared their votes.

When polling started the Earl gained an early lead but slowly the Prince's supporters gained the ascendancy and he was elected by a majority of 116 votes.

However nobody was sure whether he would actually accept. The official confirmation of the result of the election was carefully inscribed on vellum, endorsed with the University seal and placed in a box covered with blue Morocco leather. Then it was taken to Buckingham Palace by the Vice Chancellor who was kept waiting some time before he was admitted to the Royal presence. To his immense relief Prince Albert expressed himself highly gratified.

But in a letter to the University he expressed his displeasure: "The election has now terminated and a majority of the University, including a very great number of its members most eminent for their services to the church, the University and to the cause of literary science, declared in favour of my appointment to the vacant office ... I have resolved to accept the trust which the University is willing to confer on me. I have been influenced by a respectful deference to the wishes of a majority of its members, but a great unwillingness to invoke the University in the probable necessity of another contest"

The inauguration ceremony took place in the Throne Room at Buckingham Palace in March 1847 when the Masters of Colleges together with 130 members of the University attended in

academic robes. It was a very formal affair described by Joseph Romilly, the University Registrar, in his diary and was followed by a grand dinner, though Romilly did not like the quality of the wine and asked for a glass of beer instead.

Then preparations were put in hand for the Installation of the new Prince Chancellor. Cambridge received a spruce-up: “one cannot turn a corner of a street without running against a ladder or a can of paint”, one paper commented. On Monday 5th July 1847, a bright, brilliant, burning summer day, every shop closed early. Banners and streamers, laurels, flowers and happy faces were everywhere, church bells rang and every house sported a flag, some a dozen or more.

Queen Victoria and her husband arrived by train and drove in a carriage with a cavalry escort through ecstatic crowds for a reception at Trinity College. Then it was on to the Senate House where, the new Chancellor, dressed in robes of black and gold with a long train was officially proclaimed. The Queen was proud: “My beloved Albert looked dear and beautiful”, she recorded.

Now a new Chancellor will shortly follow in the Prince’s footsteps as the University turns another chapter in its history.

Pictures

9839 Prince Albert and Queen Victoria arrive at Trinity before Installation
9048 Interior of Senate House – NB NOT DURING INSTALLATION
7153 Albert and Victoria in Senate House (sorry this is low resolution)
1519 Chancellorship voters arrive at Cambridge Station
9838 Victoria and Albert arrive at Cambridge station for Installation
Punch Punch cartoon showing voters at Senate House
Punch detail – poster for Albert – and wife
Senate House – voters at Senate House – this is the best image I have,

Memories 31st October 2011 by Mike Petty

When Margaret Scott of Dorchester-on-Thames decided it was time to find a new home for more than 120 glass negatives she’d persevered from the family photographic firm, Scott and Wilkinson, she did not know just what scenes they showed.

Now they have been digitised it has become more apparent, and already they are starting to attract interest from various researchers.

Several were taken from unusual angles:

One is a magnificent and unusual view of the interior of King’s College chapel looking from above the organ loft – how on earth did the photographer get his camera so high up?

The bulky equipment was apparently carried to the roof of the Castle Hotel, pulled down in 1935, to secure a view along St Andrew’s Street. Dominating the background is the massive mansion built by Henry Rance who was Mayor in 1878 and 1882 and dubbed ‘Rance’s Folly’. It had several lifts, four bathrooms and central heating but also featured facilities not usually expected in a town-centre house. These included a swimming pool, a tennis court on the roof and a ballroom whose floor was laid by experts brought specially from Germany. It survived until 1957

One negative shows the YMCA in Alexandra Street which survived until the demolition for Lion Yard. There is also what I take to be an interior shot of the stage and another of a meeting room but as I never went inside I can't be sure. Can anybody confirm this is what is indeed shown?

Other photographs show a military band parading at Chesterton. In the background there is a fine view of the church and a glimpse of Pye's massive aerial that dominated this part of the city. Can you tell me more about it?

From out in the county comes a wonderful view of Bartlow Hills – reminiscence of the Wittenham Clumps overlooking Margaret's home village that I puffed up when we made the trip to Oxfordshire to collect the negatives

The majority of the pictures I can recognise but there are a few which seem very familiar, yet currently puzzle me. One shows a line of thatched cottages, another a couple of windmills, one of which is derelict. Do you recognise there they were?

Most of the negatives have now been delivered to the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library where they will be preserved amongst the many thousands of other images held in the library.

If you can help add further details please drop me a line at the News or email

mikepetty@tiscali.co.uk

Granddad's snaps - if you have any old negatives, slides or photos I'd be delighted to share them with other readers. Contact Mike Petty at the News

Pics

Subs –

S&W neg one of the boxes of negatives

159.57 St Andrew's Street and Rance's Folly

159.61 YMCA Alexandra St

159.93 YMAC interior?

159.67 King's college chapel

Scotts5 mystery cottages

159.92 windmills

159.86 parade at Chesterton

159.72a`Bartlow Hills

Memories 7th November 2011, by Mike Petty

I was recently invited to speak at a 'Petersfield Celebrates Age' meeting at the Cherrytrees Centre in St Matthew's Street, off East Road. Instead I spent the time listening to fascinating people who know this part of Cambridge far better than I ever will.

Amongst those who had made their way there was Betty Wilson. She'd not had too far to come, for she was born just around the corner in Sturton Street, a long narrow street of

terraced houses developed in the 1870s and 1880s to house a growing population of railway workers and now home to many young dons and professional people. Betty has lived in the area for over 80 years and has penned me a personal account of her part of the city

Betty writes: “My father’s name was Walter (Wally) Waller. He married mum (Jess Randall) and they lived with my grandparents, Lil and Harry Randall for sometime at 79, Sturton Street. Grandad was a chimney sweep all his life. He worked for Mr Kirkup who lived in King Street. He sold sacks of soot to neighbours for about sixpence; it was his ‘pin money’ which he could spend in his local pub, the City Arms. I used to see him everyday, about one o’clock on my way back to York Street junior school - we went home for our dinners then, as there were no school meals in those days.

“Everyday the Co-op horses would pass the house on their way to the top of the street, where they were stabled. Grandad had a shovel and pail to collect what the horses left behind on the road. He must have had the best grown fruit and veg in the street! I also remember cattle coming through on their way to the Co-op slaughterhouse. Sometimes one would escape and get into the back garden and cause havoc. I didn’t like this.

“My Grandmother worked for many years at Trinity College as a bedmaker, a lot of women did in those days. When someone in the family passed away, Gran would be sent to ‘lay them out’ and she also helped bring babies into the world”.

Betty recalls some of their neighbours in Sturton Street: the Reed family, Mrs Overhill and family, the Smiths, Mrs Pope, Mrs Brown, the Fletcher and Haslop families.

The small homes did not come with the facilities taken for granted today. “The Bath house was in Gwydir Street, opposite Dales Brewery, and a small shop called Hoppits. We went to the baths every Saturday, in all weathers. I remember going when the snow was ankle deep. Sometimes they would let my sister or a friend share a bath with me, it was great fun.

“My favourite sweet shop was Goodliffe’s and other shops that come to mind are, the Co-op grocers, Cable’s bakers, Biggs dairy, Samson butcher, Tom Flacks sweets and groceries and a Mr Saggars, who sold rabbits and fruit and veg. I loved rabbit stew and dumplings.

“My brother Peter had a friend named Jack Reynolds, who lived in Leaders Row, which led into Staffordshire Street, where there was a hot pea shop. We would take our own basins for the peas, and sit and eat them on our doorstep. They were lovely, with plenty of salt and vinegar. We also got a bag of chips from Taylor’s fish and chip shop in Norfolk Street.

“On the corner of Norfolk and St Matthews Street, was a Post Office, or a grocers shop, I am not quite sure. There was a fish shop that sold cockles, winkles, shrimps etc that we would buy for Sunday tea, as a treat sometimes. Wheatley’s scrap yard was in Gas Lane, and we would take empty bottles and rags and got a few pennies for them. There was also Clovers sweet shop nearby.

“Fred Summerfield’s shop was on the corner of Vicarage Terrace, and sold almost everything: groceries fruit, veg, and a lovely selection of sweets. One of my favourites was quite a novelty: it was a square box, with rows of small holes on the top. You pierced a hole, and a coloured ball would roll out. You always won a bar of chocolate, if you were very lucky, a silver or gold ball won a small box of chocolates. I would spend most of my pocket money on this”.

Just before the war Betty lived in Vicarage Terrace and for a while it was a very happy time in her life.

“My best friend was Gladys Clark. Her father worked at a fruit and veg shop in Burleigh Street. Some days we would take his dinner and a can of hot tea, and he would give us a bag of overripe fruit. What a treat that was. I remember most of the people in the Terrace. The children I played with were Jean Martin, Betty Watson, Betty Fordham and Tony Summerfield. Mrs Hinson was our next-door neighbour, the other people I remember are, the Palmer family, Langfords, Clarks and the Fordhams.

“There were two air raid shelters we went to when the siren sounded. They were in Gas Lane, which was at the end of St Matthews Street. They were cold in the winter, as they were dug into the ground, and the walls were concrete. There was often water on the floor, and it always smelt damp. We made up a bed from a small tin bath for my baby brother to lay in, and carried him into the shelter in it. Everyone was in good spirits, and we would enjoy sing alongs, read books and play cards etc. I remember someone playing an accordion.”

All that changed on a June night in 1940 when German bombs smashed into Vicarage Terrace, destroying homes and lives. Some of the children Betty played with were amongst the fatalities, including best-friend Gladys

The events of that terrible night can never be forgotten, but for those who survived life had to go on:

“At the end of the war I was going to St George’s School, and we now lived at 30 St Matthews Street, on the corner of Vicarage Terrace, where my brother Colin was born. Almost everyday I pass the house where my Grandparents lived, and remember the happy years I lived with them until I married in 1948. I am only a few doors away, where I have lived for 46 years, so I have many memories of living in Sturton Street”.

Thank you, Betty, for sharing them.

If Betty’s recollections have sparked memories for you, then please drop me a line at the News

SUBS

THE VICARAGE TERRACE BOMBING – AND PICTURES - HAS BEEN DONE SEVERAL TIMES BUT NOT THE PERSONAL DETAILS OF LIFE IN STURTON STREET

Sturton St 1964

Sturton Street, a long narrow street of terraced houses developed in the 1870s and 1880s to house a growing population of railway workers. Since this photograph was taken in 1964, the shop has been redeveloped, the number of cars increased and young dons and professional people have made it their home. The name plate of Vicarage Terrace can be seen on the right

Watching the world go by: from the door of Cable’s shop and the White Hart pub in Sturton Street

Palmer family - Members of the Palmer family, neighbours of Betty’s in Vicarage Terrace, some of whom were killed when bombs hit

135.01 and/or 7032 - the rubble of homes in Vicarage Terrace, hit by bombs in June 1940. The site is now occupied by Age Concern’s Cherrytrees Centre

Bath House – the Bath House in Gwydir Street that Betty and her sister visited each Saturday

Co-op - Betty's grandad used Co-op horse droppings in his garden

Memories 14th November 2011, by Mike Petty

Whilst browsing through the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers website I chanced upon the report of the Board of Agriculture on wages in 1919. There was one section in particular that caught my eye.

The Parliamentary gentlemen were concerned about the provision of housing for rural workers, especially in the fens where many farm labourers had a long bicycle ride to and from work along roads that were often flooded.

There were few cottages in those inaccessible areas and more were needed. But what would the ideal fenland home comprise?

One of those who gave evidence was Miss Constance Cochrane. She had been speaking about housing to about 60 women in a fen village in the Isle of Ely, and had asked them what sort of cottages they would like if a kind fairy presented them with money for the purpose

She reported: "Every woman held up her hand for three bedrooms, they clamoured for this before everything else. In low crowded rooms, even with the small windows open at night, the closeness of the atmosphere often caused headaches and feelings of suffocation. In illness the third bedroom was essential while some women spoke of there being nowhere to place the dead in a cottage with two bedrooms and one living room"

The mothers were unanimous in objecting to putting their growing girls and boys in the same bedroom and to having nowhere to accommodate relations, married children, those in service and perhaps a sick nurse. Nearly all would be satisfied with a fireplace in just one bedroom but wished that chimneys might be built not to smoke

Downstairs, the ideal kitchen was about 15 feet long by 12 feet wide. There would be a pantry or larder facing north or east, which should be long and narrow – 10 feet by 4. So much space was required for bread pans, meat in pickle, flour bins, drinking water, vegetables, apples, home-made jams etc. One woman complained she had to keep the onions under her bed because there was no other place for them and Miss Cochrane reported that she had often seen wheat heaped up or in sacks in a small living-room or bedroom

All the women wanted a large living room but opinions were divided as to whether the house would be better with a large scullery or a smaller scullery and a separate parlour.

Many would prefer one room away from the cooking, washing and undressing of the children or drying of clothes. One they could keep tidy and where the children's prizes, presents from absent sons and daughters and the many household treasures might be displayed. The husband or elder children, wanting to be quiet in the evening, the mother, tired or with a headache, the visitor or friend, would use it constantly, if not every day, and always on Sunday. One young woman had another concern: 'There's nowhere for me to have my young man in the evening, so I am forced to go out with him in the street'

The rooms should be about eight feet high, certainly not more than nine, because of the difficulty of reaching to whitewash. There should be one large sash window but not more, on account of the cold, problems of cleaning and the trouble and expense of blinds and window curtains. They must be sash types so that only the top needed to be opened in wet and windy weather. Other windows were difficult to clean and liable to break.

The majority of ladies wanted the copper and sink to be in a shed outside, because of the steam. This should also contain a small fireplace just to hold a kettle or saucepan for cooking in summer. But rather less than half of them cared for a bath and the others would be satisfied to continue the use of the wash-tub. This indifference was partly due to the great scarcity and difficulty in obtaining water, it was explained.

All this was very unlikely to come about but, Constance noted, “it was touching to witness the gratitude and pleased surprise of many of the women at such unusual importance being attached to their opinions and ideas of comfort”

It is interesting to speculate that these ladies’ opinions may have influenced the inter-war council housing boom that saw new homes springing up throughout the county.

The Board of Agriculture and Fisheries. Report on wages and conditions of employment in agriculture. Vol. II, 1919

Available on the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers website - <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk/marketing/index.jsp> which allows you to search thousands of government reports and documents from 1715 to the present. It can be accessed at Cambridge Central Library or Cambridge University Library

pictures

145.97 life inside an old-fashioned cottage

159.103 cottage interior

7495, 7499 - choice of fen women –

7877 fen cottage at Burnt Fen

10281 kitchen interior, Willingham

Haddenham – new council houses at New Town, Haddenham

Littleport – The Crescent, council houses

House of Common Parliamentary Papers website

Memories 21st November 2011, by Mike Petty

Denis Christian from Oakington has sent me copies of some of his late father’s writings. Sid Christian will be remembered by many as a baker with shops in Gwydir Street, Sturton Street and Dover Hill, off East Road. Born in 1900, he got to know the area very well and in his latter days set down his recollections of his boyhood.

In them Sid recalled how, as a lad, he would stand in Mill Road outside the Royal Standard public house, opposite Belgrave Road, where Mr Fletcher the landlord used to play his accordion outside on certain holidays. He was waiting for a bus – a horse-bus.

There are very few memories of this form of transport but a newspaper report from the year of Sid’s birth makes interesting reading:

In April 1900 as the horse bus was waiting for passengers opposite the Royal Standard and the driver was talking on the path, the horses for some unknown reason bolted. The driver and conductor immediately ran after the animals but were unable to catch them. Two passengers named Annie & Frances Scull, who were on the top of the 'bus jumped off, escaping with grazes. When the bus was about to pass the Durham Ox it collided with a market cart belonging to Jonas Wilmott the Orwell carrier and then hit another cart idriven by Eli Newman, a hawker from Bottisham. The runaway bus was finally stopped by Charles Lewis, a clothier and Robert Nelson a labourer.

But the accident did not seem to have worried the company too much, for Sid recalled: "Ginger the driver, always let me sit with him on the high front seat and he would give me the reins and let me drive, sometimes with two horses. There was very little on the roads those days so I used to guide the horses all the way to the Bank near the end of Petty Cury". He adds "Ginger would check the pennies in the box attached to the back of our seat - there were a few that did not pay".

It may have been this failure to collect the fare that led to the company being wound up in 1902. The news was received with a great deal of regret down Mill Road where people felt it would lead to a depreciation in the value of property. Shop and office workers would also now it difficult to get to and from their places of work in the hour usually allowed for dinner.

Sid recalled a journey along Mill Road: "Just past Malta Road it was all waste ground, where we went blackberrying. Gone are all the allotments, the football ground and the railway line, where they shunted all the carriages, now all built on" – the site of Coleridge Road

Then there was Romsey Terrace leading down to Polecat Farm. The shop at the corner selling fruit and vegetables was kept by Daddy Dawson and his wife. He was a big man who always wore a high sort of bowler hat and tight whipcord trousers. Sid had a regular job on Saturday fetching Daddy's wife a bottle of milk stout in a fish bag from the off licence across the road and was rewarded with several over ripe bananas.

Next door was the shoe repairer, "you could always see him standing in the window banging away with his hammer". Then the baker's shop kept by Mrs Anderson and her sister; their bread was delivered by a man who drove a high two wheeled van with a white horse that was getting old. "I remember standing outside the wheelwrights in Perowne Street when the driver went into the yard and came out with the blacksmith who carried a short stick with a rope loop on it (a twitch I think he called it) and a large file rasp. He twisted the loop round the horse's bottom lip to keep its mouth open then began to file his teeth straight so that the animal could chew its food better."

Alongside was a large sweet shop where they made ice cream. This shop was taken about a couple of years later by Eddie Goodlife. "I used to do jobs for him: I made his monster bottles of mineral waters which sold for one penny, as well as halfpenny and penny bars of chocolate and packets of broken toffee - one penny per quarter - and very large biscuits one penny each. When the First War started and the army was billeted near Romsey school I trundled a handcart to Malta Road and sold them to the soldiers"

Some of Sid's income would be spent in the Tracy Hall in Cockburn Street where he used to go once a week to pay a penny for a magic Lantern show, a cup of tea and a bun. Then came Smith's Lodge between Sedwick Street and Cavendish Road with its high wall – "but not to high to stop us lads from nipping over and borrowing his Williams pears before throwing the cores back over the wall".

The horse buses had been replaced after a year or two by Ortona motor buses and Sid had a particular memory of seeing one unable to make the gradient over Mill Road bridge: "Mr

Walford, the manager, was putting a large wooden chuck under the back wheel to stop the bus running backwards”

Once over the bridge there was a café at the top of Devonshire Road with its large copper urn always gleaming. Then passing St Barnabas Church he would watch the men going into the Workhouse or Union, known as 81a Mill Road, and wonder what it was like inside. At the corner of Covent Garden was the windmill Public house, replaced at the beginning of 1912 by the Playhouse Cinema, itself now history.

Then there were two small cottages with the gardens in front which were occupied by two bedmakers: “you could see them going to the colleges about six o clock in the morning dressed in small black bonnets and long black cloaks under which they carried a bag for all the odds and ends the gentlemen did not require”. This corner was all cleared with several small shops built, Mr Page the butcher had one and Mr Cambridge the photographer.

Ahead lay Parker’s Piece which was the scene of much excitement on Good Friday when crowds would flock for the traditional skipping and tugs of war while games of Bat and Trap or Quoits were played for a small barrel of beer.

But the more valuable prize for a boy like Sid dressed in a new straw hat and celluloid collars with fancy Dickies covering his not so fancy shirts might be a smile from one of the young ladies displaying their new frocks and hats gaily bedecked with coloured ribbons.

Perhaps you too have family writings recalling such things from all those years ago. Share them with me at the News

Scans

141.45 – a horse bus, Sid used to hold the reins
1865 Mill Road in Sid’s childhood
7603 Mill Road bridge was too steep for motor buses
9177 An Ortona motor bus
30890 Corner of Mill Road and Devonshire Road

Memories 28 November 2011 by Mike Petty

Last Monday’s News carried the headline “A14 ‘may have to become a toll road’” But as a recent book makes clear, toll roads are nothing new.

Until the 1600s roads were maintained by the individual parishes through which they passed. But locals had little incentive to look after the more distant cross-country sections only used by travellers.

In 1663 Justices became particularly concerned about the state of the heavily-used Great North Road between Wadesmill in Hertfordshire and Stilton near Peterborough. They came up with the idea of putting a spiked pole across the road and charging travellers a toll to pass through. The money raised would be used to keep the road in repair.

The idea caught on and soon other ‘Turnpike Trusts’ were set up. In 1724 routes into Cambridgeshire were improved by a trust covering the Chesterford to Cambridge and Newmarket roads. Others followed including Chatteris to Somersham in 1728 and March to Wisbech two years later. However travellers from Cambridge to Ely continued to make a muddy journey along the fen causeway between Rampton and Aldreth until the building of a new bridge over the Old West at Stretham Ferry opened up a more direct route – the present

A10. This was turnpiked in 1763 and the road extended to Littleport, Mepal and Downham Market in 1770.

Fees were set down by Act of Parliament and varied according to the type of vehicle using the road: some caused more damage than others and had to pay a higher charge. The rates were displayed on a board, part of one of which was recently discovered by a Haddenham farmer.

Inevitably people tried to get out of paying: one carter at Lt Shelford who had four asses drawing his wagon lifted two of them into the cart before he got to the turnpike gate and so reduced his bill. There were other ways of evading the charge: at Lt Abington people could escape the toll by turning off the road and travelling through a farmyard.

The toll-taker was not a popular figure. He was described as ‘a cold hearted wretch, planted in his vile little cot like a spider in his den, ready to pounce out upon every passenger and extract his odious dues. No feeling of remorse or sympathy had he for any fellow-mortal. It may be a wedding party rolling merrily along to church, it may be a funeral train, the parson or country surgeon, a set of ladies or gentlemen caracoling forth for pleasure - or a set of dull patient carrier wagons heaving slowly on their laborious mission. No matter who it may be or how or whence it came - this atrocious tollman was sure to present his harsh visage and demand payment!’

It was a dangerous job but Mrs Page, keeper of the Papermills turnpike gate on Newmarket Road Cambridge was praised after fighting off three robbers who struck just after the early-morning mail coach had passed through. The heroism with which she and her daughters saw off the attackers, with the aid of a small pistol, was much praised

It was not just road users who were changed. Tolls were also levied on cattle drovers and bargees using the high banks of fenland rivers as route ways. And on the road between Somersham and Chatteris a toll was taken for crossing a river that had dried up over a century before!

Most of the turnpike trusts were wound up after the coming of the railways reduced the amount of traffic wearing down the roads. Those on the main road from Cambridge to Ely were taken down during 1874 when a notice was issued that the material of tollhouses and their outbuildings were to be sold and removed before the end of the year. Responsibility was transferred to Highway Boards, forerunners of the County Councils

But one survived until 1905. The road between Fordham and Burwell had been constructed following the Inclosure of the two parishes. But right in the middle was a stretch of private land owned by Sir Vincent Cotton. He erected a tollgate and demanded payment from anybody passing through. This was the subject of constant complaint until finally on 1st December 1905 speeches were made and photographs taken of the payment of the last toll. Then the gate was lifted off its hinges and the road was open forever. But Charles Rose M.P. decided he wanted his involvement recorded and manoeuvred his motor car into place with the post stuck back in the hole temporarily just for the photographer.

The Victorians had wanted to remove all reminders of the time that travellers were charged to use a road. But a number of turnpike houses still remain if you know where to look.

Now Patrick Taylor has produced a pictorial gazetteer of those that survive in Cambridgeshire with photographs showing them as they are now and a brief account of what was once just history, but may now be coming back.

“The Toll-houses of Cambridgeshire” by Patrick Taylor, published by Polystar Press at £7.95 – ISBN 978 1 907154 06 5

pictures

86.163 paying the last toll at Burwell 1905

9745 the gatepost was put back so an MP could drive through in his motor car

155.34 the Papermills turnpike house, Newmarket Road, Cambridge 1972

152.29 fragment of a turnpike toll notice found at Haddenham

10169 gate between Somersham and Chatteris where travellers had to pay a toll for crossing a river that had dried up centuries before

7873 toll house at Guyhirn where cattle drovers were charged for driving their animals on the river bank

144.53 a reminder of the days of turnpike roads is still visible on a wall in Castle Street Cambridge

Memories 5th December 2011 by Mike Petty

This week I treated myself to an early Christmas present. It will last all year, is one I will never tire of and will actually increase in its usefulness as time passes.

I bought a file of old Cambridge newspapers including all the issues of the Cambridge Chronicle published between 1813 and 1831. It came out each week and carried stories, advertisements and notices relating to the issues of the day.

I know that the file is incomplete - the Chronicle commenced in 1762 and continued until the 1930s - for when I started in Cambridge Central Library at the back of the Guildhall in the 1960s there were bound files of the paper – shelf after shelf of large volumes - stacked up to the ceiling. I also know something of what it reported for in 1970 fellow members of a Haddenham WEA class started to plod through them, page by page, looking for information about our local communities.

This initiative continued until the news stories reported in the Cambridge Chronicle had been indexed for every week from 1770 to 1899 – not just for Haddenham but for all villages in Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely. In the following decades several villages arranged for these stories to be copied out and published in a series of ‘Chronicles’.

Many other indexes followed. But trying to locate information on velocipedes, stage coaches, incendiarism or murders still involves many hours of plodding through page after page. Until now.

For my new file of papers is fully indexed. I can ask for a mention of a place or family name and it will take me to a page of any issue containing it. There is a typed copy of the text and although there are various spelling mistakes I can correct these so they’re right next time. And then there is a copy of the actual paper as it was issued all those decades ago. It can be read page by page, made larger and even copied.

And it takes up no space at all.

No, I’ve not started on the Christmas sherry early. For this file of the Cambridge Chronicle has been digitised by the British Newspaper Library and is published online. You can search it for free, then pay to view the actual item.

And I did not just get the Cambridge Chronicle. I also got files of the Huntingdon, Bedford and Peterborough Gazette – better known as the Cambridge Independent Press – from 1818-1867 and the Bury Post 1801-1900. This often reprinted Cambridgeshire stories, as did the Norfolk, Chelmsford and Morning Chronicles, the Ipswich Journal, Louth and North Lincs Advertiser and many other local and regional titles from across the country that come as part of the package.

Then there's the Illustrated Police News from 30th October 1869 which has a report on a modern highwayman near Cambridge: a 23-year-old who dressed up like Dick Turpin and pulled a pistol on a carriage near Thriplow.

The British Newspaper Library project is just one of a series of databases that have been available to scholars for some time. Similar initiatives have been undertaken in America, Australia and New Zealand which can be searched for free on the Internet – type in the name of a transported ancestor and see if he committed further crimes out there.

And of course one must not forget the Cambridge News itself. Each morning today's paper is waiting when I log on. I can read it in full colour, then when I want to look back at a Memories article of three-or-four years ago I can just type in some words, click the mouse and there it is.

None of this is as good as handling an original issue or browsing through a file of cuttings – and for this it is back to the Cambridgeshire Collection now housed on the third floor of Lion Yard Library.

It holds the most complete file of Cambridgeshire newspapers anywhere in the world and has microfilmed them to reduce the need to handle 200-year old pieces of paper.

Although the British Newspaper Library will be continually adding to those on its website, it will be many years before they can hope to match it for local titles.

But their digital technology is infinitely easier to use than microfilm readers. So for now I'll sit in the summerhouse in the winter sunshine reading old newspaper stories on my laptop.

The British Newspaper Library website is - <http://www1.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>

For a Guide to Cambridgeshire Newspapers and their indexes see Mike's website -

Pictures

5678 members of Haddenham WEA scanning newspapers in 1970

5711 newspapers have long been a part of library stock – newspaper readers 1930

160030 Mike Petty checking microfilm of newspapers in 1980s

160033 a selection of Cambridge newspapers with microfilm and computer disk

160029 newspaper indexing used catalogue cards

Modern Highwayman – a page from the new website

Sketch of a man reading a newspaper, June 1895

Memories 12th December 2011 by Mike Petty

The Cambridge Corn Exchange celebrated the 25th anniversary of its revamp as a Concert Hall and Conference facility with a fanfare played by members of the Cambridge Youth Orchestra. But its history has not always been harmonious as the music played that night.

Its opening in November 1875 sparked what became known as the “Death Riots”.

John Death, then Mayor of Cambridge, was also owner of a livery stable. As he drove in his robes and chain to open the new Corn Exchange various undergraduates called out “Whoa Mayor” – but he carried on to do his civic duty. Two days later an inaugural concert was held, arranged by the Cambridge Musical Society. The Corn Exchange was packed and the Mayor and Corporation were jostled as they attempted to reach their reserved seats.

During the singing of the National Anthem some undergraduates began to yell and stamp and before long the concert was interrupted. Twice the Mayor appealed to the students to keep order, but to no avail. Women fainted, children screamed and the police were called. Seven arrests were made which led the undergraduates to attempt to “rescue” their colleagues. Under such circumstances the concert had to be abandoned.

The next day the arrested men were heavily fined. Incensed undergraduates burnt effigies of the Mayor, crying “Death! ... Death!” and marched on his house, which stood on the site of the present Wesley church. Here police were unable to prevent them smashing the windows and the situation seemed out of control.

Then onto the scene strode “Black Morgan”, tutor of Jesus College, a popular figure in the University. He climbed on a wall and said that he would be quite blind for five minutes, but no longer. During that period the crowd dispersed with three cheers for the Tutor of Jesus. No further action was taken by proctor or police.

In May 1909 undergraduates played havoc at a meeting of the Cambridge Association for Women’s Suffrage. The Corn Exchange had a seating capacity of about 1,500 but by utilising the farmers’ desks and standing in every available space, an audience of 2,000 packed in. Quite 80 per cent were women, of whom Newnham and Girton contributed a considerable quota. But it was the minority whose increasingly violent disruptions caused the meeting to break up in a disorderly manner.

Even the farmers and corn merchants who conducted their business in the Exchange traditionally ended the year with a fight, as the News reported in December 1934: *The signal for the commencement of the battle was the explosion of a cracker near the door. The ‘firer’ was immediately bombarded and soon covered with flour, wheat and artificial manure. Crackers banged merrily, bags burst with marked effect and very soon all the dignified corn-merchants were life-like imitations of snowmen. After 30 minutes the ammunition ran out and combat ceased, though the debris-covered floor was witness of the fight that had been in progress. Even the rather grim-looking statue of Jonas Webb looked comical with the flour-bag headgear that was placed on it.*

During the run-up to more serious conflicts Winston Churchill addressed a meeting of undergraduates there in 1939 and it was the venue for a War Weapons Week exhibition with a downed German plane as star exhibit

Since then the Corn Exchange has resounded to the thud and thump of boxing and wrestling bouts, the ping-pong of table tennis competition and the rumble of roller-skating wheels. The News for May 1970 reported as many as 200 young people regularly crowded in to take advantage of evening skating sessions. At two shillings, (10p), skating was cheaper than the cinema.

There have been dog shows, motor shows, book shows, children's entertainment and old people's teas, twist and bingo sessions.

In April 1974 came more disturbances. The hall was packed with 1,000 pop fans who'd paid £1.10p for a ticket for a concert by The Drifters. They waited for 90 minutes for the group to turn up before frustration turned to anger, windows were smashed and police with dogs took an hour to restore order.

Throughout the 1970s the search had been on for a source of funding to allow the transformation of the old building. Mayor Jack Warren started negotiations with millionaire recluse David Robinson. But he found the Corn Exchange too ugly and the cost too high. Mecca became involved for a while, but things move at a leisurely pace in Cambridge and it was December 1986 before the Concert Hall actually opened and the building itself started a new phase in its most varied – and more peaceful - career.

What are your memories of the Corn Exchange

101.74 Roller skating in Corn Exchange, Oct 1974 The person on the far right of the picture is Martin Flack with his chums from Chesterton School,

145.91 Coronation Tea Party in Corn Exchange, May 1937

8561 Corn Merchants at their desks, Sep 1956

110.85 Table Tennis tournament 1956

156.81 Motor show in Corn Exchange 1965 when a prototype Triumph G.T.6 was displayed, third right and a Volvo P1800 "The Saint's" car

7375 A Motor show was an annual event in the Corn Exchange in the early 1900s

154.48 The Corn Exchange seen across the Lion Yard car park in 1961

Memories 19th December 2011 by Mike Petty

In 1918, at the end of the Great War, a returned army chaplain, Eric Milner-White, started a new sort of carol service at King's College. He adapted an idea that had been begun at Truro Cathedral in 1880 with nine carols and nine lessons read by various officers of the church beginning with a chorister and ending with a bishop. It would, he said, symbolise the link between King's and Eton, the goodwill between University and Town and peace within the whole Church at Christmas time.

Ten years later the BBC broadcast it for the first time; they continued even during the Second War when the Chapel glass was removed for safe keeping, there was no heating and for security reasons the name of the Chapel had to be kept secret. Now it has become a traditional part of Christmas celebrations shared around the world through the magic of television cameras that will illuminate parts of the building invisible to human eye.

Those wishing to attend the Christmas Eve service in person will queue overnight for admission. Other overnight visitors have been less welcome. In 1800 William Grimshaw and Richard Kidman picked the lock to the outer door and for several nights let themselves in. They steadily worked their way picking the other locks that stood between themselves and a valuable collection of college coins and medals. Grimshaw, however, became scared – "the place looked so awful, that he trembled every time as if he had the ague" and he left Kidman to it. Both were caught and transported to Australia.

Others have climbed to the roof. In March 1627 the Duke of Buckingham, favourite of King Charles I and Chancellor of the University, refused to take part in what was then the custom

of having the shape of his foot, together with his name and arms cut in the lead of the roof. – it was, he said, too high for him. However later that year an Antiquarian visitor escorted his new bride to the same height where she left her dainty footprint. It was one of the smallest in England, but then she was only 13 years old!

In 1660 the Cambridge town band played music from the top of the Chapel and soldiers fired a volley of shots to mark the Restoration of King Charles II. Although Cromwell's men had used the chapel as a drill hall the famous stained glass had been spared the widespread destruction that was ordered elsewhere by William Dowsing.

The chapel bells were also intact at the time, hanging in a wooden building to the west of the chapel which by 1728 was in such a poor condition that the bellringer, Henry West, was crushed to death when one fell on him. The building was demolished in 1739 and the bell sold for scrap 15 years later.

The interior of the Chapel has been remodelled over the centuries but just 50 years ago In March 1961 the College announced that they had been offered the gift of a work of art of the very first rank – the painting of the Adoration of the Magi by the Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens. It had been recently purchased for a world record price of £250,000 by Major Alfred Allnatt who had been searching for an appropriate ecclesiastical building in which to display it.

In November the heavy wooden panel, measuring 12ft by 9ft, arrived in a 30ft lorry and trailer, escorted by two security guards and an Alsatian dog. They were concerned less about robbery than a student rag. Ten men took two hours to get the picture to the chapel doors and the 13 hundredweight masterpiece was winched on to a giant easel beside the chapel screen where it was to stay whilst they worked out quite how to display it as an altarpiece.

In April 1964 the painting was moved to the East end, and four years later, confirmed in its position following a major restoration. Not all agree that the Adoration and the setting complement each other. As one man wrote to the Cambridge News in December 1968; “The restored Chapel at King's College is magnificent but I feel that if the Rubens was moved to the right, say as far as the Fitzwilliam Museum, it would look even better”.

Pictures

61.11 15 – the News reports the arrival of the Adoration in November 1961

107.27 the painting in its first temporary position

109.72 chapel interior c1905

134.14 Kings Parade and Chapel 1798

136.89 Kings Parade c1905

159.67 newly-discovered photo of the chapel interior taken between 1872 and 1911. The two 6-foot candelabra were made in 1872. The reredos in the photo is the Essex reredos (18th century), which was replaced by the Detmar Blow reredos in 1911.

160071 the Adoration of the Magi painting

160070 Televising the carol service in 1963

Memories 26 Dec 2011 – not published as was Boxing Day

Memories 2012, Jan – Dec 31

Memories 2nd January 2012, by Mike Petty

Amongst the pictures housed at Ely Museum is a magnificent view of St Mary's Street painted by Henry Baines in 1857. Henry was born in 1823 in King's Lynn, the son of a master mariner. After serving two years of an apprenticeship at sea, he went to study art in London where he formed a friendship with Edwin Landseer. After several years of art training in Europe, Baines returned to Lynn and set up his own Art Academy in Union Street. His pictures consist mainly of landscapes, topographical views and coastal scenes, often with ships or fishing in or around King's Lynn. He was a prolific draughtsman. Following his death in 1894, a large scale exhibition of his paintings was held at Blackfriars Hall, King's Lynn, including 195 oil paintings and 196 watercolours. Some of these pictures, and others from subsequent sales in 1895 and 1914 were later acquired by King's Lynn Museum.

In Cambridge Mary C. Greene was another artist recording the local scene. Mary was deaf; she was also blind in one eye but with the other she could see more than most with two. She was passionate about painting, studying art in Paris. But it was after she settled at Harston with her brother, Sir Graham Greene (uncle of the novelist), that she turned to landscape painting. Often she would walk to Cambridge to potter around, finding charm in over-looked back streets or inn yards. She was no fine-weather artist as her view of Peas Hill on a wet day testifies, Rose Crescent before the rebuilding of 1934 provided her with a glimpse of the market hill, whilst in the courtyard of Ye Olde Castle hotel in St Andrews Street (later redeveloped as the Regal Cinema) she found a peaceful escape from the war-time fervour of 1917. Mary exhibited at the Royal Academy and was President of the Cambridge Drawing Society. She enjoyed her art to the end, the paint on some of the works being still wet when she died in December 1951

Huntingdonshire attracted a number of artists. In 1898 St Ives was described as "an ancient time-dimmed town and a drowsy old-fashioned town, delightfully unprogressive and little given to so-called modern improvement ... a place where the feverish rush of life seems stayed". By then the commercial traffic on the river, once so busy, had virtually ceased and the towing path with its bridges, locks and fords was somewhat neglected, decayed and overgrown. It formed a perfect sketching ground for artists and soon groups of friends came for a week or two. Some stayed a summer and quite a number made the area their home. Their paintings were exhibited in London galleries which spread word of the town's charm. Tourists were attracted to the area which soon developed into a riverside holiday venue, stimulating the growth of leisure boating and fishing. And such visitors increased the market for pictures, which in turn encouraged more artists to produce them. Well over a hundred artists are known to have worked in the area around the turn of the century but by the 1930s almost all had gone, driven out by the harsh economic effects of the Depression and changing tastes in the art market. Several of their paintings are housed in the town's Norris Museum.

Whilst galleries make strenuous efforts to display their collections, many paintings are held in storage, usually because there are insufficient funds and space to show them. Nor do many depositories have a complete photographic record of their artwork, let alone a comprehensive illustrated catalogue of their collections. So what is publicly owned is not publicly accessible. But now a remarkable project has been seeking out such oil paintings held in public collections throughout the country.

Over the last few years the Public Catalogue Foundation has been recording the pictures and collating information about them. It is now well over halfway through this project, having photographed nearly 110,000 paintings from over 1,600 collections. Until recently, their main focus was publishing a series of hard copy catalogues. Now it has published its work online

allowing users to search for paintings of individual places or themes. To achieve this aim, the PCF has entered into a partnership with the BBC to build the Your Paintings website. It expects to complete the digitisation programme by late 2012, funding permitting.

But they need your help in identifying locations or adding to their captions of the pictures. If you have an hour or two to spare then log in to www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings and prepare to be captivated by pictures you may never have seen before about whatever part of the country you know best

Pictures

135.14 St Mary's Street Ely 1857 by Henry Baines

148.96 Rose Crescent, Cambridge looking towards the market by Mary Greene

161.12 The Castle Inn Yard, St Andrew's Street by Mary Greene 1917

161.67 Cambridge Mill Pool showing the King's and Bishop's watermill c1795 by R. Harraden

161.68 Cambridge Telegraph Coach leaving White Horse Tavern, London, 1833 by James Pollard

149.79 St Ives bridge 1889 by Frederick George Cotman

Memories 9th January 2012 by Mike Petty

Sherlock Holmes' adventures are once more attracting wide attention with a new series of television programmes.

Such interest is nothing new. In August 1904 the Cambridge Daily News reported: "The current issue of the 'Strand Magazine' possesses a special interest for Cambridge people since the town has furnished Sir Arthur Conan Doyle with material for his latest Sherlock Holmes story, The Missing Three-Quarter. It concerns the disappearance of a member of the Cambridge University rugger team on the eve of the annual match against Oxford. Holmes is supposed to visit Cambridge, residing in an inn next to a bicycle shop; he explores Histon, Oakington and Waterbeach and the final scene of the story is set in a lonely cottage in a field near Trumpington".

But how accurate was Dr Watson's account of his visit? When in April 1989 the Sherlock Holmes Society of London made an expedition Cambridge to examine the great detective's connections with the University and town I was asked to search the files of the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library to see whether there was any contemporary pictorial record of the scenes depicted in any of the stories.

For one it was relatively straightforward. 'The Missing Three-Quarter' describes how Holmes arrives at Cambridge station where he takes a cab to the house of a doctor in the busiest thoroughfare – St Andrew's Street. When he is turned away, his questions unanswered, he takes a room in a hotel opposite. This was the Castle Inn, later destroyed by fire and replaced by the Regal Cinema. Seeing the doctor set off in his carriage Holmes decides to follow – and Howes shop just down the street is an ideal place from which to acquire a bicycle.

There are various pictures that show Holmes on his bike as he makes his way down Petty Cury, Trinity Street, Bridge Street and Chesterton Lane – remembering that he was a master of disguise and could change his appearance en route. Eventually the doctor halts in the

middle of Milton Road and invites Holmes to go ahead! He hides up in Milton but the carriage never shows.

Next day Holmes decides to explore the adjacent countryside. This time his route takes him along Victoria Road, then to Histon, Oakington and Waterbeach. But here there is a problem: there is no mention of him having visited Cottenham, yet this must have been on his route. Careful perusal of Cottenham pictures does reveal someone that looks very like Holmes biking down the High Street in which he seems to be pursued by a grumpy-looking cow. Perhaps he was too embarrassed to mention this to Watson!

Once more the exploration is unsuccessful. Holmes returns to Cambridge where he sees newspaper headlines reporting the failure of his entire mission: the University has lost the Varsity match, due to the missing rugger player!

Not to be beaten Holmes tries one last time. He borrows Pompey, pride of the Cambridgeshire draghounds, who follows the aniseed-coated wheels of the doctor's carriage along Newmarket Road, down Coldham's Lane to Cherry Hinton and ultimately Trumpington where the story has its conclusion.

All this seems to show that Conan Doyle's knowledge of local topography was quite detailed.

There is another story that is more challenging to prove. 'The Three Students' involves a scandal that is so intense that Watson will not report in which University – Oxford or Cambridge – the events occur: one of three undergraduates has obtained access to his Professor's room and sneaked a look at the examination paper. He tries to disguise the particular college (though there are some clues in the description of the building that point to Trinity Hall)

The only real information was that the events took place in 1895. A careful study of 'The Granta', the student magazine, for that year actually reveals various references to cheating at exams, Conan Doyle's athletic undergraduates (it was the long-jumper what did it) and a Mr 'Homes' (obviously a misprint). There was even a Mr Watson appearing on the stage of the A.D.C. – apparently cashing-in on his fame, as celebrities do today. It is something Holmes himself was prone also to do for he topped-the-bill at the Cambridge New Theatre on a number of occasions, as playbills and newspaper reports prove!

The great detective's adventures have been screened on a number of occasions but in the 'Table Talk' column for 12 July 1930 the CDN states that "the 'Moriarty' film" showed both Holmes and Watson as undergraduates, claiming "It was here that the great friendship between them began. It was from Cambridge that Sherlock set forth to track down Moriarty and his gang". The News also adds: "Great liberties have been taken with Sherlock Holmes since the first character was created and both in stage play and film you can learn things about the detective that Sir Arthur himself never knew!"

If you have clues or theories, then do share them.

Pictures – choice of:

CDN report from 1930

Milton – Holmes hid up in the bushes

The University rugger match

Cottenham with Holmes and cow

Magdalene Street – Holmes on his cycle weaving through traffic

Petty Cury

New Theatre playbill

At Cambridge station

Trumpington village

Castle Inn where Holmes took rooms

Memories 16th January 2012, by Mike Petty

It is always exciting to discover something new. Last week I was shown an architect's drawing of Dale's Brewery in Gwydir Street, Cambridge

It was produced by the Bristol-based firm of George Adlam and Company. The firm designed a number of impressive breweries often in the Queen Anne Revival style featuring ironwork and polychromatic brickwork. Their most flamboyant works date from around the turn of the century and include a particularly ornate brewery built for Green's of Luton in 1900, the more delicate Westlake's Brewery at Cwmavon (1900) and another at Benskin's Watford Brewery (1901).

More typical contracts in the early years of the new century were for smaller breweries of which Dale's seems to have been one.

Frederick Dale established the brewery in Gwydir Street in 1903. Writing in his 1987 history, Bob Flood describes it as a fine example of a small brewery of the period. It had a three-storey block fronting the street with offices and an archway to the yard with other buildings behind it. The name appeared in large wrought iron lettering around the roof and on a large clock projecting over the street.

All this ties in with the Architect's view and many of the buildings shown in the print are still standing. But when was it drawn and was it ever actually built as depicted?

It cannot have been the original design from 1903 for it shows a large tower above the vehicular entrance to the brewery. On the top of the tower is shown a large ornate cup.

Dale's Brewery did indeed have such a trophy. At the Brewers' International Exhibition held in London in 1911 they were awarded the world's championship and a 50-guinea gold cup for the best bottled beer. The championship beer had been selected from those entries winning first prizes in the various bottled beer classes – Dale's winning in the best pale ale and draught beer categories

The firm were proud of this award, which was featured on their bottles and advertisements with the slogan "World's Highest Award" and "Champion Beers". A seven-foot high copper representation of the Gold Cup was placed on the front of the building and remained a landmark for many years. Tony Challis from Great Shelford recalled in February 2003 how he was apprenticed to George Lister and Sons of Abbey Road. "Besides working in the blacksmith and machine shops we would work at many firms around the city. One of our jobs

was to refurbish the name ‘Dales Brewery’ on the tower at the top of the building, steel letters some 12-inches high which were bolted on all four sides around the gold cup”. The cup was taken down in February 1961

But it was not there in 1903. My suspicion is that the drawing was produced when the works were expanded in 1912. Several houses were bought to accommodate employees and to allow the brewery to build a bottle store on their gardens, while an orchard was used as stabling for their delivery horses and drays. The Brewery made their vehicles available to undergraduates on Rag Day, reflecting the connection between the firm and the university

Then just when I thought I’d got it sussed, another mystery arises!

For the picture is framed. It has an original label on the back which reads “E. Clarke, picture frame maker ... 3 Free School Lane, Cambridge”. Yet Sue Slack from the Cambridgeshire Collection has checked through street directories to discover that until 1925 the firm was known as Clarke and Warwick. So is the print later than I thought. Perhaps it’s been reframed - but an auctioneer says it has never been tampered with.

It’s enough to drive one to drink – perhaps to the fine brew that provided part of the staple training regime for generations of University rowers. Except that Dale’s was taken over by Whitbread and by 1955 draught beer was no longer being brewed. Instead the premises were used as a bottling store until sold to Cambridge City Council in the 1960s.

In January 1973 the old building had a new lease of life when it became home to the International Centre. But it was not licensed. Instead, the cavernous rooms of the old brewery, which once echoed to the clatter of horses’ hooves and the rattle of casks resounded only to the merry pop of Coca Cola cans and the chatter of many tongues as foreign students found themselves somewhere to gather. Now part of it houses an antiques centre.

But did you work there – and do you have a picture of the large cup itself: which seems to be something that has eluded photographers.

Pictures

157.92 the Brewery when used by Whitbreads about 1964

4020 Dale’s Brewery in 2001 – photo by Hugo Brown

70013 Dale’s Brewery in 2001 – photo by Hugo Brown

161114 the newly-discovered architect’s drawing

161115 alternative of above

161116 the ornate tower which may never have been built

161117 detail of houses in Gwydir Street

161112 Dales brewery on cover of Bob Flood’s history of Cambridge Breweries, published 1987

9557 Dale’s brewery lorries were used in Rag Processions, as here in 1928

Memories 23rd January 2012

Recently I have been shown a remarkable picture the Pye Radio works at Chesterton, an industry that has now disappeared.

The Pye Group started life in a back garden in Humberstone Road, Cambridge, where in 1896 William George Pye decided to put experience gained at the Cambridge Instrument Company and Cavendish Laboratory to good use by making apparatus for school laboratories or elementary university classes.

After a few years he leased premises in Mill Lane before in 1913 moving to a larger factory in Haig Road, Chesterton, now Elizabeth Way. During the Great War the firm produced gun-sights and other military instruments but when that market collapsed with the peace Pye diversified into wireless. As the radio side of the business grew so more and more space was needed and the site expanded.

In 1932 Pye Radio invited people to inspect their works and queues five or six deep stretched halfway up Haig Road. The News commented: "It is amazing that a non-industrial town should have such fine works and few realised that we in Cambridge had such an important and highly organised industry in our midst. In these times of depression it is a novelty to find a works which is really flourishing". Despite making 4,000 wireless sets a week, demand was greater than supply and they were planning to increase the size of the factory by 50 percent. That November H.R.H. Prince George toured the works; it was the first time a factory engaged in Britain's newest and most progressive industry had been honoured by a Royal visit.

Pye were also experimenting with television and had sets in production by 1936. But when war again came the company turned its attention to military two-way radios and radar, erecting a large mast for the purpose. The Government urged factories engaged on vital war work to move some of their production elsewhere. In Pye's case they suggested Swansea as a good site. But the firm had no wish to be lumbered with a split workforce should the war be won and claimed that Cambridgeshire people would be reluctant to move. Despite the bombs that fell around town, the Pye factory survived. But looking at the new discovery, one is tempted to wonder how. For the rows and rows of buildings stretching to the gravestones of Chesterton churchyard make it a conspicuous target.

Once peace returned Pye resumed their experimenting work, demonstrating colour television in 1949. They developed studio equipment that was used in the new Anglia TV studios in 1959 and was bought by countries around the world. Their technicians worked on special cameras to enable engineers at Calder Hall to inspect the inside of a nuclear reactor and closed-circuit television to monitor traffic in Leeds. Other engineers developed a portable short-range guided missile for use against armoured vehicles and equipment that could be sent into space on a Blue Streak rocket to improve world-wide telecommunication.

By 1966 Pye was an international enterprise employing 30,000 people in Britain and abroad. And then it collapsed. Government indecision over the introduction of colour television hit production and contributed to a drop in profits. In 1967 the company became part of Philips but continued in its old works until 1986. Today one has to search hard to find anything to recall that it existed.

The picture shows part of the Pye empire in its prime. It looks across from Haig Road – now itself disappeared under Elizabeth Way – towards Chesterton church, Scotland Farm and St Andrew's Road. Today the site that supplied employment for generations provides homes for others with Longworth Avenue running through the middle of the previous factory.

The photograph, taken by the Cambridge Daily News, was rescued from a tip when the company itself moved from being in the forefront of technology to just a memory

There are still many folk who can recall their own contribution to that story, with an active Pye Pensioners group that still brings ex-employees together. Photographs record a glimpse of some of the work undertaken there. But what happened in what building? If you can help then please mark up a cutting and send it through to me at the News

147.57 Pye workers streaming out of the factory 1930s

154.33 workers 1950s

2802 Christmas in the factory 1950s

8831 part of the radio polishing shop, 1930s

missile Pye worked on guided anti-tank missiles

Aerial photo – the remarkable picture, please use as large as possible
Chesterton churchyard

Follow up information

jwakefield63@yahoo.co.uk

23 Jan

to Mike

Dear Mike

I am replying to your request for information on the Pye Radio factory in Haig Road featured in your Memories article (CN 23rd January). I attach a marked up photo showing the main departments within the complex. I myself was an apprentice toolmaker at Pye Radio from April 1959 till April 1964. My wages on starting in 1959 were 1 shilling 7 pence per hour raising to 3 shillings 8 pence per hour in 1964.

You do not give a date for the main photo but it looks to be taken at around the time I worked there. The new office block on the opposite side of St Andrews Road at the top of pic was not built then & the Pye mast (seen at top of pic) a Cambridge land mark, was still in situ, it was demolished during my time there around 1963/4 I think.

At the time I was there it was mainly television sets (black & white) that were manufactured although some audio products, portable radios & the Black Box record player were made there.

Best regards

Memories 30 January 2012 by Mike Petty

Last week's aerial photograph of the Pye works in Haig Road has brought numerous responses from people who worked there.

Chris Goadby from Newmarket can identify the assembly areas, machine shops, design labs, model shop, drawing office and canteen. He recalls that the general movement of TV sets manufactured was from left to right, the chassis bits coming out of the machine shop across to final assembly where they met pre-assembled printed circuit boards before the completed sets were finally boxed-up and despatched from the right-hand end nearest Haig Road.

Tony Cowley from Cottenham was particularly struck with the view of St Andrew's Church. When he started work at the company he would look out of the workshop window to the graves of his grand parents just outside. He also has memories of the firm's Christmas celebrations, when it would not have been safe for a young male employee to get too near the massed and exuberant women assembly workers! But the staff got together after work was

done. I have photos of an outing to Southend in 1936 and a Pye ladies darts team from the mid 1950s – do you recognise anybody.

Clive Cooper and John Wakefield from Gt Shelford have emailed me marked-up copies of the picture. John was an apprentice toolmaker at Pye Radio from April 1959 till April 1964. At that time it they manufactured mainly black and white television sets although some audio products, portable radios & the Black Box record player were also made there.

John's starting wage was one shilling and seven pence (08p) per hour rising to three and eight pence in 1964. At that rate it would have taken him some time to purchase some of the Pye products. An advertisement from 1955 shows that a luxury 21-inch, 13 channel tv cost 140 guineas – over £2,560 at today's prices

Like others John has tried to work out just when the picture was actually taken. It was probably around the time he worked there. The Pye mast, a Cambridge land mark, was still in situ.

The picture does not show the plush 'wavy-roofed' office block built on the river side of St Andrew's Road which was visited by Princess Margaret in 1963. Nor a large cinder-surfaced coach park beyond the church where the coaches that brought in workers from the fens used to park all day. In 1974 more than 1,000 employees – almost a third of the workforce - travelled daily to work by Pye buses. The first of the 40 buses set out from Wisbech in time to make the Cambridge works by 8am. The firm also had a special crèche catering for some 40 children so that their mothers could return to work.

The whole area from the transmitter tower to the car park later became the Pye Telecom works, a four storey white building which opened in May 1978, one week after floods had swamped the area.

But only a part of the Pye empire was based at Chesterton. The studio business manufacturing tv cameras and multi-channel audio mixing desks was in York Street and many of the television cabinets were made either in Coldham's Lane or at a factory in North London. There was a satellite factory at Haverhill and over 60 other Pye 'B' companies throughout East Anglia.

The Pye Telecom works, making telecommunications radios and various complex systems were based at their Ditton Works on Newmarket Road until it closed in 1983. This factory sported the Pye armorial bearings – the first company to be granted such distinction in 1973. .

By 1985 a number of televisions and radios were being marketed under the Pye name, though they were no longer made in Cambridge and featured components produced by Philips. They had acquired a stake in the company in 1967 and completed the take over in 1979.

In 1986 the Pye management team moved to Croydon, leaving the site of the original radio works from which the other Pye companies had grown. Two years later Pye Unicam became Philips Scientific and a famous name passed into history

Tony Cowley recalls that when the last of the employees finally moved out of the site they organised a 'mock-funeral' procession similar to that traditionally held for undergraduates sent down from Cambridge for some misdemeanour. Were you part of that event, do you have photographs or memories to share.

Pictures

The aerial photo

A marked-up copy of the picture
158.17 similar view in 1970s

Detail showing Chesterton churchyard as recalled by Tony Cowley

Pye lady assembly workers, Christmas 1950s (we used this last week)
Pye Ladies darts team mid 1950s

Pye tv advert 1953

7378 Pye Telecom works on Newmarket Road
Pye logo

Memories 6th Feb 2012 by Mike Petty

Once more cycle safety is in the news with fears for both the rider and those with whom he might collide.

Such concerns have been part of the Cambridge scene for nearly 200 years. In May 1819 the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners issued a notice "that any person riding a Machine entitled a Velocipede upon the foot-pavement is liable to the penalty of twenty shillings". Despite this there were complaints of two undergraduates on a double velocipede running down a child watching a Punch and Judy show in Barnwell in August 1857

It is not just students who have found themselves on the wrong side of the law in this regard. The eminent University Geologist, Professor Thomas McKenny Hughes, was caught riding a bicycle on the footpath at Cherry Hinton in 1902. When stopped he complained that police would be doing better if they were moving the horses and carts on the road as they were a greater nuisance. When in 1923 Lady Darwin, of Newnham Grange, was caught cycling on the footway at West Road she pleaded not guilty: "I was riding very slowly; I don't think I was doing any harm to anyone. Some of the friends I see before me on the bench have admitted doing the same thing" she told magistrates to their amusement. Nevertheless she was fined five shillings.

Others have admitted the offence. In 1903 The Rev Charles Crump, of Sawston, was spotted riding a bicycle on the footpath. When the policeman stopped him he admitted "You have fairly caught me". Had he been a young lady not a word would have been said, but he supposed the policeman was glad to have caught a parson he told magistrates.

At the annual dinner of the Cambridge Wanderers Cycle club in December 1897 Mr G. Edwards, the Captain, admitted that not all cyclists were angels. There were men who went tearing about, whistling down the street, ringing their bells and expecting to have the whole street cleared for them. But people began to get used to it: "A few years ago the bicycle was looked upon by pedestrians as a real terror and accidents were frequent. Those that grew up with the machine now simply regard it as one of the ordinary dangers but still watch out for the 'wheeler' who comes scorching by at the phenomenal speed of 20mph", the paper commented in 1904

Perhaps such cyclists were just trying to get home before dark! The problem of riding without lights has long been a major concern. In December 1922 P.C. Cudworth was on duty in Victoria Road when he saw a man riding a bicycle without a front light. When stopped the cyclist said it had just gone out and he was going to light it. He then dismounted from the bicycle took a box of matches from his coat pocket and attempted to strike one. The constable then noticed that the lamp on the machine was an electric one which aroused his suspicions

that the rider may have been drinking! When in December 1949 Vera Lloyd of Cambridge was stopped for riding a bicycle with a white light on the back she said: "I would have put some lipstick on the glass, but I have not got any!"

Once the cyclist arrives at his destination there is the problem of where to park. "The pavements are full of parked machines whilst college courts are empty, a News editorial of 5th March 1910 observed, adding "it will be 20 or 30 years before the problem is solved". Perhaps they were a trifle optimistic! In 1949 Cambridge was unique for the way people parked their countless bicycles – with a careless flick of the foot, they balanced their machines on the edge of the pavement, suspended on one pedal - and not much of that. But the bikes often toppled over and the council was promising to provide all possible facilities for cycle parking clear off the highways. When Dame Rosemary Murray was University Vice-Chancellor in 1976 she found that the quickest way to travel on official business around the city was on two wheels but found herself squeezed out of the few cycle racks provided at the Old Schools. So she was given a "V-C-Only" cycle stand.

Cambridge cyclists petitioned for their own cycleways as early as 1913 and when the first one way restrictions were introduced in Market Street and Petty Cury in 1925 bikes were one category of traffic that could go against the flow - as they have done legally or illegally ever since.

In March 1971 the Mayor of Cambridge, Coun Alec Molt, faced 300 chanting cyclists outside the Guildhall and signed their petition demanding better provision for cyclists. Led by a Panda car the bikers took a 15-minute tour of the city centre streets before returning to Peas Hill to hear councillors' views. It was 1976 before Cambridge's first bus and bicycle lane came into operation along Victoria Avenue and since then a network of cycle lanes have been established with a bridge over the railway near the station, the longest of its type in Western Europe, which was opened in 1989.

In 1993 the City Council conceived the idea of refurbishing the large numbers of abandoned bicycles, painting them green, and parking them in various parts of the city. The idea was simple. You could merely borrow a bike from one rack and return it to another when finished. Like most ideas it half worked. People did borrow them ... Within a few weeks however the sight of a green bike in Cambridge streets was as rare as sightings of Nessie!

But the dangers still remain and now cyclists are turning to helmets for protection though one undergraduate at a Cambridge Rag Day in 1976 seems to have forgotten that other parts of the anatomy can suffer in the event of an accident!

Do you have cycling tales – email Mike Petty at the News

Pictures

Rag Day streaker 1976

"Don" on cycle – rag day

Speeding cyclist

Accident

Green Bikes 1993

Ignoring rules in Trinity Street 1992

Cycles parked in Sidney St 1964

Cycle rally 1971

Follow-up letter

Kathy Skin,
5 Consul Court,
Arbury
CB4 2TH

369605

Memories 13th February 2012 revised by Mike Petty

Bus passengers using the Park and Ride service from Milton last Monday were surprised to be put down, not in the city centre, but at the Four Lamps Roundabout at the end of Victoria Avenue. They faced a hazardous journey over footpaths covered in a mixture of ice and slush.

One elderly gentleman reflected that in the olden days paths used to be kept clear of snow – as indeed was they were across Christs Pieces, a tribute to those who kept them so.

In 1906 the News reported that Cambridge byelaws compelled householders to remove the snow from the path in front of their habitation. This provided an opportunity for the out-of-works to earn an honest copper. One man rang the bell of a corner house and informed the occupier that he had swept the snow from his path. Obviously the only thing for the owner to do was to pay the man for his labour. But when he rang the bell of the adjoining house with many feet of frontage there was no answer and his labour went unremunerated

In March 1947 a labour force in the region of 400 men was engaged in clearing Cambridge streets of snow and there was a generally held view in the town that they were doing a hard job very well. There was an almost cheerful acceptance of the inconveniences with most of Cambridge walking to work - a strange sight in the normally bicycle-crowded streets

When heavy snow fell in January 1962 supplies of salt rapidly ran out at Cambridge grocery shops as people adopted a ‘do-in-yourself’ policy towards clearing away the snow from their doorsteps. In two of the largest stores stocks of block or crushed cooking salt were negligible although there was still plenty at the Corporation store yard in Mill Road despite a considerable amount being used on the streets. Hundreds of building workers who had been laid off because of the severe freeze-up took temporary jobs with the City Council as snow cleaners. Some 250 extra men were put on to help the 50 regular council workmen and 46 extra lorries hired together with 10 bulldozers and two crawler shovels. Gangs were working 24 hours a day gritting and sanding the roads. The cost of all the extra work would, it was conceded, be ‘pretty heavy’ but was considered worth the expense to ensure the safety of pedestrians.

The final days of December 1962 also saw heavy snowstorms and by early January 1963 400 workmen were fighting to keep traffic moving through snowdrifts. Temperatures were so low that buses ground to a halt as their diesel pipes froze, as did the city’s water mains. The quadrangle at the Leys School and Parker’s Piece became natural skating rinks.

In February 1979 when Britain again faced icy chaos the Army laid plans to move in and clear snowbound roads. In Cambridgeshire workmen together with 179 snowploughs and diggers battled to clear some of the worst snowfalls and weather-hit coach passengers took refuge in Parkside police station where they were given mattresses and bedded down in the gym.

More adventurous folk have realised that frozen roads also mean frozen rivers. In February 1929 quite a number of people took advantage of the opportunity to skate to Ely. A News correspondent, signing himself 'Septuagenarian' recalled that it had been February 1895 that the river last had admitted skating to Ely when he and two friends undertook the journey.

Jean Abraham has sent me a photograph of skating on the Cam in 1963. Such scenes are relatively unusual. But skating on the footpath seems to be something that must now be regarded as commonplace

Pictures

110.62 accident at Four Lamps Roundabout in 1957 but how many went un-noticed on snowy footpaths

149.15 clearing snow in Chesterton Lane 1908

160.79 clearing snow at Trinity College 1908

8874 New Square car park under snow in 1963

145.58 skating on the Cam 1963

134.83 skating on Parkers Piece 1963

157.46 skating on the quadrangle at the Leys School 1963

Memories 20 February 2012 by Mike Petty

Anglia Ruskin University is currently hosting an exhibition showcasing products designed by Cambridge companies. It features items such as magic mops, Sinclair calculators and cat flaps.

But just 75 years ago, on 5th March 1937, the Cambridge Daily News was also highlighting local traders. Over four closely-packed pages profiled 70 traders who were then household names, from Arnold Brothers the dairy farmers to Whitmore wine and spirit merchants.

Arnold's new model dairy in Abbey Street was one of the finest in the area. They were pioneers of 'Accredited Milk' supplied by their large herds of cows based in local farms and also did a large trade in eggs, butter and other high-quality dairy produce

Mr A.H. Careless's scrap business in Broad Street had been responsible for clearing much valuable ground in the area. In the past when machinery had become worthless it was simply allowed to rot; now he could utilise old iron, copper, rags or rabbit skins, paying the highest price. Rags were sorted and made into paper while old clothes were gleaned of cotton threads that went to make new ones.

W. Delph, high-class florists designed tributes for funerals, weddings and special functions. They were members of the Florists' Telegraph Delivery Association who telegraphed orders to florists around the country at no extra charge

Sennitt's were game, poultry and fish dealers who had been based at Peas Hill for many years. They boasted the slogan 'From Trawler to Table' claiming that they knew when and how to buy, were always first with the new catch and supplied fresh fish at Billingsgate prices.

Hallen's motor cycle specialists of Chesterton always had B.S.A, Rudge, A.J.S. and Levis machines ready for immediate delivery while their car department now stocked Chevrolets and the famous B.S.A. Scout, a small car with a big performance. Mr L.W. Hallen had gained 15 years experience in the trade and everything was under his highly practical control.

The Leys Laundry in Union Lane was proud to be trusted with the laundering of all those things that previously women considered too precious to be handled by anyone outside their own home. Coloured and plain linen, silk goods, table cloths or bedding, each were cleansed and finished in a way that reflected the good taste of the women who sent them there. They also specialised in gentlemen's shirts and collars.

George Stace was the most complete and exclusive merchandiser of ladies' wear and their showrooms in Petty Cury were brilliantly awake in atmosphere to the modernistic trend of the day. All coats, costumes, gowns, fur or lingerie came from designers of the latest fashions; they had a style of their own, yet the prices were most reasonable

Winton Smith's pork pies, made daily in their large factory on East Road, had attained wide-flung success having won over 20 gold medals in national and international competitions. Their sausages too were gaining a reputation for the uniformity of flavour and value for money.

The Cambridge Brush Company in Britannia Place, East Road, had for over 30 years manufactured the 'Don' sweeping and swilling brooms in many different styles and beautiful enamel finishes for hotels, houses, institutions, offices and factories. Every day large quantities were despatched to all parts of the country.

From their chemist's shop in Rose Crescent the two principals, Mr B. Sidney and Mr F. Sidney Campkin maintained personal control over every medicinal item, be it a doctor's prescription or one of their own preparations. Their 'Brewster' specialities, made from the original formulae of the late Mr Brewster, the well-known Cambridge apothecary were recommended by the medical profession.

Whether your requirement was a massive radiogram to a cycle or pram, no one could serve you better than Messrs J. Ward of East Road and Chesterton Road. Under the personal supervision of Mr W.A. Cairns trade was busier than ever. The cycle department had enjoyed renewed popularity with the firm's own 'Crown' machines selling alongside B.S.A. and Sunbeam bikes. Bona-fide customers needed only a few shillings initial payment with the balance paid either weekly or monthly

And if cycling was not for you, then Captain Cooper's Riding School in King Street was one of the largest private indoor schools in the country with well-drained and ventilated stables, commodious loose boxes and training grounds. The Captain was an instructor of the old school who insisted on his pupils sitting on their horses in the correct manner and offered sound tuition to the horseman and horsewoman who wished to ride really well. There was an enclosed field with a good variety of jumps just ten minutes away.

And if all that jumping left ladies sore then there was the Cambridge Health Spa in Regent Street which included Zotofoam mineral salt baths for weight reduction, skin purifying and beautifying – in fact every thing to put within the reach of modern women not merely the possibility but rather the actuality of infinite loveliness.

The pen-portraits of these Cambridgeshire companies had been written by Kenneth R. Redfern of the Guyer Press Association. But what became of them?

Pictures

37 03 05b	part of the article CDN 5 Feb 1937
151.43	Delph billhead, 1934
152.90	Ward's shop, East Road 196
1006	fashions at Stace's c1910
5417	The Leys Laundry 1935
9586	Winton Smith's shop, East Road, c1935
164.71	Hallen's motorcycle shop, Hawthorn Way, 1937
36 02 15b	Cambridge Health Spa advertisement 15 Feb 1936.

Memories 27th February 2012 by Mike Petty

Recent Memories articles have brought responses from two most interesting ladies, and both have a Haslingfield connection.

Kath Skin from Arbury has a bicycle tale. She writes: "My first bike was forced upon me because my family had just moved to Orwell, a village with no education for children over nine years of age. The school for older pupils was at Haslingfield, miles away; there was no transport and one had to cycle. But I had no bicycle and we could not afford to buy one.

However the County Council would provide one, we were told, and we had to go to Lords Bridge Railway Station to collect it. So I walked with my mother, who pushed her own battered old steed, to fetch my bike. We looked at it in some disbelief! It could have come in the Ark, I thought. Upright, dirty, the saddle too high, a bright red painted front central post, and it had solid rubber tyres! 'Must have been a post lady's bike', said mum, 'but God knows when'

But then I could not ride a bike at all. So forthwith I mounted with the help of the Station Master who also lowered the saddle. I fell off. So I did a good many times. Then I wobbled all over the road into a ditch and into a dung heap. But eventually I made it home.

I had the next day to practice and the following day to my new school at Haslingfield I wobbled my way. When it rained, the tyres fell off, so I rode on the rims with the tyres hung over the handle bars. You could hear me coming for miles. My trusty bike took me everywhere but was always a source of interest to everyone. I eventually went to school in Cambridge by bus from the Wheatsheaf Public House on the Eversden/Harlton corner, and gave up my County Council bicycle. I wonder what happened to it?"

Ivy Kirkup of Histon had a much more interesting mode of transport. But her tale starts when she worked at Homerton College during the Second World War, part of the team who kept the essential functions running. She made friends with the other girls, some of whom had come from Beccles. It was good fun until a night in May 1941 when their sleep was disturbed

Heinkel bombers dropped firebombs over a wide area of south Cambridge which smashed through tiles and slates and penetrated ceilings before bursting in upstairs rooms. Often they landed on an eiderdown with a thump and burst into life, showering brilliant sparks, spewing masses of greyish smoke and creating a foul smell. This is what Ivy experienced.

She and the other girls escaped miraculously unhurt and dashed to the air raid shelters. That is where her father found her after he'd biked over from Haslingfield next morning. This was no place for his daughter to be and together they walked back to the village. A day or so later Ivy received a photograph through the post; it showed her and her sister together with the other girls.

But there was a war on, and Ivy had to play her part. She got a job at Pye's in St Andrew's Road becoming one of a vast number of rows and rows of girls producing equipment for aeroplanes one week, jeeps or tanks the next. She soldered her pieces of wires and resistors, then moved them along the line to the next operative. But all that the soldering gave her a chest infection and the doctor said she must change her job. Her boss found her something else to do.

The Government wanted the firm to relocate to somewhere safer from air raids – Swansea. But the Pye's boss was totally opposed. Instead he decided to increase production by making use of people working from their homes where they devoted any spare time to make components. However to keep this army working, they needed supplies – and that was where Ivy came in. Her new role was to ensure the production lines kept running

She was introduced to an odd-type of vehicle based on a motorbike that pulled a truck capable of delivering large loads of components to where they were needed. There was no training – she was given a driving licence and told to get on with it!

She soon got to know her way round to outworkers in Chesterton streets, down to Mitcham's Corner and to a garage in Humberstone Road. The first time she went there was nearly the last: struggling to master the controls of her little Lister truck she managed to back into the wall – 'Don't send her no more, we won't have a garage', the owner told her boss, jokingly.

Similar deliveries were being made elsewhere: out at Sawston there was a person with a proper van. But Ivy's machine was special. She had just put her gloves on ready for another trip to Humberstone Road in 1944 when two men came across and took her picture.

Ivy treasures it as a record of her role in wartime. But were any of your family amongst that forgotten army of workers that she supplied?

Pictures

Haslingfield showing school sign – a scene known to both correspondents

Ivy with her Lister truck 1944

Homerton cleaners bombed out in 1941 – Ivy is centre, back row

Homerton college colour pic

Homerton college interior 1940s – studies were disrupted by bombing

Humberstone Road – one of the streets Ivy visited

Pye outreach workers at Sawston – NB NOT SERVICED BY IVY

Memories 5th March 2012, by Mike Petty

Richard Housden from Aspley Guide has been researching the story of the Housden family who have been spread throughout Cambridgeshire. He can claim ancestors back to the 16th century in Great Chesterford, Hinxton and Ickleton.

But his more immediate roots were based in the black fens around Wicken where the Housdens were part of a close, lively community centred around the little Wesleyan

Methodist Chapel at River Bank near Upware. His father and his brother and sister were all baptised in the chapel which each year opens its doors for harvest services.

Life in the fen was hard in the post-war days. Drainage rates and taxes were high, yields were declining, the market for agricultural produce was depressed and poverty was no stranger to farmers. Nature began to take back land which had been drained and cultivated in the previous hundred years. Horace, Richard's grandfather, eventually lost his farm after several years of flooding and became a labourer at The Willows, a farm on the edge of the Fordham Fen.

His father and mother met on a blind date in Burwell. They had been courting for sometime, going out together on an old motorcycle, when late one evening, miles from home, their machine broke down. It was impossible to repair before morning so the night was spent under the shelter of a straw stack. The next day when they finally arrived home in Fordham, they were greeted with: *Where have you been all night? You'll have to marry her now!* Their protests of innocence fell on deaf ears but the lovers were happy to oblige. They wed in Burwell Church on Christmas Day 1930.

Richard was born the following November at the Willows where his parents lived in one of the farm cottages. They soon moved to Martin Road in Burwell, where council houses had been built for agricultural workers. Everyone in Martin Road was poor but families were self-sufficient and when necessary they helped each other. "We had large gardens which were well cultivated - it was rare to have to buy vegetables. Most families kept chickens and a few kept a pig at the bottom of the garden. Nothing was wasted", Richard recalls.

"There was no piped water until 1936; our water was pumped from a well in the street. In very dry summers when the well ran dry, we had to fetch water in buckets from another well half a mile away, and one summer when even that well was dry we went further to fetch water from Hythe Lane on the very edge of the fen. In the winter evenings oil lamps lit our homes and when we went to bed we took a candle upstairs with us. Electricity came to our part of Burwell in the early 1940s but many of our neighbours did not want it; they could not afford another six pence per week in rent to pay for it. But my mother missed the conveniences of town life and ours was one of the first houses in Martin Road to have the luxury of electricity".

In the early days Richard's father had a job at the Ness Farm. However, this was not to last. By the time a baby sister was born in January 1936, his dad was a sick man. He spent the next two years first in Addenbrooke's hospital and then at the Papworth Settlement before dying of tuberculosis in 1939 leaving his 25-year-old widow with three young children.

His mum worked on a milk round and took in sewing to supplement her income. Often she stitched into the early hours of the morning making clothes for them and their neighbours' children. But eighteen shillings a week was not enough to pay the rent and feed the family. When War broke out later that same year it made the situation easier. With the men away at war, work became available in the local brick factory. But it involved eight-hour shifts, 6 'til 2 and 2 'til 10, Richard remembers: "We became 'home alone' children - there was no choice. I was eight years old and in charge - at least, I thought I was in charge! There were friendly neighbours who kept a watchful eye over us".

Richard went to Soham Grammar School where he won a prize for general proficiency. This proved a problem: "I did not have shoes good enough to go onto the stage for the presentation. After I had gone to bed on the eve of the school Speech Day, one of the neighbours repaired my old shoes, so that I could receive the prize the next day", he recalls.

From there he gained a place at Selwyn College, Cambridge where he graduated in mathematics and later he went back to Soham, this time as a mathematics teacher – perhaps you remember him. Later he taught computing at the Open University and was awarded the title of Emeritus Professor at a ceremony in Ely Cathedral in 1998. This time he did have some shoes to wear!

Now he has published his researches into the Housden family history in a 200-page book supplemented by a Compact Disc of extra material. But there is still more to discover. If you can help then email Richard – rjwjmh@yahoo.co.uk - or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch

“A journey through family history” by Richard J.W. Housden is published by the Norwich Living History Group for £10 – ISBN 978-0-9563255-3-2

pictures

Soham Grammar School group 1947-48; Richard Housden is one from the left on the second row – there is a list of names

Richard Housden at the cottage at Wicken Fen, where he found an old book that belonged to his family

Fordham in the 1930s

Upware chapel

Upware chapel with group gathered in front 1930s

Soham Grammar School which Richard attended and later taught in

Burwell ice cream man – but the family had little money for luxuries

Memories 12th March 2012, by Mike Petty

College porters have been an essential feature of Cambridge life for centuries.

In the 1950s John Saltmarsh traced back some of the individuals who had performed that role in King's College. The oldest he discovered in college archives was 'Andrew the Porter' in 1482. Others who feature are Arthur Lache who was porter for 17 years until he died in 1545 and was succeeded by his widow for a year. Records also show that John Priest started work in 1586 and finished in 1648 – but it is likely that one man really did serve for 62 years, more likely a son succeeded his father. Rice Atkins was Head Porter in 1695 as his name appears on a silver crowned mace still carried on official duties. By the 19th century the position was one of some dignity: one porter was asked to count the number of mourners attending a funeral but deliberately gave an incorrect figure, feeling the task was beneath him.

Other college's porters have featured in the news throughout the years. In December 1898 Judge Hawkins recalled how when he came to Cambridge on one occasion he had tried to bring his dog with him into his lodgings at Trinity College. However the head porter had refused to allow the animal to be brought within the precincts even though it was the pet of one of her Majesty's judges. Hawkins was angry at the time but then sent for the head porter and admitted he was right

It was part of a porter's role to ensure that college rules were kept and that undergraduates were tucked up in bed before the great gates closed for the night. Inevitably this has not always been popular with students. In November 1905 the night porter of Sidney Sussex found the door of his lodge refused to open: it had been securely screwed up and he was a prisoner. After a troubled night he was aroused by the bedmakers' loud ringing at the gate when there was no option but to smash the window and escape through the jagged aperture to admit the waiting and wrathful ladies.

On various occasions the porters have saved their college from damaged by fire. In 1933 the head porter of Peterhouse, Mr Barnes, tackled a blaze in the Junior Combination Room. He brought it under control so quickly that many of the undergraduates did not know there had been a blaze until breakfast time. These days colleges have smoke detectors and the arrival of fire engines is more likely to be in response to an alarm triggered by an undergraduate burning toast.

Many porters have been respected by the colleges they served. In 1908 the funeral of Mr Fordham, head porter of Queens', was conducted in the college chapel where there were a large number of beautiful floral tributes, including one from the President and Fellows. A Cambridge man, he had been connected with the college for 35 years, having also served as the master's butler. Twenty years later in 1928 Mr James 'Jessie' Collins' body was laid in state at St John's College where he had been employed for 40 years, rising from the position of shoe black to deputy head porter.

When Arthur Prior joined the staff of Trinity in 1935 he was the youngest porter ever employed by a Cambridge college. He retired in 1980 after being Head Porter for 14 years having served five different Masters. He was philosophical about the admission of women to previously all-male colleges, a contentious issue of the day. "These youngsters think they invented sex, but we had women here when I first came. They used to stay all night even then, and we knew all about it", he told the News.

Bob Fuller, known as 'The Beast of St John's', a former army sergeant-major, was the last of the old-style head porters. He believed strongly in maintaining discipline and fined students £5 for playing loud music or having parties without permission. But his fierce-looking aspect did not daunt female students after they were admitted to the college in 1982, despite his dislike of the idea. His funeral service was held at the college chapel in 1986

Another of Cambridge's greatest characters was Albert Jaggard of Corpus Christi College who died in February 1982. He was extremely knowledgeable about the college and had a phenomenal knowledge about its old members. Undergraduates believed he was the model for the irascible head porter 'Scullion' in Tom Sharpe's 'Porterhouse Blue'.

Hard Porters have a dedicated team to assist them. Now one of this army of gate guardians has revealed what like is really like for Dons, undergraduates, film stars and innumerable visitors to come face-to-face with the most important of university employees: a college porter. He tells how they dealt with bomb alerts, pranks and alarms, not to mention the mysterious explosions heard coming from beneath the floor of the college chapel as long-dead dons literally 'popped off' when the central heating was turned on.

In "A view from the Lodge" 'Alan James' reminisces about his time as a porter at 'Godesone Hall'. But, as with 'Porterhouse', there is no such College. His earlier career had seen him as a history teacher in a village college about seven miles from Cambridge when life it appears was equally hilarious – or should that be chaotic?

Do you have stories of college porters – or were you a porter with a story to share – contact Mike Petty at the News

“A view from the lodge: reminiscences by Alan James” is published by Milton Contact – ISBN 978-0-9562649-8-5 £9.99

pictures

- 156.26 Churchill college porter W. Mercer confronts a young visitor, c1968
- 9025 a traditional porter's reprimand c1905
- 001 college porters c1910
- 166.71 Trinity college porters 1890s
- 166.68 the arrival of female undergraduates in the 1960s created problems for porters
- 141.60 American tourists on the grass at King's College – but they are being shown round by a Don in 1940s
- 157.58 increasing numbers of tourists have caused problems for colleges, even when shown round by Blue Badge guides , 1978

Memories 19th March 2012 by Mike Petty

Last week, over coffee, conversation in one of Cambridge's newer colleges turned to the subject of Grunty Fen and rhubarb. An academic had been amongst a group of antiquaries who'd made a journey to inspect the wonder of Ely Cathedral. En route they'd seen the sign for 'Grunty Fen'. Next time, he'd vowed, they would explore. But one thing he did know was Grunty Fen was famous for its rhubarb.

For the uninitiated Grunty Fen is that low-lying area in the centre of the former Island of Ely, separating Wilburton and Stretham from Wentworth and Witchford. For centuries it was waterlogged though in the centre there was a patch of higher land.

Writing in 1908 Albert Pell recalled “I've heard father and grandfather say they used to tie mud-boards on their feet and go out and gather basketfuls of eggs – coots, terns, moorhens and such. There were paths through the reeds to Wilburton and Haddenham from Wentworth. One evening I went with father to cross the fen to see grandmother but in the afternoon a thunderstorm had beaten the reeds down over the path; we missed it and got lost. It was getting dark and father took me in his arms and laid down to sleep till it got light. Dear heart what a night that was. Owls and things came and screeched at us. I thought they were ghosts, and some of these buttleeumps kept on saying ‘Bump, bump, bump’ all the time.”

For centuries locals could turn one to a thousand sheep out to pasture on the fen, to fish, hunt game or cut turf for fuel. These were privileged jealously guarded and in June 1794 a mob of two hundred Grunty Fen men armed with bludgeons and forks made their way to Ely in protest at a dispute over turf cutting. Later another peat digger discovered a valuable gold torq, now displayed in the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

It was one of the last areas of the old fenland to be drained with a Catchwater dug in 1838. This was a tremendous operation involving the cutting of many bridges and culverts as Wilburton historian Iliffe Norfolk recorded in 1971. At first it seemed to work but within twenty years things had started to go wrong. Continuing peat digging had created large areas of water known as ‘The Pools’ which remained until they were evaporated by the summer sun. Landowners launched a new drainage scheme but met opposition from the Littleport and Downham Commissioners and had to fight in a lengthy court battle before they could complete the work.

Once dry an Act of Parliament was obtained to Enclose it. Surrounding parishes were awarded 'Spade Husbandry Allotments' which were to be cultivated by the poor and the remainder was taken up by the freeholders. But the thin layer of peaty soil quickly vanished and farming became increasingly difficult. Many of the small allotments became neglected and by 1939 much of the land was uncultivated. The War Agricultural Committee pressed for improvement but this would cost £40,000 & the land was worth only £15 per acre.

The railway arrived with a line from Ely to Stretham, Wilburton, Haddenham and Sutton opening in 1866. Although later extended as far as St Ives it never proved a profitable venture. Regular passenger traffic ceased in 1931 although goods trains continue to run along the track until it closed completely in July 1964.

The area made national headlines in June 1980 when the Isle of Ely Member of Parliament, Clement Freud, asked Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher whether she had plans to visit Grunty Fen where people were worried about the level of wage settlements. She replied that the 97 residents were a very happy agricultural community with a low rate of unemployment and content under a Conservative Government. Dorothy Barker of Station Road, Grunty Fen, said: "It is nice of her to think of us"

Later it attracted further fame through the exploits of 'Dennis of Grunty Fen', that tale-telling yokel alter-ego of the late Pete Sayers. One of his revelations was the alleged presence of a great rhubarb plantation – the location of which has now been forgotten. But the Grunty Fen Rhubarb Festival was featured in a guide to Eccentric Britain published in 2011 when there were rhubarb combats, rhubarb semaphore and rhubarb tart competitions at Burwell.

I have searched the literature for accounts of the rhubarb industry. The Professor of Botany at Cambridge published a scholarly paper in the 'Annals of Agriculture' for 1801 in which he gave detailed advice on its cultivation. In 1839 the Farmer's Magazine praised the virtues of a giant Goliath rhubarb being grown in the London market gardens. It was easy to cultivate and excellent for cooking with stalks so large that just one would make a pudding. The leaves were enormous: many four feet long and six inches wide while a single root would grow so large that it filled a wheelbarrow. By 1895 rhubarb was being farmed commercially in the neighbourhood of Spalding in Lincolnshire alongside horse-radish, turnips, mangold and mustard while in 1939 Arthur Mee's guide to Cambridgeshire records that rhubarb and cabbages were growing around the church at Prickwillow.

But I have yet to find a published account of the Grunty Fen rhubarb industry. So how it became known to my donnish acquaintance?

Pictures

- 018 Iliffe Norfolk, Wilburton local historian, 1964
- 023 opening the railway crossing gates at Little Thetford corner 1964
- 163.70 Grunty Fen painted by John Titterton 1857
- 379 diesel train at Haddenham station 1964
- 1238 steam train at Stretham station
- 6323 Wilburton station for sale 1970s
- 7320 Haddenham station with passengers on platform c1900
- MP0237 Stretham station 1968

Memories 26 March 2012, by Mike Petty

Cambridge's Stourbridge Common is an area of open ground away from the hustle and bustle of the traffic thundering along Newmarket Road. But for centuries it was the site of one of the greatest trading fairs in Europe. It attracted merchants from Venice and Genoa with silks and velvets, Flemish weavers with their linen, Spaniards with their iron, Norwegians with tar and pitch and wines from France, Spain and Greece.

They were not alone, from all over England tradesmen with their packhorses and wagons negotiated the atrocious roads; from Halifax, Leeds and Rochdale came cloth, Birmingham sent iron and brass, Sheffield cutlery, Nottingham and Leicester glass and stockings. Lancashire wool would probably be bought by Norfolk manufactures, hops grown in Surrey and Kent were destined for northern breweries.

As Honor Ridout has recorded, it had been part of the life of Cambridge since well before the University had come on to the scene. Certainly it was there in 1211 when King John granted the income from the tolls, rents and other payments to support the Leper's Hospital established near by. This was swept away at the Reformation, along with the neighbouring priory of Barnwell, and then the town council and the university had squabbled about who was to have the money and administer the various activities. They reached a compromise which would cause disagreement and friction – and thus one year the Mayor would proclaim the fair first, next year it was the University's turn.

In 1789 the University Vice-Chancellor together with his entourage assembled at the Senate House where they consumed a plentiful supply of mulled wine and sherry together with great variety of cakes. Then they set off in their carriages to the Common, where they proclaimed the fair three times. Duty done the dons proceeded to their refreshment in a substantial brick building called the Oyster House.

The officials pushed their way through an upper room, crowded with people, to reach a roughly partitioned-off section known as 'The University Dining Room'. This had none of the grandeur of their usual eating places: the table was formed from rough planks supported on casks on which were placed several barrels of oysters with bottles of ale and porter in great profusion. All were devoured by the dignitaries who'd been joined by a number of lesser members of the University who had come just for the feast.

Once replete the Academics pushed their way out to enjoy a stroll around the fair and inspect the goods on offer at the various stalls. These included books that might be available for less than the price charged by John Nicholson, known as 'Maps', who supplied students with essential texts. Then it was back to that upstairs room. This was no easy task. In vain did the landlord shout out 'Make way for the Vice Chancellor and the University'. Not a man made an attempt to stir, for the University was very unpopular with the 'peasantry' who enjoyed seeing them have to fight their way through.

At length they reached the dining room where the dinner had been served up for some time. The joints would have been cold, if anything could have been cold in a climate intolerable even to a native of the tropics. There was a large dish of herrings followed by 'a neck of pork roasted, an enormous plum-pudding, a leg of pork boiled, a pease-pudding, a goose, a huge apple pie and a round of beef in the centre'. And although the wine was execrable, a number of toasts were given and mirth and good humour prevailed until half-past six when the party adjourned to the theatre.

The eye-witness account was recorded by Henry Gunning of Christ's College. He also recorded the activities of some of the folk who may well have mingled with the fair crowds. They include Richard Kidman who masterminded a series of robberies of plate from various colleges and was only arrested after his accomplice's house had been literally pulled down to reveal the hidden store of silver and Jemmy Gordon, a notorious drunkard who so scared

magistrates that they tolerated his outbursts for fear of what he should declare publicly about their own failings. Nor did Gunning neglect to record the faults and foibles of his academic colleagues including the Master of Christ's whose management of the college and its estates at Bourn led to scandal.

Henry Gunning's "Reminiscences of the University, town and county of Cambridge" was published in 1854 and has long been out of print. But it has now been reissued by Cambridge University Press. – ISBN9781108044462 £19.99

"Cambridge & Stourbridge Fair" by Honor Ridout – ISBN 97819075270102 is published by Blue Ocean £9.99

PICTURES

Leper Chapel

Stourbridge Fair booth

Oyster House in Garlic Row

Jemmy Gordon – choice of two

John Nicholson, 'Maps', sold secondhand books around the colleges

Henry Gunning

Christ's college – choice of two

Memories 2nd April 2012 by Mike Petty

March 2012 was warm and dry. But in the countryside there are problems. The lack of rain has meant that many farmers have chosen not to plant their crops since there is no hope of irrigating them.

How different from the March of 1937, 75 years ago.

Then high spring tides had coincided with heavy rain. More and more water drained into the fenland river system but the great sluice at Denver could not be opened to allow it to empty into the sea.

The high river banks became full to the brim and began crumbling and dissolving in the water just as sugar dissolves in tea. Splits occur; the bank slips a bit, but as it threatened to break men rushed to bolster it up with clay.

The banks themselves were already two feet higher than usual because of lines of sandbags. Still strong winds blew sheets of water out from the river and down into the adjoining fen - fen that was itself a sea of mud comparable with the mud of Flanders. "The way your feet sink in with a dull sucking noise reminds me of Passchendale during the war", one fenman remarked.

The sodden fen meant that lorries could not get near to bring bags - potato bags, sandbags - any sort of bag - to shore up the bank even more. And the sodden land itself was unsuitable for filling them. 10,000 bags had been laid since the previous morning and the water was already seeping through once more.

Across the fens, along the top of each river and drain, every available man - hundreds of wet and weary men - watched the water in the river while yet more rain penetrated their clothing and the incessant cold wind chilled them even more. The men were willing but almost at the end of their tether. Most were now so tired that if some really terrible disaster came along they would hardly be any use at all.

At Ely a bugler was standing by to sound a "fall-in" for volunteers in the event of a major burst. The town criers at Haddenham and Swavesey were appealing for extra men to go to the aid of Willingham, just one of the danger points. At Barway and Lt Thetford the banks were breached and the main A10 was cut by flooding near Stretham. Car loads of undergraduates flocking to help in the battle for the fens had to find another way on to the Isle of Ely. They were not enough so 100 men from RAF Mildenhall were drafted in. They found the conditions so bad that the Medical Officer authorised the distribution of rum to keep them warm.

The BBC broadcast flood warnings urging people to listen for the church bells which would announce the time had come for evacuation. For many families it was already too later. Their land was under water, their homes flooded.

The flood conditions in the fens were raised in the House of Commons at the end of March. A heroic struggle was being fought with men and women labouring by day and night with the aid of flickering oil lamps, under conditions of the last Great War, in mud and slime, with water up to their knees in order to defend their own homes. People were trapped in isolated cottages surrounded by water, children were not able to go to school for six months and households marooned, unable to provide themselves even with food and the necessities of life.

The issue was one of urgent and definite national importance. Half a million acres of the richest soil in the country were in daily peril, crops had been destroyed bringing ruin to farmers and unemployment to farm workers.

The blame, as always, lay on the Government cuts in grants for land drainage, be it Tory Government, Liberal Government or a combination of both....

On and on the parliamentary men talked until it was time to turn to other topics - the National Health Insurance Act (amendment) Bill, the Electricity (Supply) Act and then, at just before 10pm the most important debate of all - that the House should adjourn.

The floods of March 1937 are now largely forgotten. They were only a minor dampness compared to the devastation that was to follow ten years later.

PICTURES

HEADLINES OF THE 1937 FLOODS –
Men working on banks – 2 pics

The scene at Prickwillow where flood waters reached the top of the bank

Maps of the 1937 flood danger points

Memories 9th April 2012 by Mike Petty

The residents of Hemingford Road, off Mill Road in the Romsey area of Cambridge are planning a street party in July. They are looking for memories or photographs of how people lived in the past and have enlisted the help of local historian Allan Brigham.

His researches reveal that area was developed in the early 1870s when Francis Thoday, one of the largest builders in Cambridge, bought many plots of land when the 'Romsey Farm Estate' was put up for sale. Then when Hemingford Road itself was developed in 1878 Thomas Kingston, another builder, purchased at least twelve of the plots. Tom Hayward, the famous cricketer, also bought a row of the houses that he rented out to tenants

Alan has worked through Corporation Building Plans in the County Archives at Shire Hall – it was magic taking the tracings out of their brown envelopes where they had lain since being approved 100 years ago, he says. But not all the properties were built as proposed. A photograph of no.66 shows that the projecting bay does not extend up to the first floor bedroom as originally intended.

Early residents included builders, carpenters, stonemasons, grocers, insurance agents and railway men. Amongst them was Alfred Strang, a retired forester who'd been born in Scotland. But some came from much further afield.

The 1911 census lists two people born in the Falklands! How did the Bound family end up in a street on the edge of Cambridge? It seems that William Bound was born near Bristol, and was a crew member on a ship that called at the Falklands on the way to South America. Somehow he met Fanny Goss, daughter of the local hotel owner/storekeeper. Fanny's father was one of the first settlers in 1842 and there are still Goss names in the Falklands. William and Fanny married in 1873 had a son Earl Stanley Bound in 1884. They went to South Australia after that but by 1901 William Bound was a publican in Luton and in 1911 he had retired to Hemingford Road. Maybe he came here because his son Stanley had a job as a chauffeur, but for whom?

Alan would like memories of the Wesleyan/Methodist Church (now Romsey Mill). The first stage was erected in Hemingford Road in 1891 with the foundation stone of a new chapel in the Queen Anne style laid in June 1906. The building with its cathedral-like windows and seats for 420 worshippers was a considerable addition to the notable buildings of that end of Mill Road.

Another major amenity was Romsey Recreation Ground now approaching its centenary. And do you remember Goodrum's dairy that was based in Hemingford Road until the 1970s?

My own files include a cutting of a fire in November 1904 which paints a picture of the area. It reads:

Up to last night there was a cluster of buildings, workshops, tool-sheds and fowl houses at the apex of a triangle formed by property facing Mill Road, Hemingford Road and Belgrave Road, Cambridge. Today nothing remains but a heap of charred timber and twisted iron. The fowls had been fed as usual but just after 6.30pm flames were spotted. Neighbours tackled the blaze with buckets of water until the Brigade arrived with their horse-drawn engines. They connected their hoses to the hydrant in Hemingford Road and eventually extinguished the flames.

Amongst those who suffered were Mr Holder, 17, and Mr Curtis, 20, of Hemingford Road whose hen houses were destroyed.

The residents played their part in the Great War. By November 1915 Mr & Mrs Collis of 74 Hemingford Road had five sons in the Army together with two brothers, three brothers-in-law, one son-in-law, two grandsons and 14 nephews, making a total of 27 relatives serving

King and Country. Mr Collis himself was a retired warrant officer having spent 33 years in the army of which 30 were in India.

Another cutting tells how the postman brought a surprise to Mrs M.B. Hills of Hemingford Road in January 1948. It was a parcel from Buckingham Palace containing some of the gifts of foodstuffs sent from overseas to Princess Elizabeth – the present Queen – on the occasion of her wedding and which she distributed to elderly people and widows. Inside was a simple, informal letter in which the Princess said "I want to share my good fortune with others. I therefore ask you to accept this parcel with my best wishes". A number of tins of food inside included chicken soup, 'Prem', beans, coffee, cocoa, milk and chocolate pudding

But does this letter still survive today. And do you have other such mementoes of Hemingford Road. If so Email Allan Brigham - townnotgown@btinternet.com - or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch.

Pictures

Building Plans for Hemingford Road now housed in Cambridgeshire Archives, Shire Hall

A modern picture shows that they were not all constructed as originally intended

List of Hemingford Road residents in 1898

Report of foundation stone laying of Hemingford Road chapel June 1906

Goodrums milk float

Memories 16th April 2012, by Mike Petty

As news of the sinking of the Titanic was received in Cambridgeshire in April 1912 a number of communities were especially concerned.

For amongst those on board was **Arthur William Barringer**, son of Mr. William Barringer of Thoday Street off Mill Road in the Barnwell area of Cambridge. Bill was an ex-constable, who'd served for twenty-five years in the Borough Police, then found a job with Chivers at Histon

His son Arthur had been at sea for 15 years first with the Union Castle and then the American lines before switching to the White Star line. He'd served as Steward on the Briton, the Norman, the Guscho, the St. Paul, the New York, the St. Louis, and the Olympic

Olympic had been the largest ocean liner in the world until the Titanic had been launched. She'd left on her maiden voyage en route for New York on 14th June 1911 but a few months later had been involved in a collision with a British warship, H.M.S. Hawke, off the Isle of Wight. The incident resulted in a twisted propeller and the flooding of two of the Olympic's compartments. She had returned to Southampton under her own power and gone for repair.

In order to get Olympic back into service as speedily as possible the propeller shaft intended for Titanic was requisitioned. But then in February 1912 Olympic lost a propeller blade and once more the company were forced to pull resources from the Titanic, thus delaying that ship's maiden voyage.

Perhaps feeling the Olympic was jinxed, Arthur had transferred to the new even larger liner, where he rejoined the Captain and other former crew mates.

They included another steward, **Herbert Cave**, the brother of Mrs Alfred Scales of King Street; Cambridge. Herbert had only married the previous June. Now that wife was a widow. But at least she could be sure; for Alfred's body was amongst those that was recovered and buried at Fairview Lawn Cemetery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Jonathan Coy of Prickwillow Road Ely was less certain about the fate of his nephew, **Francis Ernest Coy**. Twenty-six-year-old Francis was an engineer on the Titanic and there was no mention of him among the lists of those rescued. Francis had been born at Thetford, Norfolk, and spent his apprenticeship days in Portsmouth Dockyard after which he joined the White Star line as sixth engineer in the Oceanic. He'd soon been promoted and transferred to the Olympic. Then he too had switched to Titanic as junior assistant third engineer. Francis had married the previous June, now his wife too was widowed.

Also working in the bowels of the ship was 32-year-old fireman **George Pond**, son of Joseph Pond of High Street Wilburton. He'd served in the navy for many years – and like the others had moved across from the Olympic. Now his father and two older brothers were having to become reconciled to the fact that he was probably dead, even though no body had been recovered.

They had been joined on the voyage by a Wicken lad intent on seeking a new life for himself in America. **David Barton**, third son of Shaw and Mary Barton of Belle Vue Cottage had decided to emigrate with two other friends, Arthur Taylor and Sidney Day. They'd bid farewell to family and friends and made their way off to the departure point. But a day or two later David was home. For on arrival at Southampton he had been rejected as unfit to travel because of a possibly contagious blemish on his face. He tried again, and again was forced to delay his journey. Finally, while his mates waited for him on the other side of the Atlantic David had finally been accepted on Titanic, paying eight pounds one shilling for a third-class ticket to New York. His body was never identified.

Back in Mill Road the community joined in the concern for their local lad. On Wednesday there came a telegraph from Arthur Barringer's wife in Southampton, who had two children, to say that there was no news as to whether he was alive or not. His favourite hymn 'Lead Kindly Light' was sung at the evening service at St Philip's Church. But there was to be no positive answer to their prayers. Arthur had returned home to Cambridge two years earlier. He was never to be seen there again.

Pictures

Wicken Green

David Barton whose attempt to find a better life failed – picture from Tony Day of Wicken

Wilburton High Street

King Street celebrations 1887 – there was to be no celebrations for Mrs Alfred Scales – her brother was drowned

Ely Market Hill or Ely Fore Hill

Mill Road mourned

St Philip's church where a favourite hymn was sung

Memories 23rd April 2012 by Mike Petty

Caroline Goldstein has recently sent me an adverting leaflet that she discovered tucked away in an old Bible

It was issued by the Cambridge Express newspaper in October 1892

The Express claimed that it was the best local newspaper and enjoyed the largest circulation of those journals published in Cambridgeshire. At the time these included the Cambridge Chronicle, Cambridge Independent Press and the then new four-year-old Cambridge Daily News which also issued a Cambridgeshire Weekly News. It did not add that it was also the cheapest, selling for just one penny.

Not all its pages were filled with local news. The Cambridge Express always contained a number of special features on agriculture, London gossip, interviews and Friendly Society notes. It also carried a serial story – at that time 'Beatrice and Benedict', a romance of the Crimea by Captain Hawley Smart which was based on his own experiences as a soldier in that campaign.

But the new headline-grabbing attraction was to be a series of local sketches entitled that would feature architectural beauties, curious customs and old-world traditions. The first picture selected to entice new subscribers was of Madingley Hall and church.

However there was one omission – the name of the artist was not given. Perhaps everybody already knew him

John Sebert Clarke was probably the most prolific local artist of the age. Those people who took the 'Ely Diocesan Remembrancer' encountered his work in every issue whilst he also produced pictures in each edition of Spalding's 'Handbook, diary & almanack' between 1900 and 1917 and much more

Clarke's sketches, mostly of churches, were published in the Cambridge Express most weeks from 1892 to 1896. Most villages were covered, from Melbourn to Sutton, Dullingham to Colne. His view of Quy, published in the issue of 7th April 1894, is slightly different as it shows the picture of the church on his artist's easel. They proved so popular that they were republished in two volumes entitled 'An Artist's Rambles in Cambridgeshire' in 1894.

Clarke could also turn his skills to other subjects. He produced advertisements including one for Kidman's builders and contractors of Sturton Street which showed their yard together with details of individual aspects of their work.

But in the days before photographs the paper's artist was required to illustrate news stories as well. Thus when in 1895 great sewage works were in progress a series of detailed articles were produced to explain the technical difficulties being experienced, not least the placing of

iron pipes across the bed of the Mill Pool - a scene captured by Clarke from the landing stage of the Anchor inn and showing the Kings & Bishops' mills in the background.

One of the most dramatic stories he covered had been in October 1890 when the largest fire for 30 years caused £2,000 worth of damage to rooms at Clare College, destroying the roof, bringing down the ceiling of the Combination Room and cracking the college's 270-year-old bell. Were it not for the strenuous efforts of the fire fighters the flames may have spread to neighbouring buildings and Clarke's view depicted their fight to control the blaze.

An insight into the care he took can be gleaned from two items preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library. One is a pencil sketch of the Cambridge University and Town Fire Insurance Company building in Sidney Street, the other an original photograph which he copied. Careful comparison shows that the two are remarkably similar. But the photographer failed to capture the chimney pots so Clarke had gone out into the street and pencilled them in, then added a wisp of smoke for good measure

Although his name and artwork survives little has yet been discovered about the man himself. Both he and his wife described themselves as "artists" and lived in several houses in Cambridge.' In 1881 he was in Earl Street while the final entry in the street directory seems to be in 1907 when he appears as a builder and decorator with a workshop in Blinco Grove. But he continued to exercise his art for in October 1913 he produced an illustrated scroll that was presented to W.H. Smith at Trinity Place Mission Hall.

John died of influenza and pneumonia on 31st October 1918. He had two sons and his last-known descendant in the UK is believed to be Alan Clarke in Llanelli, Carmarthenshire. Alan has been researching the family tree for many years and would be delighted to learn of any branches that still survive – email thelivinggarden@hotmail.co.uk

However there is a thriving clan of Clarkes in New Zealand who would be equally interested in anything more you can tell them

As for the Cambridge Express, it continued until 1909 when it merged with its old rival, the Cambridgeshire Weekly News. John Clarke had switched papers several years before; having started his journalistic career with the 'Cambridgeshire Weekly News' at the beginning of the decade he'd returned to them in January 1897.

Pictures:

Sidney Street – photo and sketch showing how Clarke added a chimney missed when the photo was taken

Mill Road Library

Cambridge Advertiser Advert

Midsummer Common – a detail showing Victoria Bridge and Jesus Lock

Detail of a flower

Gt Eversden church

Longstanton church

Railway being cut across Coldham's Common

Memories 30th April 2012 by Mike Petty

Christine Shephard emailed me to say ‘Your Looking Back snippet in the Cambridge News interested me as one of the cottages lost in the fire disaster in Lode was lived in by my Great, Great Grandmother. Mrs Abbott’. I sent her a copy of the actual article which revealed another family connection: her great grandfather’s pigs and fowls had been rescued!

The report in the Cambridge Weekly News of 12th April 1912 described how a disastrous fire resulting in the complete destruction of two cottages had occurred at Lode. The building, which was very old, was of stud and plaster with a thatched roof, one room was used by the Lode Institute. It was home to Mrs Abbott, the widow of a former schoolmaster who lived with her daughter

The fire had been first noticed about one o’clock in the afternoon by William Benstead, who was standing by the Cow and Hare when he saw smoke rising through the roof between the chimneys. He raised the alarm and the police at Bottisham were informed by wire. But it was half-an-hour before Inspector Dean received the message and summoned the village fire engine.

Meanwhile a strong wind was spreading the fire rapidly. Many eager neighbours were helping to remove much of Mrs Abbott’s furniture from the burning cottages and had started to fight the fire. But it was too late: the roof fell in and the walls collapsed.

The danger was spreading as flames, fanned by a strong wind, were threatening neighbouring thatched buildings. In the adjoining premises Mr R. Hatley (Christine’s great-grandfather) had a number of pigs and fowls. These were happily rescued and he helped fight the conflagration alongside Mr R. Cornwell, Mr G. Cornwell, Herbert Hiner and several women. ‘Seldom have unorganised firemen done more effective work in fighting the flames than on this occasion’, the News commented.

But there was criticism: although Mr Fred Newman and Mr Fletcher had rushed for the Bottisham fire engine it did not actually arrive on the scene until the fire had been raging for an hour. First they’d had to get the horse, described as a slow-going agricultural animal, then plod along the road to Lode. After the battle had been one and the engine was drawn back to Bottisham about five o’clock it left several of its buckets behind. Lode men stood by the smouldering remains all night in case of further outbreaks and continued to pour water on those parts of the ruin which still showed signs of fire.

The engine was a Hadley and Simpkins machine that had seen over a century’s service. It had been presented to the parish by Miss Jenyns of Bottisham Hall in 1796 following the destruction of six thatched cottages near Parsonage Farm, Bottisham the previous July. A similar machine had been given to the neighbouring parish of Swaffham Prior by Squire Allix in 1791.

Over the years the engine had played its part in various fires. In 1846 a labourer with a grudge had set fire to a farm belonging to Mr Free. High winds had fanned the flames to cottages on the opposite side of Bottisham and instantly 15 homes were in one blazing mass. “It was truly heart-rending to see the poor creatures, with merely their night clothes on, running with their families they knew not wither, to gain a place of refuge”, the *Norfolk* ... reported. A man known as ‘Squirrel’ was arrested on suspicion of arson

Then in October 1904 a devastating blaze had broken out on Charles Parker’s farm near Bottisham church. It was the most thickly populated part of the village with 20 cottages close at hand. Once more the old manual engine, stored at the Police Station, was requisitioned and under the direction of Fred Newman proved useful, despite its age. Thanks to a good supply of water from wells and the parish pump and the hard work of village fire-fighters it was stopped from spreading to adjoining premises.

It was still considered to be in fairly good condition, having been repaired by the Parish Council in 1897. But it was in need of more use to keep it in better order. It was called out again in the following February to tackle a fire started by a tramp smoking a pipe whilst passing the night in a stack at Spring Hall Farm, near Bottisham.

Bottisham's manual fire engine featured in the columns of the News again in March 1930 when a reader, Mr W.F. Turner, came across it in an old lumberyard at Cambridge. The original pump had disappeared but the solid wooden wheels with their iron rims were still intact.

Other parishes had their own fire engines. In 1816 Bassingbourn parishioners purchased one of the pumps that had been used at the Napoleonic Prisoner of War camp at Norman Cross near Peterborough. It is now preserved in Peterborough Museum. But do you know what happened to the machine that played such an important part in ensuring the safety of Lode and its inhabitants?

Pictures

Bottisham fire engine, 1930

Bottisham fire engine in action c1900

Report of the fire at Lode, 1912

Lode at the time of the fire

Bassingbourn fire engine, now in Peterborough Museum

Fire fighters at Wicken

Devastation caused by fire at West Wrating c1900.

Memories 7th May 2012 by Mike Petty

Last week I have enjoyed the privilege of meeting two groups of senior citizens in different parts of the city.

One was a final visit to a venue I have popped in to for more than 30 years. The Hill Top Centre proudly displays a framed certificate recording that it can trace its history back to a day in May 1952 when the Foreign Secretary, Mr Anthony Eden journeyed to Cambridge to open an Anglo-American and Allied services Club on Castle Hill.

The initiative had come from the Women's Voluntary Service who were keen to provide a club for American Servicemen. It would open each evening during the week with the intention of luring them away from the attractions of their camps so they could learn – in Eden's words - "what extraordinary animals the English are".

By January 1958 it had become the Hill Top Club, a place where the local elderly could gather, find companionship and enjoy hot lunches at moderate prices. It sported a sitting and a games room with a full-sized billiard table. This was a role it fulfilled for nearly 20 years though the building became increasingly dilapidated over time. Then in 1976 it moved to a new site in Primrose Street off Victoria Road.

Last week the staff, helpers and those who appreciate the kindness and care that they have been shown celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Hill Top Club by cutting a cake and recalling past times as they prepare to start a new chapter in another venue off Brooks Road

The previous day I had journeyed to meet other people with memories to share, this time in a new centre in Wulfstan Way. Here I was joined by Sarah Payne whose series of 'Down Your Street' articles published in the Cambridge Weekly News 30 years ago are still treasured in many local homes.

The area was developed in the early 1950s - some present could remember playing in the fields before the bulldozers moved in, fields where Kitchener's army had encamped during the Great War and from which Alan Cobham's Flying Circus had offered people an aerial glimpse of the village of Cherry Hinton

Sarah chatted once more to Eve Rowland who she had featured in her article on Wulfstan Way in March 1982. With her late husband and son Eve had run the award-winning 'Maid Marion Stores', a spic and span grocer's beloved by its customers which offered a welcome and a chat together with a delivery service three times a week. It was one of a line of local shops including a butcher and a post office which doubled as a greengrocer. There was also a pub, the Queen Edith, which had opened in December 1961 but has itself now passed into history, while the Queen Edith Chapel opened by the Christian Brethren in May 1956 continues to thrive.

The spiritual needs of the new community were met by a new St James' parish church dedicated by the Bishop of Ely in June 1954. Within a year the congregation had outnumbered the amount of seats provided with a Sunday School averaging 145 each week since the majority of the families in the parish had very young children. The small church was extended and its rooms now provide a base for a number of groups from young to not so-young. I have memories of visiting the lunch club that until recently provided a most welcome gathering place where more companionship could be found.

Back in 1982 Sarah had chatted to Horace and Beatrice Gowler who were amongst the first to move in: "When we first came it was very empty and bare here, with no birds", they'd recalled, while Desmond and Daphne Summers spoke of a stream that ran between the allotments and the houses on the east side of Mowbray Road. "We used to lay two planks across the brook to enable me to wheel the pram to the shops in Cherry Hinton Road", Daphne recalled. Others

Last week memories were being probed once more, this time by youngsters from Queen Edith's Primary School as part of a project which is bringing together the generations to investigate and appreciate the story of this part of Cambridge and its residents.

Do you have memories or photographs of Wulfstan Way and its neighbourhood; contact Mike Petty at the News

Pictures

Wulfstan Way shops, 1982

Eve Rowland and her family, Maid Marion Stores 1982

Wulfstan Way 1965

ORIGINALS OF THESE PICS IN NEWS LIBRARY FILE "CAMBRIDGE. WULFSTAN WAY"

List of residents 1974

Soldiers camped in the area during WWI

Hill Top Club opening certificate 1952

Certificate on wall

Hill Top Club invitation 1958

Hill Top Day Centre, Primrose Street

Memories 14th May 2012 by Mike Petty

The incessant wet weather last week caused the cancellation of the Badminton Horse Trials, forcing Cotswold hoteliers to seek desperately for folk who could be encouraged to fill rooms emptied by the loss of competitors or spectators.

And if we were journeying all that way, it would have been bad form to completely ignore the attractions of the tourist spots en route. Thus it was that I broke the journey at Lower Slaughter joining other visitors admiring a group of horses pausing in the stream to slake their thirst and enjoy a splash in the water

It was a typical part of 'Old England', a sight once commonplace in Cambridgeshire. Here, as pictures depict, farmers would often drive their carts into the pond to water the horse and swell the cart wheels. But newspaper accounts show things could be far from ideal.

Thus it was that in September 1911 the man in charge of a horse and cart belonging to Prime Godfrey drove it into the school pond at Swavesey. The pond was nearly empty but the horse got stuck in the mud; in its struggles it became embedded deeper and deeper in the thick mire, the cart seeming to hold it down. Eventually it took eight or nine men hauling for all they were worth to pull it out. A similar misfortune had befallen a travelling fishmonger from Cambridge, the previous August when watering his horse in a pond near Conington church; then it had taken the labour of men and a tumbrel cart before they could be extricated.

Quite often it was people who used the water for drinking. In 1898 an inquest at Cardinal's Green, Shudy Camps, heard how a child of seven years had complained of sickness. For dinner she'd had beef, pudding and potatoes and drank water fetched from a pond. Doctor Jones said that the water was most dangerous. It was full of injurious microbes, and ought never to be used, even for washing domestic utensils, without being first boiled. But it was the only water supply for drinking purposes in that part of the parish

Traction engines would also top up their water supplies at roadside ponds. At Ashley in 1925 a battle broke out after farmer Octavia Bocock spotted an driver taking on water from his pond and threatened to stand in front of the engine until he'd been paid five shillings. The situation turned ugly and the matter ended up in court

Time after time water from the village pond was used to fight fires. In June 1906 Barton rectory was completely gutted. The vicar's wife, who was an invalid, had been in bed and it was with difficulty that she was aroused in time to make a hasty escape in her sleeping apparel. Although there was a plentiful water supply from the village pond it was obvious the building would be gutted. It was left to burn itself out, though the church books and plate were rescued

Ponds have even been used for baptisms. In September 1910 painful scenes were witnessed at Little Downham during an open-air baptism in the Pit pond in Cannon Street, a shallow pond chiefly used for watering horses and washing carts. The Minister, wearing a pair of waders reaching over his knees, was immersing a woman when her husband suddenly arrived. He walked into the water and tried to disrupt the service, causing great consternation to the members of the Baptist community present until he was restrained by the village policeman.

Afterwards there was an angry scene as he upbraided his wife for acting so, against his wishes.

They have also even been landing places. In 1924 a Belgian balloonist came down in a pond ten feet deep at Norney Farm, Ely. He was pulled out by Mr Herbert Cross, an Ely farmer. The aeronaut had been taking part in a big race from Brussels for a £2,000 prize, had crossed the Channel during the night and experienced a very rough journey. His balloon was said to be the smallest in existence and the pilot had to stand all the time he was in the air.

But pond maintenance was a problem as Isleham parish council discovered in June 1908. The pond where the water in East Road drained from off the highway had always been cleaned out by men who had sold the mud as reimbursement. Now however they could not find anyone to purchase it. A number offered to do the job for £3 but the mud would belong to the council and the clerk, Mr F. Fyson did not know what he'd do with it.

Some thought the best thing was for ponds to be used as dumping grounds. In 1928 Cottenham pond was filled in by the Rural District Council at a cost of £42. The figure was quite staggering but an excellent job had been made and the village beautified. An insanitary place had been cleared away – there had been talk of typhoid two years ago – and it was more economic than cleansing the pond in the long run. However nearly every village had a pond and they would all want them filled. Certainly the Clerk of Milton Parish Council drew attention to what he called 'the cess-pool known as the pond' which was a menace to the health of the village. It was on a bend in the road and was a danger to traffic on dark or foggy nights.

Some ponds have survived as an attractive feature of the village scene. There was despair when in 1972 the one at Comberton dried up for three months. Fortunately help came in the shape of the Royal Engineers based at Waterbeach who deepened it, removing several tons of slime and silt to restore its beauty. Even the ducks returned and the world became right again.

Pictures

7311 Cattle in Coton pond 1881

Heydon pond showing water cart c1900

Swavesey pond 1927

Cottenham pond was filled in 1928

Ashley pond was centre of a battle with a traction engine

Horses at Lower Slaughter last Sunday

READER RESPONSES

stephen.bull137@btinternet.com

14 May (2 days ago)

to mikepetty
Dear Mike,

I was interested in your article, Memories, on ponds. You mentioned a Prime Godfrey horse and cart getting stuck in School Pond, and depicted a pond, the Swan Pond, in Swavesey.

It is possible that you are aware of the action taken by the Parish Council to fill the Swan Pond in order to create a car park in the 1970s! Details, for your information are as follows.

Over the years the Swan Pond situated in Church End, Swavesey has experienced a chequered history. Prior to a piped water supply in the village the pond served a useful purpose for providing drinking water for the people living in that end of the village. Its source of water was also essential for the fire brigade during the Swavesey Fire in March, 1913, and cattle and carters' horses were 'watered' in the pond.

In the 1970s the pond became a neglected morass of reed covered thick black sludge and the Parish Council decided and began to fill it in with hardcore and make it into a "grassed emenity and car park" (CEN: 2 April 1973). A section of the local community objected who wished that the pond be maintained as a "visual emenity" and continue to serve as a "useful drainage function". Subsequently the Cambridgeshire County Planners intervened and the pond was cleaned, landscaped and stocked with water plants, including beautiful water lillies, and goldfish; and for many years was maintained by a nearby lady resident in Frere Cottages.

Note: Photographs and articles appeared in the CEN at that time. one was captioned "Planners say stop as a village pond disappears".

With best wishes,

Stephen Bull

Former resident of Swavesey now living in Bar Hill.

137 Appletrees, Bar Hill

Memories 21 May 2012 by Mike Petty

Joan Jackson has emailed me after she spotted a picture of a line-up of delivery vehicles outside the former Cambridge Daily News works in St Andrew's Street.

She writes:

"My dad, Mr Bert Holmes, worked at the News during the 1930s and was the driver of the third van from the right. I have clear memories of his time there as during school holidays he would occasionally take me with him on his rounds as a special treat. He delivered papers out as far as Saffron Walden and all the villages in between. Not only did I enjoy the ride in the van - cars were unheard of luxuries in those days - but I remember the other drivers made quite a fuss of me and I usually received several bars of chocolate and packets of sweets.

"One of the drivers who was a close friend of my dad was killed during the war in an attempted raid in Europe but I can no longer remember his name. I do remember a Mr Male who was the manager involved in the delivery department as well as meeting Captain Archie Taylor who I believe was the Managing Director of the News in those days"

Bert drove one of a new fleet of vehicles that was introduced in 1933 to ensure that copies of the paper were received at newsagents around the region, whatever the weather.

But in December 1934 one of the vans made front-page headlines.

The vehicle was being driven along the road between Soham and Stuntney when it collided with what was described as 'a mechanical horse railway wagon'. Captain Taylor immediately made his way to the scene: "The van could not have been more badly smashed up had it been dropped from an aeroplane on to a concrete road. It was reduced to a heap of twisted metal and matchwood", he reported. About the only thing worth salvaging were the tyres and the radiator.

The driver, Tom Watson of French's Road, was trapped by his legs in the wreckage; he was taken to Addenbrooke's Hospital where an x-ray showed that he'd broken his pelvis. The driver of the mechanical horse was another Cambridge man, W.C. Hammond of St Peter's Street, who was only slightly hurt. By a strange coincidence the two men knew each other

Joan's father left the News in either 1938 or 1939 when he took a job as caretaker of St Andrew's Street Baptist Church across the road. The family moved in to No.41 St Andrew's Street almost opposite the News where they stayed until 1948.

Joan points out that to the left of the entrance to the New Theatre there is a blind which covered a little sweet shop's window. This shop, which of course also sold tobacco and cigarettes, was owned by a Mr and Mrs Flyman and was very popular with people visiting the theatre.

She got to know them very well as within the chapel premises there was a specially reinforced and protected room where the family used to go when the air raid siren sounded and Mrs Flyman used to come over to join them with her cat. "I don't remember Mr Flyman being there, but I seem to recall he was an air raid warden, so he would have been on duty", she adds

"The air raid siren was sited on the Borough Police Station which was next door to the chapel in those days, and the sound of it was deafening. We were there at the time bombs fell in the Hills Road area and not far from the Round Church, nothing like people had to endure in other cities and parts of the country, but scary nevertheless.

"Another interesting thing I remember about our time there was that during the war when the American troops began to arrive in large numbers, some of the premises belonging to the chapel, though not the Chapel itself, were converted into a canteen and social area for them.

"I seem to recall that there was some temporary accommodation made for them there as well. I do remember clearly the huge divide between white and coloured soldiers from the States which seemed quite shocking to us, even though we weren't used to seeing many coloured people in Cambridge, apart from those at the university. Only white men were allowed to come into the facilities at the Chapel - not very Christian - but the rules were made by the US Army and not by the folk at the Chapel"

Pictures

143.64 The full line up of News delivery vehicles outside the News office showing the New Theatre alongside

143.2 Detail of Joan's father in his van

143.3 Detail of the sweet shop

34 12 13 The delivery van after the collision

170.40 A railway 'mechanical horse' at Ely station

170019 Photo of St Andrew's Street Baptist Chapel and the police station 1964

5476 American servicemen with a jeep.

Memories 28th May 2012 by Mike Petty

I have been approached by a number of readers hoping that you can help them.

Sally Hedges Greenwood has emailed (salgreen85@mac.com) to say she has a photograph in her family archives that has been bothering her since she inherited it in the late 80s.

It shows a stagecoach outside the Rose and Crown Hotel at Wisbech which was in its day the town's major coaching inn. Writing in 1898 Robert Gardiner records that it was refronted probably at the beginning of the nineteenth-century but inside could be seen the roomy old stairs and panelled work dating back to the 1700s. It was then one of some 100 licensed establishments in the town but closed in February 2011 and – its website suggests – might not reopen.

In the 1800s a mail coach used to leave daily for London and there were connections to other large towns in East Anglia and the Midlands. Sally's photograph shows a London to Brighton stagecoach but was taken in the mid 1930s by E L Witcombe of 7 New Quay, Wisbech.

As stagecoach travel had long-since ceased this was obviously a specially-staged event. However this is not the most puzzling aspect of the picture: it features a number of oriental children with very elongated necks adorned with a series of rings. So what is it all about?

Tim Cockerill from Weston Colville needs help in another quest. He is urgently seeking a photograph of the Revd. James George Clark who was Rector successively of Conington, Cambs 1881-89, Radwell, Herts 1912/13 and Hockwold-cum- Wilton between 1913-26. Rev Clark owned and lived at Anglesey Abbey 1888-1912 and died in Cambridge in 1929 leaving eight children. Somebody, somewhere must have a picture with him on it – perhaps at the dedication of Hockwold war memorial, perhaps at a church garden fete. If you have one in your files please email Tim - tjcockerill@btinternet.com - or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch.

Other readers have kindly contacted me following other articles.

Stephen Bull, a former resident of Swavesey, now living in Bar Hill writes: "I was interested in your article on ponds. You showed a picture of the Swan Pond, in Church End Swavesey. Over the years this has experienced a chequered history.

"In the 1970s the pond became a neglected morass of reed covered thick black sludge and the Parish Council decided and began to fill it in with hardcore to make it into a 'grassed amenity and car park'. A section of the local community objected, wishing the pond to be maintained as a 'visual amenity' and continue to serve as a 'useful drainage function'. Subsequently the Cambridgeshire County Planners intervened and the pond was cleaned, landscaped and stocked with water plants, including beautiful water lilies and goldfish. For many years it was maintained by a nearby lady resident in Frere Cottages. Photographs and articles appeared in the CEN at that time; one was captioned 'Planners say stop as a village pond disappears'".

Sheila Proctor (nee Crisp) found her memories sparked by my article on Wulfstan Way. She writes:

“I lived there at No. 2 with my parents from 1953 until I got married in 1963. I remember the shops - I had to walk down to the grocers to get the shopping on a Saturday morning before I could go to the pictures! Mary and Ken Hall had the hairdressers and Mr. Cruickshank was the butcher. My best friend Joyce Mansfield lived at No. 15 and her brother Ken and his wife

“We had a large side garden which he had to dig over when we first moved in. There had been another family there before us but they were unable to cope with the garden because it flooded, we were told. When Dad got digging he found the flooding was caused by so much brick rubble left there by the developers when the estate was built. The council were reluctant to remove it but did in the end and then he had to have a load of top soil delivered to make the ground level again. Mr. Kingdom (Headmaster at Coleridge School) came past and congratulated him on his determination to sort the garden out. It then became a productive vegetable and fruit plot. Mum was very proud of her apple trees until someone came in one night and took the last ones!

“Dad was offered the house to buy for £2,200 but refused, thinking it was not worth it! It could be quite cold in the winter because it was built with just thermal blocks. They then moved over to Holywell Rd. off Histon Rd. but missed Cherry Hinton, so came back and bought a new house in Malvern Rd. where they lived for many years.

“Your picture shows one car and that was more or less how it was. Dad had a car because he was a taxi driver, first for Camtax and then his own private car. The house did not have a garage, so he used an old shed arrangement at Coe's Farm on Cherry Hinton Road. and had to walk backwards and forwards each day. Happy memories once again.”

Swavesey pond 2010

Swavesey pond c1910

Conington church with its crooked spire – do you have picture of the minister in the 1880s

Wisbech showing the Rose and Crown, 1930s

Stagecoach outside Rose and Crown Wisbech

Detail of the children

Memories 4th June 2012 by Mike Petty

With the country in the midst of celebrations for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II it seems appropriate to recall that it is an occasion that has happened once before.

Back in June 1897 it was another Queen, Victoria, who had been on the throne for 60 years and Cambridge prepared to mark the occasion. Carefully preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library are admission tickets to some of the events organised, photographs and files of newspaper accounts that show some parallels with what is happening today, although the language has changed something over the years

Then the decorations were lavish: “In the daytime, the town came out as gay as an Admiral Butterfly; at night it was a perfect Fairyland and feast to the eye. From the railway station to Castle Hill ran an unbroken array of flags, bunting, pictures and triumphal arches”. All of the colleges in the centre of town were illuminated with Caius in particular standing out, its new Waterhouse building being described as a “perfect precipice of glowing prismatic lamps”

The celebrations started on Monday evening with a lantern parade of over a hundred cyclists many in costume. The first prize for the best decorated bicycle was awarded to Mr Dunn who had made his machine represent the Indian jungle. There was a deer's head in the middle of grasses and evergreen, with a monkey among the ferns and vegetation. Mr Dunn himself was dressed as a hunter

The main festivities on Tuesday 22 June went without a hitch. "The sun was outpouring all the general brightness of his mid-summer effulgence from a cloudless azure sky". At midday a sixty-gun salute was fired and 1,000 pigeons swept up into the heavens in circular swirls.

Some 20,000 people gathered to watch a procession of decorated carriages. One conveyed old people from the workhouse with one or two of the old dames behaving most frivolously, winking and giggling like any little schoolgirl. There was a fete on Midsummer Common where shooting galleries, stalls, coconut shies and one of Thurston's steam roundabouts kept matters lively. It was followed by a fancy dress bicycle carnival; the first prize for the ladies, a diamond and ruby crescent brooch, was awarded to Miss L. Unwin of Newnham who, with helmet, breastplate, shield and trident made a dignified Britannia. She also received a silver "King of the Road" lamp and baby bell given by the Humber Cycle Supply Company

Sadly the much-anticipated water carnival was less successful. A News reader had suggested that a grand naval engagement should be fought on the river Cam with the explosion of mines, the firing of guns from ironclads and torpedo boats. Sadly this was not to be though crowds lined the bank between Jesus Lock and Victoria Bridge to witness an obstacle race and a water derby. The highlight was a competition to walk a greasy pole. It all left no time for the canoe race so it had to be postponed till next day.

Later nearly 40,000 turned out for a firework display. "It seemed as though for many acres one could have walked upon the heads of the people without fear of falling. The devices were numerous and uniformly good, the most popular, of course, being a fire portrait of the Queen"

Later came special treats for the young and old. A "monster public dinner" was given to 1,000 over-sixties in two large marquees on Parker's Piece. The old people began to arrive very early, with beaming faces and expectant eyes. "Gowns of antique stuff, redolent of sweet lavender, that had lain by for years protected against the ravages of moths, were brought out in honour of the occasion while one old gentleman had hunted up a pair of white jean trousers that he went courting in 50 years before". As a band played they tucked in to cold roast beef, hams, veal and ham, salad, cheese, cake and strawberries washed down with ale, lemonade, ginger beer and tea. Each diner was presented with a commemorative tankard. Next afternoon it was time for 4,000 schoolchildren between the ages of seven and twelve. A mug and plate was provided for each child and they fed on bread and butter and two lumps of cake. Far more came than had been expected, many of them obviously either over or under the specified age. At the end of the feast they romped and danced to the music of the band

There were celebrations around the county; West Watting gave dinner to the tradesmen, labourers, old and young; while at Cheveley Park villagers dined in a large marquee. There were sports at Dullingham, fairy lights at Linton, a parade at Swaffham Bulbeck and a tea at Haddenham. Even little Barway organised a cricket match and rural sports that included sack races and a grinning through a collar competition. However Chippenham was quiet. Owing to the spoor state of Mr Tharp's health at the Park the celebrations were abandoned and on one of the large farms the men worked as normal.

But at Cambridge there was no hitch from noontide till midnight. One paper commented: "The recollection of that day's rejoicings will survive for life in the memories of those who took part in them. We have never seen Cambridge look better than it did for this unique event, and the orderly behaviour of the crowd added materially to the enjoyment" Indeed, so well

behaved had the inhabitants been that no one appeared before the magistrates on the following morning.

History will tell whether the same will be said of today's celebrations. And the Cambridgeshire Collection would welcome modern programmes and souvenirs of only the second Diamond Jubilee

Pictures

The water pageant

Fragments of a poster of the Barway event

Jubilee decorations in Sidney Street – sketch

Jubilee decorations in Petty Cury – corner with Sidney Street

The old folk's tea

Ticket for a later dinner for helpers

The official programme of the Cambridge diamond jubilee celebrations

Memories 11th June 2012 by Mike Petty

A few short weeks ago I had a phone call from a wonderful old gentleman, Alec Sadler, who told me his memories of looking out from the window of the isolated farm near Wilbraham to see something strange in the sky.

He'd been drawn to his window by a loud and foreign noise; engines were not commonplace as the farm was operated manually with horses. On peering out he was filled with both fear and excitement. Flying low and engulfing his vision was the R101 airship coming straight towards him. Shouting to his mum and dad he ran downstairs and out of the back door to watch the colossal airship pass over the house and away towards Fleam Dyke. The impact of such a sight can be hard to imagine.

And of course it did not escape the vigilance of News reporters: On 1st November 1929 the R101 had left the mooring towers at Cardington at 9.41 am and under the power of three engines had cruised over Bedford for about ten minutes before heading off to the East towards Sandringham. The King was in the grounds with the Queen and acknowledged the wavings of those on board by raising his hat. The young Princess Elizabeth, who was staying with her grandparents, waved her tiny hands in high delight and smiled with glee.

It caused a sensation as it passed over Newmarket racecourse where all betting stopped as binoculars were turned to the sky; even jockeys on their way to the starting post paused to stare, though by the time the race had finished the apparition had vanished. The airship passed over Cambridge on its way back to Cardington. It glittered in the low November sun as though made of silver and hundreds of people came running into the streets when they heard the noise of the engines.

One of those was Michael Bowyer who lived in Walnut Tree Avenue, a line of Victorian houses that stretched from Newmarket Road down to the river. He still remembers seeing the giant machine; while its nose was over his house, the stern was over Abbey Road and it kept coming. On its tail was the letter 'G'. The young Bowyer wrote it down, so he should not forget it. It was the start of a lifetime passion for noting things down about aircraft. Another was Peggy Brutnell, writing back in April 1999 she recalled how she was eight years: "I lived in New Street and was playing 'houses' with fallen leaves with a few friends on the New Street Rec and we all started running home when the airship appeared". As it receded into the distance it appeared like some strange monster floating on the misty horizon.

Out at Foxton Roy Chamberlain recalled in April 2004: “I heard an unusual noise, looked out of my bedroom window and there was the R101, going slowly, when it suddenly dived or hit an air pocket at about 30 degrees and went out of sight behind a small hill. I quickly dressed, got my bicycle out and went up the hill. It was still flying, very low and I watched it while it was in view, then came home, relieved.”

The R101 was the largest in the world at that time and the latest in airship design. It could carry 60 passengers who travelled in luxurious accommodation rivalling the grandest Ocean liners and had a crew of 45. Thousands of folk had travelled down to Cardington to watch its construction including a group of Cambridge Rotarians. They were amazed at its lightness – parts that looked as if they would take two or three men to lift could be raised quite simply by one hand.

In October 1930 the R101 left on her maiden voyage to Karachi but ran into bad weather over northern France during the night, became unstable and crashed to the ground near Beauvais. Fire then consumed the airship killing 48 of the 54 people onboard. Amongst the crew to perish was Coxswain Leonard Oughton. Speaking from his Cambridge home in February 2001 his son Roy told the News “I was five years old and remember my mother and I waving my father off. When he went he left behind a silver cigarette case and his watch, because he realised the airship was dodgy”.

Alec Sadler had been prompted to phone me since he'd been excited that his childhood memories had formed the inspiration for his son, Patrick, to paint a reconstruction of the scene for entry into the Summer exhibition of the Guild of Aviation Artists. The picture has been accepted and will join other works of art at the Mall Galleries in London between 16 and 22nd July. Very sadly Alec has now passed away but Patrick Sadler, who lives at Barnardiston near Haverhill, has sent a copy which captures something of the amazing scene that his dad glimpsed all those years ago.

If it sparks any memories for you, then let me know.

Pictures

Patrick Sadler's painting of the scene at Gt Wilbraham
Two pictures of the R101 showing
Coxswain Oughton before the fatal trip
The News report of the crash

Memories 18th June 2012 by Mike Petty

An interest in the past is something that can span generations.

I have recently received an email from Barbara Todd who lives in Teignmouth, Devon.

She asks: “I wonder where you were 60 years ago, when it was announced that King George VIth had passed away? I was a teacher at The Fawcett School, Trumpington. I was in the hall with a class of children (7-8 year olds) joining in the 'Musical Movement' programme on the radio. The programme was interrupted to tell us the news and I rushed out to tell the Headmaster, Mr. Norman Walker! I recall no more!”

She has sent me a picture of her pupils and wonders where they might be now? Would they remember such an event or be too young for it to mean very much? Barbara continues: “I taught at the school for 4 years - I was Miss Jones and I left to get married in 1954. The staff I

remember were a Mr. McKay, Mr. Jennings, Miss Cross and Mr. Walker. Other names I have forgotten. All very formal then - no Christian names were used for the staff!"

She would be delighted to hear from any who remember her – email gandb@thetoddhouse.org.uk or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch.

One wonderful source of memories of Fawcett are a series of films taken by former head of the Junior School, Mr C. R. Duckering, copies of which are held by the Cambridgeshire Collection in Cambridge Central Library. He'd previously taught at St George's School on East Road where he also took numerous photographs of groups of children before it closed in 1936

Back in February 2004 George 'Cherry' Palmer, from Cherry Hinton recalled this was in his time one of the roughest areas of Cambridge but bullying was never heard of and St George's under Headmaster F. Dawson and the teachers had a policy of stimulating and encouraging pupils. Sport was part of that ethos and its footballers achieved remarkable success, forming the backbone of a Cambridge Schoolboys team that Cherry captained during a remarkable run in the All England Schools Shield competition before bowing out to the lads of West Ham in front of a crowd of 8,000 at Grange Road in 1934.

Another old boy was the late Fred Unwin, who wrote a number of "Pimbo" books recalling his memories of the area. In one of his verses, "East Road Ballad" he wrote

East Road 'College', past Loker's School-House Lane,
Had Kingdom, Baldry, Coleman and Mallett,
To teach emphatically on, how to 'spell it'.
May be a future errand boys' domain;
But, worthy lads emerged from such a place,
Going there, was certainly no disgrace!

Now St Georges has been succeeded by St Matthew's Primary School in Norfolk Street and such is the demand for places that it is currently undergoing a huge regeneration programme to cater the young people wanting to attend. But the current scholars are looking back to past times.

They are seeking stories and memories that go beyond the school itself and have been contacting former pupils, staff and the local community to produce a fantastic resource for the whole area. They have enlisted the help of a local performing arts company, 30 Bird Productions together with architecture company Public Works and Dr Luke Skinner from the University Department for Earth Sciences in a project they've called Mud. Next Saturday they will be participating in the annual Summer Event on Norfolk Street, which will see the road closed for a whole-day celebration including music, food and the finals of a local talent competition.

If you have memories of the area, this would be a good day to revive them. Back in 1936 the St George's School old pupils included lads who had gone on to become successful business men in the USA and New Zealand as well as government officials in India. On Saturday Sarah Haythornthwaite, organiser of the Mud team will, be in St Matthew's School car park hoping to meet a similar mix of former pupils or your can email her at MUD@30birdproductions.org

Pictures

MP Anne Campbell joined parents in a protest in 1985 when the school faced the prospect of losing part of their playground to widen East Road

St Matthew's staff and pupils 1982 with East Road in background

East Road showing Loker's shop and corner of School House Lane

Norfolk Street 1981 – will be scene of celebrations next Saturday

St George's school 1934

St George's school pupils c1900 – when they were studying animals

Fawcett school pupils 1936

Memories 25 June 2012 by Mike Petty

Pubs have been an important part of life for centuries; a place where people could meet, where meetings and inquests were held and where folk could have a wholesome drink at a time when the water supply was distinctly dodgy. Most communities had several pubs, but who now remembers them?

One man who does is John Shepperson, the local historian for Swavesey and its hinterland. John was born in one of the village pubs and was inspired to take an interest in their past when he was a lad. During the Second World War paper was in short supply and people were encouraged to turn out old books for recycling. John was helping in the salvage drive when he noticed a copy of a Kelly's Directory for Cambridgeshire. He would have dearly loved to have taken it home, but this was not allowed. However he did tear out the page listing the publicans, traders and residents of Swavesey.

Since then John has collected material on the village which he has shared in talks that attract large numbers of both old residents and newcomers, anxious to learn or to remember the past. Now he has allowed one of his most popular presentations, that on Swavesey pubs, to be recorded for posterity and issued on a DVD with old photographs and modern film footage identifying the once-public houses that are now private homes.

There have been at least 24 pubs in the village. One of the oldest pubs in the village was The Swan with Two Nicks which was licensed in 1820. In 1911 it was well-known to fishermen and skaters, being the nearest inn to the river and the railway station. For many years it was the headquarters of the parish church bellringers and many a lively night was spent within its walls on the occasion of their annual suppers. At Feast times the spacious upper room was utilised for dancing.

In July 1910 the wife of the landlord of the Red Lion Inn at Boxworth End was busy at her housework when she thought she heard the entrance of a crowd of customers into the taproom. On hurrying through she found the room full of sheep which had found their way in through the open door. A few weeks later the landlady of the Black Horse hung her best dress in front of the taproom fire to air and went about her household duties. On her return she found the gown in flames – fortunately a customer managed to put it out before it burnt the pub down.

However several other village pubs have been destroyed by fire including the Bottle House which fell victim to a blaze which ravaged much of the village in 1913. It was rebuilt by John's grandfather incorporating nine bottles in one wall in the shape of a diamond. The

centre bottle contains a note saying it was filled by ale brewed by King George Edward VII in 1892 at Lord Burton's brewery, Burton-on-Trent. It is said that the note can still be seen if the sun shines on the bottle at the right angle

Elsewhere the number of drinking establishments had increased in the 1830s following the passing of a Beer Act which allowed householders to sell beer and cider without a licence. At that time the water supply was poor and often contaminated. The brewing process killed the germs and the weak beer they produced was much safer, being consumed by children and adults alike. One of the new drinking houses was the Six Days Only which was owned by a member of the Strict Baptist congregation and did not serve beer on Sundays

By 1902 there was concern about the excessive drinking nationwide and campaigners urged public house to concentrate on the sale of food and non-intoxicants. In 1904 the landlord of the Swan public house at Bottisham was criticised by magistrates for failing to supply a traveller with some tea and bread-and-butter. This was a very undesirable state of things in a public house which existed for the accommodation and refreshment of the public. The provision of food was equally as important as the provision of drink. When a man asked for such simple things as tea and bread and butter or cheese, certainly it ought to be within his reach, they ruled.

At Knapwell the Three Horseshoes was closed down by its Temperance owner in 1903 which caused a petition seeking a replacement. Residents needed some means of obtaining drink in the village: many lives had been saved by the prompt administration of brandy during an illness, now people would need to go to Elsworth for such a stimulant. And should a man walk the two miles to get his supper beer he would be tempted to have more before he left.

The absence of a pub was something also felt at Haddon in Huntingdonshire in 1907. It had long been the custom for a small committee to order barrels of beer which was served to the villagers and visitors in feast week in a tent where dancing and merrymaking took place. The brewer's account was made out to 'Haddon & Co' and collections were made to pay for the beer. But the Inland Revenue fined the two labourers who stored the beer and took around the hat for selling it without a licence. Two men, aged 75 and 64, said the custom had existed all their lives, those who ordered the beer being recompensed by all the villagers.

Following an Act of Parliament in 1902 Cambridgeshire magistrates started the task of extinguishing licences of public houses thought to be superfluous by offering brewers compensation to those that were closed.

Back at Swavesey one pub that survived to the 1960s was the Rising Sun whose customers included two notorious London brothers, the Kray Twins. Now a private house, the living room still retains a small private bar with seats set around the outside wall and a table in the middle as a reminder of an important village institution. John has filmed much of his commentary in its hospitable room.

Today there is just one pub left in the village, the White Hart next to the medieval market place. Its entrance step is believed to be an old stone coffin lid found during the restoration church in 1867. All who visit it should raise a glass to John Shepperson and his life-long interest in the village that has been his home, an enthusiasm now recognised with the award of a British Empire Medal in the Queen's Jubilee Honours List.

John Shepperson's Swavesey pub walk dvd costs £6.99 (plus £2 postage) from John Dyer, 35 Gibraltar Lane, Swavesey CB24 4RR. Cheques should be made payable to Swavesey Video Group.

Pictures

Swavesey DVD cover
John Shepperson leads a village pub walk
Swavesey George and Dragon c1900

Other villages
Sutton the Brook House Nov 1964
Shippea Hill domino players at Railway Tavern 1977
Wilburton Royal Oak 1964
Haslingfield Bushel and Strike 1915
Milton Lion and Lamb c1900

Memories 2nd July 2012 by Mike Petty

Looking Back through the files of the Cambridge Weekly News for June 1912 I chanced upon an article by one of the country's top economists, Professor Alfred Marshall of St John's College. In it he reflected on the state of the University over the previous 20 years. It had been a productive period: many colleges had added to their accommodation and practically a whole new street of splendidly-equipped University buildings had come into being.

But there was another side to Cambridge: dependent on the University were thousands of people whose homes were very different from the ivy-clad academic courts. The old-established colleges in the University of Cambridge were in some degree land-owners and the gross income of Trinity College from leases, rack rents, copyholds and tithe rent charges was over £50,000 a year (about £4.6 million in today's money). So what were they doing towards solving the great question of housing reform, he wondered?

College Bursars insisted they were doing as much as they could. Marshall visited what used to be the worst places of the town. He found that many of the wretched buildings had been cleared away but that there was a difficulty. Given modern regulations there was not space to rebuild even one new cottage where there may perhaps have been half a dozen. Once dispossessed the families herded in with other already overcrowded families, adding to the housing shortage.

The problem lay with private landowners. Marshall reported how a small tradesman, who had saved a little money, acquired a cottage or a row of cottages at a ridiculously low figure. In one instance a row of four was bought for £70, patched up by the purchaser in his spare time, and let at rents which gave him a return of something like 30 per cent. "In one cottage were two rooms, one upstairs one down and nothing else in the way of accommodation. A woman was patching up the wretched loft, all open to the ladder staircase, with paper. Paper is a good deal used by the poor to keep out the weather and give some semblance of cleanliness. The floor was dangerously rotten, but she explained it did not much matter, because the children we had seen downstairs were her grandchildren and did not live with her. The three beds, which took up nearly all the floor space of this low, leaky loft, were occupied by her three sons, who were old enough to know how to escape the holes and the rotten places in the boards. She and her husband slept in the downstairs living-room"

Now a century later another economist, Prof Robert Neild of Trinity, has turned his attention to a detailed study of Cambridge University finances. In Victorian time although colleges were wealthy, the University itself was impoverished with much of its income coming from matriculation fees. These varied greatly – a 'nobleman' who dined with Fellows on the top table and could obtain his degree without taking an examination, paid three times more than the average student while 'sizers' who waited on tables and ate what was left over, were charged much less. Today student fees are again a matter of contention.

Until the Second World War the educational aspect of University life was less important than the opportunity it gave rich young men to establish friendships with others. The poor man would get very little out of a Cambridge education: he was unlikely to make many friends and would be much better going to one of the new universities, it was claimed in 1950 Prof Neild glimpsed the last of those days when he himself was at Trinity in 1957; one undergraduate rode his horse along the passageway from Neville's Court to the Great Court, another woke him by sounding a hunting horn in the early morning to summon his friends to come down for another drink..

Postwar reforms such as the Education Act of 1944 pioneered by R.A. Butler (later Master of Trinity) and backed by Labour Chancellor Hugh Dalton (a King's man) presaged a golden age for university expansion including a Marshall Library of Economics on the new Sidgwick Avenue Site. There were grants and gifts from big business to support research into aeronautical engineering, physics and – perhaps surprisingly - agriculture. Here Cambridge courses were designed to appeal to rich undergraduates destined to own and manage their own large estates. This required land so in 1949 the University purchased many acres of college fields lying between Madingley and Huntingdon Roads paying an average of £54 an acre (about £1,500 in today's values). It proved a good investment: recently agricultural land near Addenbrooke's Hospital was sold to a medical research organisation for nearly £2 million an acre.

The School of Agriculture closed in 1972 and some of the fields used for farming are now home to new research facilities sponsored by companies such as Microsoft. Other land may be developed to meet the continual need for houses identified by Marshall 100 years ago. But now half would be rented to University staff, with the rest be sold on the open market, together with a hotel and land for commercial firms.

Such development is dependent on planning permission. As snippets in *Looking Back* show just 50 years ago the University was proposing its solutions to the issues of the day. Their suggestions that major shopping development should be in the Fitzroy Street area, rather than Petty Cury, were mocked as impossible, but have since happened. Later it was Trinity College who challenged planning policy to develop land off Milton Road as a Science Park – a forerunner of the present West Cambridge development.

Alfred Marshall's article 'The housing problem, colleges as landlords' appears in the Cambridge Weekly News of 28 July 1912.p5
'The financial history of Cambridge University' by Emeritus Professor Robert Neild is published by Thames River Press at £14.99 ISBN 978-0-85728-515-7

Pictures

Vicar's Farm on Madingley Road c1967 has since developed into a major addition to the University's facilities
West Cambridge site – part of the new development

Science Park – land off Milton Road in 1974, now the Trinity College Science Park

R.A.Butler pushed through major Education Reform, later he became Master of Trinity College - seen perching on the fountain in the middle of Great Court, August 1967

Kettles Yard from Northampton St 1904 – much Cambridge housing was in poor condition in 1912

A Cambridge street – newly discovered glass neg – but where is it

Fitzroy Street – University plans in 1962 to develop it as a major shopping centre were rejected

Memories 9th July 2012, by Mike Petty

A picture in last week's Memories article prompted an immediate response from Martyn Northfield, even though it had been printed the wrong way round! It showed Cambridge Place, Hills Road and was one of a batch of glass negatives recently discovered amongst the News photographic archives

For Martyn has a cutting of the picture when it originally appeared in the Cambridge Daily News on 30th December 1936. His great grandparents James and Lucy Northfield (nee Cornwell) had been married at St Paul's Church, just round the corner in April 1863 and made their home at 32 Cambridge Place.

Cambridge Place was a long, narrow cul-de-sac with an entrance from Hills Road. It housed a Mission Room, stables, slaughterhouse, furniture store rooms and the Three Pigeons pub, one-time meeting place of the Anchor Cricket Club. It was never the most grand of addresses being home in 1891 to James Leach (a sawyer), Alfred Hobbs (a railway servant), and Mrs Lydia Prime (a mangle woman) amongst others.

Cambridge Place hit the news twice in 1936. On Christmas day 1935 one of the residents, Dick Morgan, had filled in his football pool while his wife visited a friend's house for a glass of port. "This coupon'll win us a thousand pounds" he'd prophesied when she returned. When the time came to check he found that he'd forecast fourteen results correctly and sent in a claim. Confirmation of the amount of his winnings was due to be broadcast on the wireless but at the critical time the accumulator, which powered the set, had run out and the sound faded away. It was not until a CDN reporter contacted him at his work that the full impact hit home. He had indeed won his thousand pound – but with another £717 on top! That equates to over £95,000 in today's terms. With such a fortune Dick could consider moving house. But if he had the means to do so voluntarily a number of his neighbours were facing the prospect of eviction. Over 150 people would be relocated to new houses off Newmarket Road if the council's plans for slum clearance went ahead.

It was these plans which led to a public inquiry at the Guildhall. The Medical Officer, Dr A.J. Laird, described the Cambridge Place properties. The front and back doors opened directly from the road and as many of the floors were below street level the rooms were draughty and cold in winter or in rainy weather. Nearly all the roofs were sunken or broken. The houses were damp, the plaster of walls and ceilings was decayed, the stairs were dark, steep, difficult and in some cases even dangerous. The floors were weak and in some houses worn out. The woodwork generally was more or less perished.

Only two houses had sinks and only one had a water tap over the sink. Thirty-three properties shared a water tap with another house. None had a water closet inside. There was little natural light or ventilation. Half the houses had broken cooking stoves and the rest were in poor condition. All in all he considered the houses had outlived their period of usefulness. They were unfit for human habitation and could not be brought up to standard. Ernest Hard, a builder employed by the firm of Hard and Dickerson had made a detailed inspection of the houses. "I don't think, as a practical man, you could ever convert them to decent houses", he testified. Even if a landlord spent money on repairs this would not enlarge the rooms or raise the height of the ceilings which looked as if they could collapse at any time.

But some of the owners challenged the experts' findings. They had bought property as an investment and depended on them for income. Most of the tenants were old and the rents

charged were about as much as they could afford. The properties were convenient for people working in Cambridge who left early and returned late. If they had to move out to near the Borough Cemetery on Newmarket Road they would have to pay bus fares to get to work

The clearance was agreed but demolition was delayed because of the Second World War during which the Germans decided to lend a hand, bombing the Hills Road area killing three people and setting fire to the Perse School, then opposite the Catholic Church.

Across Hills Road, residents of similar properties in Gothic Street and Saxon Street off Lensfield Road had been agitating for their homes to be cleared before the war. As bombs fell around them Jack Overhill, described how he thought the explosions would be enough to tumble them down. He describes one such incident on 26th August 1940 ... "there was a tearing sound and a violent explosion that shook the house and almost sent the windows in; there was the loud patter of falling debris on the roof". The bomb had hit Pemberton Terrace, just a few yards away. Next morning Jack went to see what damage had been done. "The bomb had fallen on a tree, knocking it down and also part of a garden wall. All the windows and some of the doors were blown out in the immediate vicinity but there were no casualties ..."

It was only a minor incident compared to what was happening elsewhere and, given the censorship of the day, attracted little attention. However the Cambridge Daily News sent a photographer to record the scene. His unprinted glass negatives are amongst those now discovered in the News archive. So do you recognise anybody, can you add to the story?

More previously unseen Cambridge wartime pictures will be featured in forthcoming Memories articles.

Pictures

Pemberton Terrace – 2 views taken 26 August 1940 –THESE ARE SEEN FOR FIRST TIME
Cambridge Place – another newly discovered negative

Gothic Street off Lensfield Road

Memories 16th July 2012 by Mike Petty

The present inclement weather has proved difficult for gardeners. Even when the vegetable patch is just outside the back door one is never sure whether rain will stop work. It is more difficult if the plot is some way off. For generations allotments have been somewhere where men could grow food or just escape for some peace and quiet and where an old tin shed could provide a relatively dry place in which to snooze the afternoon away.

But allotments have not always been peaceful places. As Saffron Walden local historian Jacqueline Cooper has been discovering, many can date their existence back to the turbulent years of the 1830s when widespread disturbances saw stacks and farms set alight across the county

At that time many parishes had been 'Inclosed' with the old open-fields where a man held a strip of land in this field, another strip in that, replaced by an allotted plot of land. But this had to be enclosed by a hedge, adding to the costs. So when money was tight there was incentive to sell your plot to somebody else and pocket some cash. However once this was gone there was no land you could call your own, and the common where you used to keep a cow had also disappeared.

Farmers with plenty of land needed farmworkers. But when prices collapsed they had little incentive to farm, and little need for labourers. The resulting hardship led to the 'Swing Riots', named after a supposedly 'Captain Swing' who was alleged to tour the countryside on a white horse urging peasants to revolt.

John Denson of Waterbeach was convinced there was a better way than have land laying fallow while unemployed farmworkers' families starved or sought parish relief. Instead why could not some of that land be made available to parishioners? It would give men something to do and enable them to feed the family. And the income the landowners would get from numerous small allotments would be higher than renting entire fields to a farmer in the usual way.

One of the first to appreciate the potential was Lord Braybrooke of Audley End. He owned land on a hill behind the church at Littlebury which he laid out in 34 allotments varying in size. Having so many tenants dependant on him for their livelihood it took little persuasion to ensure the allotments were soon taken and that the rents came in regularly. The scheme was copied at nearby Saffron Walden where a Spade Husbandry Committee was established. They were overwhelmed with applicants so decided to limit the maximum size of plot each man could have and to give those poor men with large families first refusal – after all they cost more to keep on the parish.

Allotments were an important part of local life and various rules were put in place to ensure the tenants kept to the rules. At Stretham men were only to dig the land by hand – not plough it - and they could be thrown off the allotment should they leave their wife, desert their child or commit any other offence against the laws of the country!

But as the News has reported the problems did not stop in the 1800s. In 1904 villagers at Hardwick protested after the Rector gave notice that allotment holders on the glebe land would be turned off since they refused to attend church on Sunday. The Parish Council then rented the land sub-letting it to the allotment holders. But in 1925 the rector claimed the land back saying he was having to buy vegetables that should be grown on the rectory garden

When an Allotment Association was established at Chesterton in the early 1920s three hundred people applied for plots. But men needed to be sure their hard work would be worthwhile. At Vinery road in 1923 there were about 50 people working a five-pole plot each. That was hardly satisfactory: a man who had got four or five children wanted 20 poles. He did not want to grow simply potatoes, he wanted a little fruit. If he knew he had a plot for 20 years or as long as he lived, he could put in his fruit trees.

Weeding, hoeing or digging kept a man – or woman - healthy. In June 1956 Mr Giddens of Gwydir Street was one of the oldest active local gardeners. At the age of 92 he had potatoes ready for digging and peas for picking, with broad beans in flower and runners, onions and carrots coming along nicely. On top of this he looked after a few chickens.

It was particularly galling when all the hard work was to no avail. At Hildersham in 1982 gardeners kept a nightly vigil at their allotments after some of their prize vegetables went missing. While one villager hid among his runner beans another peered from his shed seeking a thief who had pilfered choice onions, potatoes, cauliflowers and carrots. Earlier, in 1925, allotment holders in Barton Fields, Ely, believed peas & broad beans were being robbed. Then they discovered much 'stolen' produce stored between a rhubarb bed & a rubbish heap, where a big rat was acting as sentry. In the evening an army of rats of all sizes was seen to emerge from an adjacent ditch & begin to remove their plunder.

During the Second World War, when food was at a premium, grow-you own was even more important and various other pieces of land were dug up for vegetables. Gardeners at Stretham formed a produce association to pool their resources and keep down costs by bulk-buying seeds and fertiliser. This attracted wide attention and in 1948 the BBC travelled to the village to broadcast an interview with its members.

Often allotment land has come under pressure. In 1955 Cambridge Preservation Society applied to have allotment land it owned beside the Coton footpath earmarked for housing. This was opposed by County Planners and Coton Parish Council who had a waiting list for allotments. But in June that year former allotment land off Cromwell Road gained a new use with the opening of Esso Petroleum's new distribution depot. It housed eighteen large cylindrical storage tanks with a total capacity of 216,000 gallons brought from the Purfleet terminals. The neat lay-out and appearance of the depot were admired – but not by gardeners.

Do you have tales of allotments?

'Breaking new ground: nineteenth-century allotments', edited by Jeremy Burchardt and Jacqueline Cooper published by FACHRS. Isbn 978-0-9548180-1-2 £12.00

Stretham produce association members interviewed by the BBC 1948
Allotment rules – men were turned off the allotment if they left their wives
Bonfire smoke over an allotment – Stretham
Incendiarism – allotments were born in flames

Two ladies picking produce – 1895

The book
Detail from cover – the allotment garden painted by Sir George Clausen

Memories 23rd July 2012 by Mike Petty

In July 1962 – can that be 50 years ago! – the News' women's page editor, Gillian Maltby, turned her attention to country living.

"A large proportion of the strawberries you eat will have been picked by Cambridgeshire women who have spent most of their lives working on the land", she wrote.

Gillian interviewed Mr P.F. Franklin, one of the main fruit growers of Cottenham, who told her he liked to employ only professionals on picking strawberries for the dessert trade. The modern housewife liked to buy ½ lb [HALF-POUND] punnets and the women picked straight into these. He preferred women pickers – the men could work at the same speed, but the ladies arranged the fruit more artistically to make the punnets more attractive. And once the season was at its peak and the fruit fully ripened, twelve women could pick up to half-a-ton a day.

Gillian visited the Cottenham strawberry fields – known as 'gardens' to local people – where she found Mr Franklin's wife and married daughter, Mrs Daphne Goldsworthy with a group of ladies searching the rows for ripe fruit. Mrs Franklin's ancestors had been the first to grow the fruit in the area and she always enjoyed working on the land. There was a terrific satisfaction in picking something you had grown.

The women started work in the Spring picking daffodils and followed through the season with flowers, soft fruit and finally apples which in winter they graded and packed. During the

summer season their children joined them. There was plenty of space where the younger ones could play and then when grew older they often liked to take a turn at picking.

Certainly when I was a lad I biked off with my mum and nan to the orchards just along the road. There I built castles with the wooden fruit boxes whilst they picked the apples and plums until it was time for dockey. It had long been the practice; Laurie Arnold, born 1925, recalled: "I started work in the orchards as soon as I could walk. The younger children would pick the bottom branches, my mother and father would do the ladder work. The baskets would have a hook attached that you'd hook on to the branch".

And this is how most of the Cottenham women had been introduced to fruit picking themselves. There was no age limit and the most efficient ladies were over 60 years of age. Few worried about holidays, sometimes having occasional weekends in the summer and taking the rest at Christmas. "It's not so necessary when you are out in the open most of the year", said one.

Working with fruit all day, many cut it out of their menu completely though admitting that when they came across a particular fine strawberry, they ate it. But, almost without exception, the women had no preference for any particular type of picking. Mrs E. Worland, who'd spent 25 years on the land, spoke for most of them when she said she liked it all. "Its wonderful healthy being out all day. We take all weathers as they come but it's essential to wrap up warm and to be prepared for rain", she said.

The short season for the different fruit and flowers prevented the work becoming monotonous. Casual workers were used for gathering fruit for factory use – such as the mighty Chivers works at nearby Histon – and whether working on a permanent wage or at piece rate – so much per punnet – there was good money to be made.

But whether the country ladies would spend their wages on the same things as their urban sisters is another thing. In an adjoining paragraph Gillian reports on the results of a recent survey. "A stocking manufacturer has just completed a survey on the number of stockings bought in a year by the 15 to 30 years old. The average is 23 pairs" However any Cottenham ladies seeking to spend their hard-earned cash at Cambridge Cattle Market on Bank Holiday Monday 50 years ago might find the bargain was not what it seemed. She might come home with a pair of newly-bought stockings to discover they were of different sizes!

The decline of the Cottenham fruit industry was chronicled by the late Olwyn Peacock in 1990. In the late 1970s strawberry prices paid to commercial growers halved to just eight pence a pound as jam makers starting to use imported Polish strawberry pulp.

The decline affected gooseberries as well. One grower in 1977 got £360 a ton and paid £35 for picking. Three years later the price for fruit had dropped to £140 a ton but he'd paid out £100 for pickers. Several of the larger fruit growers reached retirement age and sold their farms. By 1990 there were only five acres of strawberries farmed in the village. Whereas once nearly all the Cottenham population of 2,400 had been engaged in fruit and flower growing, there were then only ten families left in the business.

Do you have memories of the orchards and gardens – write to Mike Petty at the News

Cottenham's Orchards and Gardens by Olwyn Peacock was published in 1990

Pictures

Article from 7th July 1962

122.10 Gooseberry pickers at Wisbech 1930s
10401 Strawberry pickers for Chivers of Histon 1880s
172998 strawberry pickers at Cottenham – sketch by Olwyn Peacock 1990
MP1664 fruit pickers at Stretham 1920s
MP1925 Everitt's fruit farm, Wilburton August 1985

Stocking seller at Cambridge Cattle Market c1962

Memories 30 July 2012 by Mike Petty

The recent success of Bradley Wiggins in the Tour de France has encouraged reflections on men who cycle speedily

Residents of Markham Close on the King's Hedges Estate may know that it commemorates Arthur Markham, a remarkable racing tricyclist. In 1907 he rode the London Fifty Mile Invitation Road Race in less than three hours – despite a strong head wind for much of the time - then biked the 30-miles back to his Cambridge home. He also held the world endurance tricycle record for covering over 300 miles in 24 hours.

Sidney Lack from Cottenham was another champion cyclist in the Edwardian era riding locally-made 'Senior Wrangler' cycles. One day in the 1901-02 season he cycled 15 miles to Ely where he won the Challenge Cup, then biked to Cambridge where he triumphed again. But his amateur licence was cancelled by the National Cycling Union after he took part in a race at Wellingborough in 1906. Sidney was approached by the British agent of the Paris Velodrome with a view to a career as a professional cyclist in France. Instead he left his job at Chiver's factory and headed for Boston USA. The climate did not suit him so he returned home, sold up his racing bikes and set sail for Australia where he hoped to continue his love of cycling.

Keith Mann from Girton remembers riding alongside a later Cambridge cycling superstar. He writes: "Back in the 1940's and 1950's cycle racing and touring was extremely popular and I myself was very keen on cycling, like many people of all ages. Cambridge at the time had two very good racing clubs, The Cambridgeshire Road Club and the Town and County Cycle Racing Club"

Two of the competitions were the Fens 50 miles Time Trial from Ely and the 100 miles Time Trial around East Anglia. These were races open to all cycling clubs. Then on Sunday mornings there'd be regular 25 mile cycle races from the top of Madingley Hill to just outside St. Neots and back.

After Keith left school in 1946 he saved his money doing odd jobs and in two years managed to buy his first racing cycle for £18.00 from Skeels cycle shop in Bridge Street. He then joined the Cambridge Association of the Cyclist Touring Club, run by Peter Hunt, which organised long-distance rides as well as speed events.

Keith has lent me a photograph of the Cambridgeshire Road Club on a training run to Kersey, Suffolk in winter 1949. He is second from the left with Jim Pauley and Brian Curtis on either side of him. Brian Pettit and Vic Ayres are on the right whilst in the centre is Fred Krebs.

The Krebs family had fled Vienna following Hitler's attacks on the Jews and came to live in Mill Road when Fred was aged 8. He attended the Grammar School at Parkside and studied engineering at the Tech. Fred was keen on badminton, rowing and squash but achieved most fame as a racing cyclist. He went on to turn professional, winning the Tour of the Chilterns in

1953 and competing in the Tour de France in 1955 riding for the Hercules Team. He came home from France unsuccessful, older and wiser but showing off “le tan” (unavailable on British beaches).

Fred’s fame prompted one of the Cambridge cycle shops to stock a replica of the winning bike and this attracted the attention of a young Richard Bailey. He too has shared his early cycling days, seeming to follow in Keith’s tyre-tracks.

Like him in 1956, aged 12, Richard joined the Cyclist’s Touring Club, taking part in their social excursions into the country lanes before graduating to a full-on racing club. He recognises some of the faces from Keith’s photo - Brian “Muscles” Curtis and Brian Pettit - and thinks he may have met Fred Krebs one Thursday night in the mid 1950s. : “a rider from an RAF base nearby appeared with a chrome road bike - most races were ridden on track bikes with a single front brake in those days so this guy was special - he did a very fast time. There was talk that he had ridden the Tour of Britain but I never saw him again. I’ve met old riders who used to race with Krebs and there is no doubt the guy was a real champion”

Richard continued cycling with the Town & County, then Welwyn Wheelers and finally with a club he founded called the Barnwell Cycle Racing School. In 1966 he became the youngest qualified coach in the British Cycling Federation before following Sidney Lack out to Australia in 1968 where he opened a bike shop in Melbourne. He has continued his love of speed cycling qualifying as a State Level Commissaire with what is now Cycling Victoria. He contributes a regular column to the newsletter of Echuca-Moama Cycle Club in Victoria in which he often recalls his early days in the old country.

Richard Bailey wrote his first cycling articles for the Cambridge Daily News in 1963. Keith Mann would have read them at the time. For more than 30 years Keith has been taking copies of the *News* each evening and has kept stories that interest him. But as well as taking cuttings Keith takes whole pages. He keeps them flat and he keeps them dark. And when he has accumulated enough he binds them into volumes covering the local stories, the headlines and bylines since 1966.

Meanwhile out in Oz Richard still keeps up to date with his home town, being regularly updated by his brother who lives in Long Reach Road and, of course, able to read the News online.

Now the two have been united in its pages – all thanks to Fred Krebbs and the Tour de France

pictures

Keith Mann on his racing cycle Feb 1948

Cambs Road Club on training run 1949 – includes names with Fred Krebbs centre

Cambs Road racing club in Suffolk 1949 – some names

Sidney Lack with some of his prizes

Memories 6 August 2012 by Mike Petty

A few weeks ago I featured an email from Sally Hedges Greenwood about a photograph she’d found in her family archives.

It showed a stagecoach at Wisbech and was taken apparently in the mid 1930s. As stagecoach travel had long-since ceased it was obviously a specially-staged event. However this was not the only puzzling aspect of the picture: it featured a number of oriental ladies with very elongated necks adorned with a series of rings. So what was it all about?

Last week I travelled to Wisbech to talk to members of the Fenland Family History Group and was quite confident that they would have the answer. They are expert at assisting people from around the country or across the globe to track down their local roots using the resources available in Wisbech library or the nearby Fenland Museum. This is an Archive centre for many church and other records and boasts a Library whose shelves are packed with ancient bound volumes including a large collection of fenland material. It also holds a magnificent series of photographs taken by Samuel Smith in the 1860s and postcard publisher Herbert Coates.

But they had drawn a blank

The most likely source was the magnificent collection of photographs taken by Lilian Ream whose firm covered numerous events in the area from the 1920s. The negatives were rescued from destruction in the 1970s and became the subject of various cataloguing and sorting exercises, some carried out by youngsters otherwise unemployed. With assistance from the Royal Air Force, the National Museum of Photography and others the images have been preserved. They have recently been transferred to the County Archives at Shire Hall, Cambridge to the disappointment of the local historians: it is a very long way from Wisbech with little public transport. The catalogue is online. But again this has no mention of the event depicted.

With no obvious Wisbech clues it was time to turn to those strange ladies. Internet sources show that the 'Giraffe-necked women' came from the Padung tribe of south-east Burma and were exhibited as part of Bertram Mills Circus which visited Wisbech from 17th-19th May 1937. A copy of the programme preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection shows they appeared alongside Fritz Barton the trapeze artist, Dratsa the clowns and Zeboy the comedy zebra. There were lions that sat up and begged, pigeons that fell 'dead' after being shot at with blank cartridges and dancing horses. It was at the time seen as great entertainment.

And the Wisbech Deputy Mayor, A.W. Collett managed to make time in a busy schedule for a visit to the circus big top, riding in Bertram Mills' stagecoach drawn by four lovely black horses – the vehicle shown in Sally's photo.

The picture was taken outside the Rose and Crown Hotel on the Market Place. This ancient inn, dating back to the 1400s, had once been quite used to stagecoaches. In 1792 Royal Mail Coaches had left daily for London, passing through March, Chatteris, St Ives and Cambridge to arrive at the Golden Cross in the Strand. They'd been joined in 1828 by the 'Hero' which took over 12 hours to get to Piccadilly, while other coaches ran to Norwich, Stamford and Boston.

In its day the Rose and Crown had been noted for its lavish hospitality. A dinner to the Mayor in 1858 started with a choice of mock turtle or swan gilet soup, moved on through a selection of fish including red mullet and stewed eels, then mutton, veal, turkey and Guinea fowl. The next course included partridges, leverets, cheese cake and syllabubs with grapes, oranges or preserved fruit amongst the dessert course.

Like much of Wisbech the hotel has fallen on hard time in recent years but – like much of Wisbech – it has recently undergone an extensive programme of renovation and revitalisation and is once more fully open for business.

Wisbech has a past to be proud of which the town will be celebrating with a Heritage Weekend from 6-9th September.

Many buildings including the Council Chamber, Grammar School and Masonic Lodge will be open alongside the better-known attractions such as the Brinks, Peckover House, the Castle,

the Octavia Hill Birthplace House and the Wisbech and Fenland Museum where children can dress up in Victorian costume.

The Fenland Family History Society will be at Wisbech Library from the Thursday to Saturday with a team of experts to help you in your research. But should they not be able to answer your particular enquiry then contact me at the News and I'll enlist the services of our readers.

For information on Wisbech and its Heritage weekend contact the Wisbech Information Centre on 01945 464058

Photos

The picture of a stagecoach outside the Rose and Crown – now known to be taken in May 1937

Detail of the 'Giraffe-necked women'
Bertram Mills advertisement
Bertram Mills circus programme cover
Bertram Mills circus programme

The Rose and Crown at that time
Wisbech High Street in 1920

Memories 13th August 2012 by Mike Petty

One wet evening a few weeks ago I drove out into the fens beyond Chatteris. Instead of following the Isle of Ely Way towards March, Guyhirn and Wisbech, I turned along the Forty Foot with its straight expanse of water on one side, scattered houses low beside the road on the other.

After some miles I turned right and headed out along bumpy fen road through fields towards a small community that must be one of the most isolated in the county.

Benwick lies along the route of what was once a major river, the West Water. Houses were built half on the dried-up river bed, half on the land beyond. But they began to tilt backwards as the peat land shrank. The Old Rectory in High Street moved so much that the roof actually slid off in 1948.

It was not an evening to explore but I drove round trying to find the church mentioned in guidebooks as standing in a picturesque position by the river. I failed. The pub was open but they were not doing food: "The chef's probably drunk by now", I was told (at 6.15 pm). It appears that he, the staff and some of the locals had gone off to the brewery – a reward for the excellence of the service they offer to their customers. Fortunately there were still plenty of other Benwickians to give me a most warm welcome in the village hall at the back of the school.

In 1946 Mary Bell had made the same journey and recorded her impressions in *The Sunday Express* for January 13th that year:

"A soaking rain was driving in from The Wash as I motored over miles of flat fen roads. Mounds of sugar beet flanked the roadside awaiting transport. Acre after acre of black soil stretched out before me; rich soil that becomes purple where it meets the horizon, the soil that gives wealth to Benwick, the richest village I know"

The richest village?

Then quite half the houses were unfit to live in, some only kept standing because of the wallpaper. There was no water; in drought people used the polluted river. There was no sewage, gas, coal merchant, village hall, street lighting, playing field, resident doctor, nurse, policeman, fire-engine or ambulance. They did have a bus shelter (with three buses a week) and a railway station, though no passenger trains stopped there.

But the 680 residents couldn't help making money. An acre of rich fen soil would produce 15 tons of sugar beet (the average for the country was 9.5 tons), 14 tons of potatoes (double the average), and great crops of carrots and celery. Nearly every woman in the village helped on the family farm, and also worked on the bigger farms in the season. Sometimes they earned 36s (£61 in today's money) for a seven-hour day "carroting" and 25s. a day for beet and potato lifting. When the roots were being harvested, and sugar-beet cheques were being paid in, the bank (attendance once a week) had been known to send to March for more clerks while the people of Benwick queued to do business!

No wonder they didn't want new houses – 'They'd have to be built on land that brings us in good money', locals told her

In those days Benwick had nine public houses and they did have a church together with Methodist and Baptist Chapels. But the church tower was taken down in 1966 with the rest of the building following in 1985. Its stained glass windows went to Doddington and one of the bells to Orwell. The old Baptist chapel of 1818 had been replaced by a new one 40 years later; it served its congregation until 1963; the Methodist chapel closed in June 2005.

Since then many of the old cottages have been replaced by modern homes with amenities that the residents of 1942 would not have dreamed of

Benwick remains a close-knit community where families stay for generations. They take care to remember their past, passing stories down the years. And now two of those residents, from different generations, have recorded much of their village's past in over 260 pages of information, photographs and recollection,

Janet Fountain was born and brought up in The Five Alls and married a farmer whose ancestors had arrived with the drainers of the 1600s. She has enlisted the enthusiasm and computer skills of a Benwick-born lad of a more modern era. Adam Keppel-Garner attended the village school and is planning to go to University. He has set up a village website – www.lilyholtroad.co.uk - and would welcome any more records and memories of a community that might be isolated but is far from unwelcoming

Benwick Bygones: village life in the 20th century by Janet Fountain and Adam Keppel-Garner; £12.50 is available through the website or by phoning 01354 677 228

Pictures

10317

Ibberson's Fen drainage mill near Thacker's Barn, Turf Fen, Benwick, c1937 with Brindle and Thomas Thacker. Usually the most exposed parts of the mills were covered by weatherboards.

124.45 White Fen Engine, Benwick, erected 1847, scrapped after 1936; shows Mr Bates with Elizabeth and Eliza Bates, c1906

Leaning cottages, 1950s

Church and pill box 1950s

Demolition Benwick church 1985

8695 Benwick High Street c1900.

Cover of book

Memories 20 August 2012 by Mike Petty

As News broke of the massive Lottery win at Haverhill so rumours spread as to who might be the beneficiary.

It was reminiscent of what happened in October 1817. Then the Cambridge Chronicle reported how 'one of the most extraordinary instances of good fortune that perhaps ever occurred to any human being had fallen to the lot of a young gentleman'. Andrew Cawston had been travelling by coach to his school in Shrewsbury when he'd got into conversation with an elderly gentleman. Impressed with his honesty the old man told the lad that he had been 'long looking for a person to whom he might leave his fortune, and that he was the object of his election.'

His benefactor died shortly after and although not willing to publicise his new wealth Andrew had been anxious to have his father - a malster living at Chippenham - made more comfortable. So he sought the advice of Mr Weatherby, an eminent Newmarket solicitor. Soon it was known that his fortune amounted to more than £500,000 and that he had an account at Hammond & Eaden's bank at Newmarket with over £1,100 in it.

With such wealth Andrew bought his brother a place at Emmanuel College as a Fellow-Commoner with an income of £600 a year. Soon it became common knowledge that the Empress of Russia was paying ten times that amount annually as interest on a loan of over £100,000 he'd made her. Then there were the diamonds, the ships, the estates in South America - all to be his on 1st January 1818

No wonder relatives, shops, wine-sellers, Newmarket traders and others were anxious to advance him credit and cash, safe in the knowledge that all would be amply repaid at the turn of the year. But before the year was out the papers were once more trumpeting the name of the Fortunate Youth - this time as an impostor. 'In the present dearth of news the editors of the several papers have served up everything to the Public, not only every thing that has been said but every thing that has been conjectured', the Chronicle confessed. There was not a scrap of truth in any of it

There was no doubt however about the fortune of Ernest Terah Hooley. Born in 1859, the son of a Nottinghamshire lacemaker, by 1888 he'd become a financier and developer of the Trafford Park industrial estate in the outskirts of Manchester. His original plan had been to convert the park into a high-class residential area containing 500 grand villas, a racecourse, and an industrial fringe along the banks of the Manchester Ship Canal. But instead he developed the site as an industrial estate, the first in the world. He also set up many of today's most familiar companies including Boots, Bovril, Dunlop, Schweppes and Singer sewing machines.

The rise in his fortune coincided with the boom in bicycles and the invention of pneumatic tyres. Hooley added to his wealth by buying up the Humber and Raleigh cycle companies and

then selling the shares on the stock market. Using the profits he bought the Dunlop Tyre Company for £3 million and then sold it for £5m.

Hooley became a close friend of the Prince of Wales, kept luxury yachts in the Solent and, a string of racehorses at Newmarket. He also acquired grand country homes including Papworth Hall where he entertained the great and the good to extravagant parties. He was appointed High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire for 1897 and prepared for a baronetcy.

His fortune helped fund the school at Papworth Everard but in 1899 the News reported that the children who used to attend it were enjoying a prolonged holiday. The school had closed because there was no money wherewith to keep it open. Hooley had hit financial problems. The man who had made a million had gone bankrupt for a million-and-a-half.

However Papworth Hall had been transferred to his wife and in 1901 Hooley was still living there in the same state & affluence as he had before paying wages of more than £6,000 a year to his servants, gardeners and grooms. He set about improving his mansion, which brought him into conflict with Godmanchester Town Council. They claimed the roads were being badly damaged by a traction engine hauling building materials from the railway station. Hooley even had plans to buy the Caxton Gibbet public house and rebuilt it on the other side of the road.

By 1911 he had farms at Elsworth and Caxton together with a ploughing and threshing tackle business at Dry Drayton. But he was again in serious legal and financial difficulties. He received a twelve-month sentence for obtaining money on false pretences and in the following year he was judged bankrupt for a second time. This time he lost Papworth.

He re-entered business as an estate agent, but by 1921 was again bankrupt, and the following year sentenced to three years imprisonment for fraud. Following his release, Hooley returned to the business of property sales, continuing to work until his eighties. He was made bankrupt for a fourth time in 1939 and died in a rented flat in Long Eaton in 1947. It was not the end of the story for in 2002 his surviving heirlooms were sold by auction at Newmarket

Now the new winners can decide for themselves how they wish to spend their wealth. Perhaps they will consider the example of another self-made Newmarket millionaire, David Robinson who after leaving Cambridge and County School joined his father in the family cycle shop and in 1954 set up the Robinson Rentals television business. He made and gave away a fortune including a contribution towards the Rosie Maternity Hospital which was named after his mother and a bequest to found Robinson College which will live on as a permanent reminder of his munificence.

Pictures

Caxton gibbet hotel that Hooley planned to rebuild – it's future is again under discussion

Cheveley – choice of two pictures

Papworth Hall, now a hospital

Robinson college name

Clearance for the building of Robinson college in March 1979

Newmarket – tradesmen were happy to advance credit

Perhaps find picture of the Haverhill winners

Memories 27 August 2012 by Mike Petty

Weston Colville is a buried deep in the countryside between Linton and Newmarket. But it was home to a poet once mentioned in the same breath as Burns, Wordsworth and Byron. His

books were endorsed by Cambridgeshire's nobility, by Charles Dickens and even Martin Tupper. Martin who? Now dismissed as a third-rate Victorian poet, Tupper was in the 1860s a favourite writer of Queen Victoria and tipped as a future Poet Laureate.

James Withers was born in the village in 1812. His dad was a shoemaker who'd fallen on hard times and he was a less than welcome addition to the family's precarious budget. There was no money for schooling so the lad was sent out at an early age to pick stones, weed corn and scare crows. As he watched he absorbed something of the natural life around him, the flowers of the fields and the birds he was supposed to keep in the air.

When aged 12 he went to work for a market gardener at Fordham, finding reading matter in the tattered pages from Shakespeare amongst the waste paper from which he made seed bags. Good fortune came his way in the form of a legacy from his deceased grandmother with which he entered into his father's old trade. It was not a success so he went back to Fordham, took a wife, started a family and failed to earn enough to support them.

In 1846 in desperation he turned to Newmarket workhouse for relief, where at least they were fed:

Two days in the week we've puddings for dinner,
And two we have broth, so like water, but thinner

All the while he was composing rhymes, though his lack of writing made it difficult for him to set them down. Eventually a local farmer's wife took notice of him and funded his first volume of poetry, published in 1854.

A reporter in the 'Era' newspaper for May 1855 visited Withers at Fordham and described how: "He delights in the cultivation of his garden and his wife may be seen each day with a cart loaded with its produce, which she is unpoetical enough to offer for sale in the town of Newmarket and the different villages within her route".

But Withers did not want to be 'a useless dungheap weed' that 'rot just where they grow'. He went to Lynn and undertook a four-day voyage on the stormy deep till he docked in North Shields, sick of the sea and virtually broke. He had to walk home but he saw coal mines at Durham, Whitby cliffs, Scarborough & Bridlington; he had crossed the Tyne and Tees, climbed steep hills and descended deep dells, seen Lincoln Cathedral and Boston stump and left his tobacco box at Fosdyke Bridge in lieu of twopence, the usual charge for crossing. By the time he returned to his family he was footsore and destitute

His first volume of poetry was followed by a second. It brought him a grant of £50 (about £4,200 today) from the Queens Bounty with another £10 from a Literary Fund. Most importantly it attracted the attention of a reviewer in Macmillan's Magazine for April 1860 who dubbed him the Cambridgeshire hedge-side poet and praised his verse.

His story had great appeal. The Stamford Mercury commented: As a poor farm labourer and occasional cobbler Withers has hitherto enjoyed very little of the smiles of fortune; his path has been a rough and stormy one; the tempests of poverty and misfortune have clouded the greater portion of his life ... but he has found a few good trusty friends and it may be that his future will prove far more happy than his past career. In his adopted village of Fordham he still pursues his humble avocations but it is to be hoped that before long some means will be found to place him in a less toilsome and more remunerative position

More volumes followed, though sometimes inspiration faltered:

I sat by the fire, t'was late in the night

And I wanted a subject on which I could write.
Not one could I find that had not been used,
And my mind was a chaos, confusion confused.

He wrote the problems of the time, about cholera and incendiarism, about haunted houses and cows eating his flowers –

“And when I try and frighten her, and stamp and loudly bawl,
She licks her nose and coughs and stares, and does not mind at all”

But most of all he wrote about his native village, his happy childhood’s home, the ancient dame whose pastry through the village spread her fame, the Three Horseshoes where old folks talked of times when they were young, the blacksmith’s shop where the heavy anvil rung and ‘Every stile and tree and hedge-row wild
So dear to me when I was but a child’

His fame did not last. His literary friends passed away and he lost his capital in a disastrous investment. But Fordham villagers rallied round to ensure he could continue to live a thrifty life in his cottage until his death in February 1892

The Bury Post of December 1856 had included a poem to Withers:
‘Nor let it be said to our country’s disgrace
Such a Bard in obscurity finished his race’

But that is what happened.

However at two o’clock on Sunday afternoon 2nd September his words will once more be heard at Weston Colville Church alongside those of another rural poet, John Clare to whom he was compared

For details contact Tim Cockerill on 01223 290439 – tjcockerill@btinternet.com; tickets are £10

Memories 3rd September 2012 by Mike Petty

When military historians reflect on the battles that have shaped our future they will doubtless remember the battle of Hastings of 1066 when King Harold’s men were defeated. But who now recalls the fierce fighting at Horseheath in September 1912 when King George V watched his own soldiers struggle with an invading force.

A Cambridge reporter who was on the scene described the event. The British army were endeavouring to check the advance of an enemy force that was moving inland from the coast between Wells and Hunstanton. The invading cavalry had fought their way to high ground near Newmarket and consolidated their position with patrols along the narrow winding lanes of that part of the countryside. Through Ashley, Dullingham and Brinkley they’d pushed on, their attack spearheaded by fast-moving cycling soldiers

Owing to the swiftness of their advance they’d managed to capture two of the British aircraft on the ground at Newmarket while a third had come down with a fractured engine and a fourth had been smashed when attempting to take off from a ploughed field. It was a terrible blow to the Royal Flying Corps based at Hardwick who were already mourning the death of four of their number killed in accidents.

But the remainder were continuing in their vital role of scouting the invaders’ advance before flying back to their base to drop messages to the men waiting below who rushed them to

Army Headquarters at Royston for evaluation. It was soon apparent that a plane was less effective than the airship. From its base at Kneesworth it could stay up far longer and sent messages by wireless. The enemy was less fortunate, its own airship had been delayed with engine trouble though when it did arrive it rendered valuable service before being tethered to a concealed anchorage for the night

Having been pushed back, the British were massing along the line of the Roman Road where the Household Cavalry, Royal Scots Greys and Mounted Infantry along with units of the Wiltshire, Dorset and Hampshire Yeomanry supported by a dozen Horse Artillery guns were ready to check the enemy advance.

Cambridge itself was vital and had to be held at all costs. Members of the Territorials dug miles of trenches with gun emplacements guarding each approach and trees that needed to be cut down were marked for the axe. At the same time buses were commandeered to carry engineers to destroy all the bridges across the Ouse.

As the crisis deepened the King himself moved to rally his forces. From the sentry-guarded safety of Trinity College he set off in a cavalcade of motor vehicles before taking to his horse from which he watched for some five hours. There was no time for fancy food; he took his sandwiches in the shelter of a hayrick surrounded by his officers.

Throughout the region battles raged and every church tower became a look-out post. At Horseheath the church and churchyard provided our army with fortress-like defences and it was here that the King made his way to view the fight, first from the high ground at Horseheath Lodge where he could see the hostile howitzers and 18-pounders that were raining fire on the Northampton, Notts and Derby Regiments defending the village. No-one could stand such an onslaught and the enemy fought their way step by step through cottage gardens. Strengthened by reinforcements, the British fought back but could not resist the enemy counterattack

And now the eyewitness reporter chronicled how the King, seeing them coming, rode quickly through a farmyard among ploughs, harrows and other implements, pigs and chickens scattering before him and out into a rickyard where from a stack he watched the attack. The farm hands stood in groups about the King, their interest and excitement being divided between their Sovereign and the battle.

At Ashdon the British battalions of Grenadiers and Coldstreams charged down slopes of newly-ploughed fields but were checked by the arrival of fifteen hundred enemy cyclists racing behind their General's motor car. Throwing down their bikes they opened rapid fire, being almost buried from view in fields of clover. At Steeple Bumpstead the enemy cavalry captured the British transport – fodder, ammunition and – most significantly - the travelling kitchens whose savoury stews were most appetising. But the enemy General only narrowly avoided capture when his own headquarters were attacked.

Soon his troops had captured Radwinter, giving them a clear road into Saffron Walden or Cambridge. It was then that Territorials who had been tasked to hold Cambridge were called into the fighting. All afternoon the battle raged until the military leaders called a truce.

Then it was time for all to go back to Trinity College for dinner and for a proper evaluation of the lessons that had been learned from this great military manoeuvre. It had been an exercise been planned from Trinity four years earlier and which was to be echoed for real just a few years later. Only that time the enemy never made it to our shores and the General who had led the make-believe attackers, Sir Douglas Haig, was to learn new lessons

Pictures

King leaves Trinity college to visit the battle
Troops at St Ives
Soldiers on Stourbridge Common
King meets an old soldier at Linton
Troops resting at Linton
Horseheath church – scene of heavy fighting
Enemy capture planes on Newmarket Heath
Airship at Newmarket - they played vital reconnaissance role

Memories 10th September 2012 by Mike Petty

After a year of rain, things have cleared enough to allow farmers to harvest their crops. They were not so fortunate 100 years ago

Throughout the whole of August 1912 there had been only five rainless days in Cambridgeshire. But things seemed to have changed on the last Sunday morning of the month when the sun shone, giving farmers hope that the cut and shocked corn might be carted off the fields.

They were to be disappointed; all day Monday it rained incessantly. At Swavesey and elsewhere the water rushed across the land in a torrent, pouring into drainage ditches with a noise like a waterfall. And in its path it swept up the crops waiting to be carted. The shocks floated and drifted with the wind until they rested against a hedge or a clump of trees where they piled up. Then the wind changed and the huge and lengthy heaps were swept the other way to become stranded on the opposite side of the field, looking like seaweed washed up on a beach after a gale.

Throughout the fens and farms men waded in Wellingtons trying to rescue what they could. Some used makeshift rafts constructed from a door nailed across two railway sleepers from which reapers armed with a pitchfork collected a few sheaves before punting them across the watery waste towards the nearest dry spot. Inevitably there were upsets and men slipped into water above their waists. Some gave up any attempt at keeping dry as both men and horses worked up to their bellies to try and salvage something from the flood

Either side of the main road from Soham to Ely the fields were vast lakes with ears of wheat or barley showing above the rippling water. The road from Chettisham to Gilgal near Littleport was under water, Grunty Fen looked like a sea with waves to the tops of the hedgerows and the lower rooms of The Tiger pub were submerged.

But it was not just the fields that flooded. In the centre of Histon the Brook overflowed, only the handrail denoting where the footbridge crossed. At Stretham the bottom of Red Lion Street near the allotments was under water. In St Ives, West Street was amongst several streets flooded with residents of Victoria Terrace digging up their potatoes and moving their pigs to higher land. Boats and carts ferried pedestrians to their homes through water an inch higher than it had been in the previous great flood of 1875.

At Soham Sand Street homes had several feet of water in them and people in Town's End and Brook Street waded up to their knees, while at Littleport rushing water from the Hemp field flooded the main street between the Granby Hotel and Hitches Street, running into the shops of Mr Fitch and Mr Secker. The steam fire engine made some attempt to pump the water away, but was not very successful

Cambridge escaped lightly, certainly compared to Norwich where the overflowing of the Wensum left 10,000 people homeless, disabled the electric and gas works and led to fears that even the water supply would have to be shut down. Canary breeders reported the loss of £100 worth of birds, Colman's had 600 tons of starch destroyed and a baby drowned when it slipped from its mother's arms. Yet one of the local papers, the Norwich Mercury, carried few reports – their offices were seriously damaged when a two-storey building collapsed and the boiler and part of the machinery was swamped by the deluge

But it was the farmers that suffered most – 'the crop will not be as good this year as the rakings were last' one prophesied. The big farmers would survive the loss of one harvest, it was the little man who'd suffer most. How, people asked, could such flooding have devastated the rich fen land, forcing the town crier at Haddenham to call out every man to go down to the Cut Bank or the fen would be 'drowned'

For the most part the fenland pumping engines worked well, but even though newly-installed pumps in Mere Fen Soham discharged 1,000 gallons from the land into the river, they could not keep pace.

At Ten Mile Bank the giant pumping engine stood motionless; work was underway to update the entire machinery – a task always carried out in the summer when its services were not required. It was a slice of bad luck that it was out of action just when it was needed most. The Commissioners strove to find a replacement to clear water from thousands of acres

But even when the water was confined within the high river banks the danger was not past. Until it could get out to sea through Denver Sluice there was always the danger that the banks could collapse under the pressure. This happened near Hilgay and Lakenheath, adding to the devastation in these areas

The men thrown out of work found time hanging heavily; at Fen Drayton a dozen amused themselves by playing a game of marbles on the dry spot at the side of the main street. Sheffield fishermen made their usual rail trip to Ely to enjoy their sport, only to find that they could not get near enough to the river to cast their hooks.

It did not deter cyclists who made excursions to see the sights nor members of the Belmont Cycle Club who took a river trip to Upware on board the motor-launch Victory. All went well until the boat ran aground on the submerged bank of the river, the water being across the washes for some distance making it impossible to see where river ended and land began. Luckily a local land, Howard Swift, saw the party were in difficulty and that swollen stream was running with great power. He at once launched a boat and rowed over a mile to the stranded vessel to convey a dozen passengers to land. The members were so appreciative of his pluck that they presented him with a handsome silver medal.

Does this still survive, or do you have pictures or memories of the great harvest flood of 100 years ago

Photos

Harvesting by boat at Ramsey 1912

Ely across floods 1912

Littleport fire engine pumping water 1912

Stretham flooding 1912

The River Ouse burst its banks, 1912

Sand Street Soham that flooded

Memories 17th September 2012, by Mike Petty

Last week when speaking at Ramsey University of the Third Age I recalled how I used to ask audiences just how many of them had been in the condemned cell in the County Gaol on Castle Hill, Cambridge. Almost inevitably one or two hands would go up. But that was over 40 years ago and now very few people even remember that Cambridge used to have a County Gaol – well it had been closed in 1916 and demolished in 1930 to make way for Shire Hall.

One man who once had first-hand knowledge was Mr C. Corby of 5, Beaconsfield Terrace, Victoria Road, Cambridge. He was a warder of H.M. Prison at Cambridge for 30 years and on his retirement in September 1912 had shared some of his memories with a reporter from the Cambridge Weekly News

Warder Corby had started his prison career in Wakefield gaol before being promoted to Cambridge in August 1882 when Barnabas Gibson was Governor. At that time structural alterations were being made and Corby took charge of 10 or 12 prisoners who were levelling the ground and filling in the old moat. The old prison gateway, only large enough to allow a barrow to pass through, was replaced while inside new hospitals were constructed for both male and female prisoners and the Debtors Wing altered to accommodate women prisoners from Huntingdon Gaol, which was being closed.

During his time at the gaol there had been just one escape. A prisoner had been employed scraping limewash off the walls and managed to hide his scraper amongst his clothes. During the night he made a hole in the roof of the cell, placing his blankets on the floor to deaden the sound of any falling material. Corby had been on duty but did not hear or see anything suspicious. Yet early in the morning it was found that the ‘bird had flown’. He had got over the boundary wall with a ladder, let himself down the other side on a rope and escaped by way of Hertford Street. The gaol-breaker was caught two days later and brought back in handcuffs and leg-irons. Magistrates sentenced him to 18 strokes with the ‘cat’ which it was **CORBY’S** unpleasant duty to administer

Warder Corby had known some of the most notorious murderers. One was Walter Horsford a farmer charged in 1898 with poisoning Annie Holmes at St Neots. It was Corby’s job to escort him to Huntingdon Assizes for his trial and after the **SENTENCE** had managed to avoid the large crowd waiting outside the court by sneaking Horsford out of the back door and driving smartly away before they realised what was going on. “Horsford was a most self-contained and stoical prisoner for a man who had received the death sentence”, Corby recalled. “He never showed the slightest sign of fear. He remained calm to the last, and walked with a firm step to the condemned cell”

Samuel H. Dougal was another remarkably cool customer. He’d been living with Camille Holland in Moat Farm, an isolated building surrounded by farmland at Clavering, near Saffron Walden. But then she’d vanished to be quickly replaced by a girl Dougal called his daughter – only in reality she had been his (third) wife. Stories circulated about Dougal’s amorous affairs, of him giving lessons to naked girls in the meadows near the house and questions were asked about what had happened to Camille and her money. After four years **IN MARCH 1903** Police started to search for a body. They drained the moat looking for it.

Corby was looking after the suspect. “While they were searching for Miss Holland’s body, he had the papers supplied to him every morning, and used to read the reports of the proceedings at the Moat Farm with the greatest interest. While the police were digging the moat over he was quite lively and cheerful, but on the morning that the newspaper stated that digging had commenced along the dyke it was obvious that the man was nervous and shaken and entirely

changed. I thought at the time that the body would be found very quickly then, and my suspicion proved correct”

Warder Colby took Dougal from Cambridge back to the Moat Farm for the inquest and allowed him to SIT in his own house while waiting for it to commence. “It must have been rather a strange experience to sit in the house where he had lived, with the furniture almost untouchable, his own gun hanging on the wall before his eyes, waiting for such an event as that. Afterwards the inquest was adjourned to Newport and I took him there also, and brought him back to Cambridge after he was committed for murder by a coroner’s jury. Later he was removed for trial to Chelmsford, and I saw no more of him”

Nor was this his final murderer: Corby was actually present in 1910 at the execution of Henry Hancock for the murder of Alfred Doggett at Chesterton. “On the morning of the execution I said to him ‘Well, Hancock, this is the last morning. I can give you whatever you ask for this morning. He replied ‘I think I would like a pint of old ale and a bit of twist tobacco’. I obtained the tobacco and ale for him and he thoroughly enjoyed both. He gave absolutely no trouble all the time he was in prison and showed no sign of fear up to the very last.”

Things were different now, Corby reflected: “at that time a man might get five years for stealing a fowl. Now if it is his first offence, it is quite possible that he may not be imprisoned at all.” But if conditions for prisoners had improved, those of warders had not – they were complaining about pay – some things never change.

The full interview was published in the Cambridge Weekly News on 6th September 1912

The case of Walter Horsford, the St Neots poisoner was featured on a website for teachers produced by e2bn, based in Hertfordshire, in 2006 – <http://vcp.e2bn.org/>

Pictures

The Horsford trial from the e2bn website

Newspaper report of Horsford’s execution at the County Gaol

Prison staff c1910

Exterior of the Gaol at closure, 1930

Gaol corridor

The County Gaol, 1814

The Moat Farm mystery made headlines around the world – Yankee

Cover of book – zoom in on the pictures

Report of the hanging of Hancock 1910

to mike

Dear Mike,

Surprised to see my Great-Grandfather's picture again - front row left Mr. Alfred Edwards, Chief Warden at the County Gaol. You kindly sent me the photo some time back.

Reading your latest interesting article, it made me get out the family history again and found his wedding certificate, he came from Springfield in Essex and Mary from Broomfield, Essex, and his death certificate dated 3rd March 1929. He came to Cambridge from Chelmsford

goal. Also the receipt for their new house at 37 Mawson Rd, Cambridge, dated 31st August 1906, for the sum of £186.19s. 5d. The deposit was £18.5s.0d. How times have changed!

Great-Grandmother's Will on a slip of paper in a black edged envelope is also amazing when she divides up her possessions and her children got either a desk and a case of birds (their father kept birds in his garden shed/loft and had them stuffed and in glass cages when they died), a feather bed bolster and two pillows, a ring for each of the girls (he was a generous man as I have several pieces of jewellery today), Grandmother's watch and my father got her little clock.

Hope you enjoyed this!

Regards,

Sheila Proctor colin.proctor1@virgin.net

Memories 24th September 2012, by Mike Petty

It could be dangerous being a level crossing keeper.

One morning in 1913 Mr Exworth, the gatekeeper at the Granham's Road crossing at Shelford saw something lying under one of the gates. He thought it was an ordinary one-pound treacle tin with a bootlace protruding through the lid.

This excited his suspicions. There had been newspaper reports of a number of innocent-looking bombs being found in various places so he examined the tin carefully. Inside was a wad of cotton wool, soaked in oil, a few lumps of charcoal and a long red squib. Then he noticed that the end of the bootlace had been set alight. There was little doubt that this was a real bomb and had been intended to set fire to the crossing gate.

Exworth immediately contacted the police and Sergeant Salmon immersed the tin in a bucket of water before taking it to Shelford station where he left it in the charge of the stationmaster. The question was who had planted it. The answer was soon plain: there was a message on the outside which read 'Votes for Women'. Two strange women had been seen in the area and there had recently been a great deal of suffragist activity with rallies and meetings in Cambridge and local villages.

This one incident has been recently discovered, just too late for inclusion in a fascinating new book. Helen Harwood, daughter of a railwayman, has compiled a detailed account of Shelford and its railway from the laying of the track to the present day. She covers the buildings, signals and structures together with the corn mills, corn merchants and coalmen who established their businesses in the village to take advantage of it.

Helen also tells the stories of many of those who have worked there in various capacities, from the stationmasters convicted of fraud through to the signalmen and shunting horses. It was not always a contented workforce with a series of disputes following the Great War when wages for guards, porters and others were reduced. The General Strike saw undergraduates and others volunteering to keep the railways running, taking over the Shelford signalbox and mistakenly sending one Liverpool Street train along the branch line to Haverhill. When crossing men refused to open the railway gates the train had to stop while the Guard hopped off to do the job.

Inevitably there have been accidents and tragedies including one to Mrs Scott back in August 1859. Returning home with her children from a day's gleaning in the harvest field, her grain

safely stored in her bag, she decide to take a shortcut down a farm road rather than cross by the railway bridge. But as her pony and cart started to cross the line it was struck by an oncoming train. The animal was caught by the locomotive, its forelegs cut off and 'its entrails let out'; the cart was broken into shivers and the occupants flung out. In desperation Mrs Scott clung to the engine while the driver frantically shut off the steam and the train came to a halt. She survived to tell the tale and her ordeal was depicted in the Illustrated Times.

One of the most interesting features of the book is an extended interview with former steam locomotive driver Ron Gooch who has lived in the village since the '50s. Ron started on the railways during the war when aged 14; his first job was as a call-boy in Lowestoft going around the houses of the men on duty to ensure they were awake in time for their shift. He quickly graduated to a fireman which, he explains was a complicated job

Ron writes:

In the 1940s a Whittlesford job could fill your diagram (or shift for the day). You'd start at Cambridge, and you'd first have to get the engine ready, which took an hour or an hour and a quarter. You might stop at Hills Road to collect a load of stinking bones to take to Whittlesford. There was some sort of glue or gelatine factory there. You'd drop five trucks off at Shelford, five at Sawston. That was Spicer's - big rolls of paper. Then the rest were dropped off at Whittlesford. You'd have a booked break of perhaps 40 minutes. Then you came back. You had to keep out of the way of the passenger trains, and that held you up. Then you might stop at Trumpington - there was a big yard there, Cambridge South. There the wagons were made up for trains for Whitemoor (March). And that was your day's work.

Later he became a driver: "When we used to go down the Mildenhall Branch, the signalman at Newmarket Box used to give us the nod, and we'd drop lumps of coal along the line near his house. There'd be half a dozen eggs waiting for us the following week"

Ron Gooch is still regularly to be seen at Shelford as one of the 'Station Adopters' ensuring it is kept spick and span. Thanks to them in 2011 Shelford won an award as the Best Small Station in the region.

While the future for Shelford station might be uncertain, its history has been fully documented – unless you can add even more to what Helen has recorded

Shelford and the Railways can be obtained for £10.50 direct from Helen Harwood – ring 01223 840393 or email helensshelfordhistory@gmail.com

Pictures

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 86.1257 | Shelford station in the early 1900s |
| 7413 | station staff noticed Ted Mott taking this picture in the 1920s; there are flowers along the platform – and Shelford was Best Small Station in 2011 |
| 7010 | Mrs Scott's accident, 1859 |
| Haynes | signalman Haynes at Shelford box 1967 |
| 32 | Shelford station now |
| loco | class 47 locomotive passing the old Shelford signalbox in the 1970s |
| 86.1258 | GER locomotive, one of the T19 class built in 1890 and used to pull the Royal Trains. It was scrapped in 1908 |

Ron Gooch and his team of station volunteers – and other pictures from the back cover of the book

Front cover of book

Memories 1st October 2012 by Mike Petty

Whilst talking at the Ely 41 Club recently recollections were shared of childhood at the Ship Inn at Brandon Creek, north of Littleport. This ancient inn sits at the junction of the Great and Little Ouse rivers and was visited by the former curator of the Folk Museum, Miss Enid Porter, when she recorded tales from the fens related by William Barrett. He was a profoundly deaf, real old fen man, who loved to share his stories – stories that improved with the telling.

One of these was of the picturesque Baits Bite Lock on the Cam near Milton. It was not then so pleasant: “I used to be in charge of the towing horses that pulled Fison’s lighters and that lock not only stank but it hummed with millions of flies. You see, in those days all the sewage and garbage of Cambridge got dumped in the river, where it floated along till it got held up by Baitsbite Lock”, Barrett claimed.

The conditions may not have been exaggerated; writing in the News in 1897 Thomas Banyard complained: “Sir, - On Wednesday morning my attention was called to the state of the River Cam near Baitsbite Sluice. The water was covered with an oily matter and the stench arising therefrom was beastly. The whole atmosphere was apparently impregnated with some vapour. The havoc amongst the fish was appalling. Thousands upon thousands - I might say tons - of pike, eels, roach and dace were dead and dying, struggling to liberate themselves from their putrid, poisonous liquid. I never witnessed such a lamentable sight before”

But at Baitsbite the fishing was usually good, Barrett recalled: “If anyone dripped a baited hook into the water there the eels would fight one another to get caught on it. The lock-keeper used to send stones and stones of eels to Cambridge – real yellow bellies they were. There was a cook shop on the market place there and all the college lads, in their caps and gowns, would stand round it gobbling up jellied eels just like a flock of crows gobbling up worms, and cawing away between swallows. Those eels were served up in basins, and all you had to ask for was a jar of Nancy’s Stew”

Recently whilst trawling through the old copies of the News for April 1940 I discovered a similar story. People had been speculating about a possible revival of eel fishing in those days of wartime rationing and hardship. It prompted a 70-year-old reader to tell how, about a century before, the keeper of Bottisham Locks had been old William Robinson, who lived in a little cottage opposite the sluice gates with his wife and daughter. He was one of the most famous, eelers of his time, working not only on the Cam, but also along the Lodes that run into the main stream.

The old lock keeper rarely used an eel fork or spear for catching eels, preferring the “eel-set” (snare) or eel-buck (trap), a kind of wicker tunnel closed at one end. He caught more than he could comfortably dispose of alive, and this led to the making of twopenny eel pies by his wife and daughter. On certain evenings the old fellow would go into Waterbeach village and at the Sun, Rose and Crown, Dog and Duck, Travellers’ Rest, and other taverns marketed his wares. The fame of Robinson’s eel pies, reached Cambridge, but before a branch business or ‘round’ could be established in the town, the famous old eel catcher died and the business came to an end.

In the 1850s the landlord of the ‘Five Miles from Anywhere, No Hurry Inn’ at Upware, John Appleby and his wife built up a reputation for their meals of eels. They served them fried, stewed, boiled or poached. People believed that they could distinguish between male and female eels; the latter was “very tasty, very sweet” and far better than the male of the species, which was smaller and tougher. Today eels still regularly feature on the menu of the Old Fire Engine House Restaurant at Ely

Eels were caught in various ways; in 1935 C.F. Tebbutt described traps made by Mr Killingworth from Earith. There was the 'grig' made of split osiers, the 'hive' which was baited with a worm threaded on a piece of wire and the 'cod' that was placed in the middle of a net stretched across the watercourse and needed no bait, as the only way the eels could avoid the net was to enter the trap.

Writing in Fenland Notes and Queries for 1906 Joseph Coles (born 1832) described catching eels in the waters of Whittlesey Mere. There men preferred an eel-spear or gleave. Large eels always had three holes to their home in the mud. One was a large one where its head peeped out and there were two small ones somewhere near where the end of the tail would be. It was no use striking near the head as the fish was too large to pass between blades of the gleave. So the gleaver aimed at a spot near the two small holes and invariably secured the eel near its tail.

In April 1931 a public inquiry was held at County Hall, Hobson Street, Cambridge into proposed changes in the Ouse and Cam Fishery Board bylaws relating and the Professional Eel Fishers of the Isle of Ely gave evidence. One of these was John Walter Barnes of Manea who told the inquiry that men had fished for eels for centuries; it was part of their rights. He used the same implements as his great-grandfather before him; they were worth £50 and of no use for other purposes. Some years he caught £10 worth of eels, other years £80. The best time was when the flood water had almost receded that that was during the close season. He had a strong objection to getting a permit for something he'd done for years. It was the thin end of the wedge.

Today there are very few eel fishers left, though Paul Carter from Outwell continues to practice the skills built up over the centuries. Do you have tales or memories? Write to Mike Petty at the News

Pictures

Fire Engine House Restaurant in Ely 1968
161.96 Eel fishing from the Oxford Almanack of 1719
103.32 an eel fisher with his gleave at night in the fens c1880
124.59 making eel traps at Ely c1890
100.07 Bottisham Lock 1880s
134.23 Baits Bite Lock c1760
59.96 eel gleaves on display at Ely Museum 1975
86.126 Ship Inn Brandon Creek 1930s
163.74 Ship Inn Brandon Creek c1890

Memories 8th October 2012 by Mike Petty

Just what is there to do at night in our local villages? And how do we stop youngsters moping around the streets or drinking themselves into oblivion

These were issues that concerned the Bishop of Ely back in 1912 when he commissioned a survey amongst the clergy in the 300 parishes in his diocese. The results may be relevant to our modern lives.

Sport was one of issues investigated. Cricket was the most popular game but only 182 parishes had teams and just 131 had football clubs. The reason was simple: the agricultural

labourer had little leisure for games since he worked late into the evening and had no Saturday half-holiday.

Instead men took pride in the cultivation of gardens and allotments. Nearly 290 parishes reported they had ample allotments while 171 had flower shows and 17 gave prizes for the best cottage gardens. It was something drummed into kids at an early age as many schools included gardening amongst their lessons

There were clubs for men but they failed to attract or keep the roughest class for whom they would be most beneficial. Several villages had Institutes to which both men and boys were admitted, but neither group felt at ease in the presence of the other.

There were companies of Boy Scouts in 77 parishes while 29 had Church Lads Brigades. The difficulty was the lack of local leadership, many parishes reported they 'had a company, but it broke down for lack of officers'

But girls were neglected despite the efforts of the Girls' Friendly Society. Most of the girls were away in service and for those who remain the lanes were not safe in the evening, therefore clubs were not desirable, the clergy considered.

Just eight parishes had attempted the difficult task of arranging weekly meetings for boys and girls jointly where they could play or dance under proper supervision. This met one of the greatest social needs as wrong relations between young people were largely due to fact that normally the two sexes did not meet under wholesome conditions, the Bishop felt.

But his ministers saw the practical difficulties: the parson was often the only person capable of organising amusements and the burden fell heavily. "What can I do, I am single-handed and too poor to pay the expense of entertainment. We have no squire and the farmers do not recognise any duty in respect of recreation", one lamented. However others complained that the parson was not always quick enough to see who could help or wise enough to allow them to get on with it

Music was one of the best and cheapest sources of pleasure and culture. Every parish had a choir which could form a nucleus round which musical interest might grow. And the old 'folk-songs' which had just been rescued from oblivion by Cecil Sharpe were ideal for that purpose. Being a genuine produce of village life, they made a direct appeal to many left out in the cold by more conventional words or music. Most parishes held one or more concerts a year. Dances and whist drives were also popular while lectures were important as well. They all encouraged people out of their cottages and gave them an opportunity to mix with their neighbours.

Amateur drama had its place; a number of villages had a good deal of talent and although they could prompt small jealousies these were soon forgotten while the benefits remained. The Village Children's Historical Play Society had produced a number of simple plays and provided costumes at trifling cost. There were some small travelling dramatic companies who pitched their tents in lesser towns and attracted youths from the villages round. Their plays were wholesome high moral melodramas. But a bad season could ruin them.

Travelling cinemas were less welcome: they did nothing to cultivate the intelligence while Feasts – which were a highlight of village life - did a great deal of harm some parsons thought.

The fact was that many people just did not feel the desire to be amused.

The apathy of village life rests like a fog upon the young men. Dulled by monotony and weary with the day's toil they find the slow gossip of the public house less of a strain than even the simplest lectures or music. They liked to take their ease in the inn rather than submit to the necessary regulation of a club, the report found.

Was the problem being caused by the bicycle that was becoming a major part of village life? Bikes kept many boys and young men out of harm and brought distant places within their reach. But they also enabled young people to go in after working hours and share the amusements to be found in nearby towns. The effect was bad. Being so far from home they were little controlled by public opinion and wasted their money in foolish or vicious indulgence without their friends suspecting. At the same time their habitual absence frustrated all efforts to maintain clubs in their own villages.

Or could the bicycle be the answer?

Lads could be encouraged to bike to neighbouring churches on Sunday afternoons – perhaps there to meet local girls. It would certainly be better than lounging at corners or inventing gossip

Such cycle tours of churches are still a feature of Diocesan life. Perhaps following the resurgence in cycling now being experienced it might be something to be encouraged even more, bringing an appreciation of the architectural gems that all too often now stand locked to visitors and villagers alike.

PICTURES

1393 or sp253 Choice of Stretham Feast – clergy did not approve

Children on street with bike and pub – Stretham

154.17a Boy Scout rally – many groups had failed

8639 children in street at Ashley

86.1041 village cricket team – Milton

86.729 church choir, Hildersham

20030 children were taught gardening at school – Sedley School, Cambridge

Memories 15th October 2012 by Mike Petty

Deep in the fens, miles from anywhere except Upware, stands a small Methodist chapel. It was erected in 1884 to replace an earlier building that had fallen into a dilapidated state, its problems exacerbated by the floods of November 1875 when it stood in a pool of water

The money for the new chapel was raised by many means, ranging from donations of ten guineas by Frederick Munns, a Cambridge picture dealer, who laid one of the foundation stones, to 'a bag containing over 300 farthings collected by a little boy, who had set himself to this work long before the congregation took the matter up.'

Among the trustees of the then 'new' Wesleyan Methodist Chapel were: William Stevens of Upware, engineer; William Housden of Swaffham Fen, farmer; Charles Pratt of Swaffham

Fen, farmer; Thomas Ivatt, junior, of Cottenham, farmer; Josiah Chapman Munsey and William Munsey of Cottenham, basket-makers; Robert Norman of Cottenham, farmer; Thomas Miller of Waterbeach, farmer; James Neal of Cambridge, tailor and robe-maker; and John Shrive of Cambridge, basket-maker.

For generations fen folk made their way there each week; when asked why they'd reply 'there weren't nothing else to do of a Sunday in them days.' But for there to be a service, there had to be a minister.

One of those to make the long journey was Samuel Waddy who recorded the problems of such a visit. "The circuit is exceedingly laborious. I walked thirty-five miles the other day on the worst road I ever travelled, through the fens. I sank up to my knees twice, and walked over the ankles for miles, falling down three times into the bargain".

His daughter published her father's account of a visit to the small chapel in Swaffham Fen about 1825 where he ministered to a congregation entirely composed of farmers and their labourers.

'One sultry afternoon, in the middle of harvest he was preaching and as his audience had all been employed during the whole of the previous day and far into the night in getting in the crops, the heat and rest overcame them, till, one by one, they fell asleep. Seeing the universal drowsiness, he paused and asked "Is there anyone in this congregation awake?" Obviously they all slumbered. His first inclination was to rouse them; but, remembering their hard toil, he had pity on them, and, quietly descending from the pulpit, opened the door and walked away, leaving the entire gathering fast asleep. At some little distance, he turned and looked, but no sign of life was visible and he walked home, wondering what would be the feelings of the first person who awoke'

Sometimes the congregation waited in vain: William Coles, a lay preacher in the Cottenham circuit, recalled how he'd plodded down the drove on the Waterbeach side of the Cam till he arrived at the Jolly Anglers only to find the ferryboat – the only means of crossing - was on the far side of the river. After waiting for some time he saw a man driving cattle on the opposite bank and shouted 'Please tell the people that the preacher was unable to cross and has returned to Cottenham'

Alan Wyatt of Landbeach has memories of another minister who arrived in a model T' Ford to take a service. Knowing that the car was notoriously difficult to start he decided to leave the engine running for the duration of the service. During a period of silent prayer the motor was heard to splutter. The minister raced from the chapel to tend the ailing engine. He became so engrossed in the task that he forgot his congregation and drove away. How long they remained in silent prayer we shall never know!

However none of those difficulties confronted the congregation this year at the annual Harvest Thanksgiving Festival. 'Shall we Gather at the River' was followed by 'We Plough The Fields And Scatter,' 'Bringing In The Sheaves' and other traditional 'Sankey' hymns and this time the preacher, Cecil Nash of Swaffham Bulbeck, had no danger of a dozing congregation – the pews were far too packed for that!

Two collections were taken, one for charity, the other to ensure that the chapel remains standing.

It had prospered for many years, serving families in Swaffham Prior and Waterbeach Fens, until the 9th of July 1958, when, with a declining population and congregation, the Methodist Church decided to sell the property. It is now maintained by a dedicated group of trustees subject to a legal covenant that it 'shall not be used for the manufacture, distribution, sale or

supply of intoxicating liquor, nor for use as a public dance hall, or for any purpose in connection with the organisation or practice of gambling in any of its forms.'

But in this deeply agricultural area, surrounded by the rich black peat soil it continues to provide a place where farmers and others give thanks for their harvest on the first Sunday in October each year.

Pictures

- 39 children outside the chapel c1910
- 166.45 the chapel
- 166.56 Methodist rally at the chapel 1930s
- Chap2012a the chapel decorated for Harvest Festival this year
- 86.1461 chapel with bike – perhaps that of the minister – 1949
- MP01 the pulpit
- MP02 chapel interior
- 5685 a harvest festival display at Castle Street Methodist chapel Cambridge 1934
- 152.36 road to the chapel
- 135.79 ministers had to cross the Cam by a ferry along with everybody else – c1880

additions:

Mr A.H. Sennitt
64a West Fen Road
Ely
Cambridgeshire.

8th November 2012.

Dear Mr Petty

I read with interest your columns in the Cambridge News, of particular interest to me have been the recollections of the little fen chapel. To that end I've put pen to paper recalling some of my own memories.

I hope you find them of interest and please do not hesitate to contact me if you feel you would like to have some more detail

'My brother and I used to go to Sunday school two times most Sundays followed by services. The Sunday school was run by Mrs Stamford. In the summer we had an outing always to Hunstanton with a fish and chip lunch. I don't remember how we got there. Also in the summer we had an anniversary when all the children performed. We had a tea party with large boards over the pews for the food. Out the back was a kitchen where the tea was made presumably heated by paraffin. This was made of wood and has long since gone. Before the war there were concerts probably mid-week where rousing religious songs and hymns were sung. Remember there was no electricity and few radios and so this was the only entertainment. Mrs Stamford's daughter Renee married Peter Cockerton. She is older than me so would remember more.'

King Regards

Alfred Sennitt

Memories 22nd October 2012 by Mike Petty

The shortage of accommodation is one that has been felt by various generations, as a survey by the Ely Diocesan Social Service Committee in 1912 reveals.

Local clergy reported that all too often young couples were having to put their marriage plans on hold as there was nowhere they could afford to rent. So they continued to live with their parents in properties which were often overcrowded.

Houses should have a minimum of three bedrooms, one for the parents, one for boys and one for girls. But many had just one. This meant married couples slept in the same room as their children and crying babies disturbed everyone. This was bad enough in normal times, but worse in times of sickness, pregnancy or drunkenness. Bedrooms ought to have fireplaces, not for warmth but to allow some air into them. Many had no opening windows: the atmosphere in which some of the poor live is such as makes a strong man, accustomed to pure air, faint in a few minutes, the clergy reported.

There was no privacy: adults had to undress and relieve themselves in one another's presence. Often families had to share a water closet with their neighbours. Sometimes the privies were too close to the cottage which added to the problems caused by lack of running water, bad drainage and the presence of pigsties.

Such daily contact with filth and foul smells led to loss of self respect and liability to disease. But it also presented a moral danger; for the privies provided meeting places for the young of opposite sexes at all hours, secure from supervision.

It was the mothers who suffered worst. The fathers went out all the day to work, the children were in school but the women were anchored in the house. The combined effect of insufficient space, bad sanitation, poor water supply and air deprived of oxygen produced a kind of torpor which disinclined them to any exertion. Many women who were clean and efficient when working for others allowed their homes to remain dirty. Some were so filthy in their habits that landlords thought it a waste of time to put the cottages in order.

It was a vicious circle: dirty houses made dirty people, and dirty people made dirty homes. That was not the end of the problem: an overcrowded dirty and untidy house drove the husband to the pub where he spent the money which might have made the home more comfortable

A mother who was anaemic for want of healthy conditions was less able to control high-spirited children when they were well, or nurse them when ill. Boys and girls above school age were altogether beyond her control and sought their evening amusement away from home in the streets and lanes – and many a ruined life was the consequence, the clergy felt.

The problem was economic: a labourer whose wage averaged fifteen shillings a week (about £70 today), could not afford three shillings for rent; and that – about £14 in today's prices – was too low a rent for a cottage that cost £160 (£14,800 now) to build and keep in repair. It provided the landlord with a return of about two percent on his investment – an expensive form of charity.

The situation was exacerbated by new byelaws which added to the cost of new buildings. So the old cottages were patched up or left to decay until they became uninhabitable. The worse they became, the more unwilling good men were to own them, so they fell into the hands of small owners who made a profit by refusing all repairs.

Old-age-pensioners made matters worse: they were often willing to rent cottages which were only fit to be burned, preferring an unclean independence to a sterile workhouse.

But the problem was less now than it had been in the past because so many village people had been driven away from the fields to try and find work in towns.

Some local authorities were taking steps to remedy the situation by building new houses. But this meant increasing rates at a time when farmers – who were both Councillors and large ratepayers - were themselves facing financial problems. And such pillars of the establishment were themselves often renting out substandard properties and pressurising Council Inspectors who demanded repairs.

All that was 100 years ago but Eddie Holden has emailed to recall the situation he experienced in the 1950s when he was happy to live in a hut off Cambridge Road, Ely that had been part of a Prisoners of War camp .

Eddie recalls: “I helped to convert those huts into living quarters after the p.o.w.s had gone. They were intended for young married couples, before they got a council house. I got one at the time, no29. Some were wood huts on piers and the others were Nissen huts of galvanised steel and asbestos linings. These were 60 feet long, divided into two by brick walls into two quarters , one at each end”.

Eddie would love to find a photograph of the area at that time. So I turned to that comprehensive Book of Ely compiled by Pam Blakeman in 1990 and now reissued with a new chapter bringing it up to date. She records that the camp housed both German and Italian soldiers who were allowed into the city and its cinemas. It later housed refugees – and Eddie – before it was closed and the site cleared for the present golf course. But there is no picture amongst the wealth of illustrations which range from 16th-century views of a Bishop’s funeral to the modern Cloisters shopping area. If you have one let me know.

However the cover view shows a scene that would have been as recognisable to the clergy of 1912 and wartime prisoners as it is today. It is a painting by Henry Baines about 1857, now displayed in Ely Museum, a building that itself was once a debtor’s prison administered by the Bishop of Ely

The Book of Ely by Pam Blakeman, new edition published by Baron Books, ISBN 978 0 9566287 3 2

Pictures

Wedding – choice of
109.93 wedding group
174970 society wedding at Ely Cathedral – but many young people could not marry as they had nowhere to live

old lady in cottage – choice of
136.57
145.97

174069 despair in a cottage – an engraving from 1895

Ely – colour picture of St Mary’s Street by Henry Baines 1857

145.06 Prisoners of war in camp at Trumpington – are there pictures of Ely?

563 A Prisoner of war camp at Friday Bridge was later used as an agricultural holiday camp

10281 interior of cottage, Willingham

10356 tumbled down cottages at Longstanton

Memories 29th October 2012 by Mike Petty

Last week the News reported how one of 15 brightly-painted pianos that have been dotted around Cambridge streets as part of the Festival of Ideas had disappeared from its allotted position. It was discovered abandoned half-way across Midsummer Common and has been returned to its allotted position where it can be played by whoever is passing.

For over a century those who prefer a piano of their own have found specialists such as Millers Music Shop able to offer advice. It was founded in 1856 when hard times forced the sale of the Miller family's grand piano to save the family bonnet shop from bankruptcy. This sale was so successful that more pianos were purchased and keyboard instruments remained an essential part of their business.

But they were not alone. Henley Arthur Bedwell also made and rented out pianos. In 1898 one was lent to William Elliott who was staying at the Cutter Inn, Ely. The instrument was carefully packed in a wooden case and despatched by the Great Eastern Railway. It arrived safely in Elliott's sitting room, overlooking the Great Ouse, and was placed in an inside wall, next to the fire. He played it every day and was delighted: the piano never went out of tune and showed no signs of being damp. When he'd finished with it he contacted Bedwell who send a packing case for its return.

Richard Brown, manager of the Cutter, ensured the piano was properly packed into the case, then Ebenezer Dewey took it to the station where he left it in a parcel shed. James Merry, the goods foreman at the station, loaded the case safely on to a railway truck immediately behind the engine and covered it with a tarpaulin. As soon as the train arrived at Cambridge it was backed into a goods shed where Thomas Tatham helped unload the piano into a grain shed. Later James William King put it on his delivery wagon together with several barrels of beer and took it to Bedwell's premises. As far as they were concerned, the job had been done.

But when Bedwell lifted the lid he found the wires inside the piano were rusty. He was convinced that the railway company had been negligent. So he took them to court. But the evidence proved difficult to refute: the packing case itself was dry inside and out, the piano body, although dull, was not wet and Harold Pain, an optician and keen amateur weatherman, was adamant there had been no rain during the time of the journey. The only possible source of damp could have come from the barrels of beer that had shared the wagon on its journey from the station. But these definitely had not been leaking, the Railway maintained.

Another railway company had more trouble denying liability in May 1907 when a horse attached to L.N.W.R. parcels van collided with a handcart on which two men working for Mr H. Leavis of Regent Street were conveying a piano near the Guildhall. The man pulling the cart narrowly escaped injury by jumping aside, but the piano was pitched on to the road and damaged. The firm suffered more badly in May 1907 after fire broke out in the upper floor of Messrs Constable's stained glass works above their piano warehouse. The glassworks was gutted and the glass cracked and popped and although firemen prevented the fire gutting Leavis' premises several pianos and portions of pianos, were surrounded by pools of dirty water, drops of which fell with a monotonous splash from the ceiling.

Transporting pianos is a difficult job and getting them up winding staircase into upper rooms of buildings was one problem for which the removal men had an answer. George Love from Burleigh Street manhandled them up a ladder while some old houses, such as those in Bene't Street, had rings under their eaves through which ropes were placed to enable such bulky items to be drawn up to upper floors and taken in through the window.

But some people moved pianos themselves. Back in December 1910 a woman calling herself 'Lady Marcia Somerset' rented a large house, Broom Lodge at Hemingford Grey, saying she intended to open it as a riding school and take in paying guests. Furniture was delivered via St Ives railway station and she lived there with her brother in some style. They employed a groom to look after the horses and had bulldogs. As befitted her status, she opened accounts with local tradesmen who were happy to supply goods. They were less happy when their accounts were not settled.

When Pc Warrington visited the house he had found it stripped of everything except an iron bedstead in one room and a camp bedstead in another. Bedroom furniture, brass candlesticks, a pair of staghorns, a small cupboard with glass doors, two carriage lamps, a pair of horse bits, a couch, two easy chairs, eight small chairs, three carpets, one hearthrug, four chairs, fender and a set of fire-irons, wardrobe, dressing chest, washstand, desk, dinner wagon, six hunting crops, cricket bats and stumps and two baskets containing glass and china had all gone. So had the grand piano. When questioned the 'Lady' said she could not get on with Hemingford people; she owed them some money but they were pressing her rather too hard and she had sent her grand piano to her town house. But it was discovered in Norman Bradley's pawnbroker's shop in Fitzroy Street, Cambridge

Quite how she got it there is unclear but it must have taken even more effort than that exerted by the more recent potential piano-pinchers.

Pictures

Removal men taking piano through the window c1910

The Cutter Inn, Ely
Leavis's piano shop, Regent Street
Miller's Music Shop, Sidney St c1900

Hemingford Grey where a 'Lady' caused tongue to wag

Memories 5th November 2012, by Mike Petty

Bonfire night in Cambridge used to be one of mayhem. In 1786 it was celebrated in the traditional manner with squibs, crackers, rioting and mischief to the personal injury of many and the great danger of the inhabitants in general. We wish housekeepers would unite with magistrates to suppress this dangerous nuisance, the Cambridge Chronicle commented.

By 1860 correspondents were lamenting the loss of old-time traditions: The Guy of former years was a figure dressed in modern but seedy clothes, supported on the back of a donkey by some partner of his saddless seat, his arms outstretched to denote the intensity of the torture he had undergone, his gloved hands bearing brimstone matches spread out fanwise to show his diabolical intent; his face red and apoplectic with no nose to speak of, eyes fixed and

expressionless complexion highlighted by a large white frill and gigantic paper collar. The Cambridge guy this year was a hollow mockery, attired in a top coat of green paper copiously bedecked with spangles somewhat like a Chinese mandarin and borne on a stretcher.

By the turn of the century however the battle lines had been drawn once more. In 1899 almost as soon as it was dark a large number of youths made their way to Cambridge Market Hill which was in a short time alive to the crackling and bangings of fireworks. The 'Varsity' joined the townspeople and from eight to eleven there was a roaring, rushing crowd of several hundreds about the hill and neighbouring streets. Certain of the townsmen who had begun the day not too wisely by profusely drinking were responsible for the greater part of the disorder and were seized and marched off by the ever-vigilant gentlemen in blue, the paper reported.

Disturbances followed for several years; 1911 saw a violent battle for the bridge by Jesus Lock when five policemen successfully resisted the attacks of 300 undergraduates and 'town rowdies' though PC Johnson was knocked out and PC Tillet had both heels of his boots torn off. Next year Bonfire Night fell on Sunday and it was hoped it would put an end to the bedlam. But gowmsmen rioted with equal vigour on both the 4th and 6th. Some raggers climbed the fence into Newnham College grounds, pulled up the hockey goalposts and prepared a bonfire. The noise aroused the College; several of the lady dons and students came out and ran towards the revellers. But police arrived before the Amazons had chance to wreak their revenge. In Trinity Street mounted policemen dispersed a group of undergrads and arrested one of the students. He was conveyed to the cells escorted by ten constables on foot with a dozen mounted police strongly protecting the rear and flanks from attempts to 'rescue' him. Then in 1913 the Cambridge railway station was attacked and the platforms flowed white with the upturned churns of the night milk train

During the blackout of the Great War the tradition was suspended and the 1920s' were relatively calm: Indeed by 1923 had it not been for the mounted police and the proctors, the market square would have been its usual desolate self soon after 9.30 pm. It was noticeable that as soon as the mounted police left the crowd decreased by 50 per cent. Violence flared in 1934 during which many of the police lost their helmets, several more had their tunics ripped right down the back and not a few sustained split knuckles and bruises as nearly 40 arrests were made. When supplies of fireworks began to run low parties of undergraduates attempted to put out every street light but carried their efforts too far and smashed the glass of two shop windows and the traffic signal at the top of Petty Cury. Some 35 people appeared in court including a Trinity undergraduate who was fined for 'tipping' a policeman's helmet.

During the Second World War things quietened down; afterwards Bonfire Night started again. In 1948 a big crowd on Market Square was joined by undergraduate men and the newly-admitted women students wearing their gowns for the first time on bonfire night. Scores of fireworks and smoke bombs were thrown, some down the underground toilets and rockets were aimed at the Guildhall clock. The interior of the Senate House was severely damaged by an explosive charge and 70 panes of glass broken. The priceless medieval glass of King's College Chapel narrowly escaped destruction. There were eight arrests – five of them undergraduates - and 10 people were taken to Addenbrooke's Hospital. The headlines of Varsity, the student magazine read *Bonfire damage worse than enemy action during war*

It prompted the University to clamp down on undergraduates and in following years Proctors patrolled the streets while police cordoned off Market Hill. But violence exploded once again in 1959 with a pitched barrage of squibs and bangers while youths poured oil on the water in the Market Hill fountain and then set it ablaze. After an hour's bombardment the square was blanketed under a thick pall of sulphurous smoke into which more and more people groped their way. Nearly everyone was caught at one time or another by a squib, many people's clothes were scorched and burnt and several people injured.

Given such horrendous acts the police and university authorities took steps to control the situation, with students and members of the armed forces being banned from the centre of the city.

In the 1970s Cambridge Round Table organised a fireworks display at Cambridge United's Football ground which attracted hundreds of children and resulted in 1972 being one of the quietest Bonfire Nights for many years. It was an example that has been followed and now thousands flock to organised fireworks spectacles.

The old bonfire nights were 'fun' for some, but terrifying for others. Writing in 1999 Judi Pollard (nee Moore) recalled: "Living most of our childhood in Sidney Street I remember my father used to take us to a friend's house in Chesterton to share their celebrations. But inevitably we would return home to find Sidney Street blocked off by the police to avoid the Market Square crowd rampaging. On one such occasion my mother, who had stayed in the flat, was bombarded by fireworks being thrown up against our windows. I can remember when in my teens my boyfriend and I crammed on to Market Hill with a few hundred others. Somebody let off something – probably home made – because it was the loudest bang I'd ever heard and the ground actually shook. As a finale to that evening we were then pelted with bags of flour by the people residing in flats over the Milk Bar and other premises on that side of the Square"

But should anybody feel tempted to recreate the madness of past times it might be worth recalling that: "*Any person who casts or fires a squib, cracker, serpent or other firework in the public street shall forfeit 20/- or be committed to the House of Correction to hard labour for one month.*" And when that rule was made in 1786, twenty shillings was a great deal of money!

Boys with Guy outside 39 Cam Road
Varsity headlines 1948
Cambridge Weekly News headlines 1912
Bonfire night cartoons c1910

Market hill ringed with police & proctors, Bonfire Night – a cartoon from Granta, 1930

Children on Midsummer Common, 1988 – neg 41 88 323

Memories 12 November 2012, by Mike Petty

Jesus Green is in the news at present with proposals to undertake a drainage project to enable it to be used all year round. At present the area nearest Victoria Avenue turns into a bog after heavy rain. Such improvements could pave the way for sports pitches. However there are fears that it might change the peaceful character of the area.

However the area has not always been peaceful. There have been various events held on the Green over the years.

In 1894 the Royal Show was held on Midsummer Common and Jesus Green; trees that had been planted alongside the newly-constructed Victoria Avenue were dug up and replanted once the various pavilions and show rings had been dismantled. Ten years later a Mammoth Show, was held in the grounds of the Leys School attracting a crowd estimated at 17,000. A larger venue was needed so next year an area of Jesus Green was fenced off to provide a venue for a vast array of activities. There were sports including an obstacle race with men running with a bucket over their heads and the 100 yards boys' race. But it was the cycle races that attracted the crowds, especially when Cambridge had champions like Arthur Markham. In addition there were displays of various types. The show ceased during the Great War when the peaceful area became a military camp for a short time, but was revived in 1922 and continued until 1926: the Council did not want the grass to be cut up as they had other ideas for Jesus Green.

In 1922 an Act of Parliament had increased the Council's power over the common lands - they could now restrict the traditional grazing on Lammas Land and Jesus Green. And they could legally built a swimming pool on grass which some considered sacred. Inevitably the proposals met opposition but construction began in 1923. The new baths were 300 ft long and 40 ft wide and ideal for water polo. By putting them near Jesus Lock it was possible to get a natural flow of water from the river, which avoided the expense of pumping. They proved a success: by September 1925 20,000 tickets had been issued for male bathers alone. But in 1953 the swimming pool was running at a loss, partly because the water often looked more like soup and failed to meet public health regulations. Despite opposition mains water was substituted.

Swimming was not the only attraction: despite a shower of rain a number of tennis enthusiasts were present on Jesus Green when in February 1925 the Mayor opened Cambridge's first public hard tennis courts. Directly adjoining were new grass courts, nearby was the bowling green whilst further afield cricket pitches were being laid. Dr Rouse Ball of Trinity College gave money to build a pavilion, which was named after him. Then in 1927 an 18-hole putting green was opened. Children's play equipment was also installed

Since then Jesus Green has been home to a variety of entertainments, including a pop festival in 1969. There were even proposals to build a £40,000 open-air theatre on Jesus Green to be funded by the City Lottery Committee, but this never came to fruition.

The most ambitious was in 1976 when an enormous blue big top was pitched to provide a home for Sadlers Wells Ballet. It proved a great success although in 1979 hundreds of disappointed enthusiasts had to be turned away after heavy rain transformed the grass to slub. The bad weather continued incessantly for almost a fortnight but finally it relented and peace returned to the Big Top. At last it was possible to enjoy performances without the accompaniment of heavy rain on canvas, whistling wind and a variety of off-stage rumbling though audience and artistes still had to be on their guard against damp patches on the walkways and duck-boards

Being so near to the river, flooding is something that has reoccurred over the years. In August 1879 more than three inches of water fell in six hours. The Cambridge Chronicle reported that "the lightning and thunder were awful in grandeur and the downpour of rain and hail terrible". The Cam flooded at Midsummer Common and the Jesus Lock footbridge stood only inches higher than the river.

Hopefully modern drainage techniques will ensure that such scenes remain a thing of the past

Pictures

148.81 Panoramic view of the Royal Show 1894 – and detail just Jesus Green
160.23 Jesus Green swimming pool 1966
6376 Soldiers camped on Jesus Green during WWI
6871 Jesus Green fenced off for the Mammoth Show
174106 Jesus Green 1992
174107 Children at play 1964
174108 Flooding in 1879

Memories 19 November 2012 by Mike Petty

Clare Hall was founded so that Richard Eden could invite his friends to Cambridge – or so Sir Geoffrey Elton, the distinguished historian, regularly told visiting scholars. But history books show Clare Hall was one of the earliest of the University Colleges founded in the 1300s.

Richard Eden can only trace his connection with Cambridge back to a damp and misty December day in 1939 when he was shown into rooms at Peterhouse, overlooking the ancient gravestones in St Mary the Less churchyard. For such a prestigious address he was charged ten shillings a day for each of the four days it would take to complete the University entrance examination. He was successful, qualifying for scholarships enabled him to take up his place to read Mathematics from October 1940.

His initial accommodation was a room in Tennis Court Terrace where his landlady provided a jug of hot water each morning. If he wanted a bath he could walk to Peterhouse in his pyjamas and dressing gown, as a previous occupant, J.B. Priestley, had done before him. Since there was a war on he could not concentrate solely on study and was expected to train for the army, air force, navy or home guard. As the latter did not clash with his studies he decided to join the signals unit.

Having successfully completed his degree in Mathematics, Richard was invited to travel down to Bletchley Park for an interview. He was not told quite what the job entailed, but he turned it down. For he was by then engaged in something more important: the development of radar to direct the searchlights that guided anti-aircraft guns. In December 1942 he was sent as an officer to an ack-ack battery based in prefabricated huts at Ely.

But Eden was not a stay-at-home soldier; in September 1944 he was in a glider that landed near Arnhem, leaping out, sten gun at the ready, to be greeted not by Germans but welcoming locals. However the Germans were nearby in force (as the code breakers at Bletchley Park had warned) and the attempt to seize the nearby bridge was one advance too far. Of the 12,000 airborne troops who landed, just 2,500 came back across the Rhine; he was one. Later he was amongst troops planning to parachute into Singapore until the explosion of the Atom bombs made that attack unnecessary.

For many people such wartime excitement would be the main talking point of a lifetime, for him it was just a start. The Atom bomb had been pioneered by physicists at the Cavendish Laboratory and soon he was a researcher there, meeting many of the men who had been involved in making that bomb, as well as Werner Karl Heisenberg, one of the leading German wartime scientists.

But life was not all study. In 1949 he married Elsie, the attractive girl he'd met at a dance ten years earlier. Soon they set off for America following an invitation from Robert Oppenheimer to study physics in Princeton. By the time they returned to Cambridge in 1957 they were a

family of five. Today Richard and Elsie have seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren, some of whom visit and dine at Clare Hall in Herschel Road.

Although it has an ancient name, this college, based in Hershell Road, off Grange Road, is one of the newest in Cambridge. It was founded by Clare College as an Institute of Advanced Study after Richard Eden's proposals won the backing of the Master, Sir Eric Ashby and its Governing Body in 1966. There were many problems to overcome but today Clare Hall welcomes research students and senior academics of different nationalities and disciplines from across the globe, many of whom bring their families with them. They stay in a range of modern buildings with all facilities for study – and of course even bathrooms!

At lunchtime they take soup from a large pot in the centre of each dining table. The wealth of expertise and breadth of knowledge that gathers in that room is astonishing. They are researching topics such as nineteenth-century volcanic eruptions, after-life and grief in funeral sermons in England in the 1500s, environmental changes at Angkor Cambodia or the role of differential Calorimetry in revealing the mechanism of superconductivity (whatever that is).

Amongst those who dine is a gentleman who did take up the invitation to work at Bletchley Park, cracking not on the German but the Japanese codes. And a modest Cambridge University Emeritus Professor of Energy Studies, Dr Richard Eden, who has been encouraged to set down his Memoirs, now published by the college he helped to found.

His book gives an insight into one small part the University of Cambridge that most residents and few visitors will ever glimpse. Yet one that is known by academics the world over, all of whom regard Richard Eden as a friend – as Elton predicted.

Sometimes in Cambridge: memoirs, by Richard Eden is published by Clare Hall – ISBN 978-0-9532717-2012 price TO BE NOTIFIED

Pictures

Dr Richard Eden, drawn in 1984

Richard and Elsie in 2002 – they celebrated their Diamond wedding anniversary in 2009.

The original 'Clare Hall' changed its name to Clare College

The new Clare Hall was formally opened in September by University Vice Chancellor Sir Eric Ashby (centre) Lord Adrian, Master of Clare College (right) and the first President of Clare Hall, Professor Brian Pippard in 1969

Clare Hall's West Court in Hershel Road, once home to Lord and Lady Rothschild.
One of the more recent additions to Clare Hall

Cavendish Laboratory in Free School Lane where scientists pioneered the Atom bomb

Anti-aircraft guns on Parker's Piece – Eden worked on radar guidance

Members of Clare Hall and their families explore Stretham Engine during an expedition to the fens

Memories 26 November 2012 by Mike Petty

In November 1962, 50 years ago, the Cambridge News published the first of a series of articles entitled 'Down Your Street'. Erica Dimock was asked to visit a street trace its history,

talk to residents and shopkeepers and record impressions of life in that locality at that period. The articles were illustrated by pictures taken by News photographers and together they painted a unique picture of the area.

It seemed appropriate to start with Castle Street which gave an opportunity to reflect on the Roman road, the first castle built by William the Conqueror and St Peter's church, one of the smallest in England. It meant too that Erica could pop into the Folk Museum and talk to Enid Porter, its curator since 1947 and already an acknowledged authority on Cambridge. But most importantly she spoke to residents: "In Leonard's Yard, one of the numerous little yards and courts of cottages in the area lives Mr Claude Parkinson, who for many years had a cycle repair shop in Castle Street. He recalls the early 1920s when he set up shop and allowed all those who cycled into Cambridge from the country to leave their bicycles in his yard while they did their business in town".

In the course of her travels Erica met many such people. In Petty Cury Mr Monty Harris ran Separates, a ladies shop selling skirts and blouses, woollen goods and slacks as opposed to full length coats and dresses. He complained that there were only three locally owned businesses left in Petty Cury, all the others being branches of national firms. "I think it is local firms which attract people and which have something different to offer them. Otherwise you might just as well go to Bedford or Welwyn to do your shopping. The goods will be the same anywhere in these multiple stores", he said

In Green Street Leonard Whitehead had been cutting men's hair for more than 40 years. When he first started, porters and waiters from nearby colleges would trundle their wicker trays along the street, delivering breakfast to their students or waiting upon them at private cocktail parties. One man who had become a kind of institution in the street was Mr Freddy Fulcher, who used to stand with his coster barrow selling fruit to undergraduates.

Histon Road residents were gradually witnessing the countryside slipping away from their doorsteps and people were still living in prefabricated houses erected as an emergency measure during the war. In 1963 the Gwydir Street terraced houses looked much the same as they had when they were built in the 1860s, but the atmosphere of the street had changed. It was becoming 'the Soho of Cambridge' as young families moved away to be replaced with people from Italy, Jamaica, Poland, Yugoslavia and a variety of other countries. Dales had stopped brewing and its landmark seven-foot high cup, a reminder of the gold cup won for the best beer at the Brewers' International Exhibition in 1911, had been removed for safety reasons.

Some Park Street residents had a most attractive outlook over Jesus Green and across to the river. But there was a problem: "The only disadvantage of living in these small terraced houses is the lack of a bathroom and indoor toilet. Some of the slightly larger houses round the corner have managed to have bathrooms installed and, with this very necessary amenity, have turned their homes into lodgings for undergraduates," she reported.

Union Lane, the link road between Milton Road and High Street, Chesterton, was the home of the old Chesterton Union Workhouse and the stark building still dominated the area, though memories of the harsh and bitter regime of that institution had almost disappeared. By 1963 it was a Hospital dedicated to the care of elderly people. Union Lane was also home to the Cambridge Electro Plating Company which specialised in painting and electro-plating items from car bumpers to silver or the large copper urns used in college kitchens to prevent them rusting.

On and on the series ran, covering Newmarket Road with its gas works and brickyards, Fitzroy Street with its thriving shops and Sturton Street where Bill Coulden, licensee of the White Hart, found residents 'a wonderful crowd of people. Bateman Street had a home for

unmarried mothers and their babies. Most of the girls were from the local area; they entered it about six weeks before their babies were due, were taken to hospital for their confinements and then returned to the home until their babies were six weeks old, giving the mothers adequate time to plan for the future. The home was not run as an institution but had the atmosphere of a family, each mother being responsible for the care of her own child. Family prayers were held in the chapel night and morning. Careful plans were made for the future of the babies, about 50 per cent of whom were legally adopted through one of the Registered Adoption Societies. Others went home with their mothers, into residential nurseries or were placed with foster mothers.

So much of what Erica discovered has now completely passed away. Her articles continued until the autumn of 1964. They are all filed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library in Lion Yard, and are a wonderful snapshot of 60's life, much enhanced by the pictures taken by News photographers, then modern, but now a valuable record of a vanished city half a century ago

NOTE – I MAY BE ABLE TO ADD EXTRA NOTES ABOUT ERICA HERSELF
TOMORROW

Pictures

Heading of first article, on Castle Street, Nov 1962
Advertisement for Castle Street businesses
Castle Street Nov 1962

Bill Coulden in Sturton Street – ‘a wonderful crowd of people’
Histon Road
Fitzroy Street shops
Petty Cury and Separates

Memories 3rd December 2012 by Mike Petty

Few motorists queuing along Elizabeth Way to turn into Newmarket Road will notice an ancient chimneystack rising above the terraced houses on their left. Yet it belongs to Abbey House, one of the oldest and most-interesting properties in Cambridge. It was built in the 1670s on the site of an Augustinian Priory and was once claimed to be the most haunted house in all England. But whatever the supposed ghostly residents, the real ones have been an interesting set of characters.

They include people whose names are immortalised in Cambridge streets – Panton, Gwydir and Geldhart - and one whose remarkable story has just been told. Peter Danckwerts won the George Cross for his wartime work as a bomb disposal officer, he combated Italian frogmen riding human torpedoes then absent-mindedly stepped on a landmine. Postwar he joined the newly-established University Department of Chemical Engineering becoming Shell professor and gaining an international reputation.

In 1962 he glimpsed Abbey House. By then it belonged to the City Council who'd been given it by Lord Fairhaven in 1946 as the site for an enlarged Folk Museum. But the building was just not suitable and the museum did not have the resources to keep it in good repair. Instead it creaked alarmingly in high winds, enhancing the impression of hauntings. Danckwerts became the latest in a series of tenants

In retirement he looked into the stories of those who had lived there before him. The most remarkable was Jacob Butler who inherited the property in 1714 when he was in his 30's. Butler was a barrister, a graduate of Christ's college and a man of massive physique, being six feet four inches tall and broad in proportion so his appearance in court was striking. He was frequently involved in litigation himself.

Jacob owned much of the surrounding area including the field where the Stourbridge Fair booths were set up on St Bartholomew's day. This was a real little town laid out in rows – Garlic row, Brush row and Cheese row with sections for cloth, iron and coal, and a cheap side. It brought sellers from all over Europe and buyers from all over the country. There were curious rules attached to Stourbridge fair which Jacob saw were observed, once driving his carriage through the crockery stalls and smashingg tons of their wares after the traders failed to clear the land in time.

But he had a soft heart, especially for the poorer folk, and a love of the eccentric. He always invited the dwarfs and Giants from the side shows to dine with him while the fair was on, and this was accepted as one of his little quirks. He also liked to get value for his purchases and, long before his death, had a coffin made of oak which was so huge that several people might have got inside. Visitors flocked to see his final resting place - sometimes they used it as a card table, when tired he would lay down in it.

Jacob's funeral in 1765 was a grand event, for he was the oldest barrister left at that time being 84 – though he had not practiced for some time, being considered cracked in his intellect. He left instructions that they were to drive his giant coffin on a farm cart drawn by his favourite horses Dragon and Brag to the Abbey Church, St Andrew the Less on Newmarket Road. If the church would not bury him there he was to be brought back and buried in a grass plot in the Abbey House grounds. However that caused problems, for he wasn't living at Abbey House then – he'd lost it in a lawsuit and moved to a house in Emmanuel Lane.

Then they found that the coffin was so large it would not go into the church. So his corpse was laid in a lead coffin and was conveyed in a normal hearse to the Church, while the wagon behind drew the large oak coffin. Then after the service, the large oak coffin was lowered into the vault and the smaller one put down into it.

Such a man deserves a memorial and so Jacob Butler erected one himself, eight years before his death. It took the form of six large mural tablets erected on the walls inside the Abbey Church giving his own view of his life and achievements, not wanting to rely on the judgement of others. But after a new Christchurch was erected across the road the Abbey Church fell into disrepair. When it was 'restored' in the 1850s Jacob's memorial was taken out of the church and set up outside in the churchyard where time has taken its toll.

Now Peter Varey, author of the book on Dankwerts, is hoping to get the Squire Butler's hexateuch repaired. Expert restorers have said the six slabs are slate and shouldn't have been exposed to the elements. It may be possible to restore them, perhaps to be reinstalled inside the church. But they have worn away and are virtually blank.

However all is not lost. Back in 1786 Jacob's version of his life story was published in 'The history and antiquities of Barnwell Abbey, and of Sturbridge Fair' and although stone and slate crumble, paper has survived. The actual volume itself is very rare but it can be freely read, page by page, by anybody with a computer connected to the internet as it has been scanned as part of the Google Books project.

One day all books may be available this way. In the meantime Peter Varey's account of the career of Professor Peter Dankwerts can be ordered from bookshops or by email directly from the author - peter varey19@gmail.com

Life on the edge: Peter Danckwerts, by Peter Varey is published by PFV Publications – ISBN 978-0-9538440-1-2 at £14 softback, £18 hard.

Pictures

Abbey House – views in 1880s, 1914 and 1964

Abbey House exterior and interior with Peter Danckwerts, 1987

Abbey Road c1964

Jacob Butler – choice of two drawings

Abbey Church 1838 and 1880

The Butler Memorial, now crumbled away

Memories 10th December 2012 by Mike Petty

“We Also Served”, the official story of the Cambridgeshire Home Guard during the days when England prepared for invasion, was published in January 1944.

It tells how on 14th May 1940 Mr W Eden, Secretary of State for War, had broadcast an appeal for a citizen force to be called the Local Defence Volunteers. Colonel Cutlack was nominated county commander for the Isle of Ely, Major Phillips for Cambridgeshire with zone commanders based at March or Ely and elsewhere. Men who responded to the call were entitled to claim expenses such as a bicycle allowance or payment for underclothes torn on barbed wire. But it remained a volunteer force until 1942 when conscription was introduced.

The official story was subject to censorship. But last week Peter Tooley of Trumpington showed me a few notes which give details which the censor did not approve.

Some of these were written on 31st January 1944 by the Chairman of the British Legion, Major W. Phillips, from the Cambridgeshire Home Guard Group Headquarters at 2 Trinity Street, Cambridge. He suggests amendments to the draft text, insisting that that the work of Colonel Diver should be recorded. He'd spent many nights out in his car checking and distributing rifles, ammunitions and denims. It would hurt his feelings should this not be mentioned.

Initially weapons had been in short supply. In 1940 one checkpoint was issued with packets of pepper, short lengths of lead casing and iron tubing. But many men had their own shotguns and breech-loading punt guns could be adapted to stop tanks. Then Cambridgeshire received 8,000 rifles sent by the United States. They arrived at the Corn Exchange thickly covered in grease and for two weeks hundreds of helpers were kept busy cleaning them - and ruining many garments in the process

Molotov cocktails were an important part of the arsenal. Many were manufactured by the chemical department at Chivers of Histon until they ran out of bottles. They were filled with a mixture of petrol, tar oil and paraffin with a lighted rag in the top and were dangerous weapons since the liquid might leak out as they were being thrown and set the thrower's uniform on fire.

A separate unsigned typescript is much more interesting. It relates to the 4th Battalion which covered the area from Grantchester to Bassingbourn. "We were to block roads when the Boche landed. Anything would do. Old wagons, rollers, binders, anything. Stop the roads, trap him in defiles if you could find any, in one of the flattest countries in Europe! Get at the parachutists before they have time to form up, with a few old rifles and the village poachers' shot guns. Splendid, everyone was thrilled. It was a magnificent bluff, and it succeeded. No Boche could believe that we were so unprepared"

At first administration was relaxed. When three hundred and fifty rifles with 10 rounds for each were left at Melbourn police station there was not even a chit to show who'd received them. Another handful of rifles were dumped on the billiard table of the village inn, with ducklings waddling in through the door. But inevitably paperwork followed and this added to the problems: "In all, more than 65 articles of equipment now have to be listed, filed, docketed, signed for and put on returns, which may, or may not, bear some resemblance to the actual holdings".

No 'bumph' had been the original promise, which in the typical manner of the age was immediately broken. Add to this, Home Guard officers in the country had to attempt to put into force numerous instructions which seemed to have been drawn up by people who have never seen a village except from the window of a rapidly-moving car, the writer complained. These two sentences did not make it past the censor.

While the book rightly salutes the work of the men prepared to defend their village to the last bullet, there was another side to the story, according to these notes. By 1944 the Home Guard was no longer the happy body of volunteer adventurers it had been in the first hectic year. The spirit had been killed by an ill-devised and badly-administered system of conscription.

There was worse: "The Platoon Commanders, keen NCOs and men are driven wild by the non-attendance of shirkers who openly attend as few parades as possible and make the work of training an almost intolerable strain on their instructors. I saw Private So-and-So walking along the road one Tuesday evening. He did not turn up at the parade but sent a message by another man to say that he was tired"

The writer concludes: "The Battalion now consists of about one-third keen, willing, comparatively well-trained men and another third who train unwillingly".

But that left another third. They were "slackers, shirkers, money-grubbing, scrimshanking conscripts who would be better dead than wasting their time and breaking the hearts of the loyal old volunteers who try to train them."

Somehow these words failed to make it into the official history!

Pictures

We Also Served – the official history of the Cambridgeshire Home Guard

Some of the notes

Detail of the slackers complaint

A happy band of brothers? Stretham Home Guard

Somewhat more serious - Girton and Madingley Home Guard

CDN picture of the early Home Guard

5559 Home Guard marching

Some of the Home Guard equipment that had to be recorded piece by piece

Memories 17th December 2012 by Mike Petty

Christmas is a time when children look forward to future presents and older folk reflect sadly on a time when they had less to look back on. It's a time when many regret they had not recorded the memories of those who were once an essential part of their own Christmases

Members of Meldreth Local History Group have been spending many hours speaking to long-time villagers, recording their voices, dialects and reminiscences. Now they have issued a compilation on a double CD which paints a picture in sound of a way of life that had vanished, perhaps for the better.

Eric Walbey recalls his schooldays in the 1930's: "We used to take a packed lunch to school which was mostly bread and cheese, or meat perhaps after the weekend. I remember one day, it was bitter cold and my mother walked from over the hill in the pouring rain with a bag of baked potatoes from the oven, full of butter so that we had something hot that morning. We used to have a third of a pint of milk that was delivered to school and once we had Horlicks for quite a while for our mid-morning drink."

At Christmas the school arranged a party for the pupils when the teacher dressed up as Santa Claus with a sleigh and bag of presents. At home Eric always got a chocolate football with 'Meldreth' printed on it and a pack of handkerchiefs decorated with nursery rhymes. After Christmas any unsold toys were displayed in the spare bedroom of the Post Office and sold off at half price

Daphne Pepper remembers how Mrs Thurley who once lived in West Way had a little sweet shop in a field opposite her house. "It was like a little wooden shed with steps up to it and it was there for a long time. When you wanted anything you used to go and knock at her door and she used to come over and serve you. She had other things as well; I mean butter and things like that but they were in the house"

There were various pubs in Meldreth in the pre-war days. Sylvia Gipson was born in 1916 at the British Queen. "In those days life was quite hard, no electricity, no water; well I often wonder how we survived. There were four bedrooms for my parents and four children but there was no bathroom. We had coal fires and we had to sit huddled round them to keep warm. Of course you went upstairs to bed and everywhere was cold. You went to bed with a candle. There were oil lamps that had to be filled every day and outdoor toilets so there wasn't much comfort there. We were luckier than some because we had a pump outside" Other people had to travel some distance to fetch water and carry heavy buckets back home using a collar and yolk.

Sylvia continues: "My father made a cart because he was a carpenter and joiner, especially to go to Royston to pick up the beer sometimes with a horse and cart from Phillips Brewery. We had some characters who came into the pub. There was old Alf Jacklin who liked his drink and then there was a farmer from Whaddon, Jarman, he used to bike over here and before he used to leave he used to stand on his head". Bill Marsh used to punch the ceiling when he had had a lot to drink.

The family had their Christmas dinner, always a 30lb turkey. "Mother got up at 6am on Christmas morning to get the fire going and get the coal oven heated. It was cooked in a big baking tin made by Mr Ellison of Melbourn and was very heavy to lift out".

They also had a Christmas tree – or rather the branch from a yew tree which they decorated. It came from the gardener at the big house, Meldreth Court. Kath Huggins worked there in the 1940s: mostly cooking and serving table: “I washed up a pure gold tea set and Miss Mortlock would say ‘Kathy we’ve got friends coming for tea tonight’, and she’d come and give me the gold service. I thought ‘Oh my God if I drop that!’” The house had big shutters, we used to go outside and shut all the shutters on those big windows. But it was haunted: “I definitely felt a ghost, I do believe I did; I know I did. I went up the staircase one night because you had to go and turn the beds back and I got coming back up this passageway and there was a swish and I felt somebody go by me. People think you’re crazy but it’s true. I shot down that stair.”

‘A Century of Meldreth Memories’ makes fascinating listening, especially on the car stereo – you almost hope you hit a traffic jam so you can hear it all before you arrive at your destination.

And if you’d like to see what the village used to look like just log into Meldreth Local History Group – www.meldrethhistory.org.uk from which you can order a copy of the CD for £7.00. If you’re not into computers just ring 01763 268428

pictures

composite view 1977 showing British Queen bottom left

British Queen in High Street c1910

Meldreth Court c1910

School group including two of contributors, Reg Jarman, third from left on back row
Sylvia Gipson 2nd left front row

British Queen drinkers - Group of Locals standing outside the British Queen public House, High Street, Meldreth, Christmas 1942

School exterior c1910

Cover of CD

Memories 24th December 2012

Robert Dennis Farren was born in Willow Place off Fair Street Cambridge in 1832, the son of a publican. He went to school until he was twelve years old then got a job with a heraldic artist, grinding colours for the men doing the painting.

When the firm collapsed in 1854 Farren got a post at the University Museum of Geology, mounting and labelling specimens He impressed Professor Sedgwick who encouraged the youngster to improve his education. He was given the run of the Fitzwilliam Museum where he spent many hours copying the works of ‘Old Masters’ and covering considerable areas of paint with images of angels, nymphs and goddesses. But he also had to work in the dissection rooms drawing anatomical specimens

Farren became a successful portrait painter, including various Professors amongst his sitters. He included many members of the University in a painting of Degree Day Morning 1863 outside the Senate House. This was reproduced photographically by his brother William with

whom he went into business in Rose Crescent as photographers, print-makers & frame makers. The partnership ended in February 1870 though his pictures continued to be displayed in the shop until 1874 when twenty were destroyed in a fire that ravaged the premises. They included a view of the Isle of Arran that had been displayed at Dudley Art Gallery

Robert Farren travelled extensively around the Cambridge area to find picturesque rustic spots to depict. He made the acquaintance of Robert Bowes, a publisher who was planning a re-issue of 'Memorials of Cambridge' that had been originally illustrated by the engravings of John Le Keux. Farren was asked to produce some alternative pictures.

This led to a successful series of books of local scenes including 'The Granta and the Cam, from Byron's pool to Ely' published in 1880, 'Cambridge & neighbourhood', 'Cathedral Cities, Ely & Norwich' and a limited edition of 'The fenlands of Cambridgeshire' in 1883

Farren featured a number of the fenland engravings in a series of essays in 'The Etcher' throughout 1882, though this did not stop the magazine publishing an unflattering review of one of his other productions, 'A Round of Melodies' showing the affinity and harmony as represented by airs and songs. He also produced volumes of etchings depicting performances of plays by Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides as performed in Greek by members of the University.

By 1881 Robert Farren was living at Mayfield, a large house in Hills Road with wife Annie, four sons, nine daughters and his father, William. All seemed settled.

Then Farren decided to move from Cambridge, he sold off his goods and went to Scarborough in 1885 returning briefly a few months later to accept a cheque for 110 guineas from the hands of the Mayor as a departing gift from his local friends. Up in Yorkshire he continued to sketch the scenery and work as an artist, exhibiting at the Royal Academy and enjoying a reputation as an artist of high repute

But things did not go as planned. In 1891 he was dogged by ill health and was unable to sell sufficient paintings which forced him to sell his furniture in attempt to clear his debts. Despite this he was adjudged bankrupt in January 1894.

In 1896 he issued a book of engravings of the Cathedral Cities of York, Lincoln and Beverley which included some of his original drawings and an introduction which had been drafted some nine years earlier, shortly after he'd made the journey north.

By then however Farren had returned to Cambridge, living at the Great Northern Hotel, Station Road and teaching oil and water colour painting at his daughter's studio in St Andrew's Street.

In August 1912 Robert left Cambridge and went to live in Highgate where he died on 17th December. His body was brought back by train and taken directly to Chesterton where he was buried in the churchyard alongside his wife. The funeral service was a very quiet one with just three of his fourteen children among the mourners. The wreaths included two representing an artists' palette and pant brushes, one on a white background, the other blue

Robert Farren's illustrations remain some of the finest engravings of Victorian Cambridgeshire and are eagerly sought for in antiquarian bookshops, 100 years after his death.

Pictures

159.12 – Chesterton churchyard where Farren is buried

159.02 – Farren at work – a self portrait

7147 – Degree Day morning 1863 features the faces of dozens of academics

Choice from

103.14 - Ely Cathedral

103.16 - Ely Cathedral from the Gallery

103.28 – Ely Cathedral over a flooded landscape

124.97 - storm in the fens

168.75 - Barway drainage mill & Ely cathedra;

2503- Cambridge from Chesterton Road

9632 – St Peter's church Cambridge

Robert Farren, the well-known Cambridge artist, died at Highgate. Farren, who was born in Cambridge about 80 years ago, lived in Cambridge all his life with the exception of a few years' residence at Scarborough until August last when he went to live in Highgate. He was a very clever water colour artist but best known for his work in oils and his etchings. His fen pictures were well-known and his series of etchings of cathedral cities amongst his most famous work.

His 'Degree Day' was published as a photo by Wm Farren when he lived in Rose Crescent. Farren loved to paint Cambridge & Cambridgeshire scenery and there is scarcely a picturesque 'bit' in the town or county that has not been reproduced by him. At one time he had his studios at the top of which are now the University offices but were formerly a Liberal Club. A good many years ago he resided at Mayfield, Hills Road but during the last three years lived at no.1 Station Road.

In his younger days he was a very handsome figure, tall and well-built. He was a skilful fencer and attained some note as a geologist. He married Miss Mason, a Cambridge lady and had a family of 14 children, none of whom are now living in Cambridge, his only relatives being his nephew William Farren, the naturalist, of Regent Street and his brother. Two of his daughters have inherited their father's artistic skill in no small degree. The funeral will take place at Old Chesterton churchyard where his wife is buried. – 12 12 20bb

Robert Farren died in 1912.

I'm also interested in a painting Farren refers to in his short autobiographical memoir - of the Burial of Christ which he painted as a very young artist on the wall of King's Old Gateway... can you shed any light on this? is he referring to the Old Schools entrance here? But where exactly and why was it painted here?

Memories 31st December 2012 by Mike Petty

Christmas time in Cambridge Corn Exchange in 1934 was a pantomime. Merchants who spent their lives assessing the quality of the flour, wheat or artificial manure brought for sale

in the staid, solid building let down what hair they had in a riot. The signal for the commencement of the battle was the explosion of a cracker near the door. The 'firer' was then bombarded with samples of whatever substances were near at hand. Bags burst with marked (and marking) effect and very soon many of the dignified corn merchants were life-like imitations of snowmen. The 'battle' spilled out into Wheeler Street when those nearest the door were charged into the road, followed by missiles of all sorts. Dignity of every kind went to the wind and even the rather grim statue of Jonas Webb looked comical with the flour-bag headgear that one of the brighter sparks had placed on it. After about 30 minutes or so ammunition supplies ran out and the combat ceased with only the debris-covered 'battle-ground' bearing witness to the fight that had taken place.

In Ely any such activities came to an end in December 1962 when its Corn Exchange was used for the last time. It could trace its history back to 1845 after the recent arrival of the railway promised to bring increased prosperity for farmers. The Bishop was consulted about the possibility of pulling down an ugly cluster of houses that had grown up in the middle of the market place and erecting a building which would become the pride of the town and one of the best in the Kingdom.

A Cattle Market and Corn Exchange Company was set up, a tender for £1,500 from Simon Oates of Cambridge was accepted and work started. Initially there were problems as adverse winds delayed the docking at King's Lynn of the ship laden with stone for the building. But the Exchange was completed by February 1847 and merchants took every desk and stand.

Things did not go smoothly: the new merchants demanded a discount on prices, which led to a boycott by farmers. And with agriculture in a critical condition the new building was used for a public meeting with the erection of a platform for speakers and a gallery filled by 2,500 farmers. The Wesleyan Methodists also used it for a meeting that degenerated into great confusion and noise before it finished at the late hour of 11 o'clock. Similar public meetings continued in the following decades together with auction sales – at the first of which Mr Bidwell disposed of 175 tons of Peruvian guano. There were wrestling matches, balls and dances in the 1950s to bands led by Peter Ward, Wally Scott and Ross Norman.

Then in 1855 a Public Room was constructed alongside. Only on completion was it noted that the architect had forgotten to include any stairs to the gallery so another parcel of land had to be acquired to build a staircase.

With its stage and dressing rooms below it was used for pantomimes organised by Alice Ramsdale and concerts held by the Police to raise money for their benevolent fund. The highlight of the season in Edwardian time was the Militia Ball when it was decorated with flags and bunting. There were men in regimental dress and a galaxy of beautiful ladies in long evening gowns, each carrying their dance engagement card suspended from the wrist by a white cord. During the supper interval dancers would retire to the restful atmosphere of a drawing room laid out with small tables and easy chairs in the Corn Exchange alongside.

In 1910 Ely's Public Room was enlarged and fitted with a maple floor for roller skating which proved popular; learners paid threepence admission and threepence more to hire the skates. During the Great War it housed productions of Gilbert and Sullivan by the Ely Trinity Amateur Operatic Society and afterwards served as a cinema – the City Picture House, initially showing silent films. For a while it returned to general social purposes but re-opened as the Exchange Cinema in 1938 and continued until May 1963

Meanwhile things were changing in Ely's Corn Exchange itself. Before the war some 300 people from the Eastern Counties and London had congregated every Thursday and Broad Street was packed with people coming off the trains to the markets. But in December 1962 only a handful of farmers, merchants and representatives of seed, feeding stuffs, fertilisers

and oil companies turned up for the building's last two hours' use as an indoor market before sales transferred across the road to the Club Hotel.

The Corn Exchange and Public Room were put on the market with an asking price of £20,000 and in October 1962 a London development company, Suburban and Counties Properties of London submitted proposals for a development of modern shopping units that would transform the city centre, standing proudly alongside a new Post Office and a big new Tesco supermarket on the corner of Brays Lane.

Both of those are now just memories but if you remember Ely's Corn Exchange and Public Rooms then write to Mike Petty at the News

Pictures

60.283 Ely Corn Exchange Dec 1962

356 – 357 – view before and after redevelopment of Ely Corn Exchange

346 The Public Room 1963

Whist drive in Ely Corn Exchange 1914

8561 Corn Merchants at Cambridge 1950s

327 Public Room c1900

7926 Painting 1845 before the Corn Exchange or Public Room

340 Ely Market showing Corn Exchange and Public Room 1930s

249 photo same area 1920s

Memories 2013 January to December 23

Memories 7th January 2013 by Mike Petty

Fifty years ago a News reporter, Erica Dimock went 'Down Your Street' down St Andrew's Road in Chesterton, then headquarters of one of the greatest names in the electronics industry, Pye of Cambridge

One of those she chatted to was James Brignell who remembered the area long before any factories, or indeed houses. In his childhood he'd wandered from Chesterton church picking his way between bushes, gathering buttercups from the fields and stopping to watch the donkey tethered there. In those days it was known as Lovers Walk.

But in the 1890s Chesterton was changing with the development of a large new De Freville Estate bounded on the east by Cam Road. From this Moses Gawthorp constructed a roadway and houses were built along part of Lovers Walk. The quiet seclusion had gone and in 1904 this part of the Walk was renamed 'St Andrew's Road'. After coming out of the Air Force in 1921, James Brignell used some of the adjacent land as a gravel pit, then started a building business on the site.

John Hodgkinson was another man who knew the area well. He was a Director of Banham's the Cambridge boat builders. The firm had been started in 1906 by Mr. H. C. Banham, whose

father owned a shoe shop in Regent Street. For some time Banham had worked in the shop by day and on the boats by night, but eventually he'd decided to concentrate his attention on the boats. He acquired an osier bed to which people would come to collect the raw material needed for basket making, cleared it and started his one-man business, making small rowing and sailing boats. A year or so later he obtained a steamboat and barge on which he took passengers for special river trips. He also built up a fleet of motor cruisers which proved popular with holidaymakers. But the firm's principal skill lay in the construction of rowing eights, including the Cambridge boat used for the annual inter-Varsity boat race. By 1963 they were making 30-40 cedarwood rowing eights a year, most of the work done by hand with a five years' apprenticeship needed to become a proficient boat builder.

Nearby was the Cambridge depot of the India Tyre and Rubber Company which had opened in 1953 receiving tyres made at the company's factory in Scotland which it supplied to distributors. The depot in St. Andrew's Road was stacked high with over a thousand tyres of all sizes, ranging from large tractor tyres to those intended for small wheelbarrows.

But the biggest company was Pye of Cambridge. Its story went back to 1896 when Mr. W. G. Pye, a workshop superintendent at the Cavendish Laboratory, started in business as an instrument maker. New premises were acquired at Mill Lane and in 1913 they moved to St Andrew's Road. The First World War brought a considerable demand for Pye's instruments but when that market collapsed the firm started to make radio sets and even televisions. With another conflict the firm turned to war work with large numbers of girls producing equipment for aeroplanes one week, jeeps or tanks the next. Then it was back to more peaceful pursuits and as television spread so Pye's Outside Broadcast Units – as supplied to the BBC - were exported across the globe. Transistors, space, radio telephones and electronic telephone exchanges were further fields of Pye's activity

St Andrew's Road became the hub of the worldwide Pye Group though in 1963 residents complained that the residential character of the area had been lost and former open views to orchards, field or the river had been blocked as the firm expanded. More change was to follow when a new Elizabeth Way ploughed down the tree-lined Cam Road and a new Elizabeth Bridge opened in July 1971 alongside Banham's boatyard

It was just 25 years ago in January 1988 that the Pye name disappeared from the Cambridge scene. The firm it had become part of the Dutch-based Philips group in 1967 but in the years that followed, with competition from Japanese manufacturers, various parts of the former empire had been closed or amalgamated. When Pye Unicam became Philips Scientific a reminder of Cambridge's industrial heritage disappeared.

Now St Andrew's Road is once more undergoing a radical transformation with new homes being constructed where wirelesses were manufactured and donkeys once grazed.

But if you have memories of the area, the do share them – write to Mike Petty at the News.

Photos

158.17 Aerial view of Chesterton Church and Pye factories, showing St Andrew's Road, formerly known as Lovers Walk c1970

111.10 Chesterton church looking to Cambridge across open fields, 1838

1898 map showing Lovers Walk

St Andrews Road 1930s

Cam Road 1920s, now Elizabeth Way

Cam Road 1965

One of Banham's rowing eights 1955

Banham's boatyard showing work on Elizabeth Bridge

Feedback

From: Tony Cowley [mailto:tonycowley@btinternet.com]

Sent: 05 February 2013 19:47

To: Newsdesk

Subject: Kiss farewell to Lovers Walk and bye, bye, Pye CN Monday 7th January, 2013

Hi Mike,

Just been given a copy of the above. Belatedly I would like to add my memories of the date given to the aerial photograph showing Pye Teleom, Site One, as it became known.

A close examination of the top centre of picture reveals there are:

(1) there doesn't appear to be much sign of occupation either by production or office workers or office staff.

(2) the rear of the large flat roof production area, (that we were told at the time was the one of the largest to be built in the UK and possibly Europe), was to become the goods entrance usually was a hive of activity with staff cars and delivery vehicles - yet free of construction workers.

(3) the side of this large white building at a point above and to the left of where the long tubular like connecting bridge spanning this building and the long 'Wavey Line' office block, stretching at 45 degrees from left to right a quarter of the way up the right hand side of the photograph, parallel to St Andrews Road, can be seen the name Pye Telecommunications Ltd.

(4) to the left of this point and round the corner of this block, there appears to be some form of construction staging going on - indicating final work or maintenance.

(5) the carpark used by catering staff and office workers behind the 'Wavey Line' building is also empty apart from a single coach like vehicle.

(6) a windowless, cube shaped, Squash Court, was to be built later c1980 alongside and to the left of the brand new 'Pye Sports & Social Club' (seen here sticking out onto the Pye Sports field, that replaced the old wooden hut, also looks free of human activity).

I started work in the Mobile Radio Development Lab', Pye Telcom, Newmarket Road at the junction with Ditton Lane in 1966 but we all moved to Site One, St Andrews Road in May, 1978. It was a very well planned move with all the Pye Telecom labs contributing to the design of the brand new work benches, chair heights and general layouts etc of the new Engineering Block. Characterised by the black bands of windows, providing the wrap-around front and side of the production area - seen the photograph, top right of centre. First to move

to our new home were all the production workers from their 1930 style wooden floor areas recently demolished and now the carpark, all neatly marked out ready for the development staff cars to occupy, shown centre bottom of the picture.

By the above observations and memories I judge the year to be early 1978. Perhaps all of this can be added to, or corrected, by other personal memories of others?

Many thanks for allowing me to see the photograph. I'm sure it must have stirred many memories and I hope you got a good response.

My best wishes to yourself and Pat,

Tony

Memories 14th January 2013 by Mike Petty

Can it really be 25 years ago that Cambridge's Victoria Cinema passed into history

Its story started in the Victoria Assembly Rooms off Market Hill, a building used for a variety of meetings and gatherings. In 1911 it was converted into a cinema called the Electric Theatre holding 280 people.

A specially-constructed fire-proof lantern chamber was installed projecting non-inflammable films. However these were difficult to obtain so in August 1911 Mr Jordan, the manager, sought a licence to show flammable film instead. The room could be cleared in less than two minutes and a skilled fireman was always on duty, he told magistrates. There were continuous performances with people coming and going all the time and never more than 100 by the end of the evening. But there was no back door and the exit to Market Hill was rather narrow, police pointed out. So the licence was refused and they carried on as before. In 1915 it was refurbished and reopened as the Victoria Cinema continuing until 1929 when it gave its final performance.

Two years later in 1931 a new Victoria Cinema opened further along the east side of Market Hill. This was much larger with 1,500 seats, 500 of which were in the balcony. The building was an attraction in itself with a large bar and lounge, a restaurant and dance hall to entertain patrons.

The auditorium could be illuminated by a gorgeous flow of rich colours that rose like waves to reach a climax in the rich proscenium curtain of crimson and gold. And, as a highlight of the evening there was a modern theatre organ capable of producing every possible noise necessary for the accompaniment of a film, from telephone bell to tram car, bird, boats, motors and surf. It was played from a beautifully decorated console which rose on an electric lift into the centre of the orchestra pit.

Bert Hewett was amongst the 1,500 people who crowded in for the opening. Bert worked for Baily Grundy and Barrett, the electrical engineers in St Mary's Passage who'd carried out the complete electrical installation work at the Victoria Cinema and was there with Dick Matthews just in case anything went wrong.

In 1952 the cinema was restyled in a 'eurythmic' design – "designer, architect and illuminators combining to make a symphony of shape, colour and tone". That November 1952 they tried something new – a three-dimensional film. The late Albert Waldock who worked as a projectionists from 1941-1988 remembered it. "The Victoria was the first in Cambridge to show the true 3D – not the red and green type. The projectors had polarising filters in front of

the lens to separate the images, one for the right-hand reel and one for the left – one horizontal and one vertical. The patrons were issued with glasses to separate the images”. Other innovations followed: new 70 mm film equipment was installed in 1967, a second screen came in 1972 when the Victoria was renamed ABC1 & 2.

But an era ended in May 1982 as the lights went up for the last time on the ABC Minors Matinee. The final credits brought to an end an institution which had won a place in the hearts of thousands of children. No more would Keith Kendall and his part-time cleaner colleagues sneak into the lavatories to catch some 12-year-olds having a crafty cigarette. Sid Perkiss, who had manned the box office, remembered when two or three hundred children packed the cinema. Now it had been killed by television.

Film fans were assured that the Victoria would not follow the example of the Central and be turned into a Bingo hall. Instead EMI were planning to add a third screen to it. It was after all the largest cinema in Cambridge attracting an average audience of about 600 people paying £2.10 for their seats

In December 1983 fire broke out causing damage estimated at £50,000 but by February 1984 both screens were back in service. It was hailed as one of the best-equipped cinemas in the country with new equipment, new seats and much-improved lavatories. It had six-track stereo, a new screen and a new 70mm projector which was seen at full benefit in films like ‘Ghandi’ and ‘The Star Wars’ trilogy that was brought back by popular demand.

Then came the news that the cinema was to close and the site had been sold for new Marks & Spencer store. In January 1988 the lights went up for the last time as the final performance of its last show came to an end. As the audience left after seeing ‘Spaceballs’ or ‘Predator’, staff reflected on the cinema’s long history recalling when ‘South Pacific’ had ran for two solid years and ‘The Sound of Music’ for three in what many still remember as the Victoria Cinema.

Does the Victoria have special memories for you. Write to Mike Petty at the News

Pictures

Market 1 – view across Market Hill showing the Victoria Cinema in its original site

Market 2 – similar view 1993 – Marks and Spencer occupies the site of the rebuild Victoria

Victoria opening 1931 article in CDN

Victoria closing – from News 15 Jan 1988

Exteriors – choice of

1947

c1950

1964

Horror – crowds leave cinema in November 1972 after an all-night showing of horror films

Memories 21st January 2013 by Mike Petty

“Land of Hope and Glory”, so familiar from its performances at the Proms was penned by A.C. Benson, son of an Archbishop of Canterbury and Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge. He was also a keen diarist whose volumes are carefully preserved alongside those of Samuel Pepys in the college library where they are accessible to scholars.

But who would want to make the trip into Cambridge read the private jottings of a one-time master of Eton whose prolific volumes of poems and essays are downloadable freely from internet sites.

Step forward David Jones, former history teacher at the Perse School for over thirty years. He'd read various published extracts from Benson's four-million-page diaries and realised that the two of them shared a common passion – cycling. Now he has published an account of Benson's bike rides in Cambridgeshire between 1904 and 1925. It is an utterly charming and captivating account of the county with numerous brief pen pictures of villages and people, not all of them flattering.

Haverhill “a vile place of red-brick houses clustering round a cloth manufactory. I daresay a useful and industrious place, but not a place to visit ... had tea at a confectioner's shop”

Rampton ... “an out-of-the-way village with a quaint ancient church ... an old lady played evil tunes on an excruciating organ”

Bourn ... “stood long to see a poor mare who had fallen in the road with a huge cart of gravel upon her being rescued. It was strange to see how utterly patient and submissive she was. The collar nearly strangling her ...”

Cherry Hinton ... “came back by an abandoned road by the huge cement works with their chimneys belching smoke, their powdered roofs, their odd retorts and towers; the lights beginning to be lighted within and the giant shapes of moving beams and rods to move shadowly before the windows”

Coveney ... “I stumbled upon a spectacled, red-noses, dyspeptic-looking parson and really I think the worst-dressed man I ever saw – an old ragged coat, brown and green ... and trousers patched and creased and torn, burnt nearly yellow in places. But he had a friendly dignified and agreeable manner – very much of a gentleman”.

At Quy “I met a funeral. The slow procession of clumsy rustics, in greasy black, the self consciousness, the ugly dreary coffin, the whole hideous pomp affected me strangely

Fen Drayton ... incredibly out-of-the-way, remote. There are three or four very pretty old houses – but all hopelessly desolate. There were artists sketching in the little main street

Roads were often in poor condition and punctures were frequent. At Toft ... my bike punctured, but I found a blacksmith's shop and a nice young man mended it. I should have been quite content to sit there. I like a smithy, the darkness of the roof, the odd things hanging from the walls ... the smouldering fire and the way in which it puffs and snorts when they pull the bellows. Another puncture occurred near Fleam dyke ... “a gig approached, with a man who looked like a doctor, or a very respectable farmer, yellow, wrinkled, whiskered; driven by a cheerful boy. What was my astonishment when on passing he shouted out loud, abusive and derisive remarks at me ... I was furious, but being punctured could not ride in pursuit, as I would have done”.

Nor were there many bridges as he found at Dimock's Cote, a solitary farm on the Cam between Wicken & Stretham: “we shouted loudly and presently wild men appeared to whom we made signs that we wanted to get across. They sent out a man in a black boat, but the wind was too strong and he was driven back. He then, carrying a line and rowing with a spade, struggled over and they pulled us across”

Railway gates were usually closed in the days before motor cars were common: at Foxton ... “had altercation with a signalman who would not open gates - and watched with pleasure a great heap of weeds on a lonely fallow pouting rich smoke on the sunset air – exquisitely beautiful. Tried to light my lamp but failed and lost a glove as well. Very angry. Just escaped the police”

Benson often took the train for part of his journey and it was the presence of a railway across Grunty Fen, making it easier to get to and from College, that prompted him to rent Hinton Hall at Haddenham in 1906. It also allowed the making of long journeys, often with his Wilburton neighbour, Albert Pell:

“After breakfast we looked at maps and made up our minds for Brandon. We started at once, as soon as we could get sandwiches – but the wind was against us and we had a nightmare ride to Ely. We tore along, the wind relentlessly keeping us back; and at last I gave up hope – but when breathless, streaming, sick and palpitating we drew up at Ely, I found our clocks were fast and the train was not even due”. Brandon was a pleasant, sleepy sort of town. He visited a gun-flint manufactory – “quite a poor little place, a back garden of a cottage in a row; we still supply flints by the thousand to African natives. The whole thing done by a man ... he made me a little stone axe ... But oh, how he talked ... I longed to get away but he came to the door, not to let us slip out ... Then we got off ... he came running after us down the road ... it was terrible”

Benson found the rides a wonderful way of unwinding from the pressures of academia. He continued them through the dark days of the Great War, when at Eversden he met a man who toiled in a munitions factory for twelve hours a day. They were therapeutic when he suffered depressions, but eventually declining health and old age took their toll.

On 13th October 1924 Benson took what was to be his last bike ride: “I rode – a hot, autumn day, very beautiful, by Harlton and Haslingfield. The gossamers streaming from the telegraph wires a beautiful sight”

All this and much more he recorded in his diary, adding “I should like to think that in the days to come, when I am gone, someone should care to retrace my rambles”. He would be delighted that David Jones has done just that.

A Passion for Quiet Country: cycle rides in Cambridgeshire 1904-1925 from the diaries of A.C. Benson, is published by David Jones – ISBN 978-0-9570386-1-5 at £16.95

Pictures

A cyclist

Haddenham station

Haverhill

A fen funeral

Puncture mending

Choice of views of

Cherry Hinton

Coveney

Fen Drayton

Rampton

Memories 28th January 2013 by Mike Petty

Cambridgeshire Family History Society helps people trace their ancestral roots. At their regular Saturday meetings at Girton enthusiasts come together to learn new hints and share their discoveries.

Recently one of their members chanced upon two old family photograph albums. One is small, old and tattered, the other was once rather grander with gold-edged pages, a brass clasp and an ornate cover containing the initials J.H.F.

Neither is worth a fortune but they will be priceless to somebody.

For they contain about thirty Victorian photographic portraits; there are old men and old women, ladies in their prime and young children. But who were they?

Most of the pictures are small Cartes-de-visite with decorative backs advertising the names and addresses of the photographers who took them. They come from Oxford, Norwich, Salisbury, Hingham, East Dereham, Keithley, Aylesham and London amongst other places. One of the earliest shows an elderly couple, the image now fading away. It was printed on a Carte with the decorative back proclaiming the name 'S.Goodair, Photographer, Hopton'. But it has been over-stamped 'J.W. Garbutt, Leopold Street, Leeds'

There are however a few taken locally. One was by R.H. Lord who had studios at the junction of Market Place and Market Street, Cambridge between about 1882 and 1900. Lord's work achieved international acclaim, winning medals in Vienna in 1888. Much is known about him, but who was his sitter? Another was by H. Faulkner White who had studios at 47 St Andrew's Street, Cambridge in 1883-84.

Four of the smaller pictures have stamps on the back showing they were taken by John Titterton of Ely. He had studios on the corner opposite the Lamb Hotel where he combined technical skill with an artist's eye. Titterton chose some unusual angles from which to record familiar scenes and a picture taken from the top of the chimney of the Quay brewery in 1879 was hailed as "the best photograph ever taken of the Cathedral exterior". One has a date, 1869, but there are no names.

There is however one clue to the mystery.

A picture of a grand old lady was taken at the Ayers photographic studio, 3 Clarence Place, Regent Street, Great Yarmouth. It has writing on the back. which reads "Mrs John Mayle. Died Jan 20, 1875, aged 67. The mother of the late Mrs John Freeman"

Research suggests that she was born Mary Preston and in 1825 had married John Mayle a publican, cattle dealer and farmer of Newnham Street, Ely. They had at least 11 children. One married a druggist from Watton, another a commercial traveller from Wandsworth – and there are pictures from these places.

The first of Mary's daughter, also named Mary, married into the ironmonger family of Peck's of Ely while a son, John, wed Elizabeth Wallis from Witchford. Her father was a horse dealer, and they reared seven children.

The second daughter, Elizabeth, married John Freeman in 1863. They had a son who died in infancy and two girls, Mary and Jane – doubtless the children in the 1869 Titterton picture.

John was a prominent builder, responsible for a number of important projects including Ely Methodist church, a schoolroom and chapel on the Mildenhall Road in Burnt Fen and the restoration of Wentworth Church. In August 1870 disaster struck. He went to inspect work being carried out on the railway bridge over the Old West River near Little Thetford but

stumbled and train ran over his foot, crushing it. He survived, walking with the help of crutches but died later that year.

This connection with the Freeman family may account for the initials J.H.F. on the cover of the larger album

This legacy needs to return to its original family. If you have the surname of Mayle from Stuntney, Freeman or Peck from Ely in your family tree it may be of interest to you. If so please contact Mike Petty

Pictures

Album front with the initials

A page from the album

Some of the pictures

John Freeman – was this the builder who died in 1870

Carte de Visite by R.H. Lord – but who is the sitter

Mary Mayle, - her picture has the clue
Inscription on back

Mary and Jane Freeman 1869

Memories 4th February 2013 by Mike Petty

Kingfishers are plentiful, marsh harriers and herons common in the fens and nightingales very abundant everywhere.

Not early results from the recent RSPB bird survey but extracts from a remarkable journal compiled at Swaffham Bulbeck nearly 200 years ago by its vicar, Leonard Jenyns.

Leonard was son of the master of Bottisham Hall and passionately fond of birds, botany and natural history. Whilst a pupil at Eton he'd borrowed a friend's copy of Gilbert White's 'Natural History of Selborne' and copied out large sections.

Then when at St John's College, Cambridge he'd made friends with John Stevens Henslow who later married his sister and became University Professor of Botany. He also palled up with a younger student, Charles Darwin, and together they explored the fens around Bottisham, collecting specimens of plants and beetles.

When aged 23 Jenyns was ordained curate at Swaffham Bulbeck. That vicar spent all his time running a school near Wisbech so Leonard was left to his own devices. After five years he was appointed to the vicarage. There was not much money attached to the position but it was near his family home at Bottisham so it suited him well.

Swaffham Bulbeck church attracted quite a good congregation on Sundays but scarcely any of them showed the proper reverence during services. The main problem was a group of young men and boys who sat together on the short benches under the north wall. So Jenyns decided that immediately he noticed any laughing or talking he would come to a dead stop whether reading prayers or preaching, and stare at the offenders. The rest of the congregation followed suit and the youngsters quietened down without a word being spoken. However on one

occasion the congregation took no notice so Jenyns simply walked out, leaving the bride and groom at the altar.

The vicar himself became something of a joke amongst his parishioners. When the fenland fogs formed on the large grass meadow in front of the vicarage he would be seen outside sitting at a small table jotting down notes until it lifted – sometimes all night. He recorded month by month the arrival of swallows, the singing of the greenfinch and the migration of winged ants as well as the ripening of his snowberries, peaches and Jargonelle pears

He noted badgers, natterjack toads, otters and the fish caught in the streams. One day he spotted a cow. They were common sight in the village but this one was different. It was dead and suspended from its heels against the west tower of the church where it was being cut up. Jenyns intervened and banished the butcher from the churchyard.

One day he was offered the chance to see the world as naturalist on a boat called the Beagle. He was not the first choice: his brother-in-law Professor Henslow had already turned it down. After a day's agonising, Jenyns did likewise and so his friend Charles Darwin got the trip.

Jenyns was content in his fenland parish and quite thought he'd spend the rest of his days there. But his wife became ill and they had to move away from the damp fenland to the Isle of Wight where the climate was more conducive to her recovery. Later they relocated to a parish in Somerset where she died. Jenyns' grief was compounded when Professor Henslow followed her to the grave within the year.

He remarried and moved into a small house in Bath. But as there was little space for all his books and herbarium he donated them to town's Royal Literary and Scientific Institution who built a room to house the Jenyns Library. He continued to publish extensively and his expertise was recognised by learned societies, several of which he'd founded

In 1871 Jenyns received another invitation when his cousin offered him an estate in Norfolk and a fortune in shares, but only if he'd change his surname to that Blomefield. This time he accepted the offer.

Leonard Blomefield died at Bath in 1893, leaving piles of paper, specimens and cuttings. Amongst them was a manuscript detailing his observations in Cambridgeshire. It was full of notes and newspaper cuttings on the mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, molluscs and fishes.

They record how moles were common (including white varieties), badgers were very uncommon, otters – formerly abundant – were still occasionally found at Trumpington, red squirrels were not unusual but Cambridgeshire's unique variety of long-woolled sheep had disappeared. Porpoises had been observed near Earith and a sturgeon caught at Ely.

Bustards had become very rare, though a gentleman had seen one near Swaffham Prior – if he'd had his gun with him he could have bagged it for Jenyns' collection. As it was there was a newly-stuffed one on display in January 1831 at Mr Denny's taxidermy shop in Downing Terrace, Cambridge. This was quite near the present University Museum of Zoology one of whose senior curators, Richard Preece has now edited Jenyns' remarkable record for publication.

"Fauna Cantabrigiensis ... by the Rev Leonard Jenyns (1800-1893)" is edited by Richard C. Preece and Tim Sparks and published by The Ray Society at £65 ISBN 978-0-903874-44-1

Pictures

Swaffham Bulbeck church c1915
Bird catchers in the fens
Fenland birds and plants c1880
Moles were common
Sturgeon 1907 – one was caught at Ely
A Bustard – very rare, though one was stuffed in 1831
Sheep – the long-wooled Cambridgeshire variety had disappeared

Memories 11th February 2013 by Mike Petty

When Jim Swainland was having a clear-out recently he discovered a map he thought might be of interest to me. “Harding’s Guide Map to Cambridge” is a bit out of date - there’s no M11, no northern bypass, not even a Twentypence Road from Wilburton to Cottenham. But at least the A10 north from Cambridge is still shown much as it is today – and despite all plans for new towns, this seems unlikely to change any time soon.

Nor is there a decorative picture to make it worth displaying. There is a calendar covering the period from February 1924 to January 1926 but in none of those years do the dates match those of 2013

What makes it fascinating is the decoration around the edge. It comprises a series of delightful colour advertisements for local tradesmen, many of which have faded from memory.

This was a period when motoring was all the rage and you could hire a car or motor cycle taxi from Rudd’s garage on Histon Road. Although there are no advertisements from firms offering to sell you a car, there are some for firms that would patch them up.

Queen’s Garage of Newnham Terrace, sole agents for National Benzol petrol, were motor engineers and haulage contractor who undertook repairs and overhauls and were open day and night. Bryant & Howlett of Abbey Walk repaired and painted motor van bodies and built lorries to order using the best seasoned materials.

The building trades are well represented. Craft and Company, decorators and painting contractors from Mawson Road, Cambridge, undertook paperhanging, distempering and glazing

If you needed a sanitary engineer, then there was a choice. C. Tolliday & Son, hot water engineers of Barton Road, would fit cisterns and water tanks, repair hot water and steam pipes and also sharpen lawn mowers while Clark’s Abbey Building Works on Godeston Way were able to tack any job, large or small.

A.W. Morlin of 148 Hills Road were one of the oldest ironmongers and builders’ merchants in the area, having started in 1909. They specialised in fireplaces but also had a large stock of baths, sinks and lavatory basins at reasonable prices. They’d opened a large warehouse in 1920 but it was soon too small and another wing was added in 1933.

Waller’s of Fitzroy Street supplied suits and suiting of lovely quality and colourings in fancy Worsteds, Tweed and Serges; they’d fit you, please you and save you money too. And when clothes needed cleaning there was the Swiss Laundry. When they had set up in 1903 they were the largest in Cambridge and one of the most improved laundries of the day using only

the best pale soap and boiling water. They also mended all holes in tablecloths and other linen free of cost. The firm took pride in their service: their building had a glass roof so that the smallest grain of dust could be detected and their workers were supplied with white clothes to ensure the clean linen was in no way soiled by coming into contact with material of a different colour. But in 1910 local residents complained that smoke from the laundry chimney deposited smuts on the washing they'd hung to dry in their gardens, making it so dirty that it had to be taken in and washed again. One lady complained she'd washed a tablecloth three times and each time it had come in dirty. In the end she'd sent it to the laundry.

For relaxation at the end of a hard week, you could hire a pleasure boat, punt or canoe from any of S. Dolby's boat houses at Garret Hostel Lane, Robinson Crusoe Island or the head office at the Anchor Boat House in Silver Street where there were two large billiard tables that could be hired at reasonable terms.

J.J. Butterfield of 107 King Street sold wirelesses. They had receiving sets, amplifiers, audio filters, loud speakers and even telephones. But if you preferred to make your own music then W.J. Moore at 52 Bridge Street sold pianofortes or organs. The firm made news in September 1927 when three pianos were badly damaged after an oil stove they kept in their warehouse to prevent the instruments from becoming damp caught light.

The most unusual advertisements is for the Borwood Tool Company whose Ditton Works supplied wood-boring and circular moulding bits for hand or machine use. Do you know anything about this particular firm?

And at the end of the day, H.S. Mansfield, monumental mason and carver would supply memorials in marble, granite or stone from the works on Rock Road, guaranteeing the best possible workmanship at the lowest possible prices.

If any of these ring a bell with you, let me know.

Pictures

Coven of the map and selection of advertisements

Readers' comments

On 19 February 2013 08:22, Beverley Svensson <beverleysvensson@virginmedia.com> wrote:

Dear Mike

Regarding the poster W J Moore – My father brought me a piano from that shop in 1945. It was a reconditioned one as no new pianos were being made because of the war.

It cost £60, and my father had saved his pocket money for a long time, I do remember him counting the £1 notes in the shop.

Mr W J Moores nephew Arthur was courting Doris Doggett who lived next door to us at Trinity Cottages in Madingley and on their wedding day in Madingley Church I was their Bridesmaid, I wore a pink taffeta dress and carried a posy of blue Scabious.

Arthur who was a piano tuner for his uncle I think, tuned my piano until he died. When the W J Moore shop closed Arthur worked for Millers.

From

Joyce Svensson nee Johnson
Fulbourn
Cambridge

Memories 18th February 2013, by Mike Petty

The current controversy about horsemeat in beef burgers has caused consternation around Europe. One reason for the substitution seems to be is that beef is so much more expensive than horse.

But such issues are not new

Writing in 1894 John Cordy Jeaffreson lamented the difficulty of buying any beef of good flavour in London: the beef that was displayed in the butchers' shops at Christmas-time was magnificent to the eye and tender to the tooth, but it was the flesh of young oxen.

Horse was one possible alternative but no cook could make the flesh of an old and worked-out horse into meat fit for human beings. The flesh of a young horse was a poor meat; the flesh of an old and worn out horse so bad a meat that men had to be goaded by famine before they cared to consume the hard and coarse viand, he noted.

Then one of his friends invited him to dine on something better: donkey. Jeaffreson accepted with reservations:

“I went to my friend's house without a keen appetite for the meat, although I was assured that the donkey had been, to the last, a young and healthy animal, and had been fed on bread-and-milk for the experimental table.

“Indeed, I went to the feast with a strong repugnance to the notion of eating donkey, and with a resolve to dine on the more familiar and common viands which would doubtless be offered to me. As I intended to avoid the donkey, I partook heartily of the soup, the fish, the entrees. After going thus far in the menu, I remarked to my host, ‘So far the dinner has been more than good. When will donkey be offered to us?’

“‘With the exception of the fish,’ he replied, ‘everything of which you have partaken was a preparation of donkey. The clear soup and the thick soup were made of donkey. The entrees were donkey. And now comes the piece de resistance — loin of donkey.’ As I had committed myself so largely to all the hygienic risks and consequences of eating the unfamiliar meat, I conceived I should not make matters much worse for my health by partaking of the loin of donkey, which proved alike tender and tasteful. Delicate in texture as well-kept five-year-old mutton, it had the flavour of roast loin of pork”

But this was well-known in Cambridge.

For in 1869 A.A. Vansittard, a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, bought himself a healthy young donkey. He fattened it on oil-cake and when it was nice and juicy had it killed by a butcher. The idea of eating it was endorsed by another Fellow of Sidney, whose gastronomical tastes were notorious, and under his direction every part of the animal was utilised. Joints were also given to Trinity College and to one or two private friends. The considered opinion of one diner was that the meat was delicious, rather like swan. But the

stench of fat in the kitchen was so disgusting that the man who usually collected the dripping refused to do so that week and it had to be buried some distance away

A handbill, preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection, records the event:

Great Donkey Feed

O have you heard of the dainty feed,
(It is really true indeed,)
By some gourmonds it was agreed
To try a fatted donkey.

All who tasted did thus declare
No venison, French dish or hare,
Could by any means compare,
With a roasted donkey.

They found the meat so very fine,
They vow'd they never more would dine,
Ether off mutton, beef or swine,
But a good fatted donkey

Some chose the head and some the tail,
And it is said they did not fail,
To wash down with the college ale –
The nicely fatted donkey

Others preferred the loin and rump,
So nicely dressed, and so plump,
On which Neddy had many a thump,
Before he was a fatted donkey.

Some chose the liver, and some the heart,
Such delight it did impart,
And the brains made into a tart
Of a nicely fatted donkey

Some thought delicious was the tripe,
So nicely dress'd, sweet and ripe,
More delicate than grouse or snipe,
Was a good fatted donkey

The feet and ears made into soup,
With a fowl who had got the roup,
Delighted the epicurean troup,
Who fed on the fatted donkey

Even the skin made into a stew,
Was a dainty dish known to a few,
Which all gourmonds will now find true,
Of a roast and fatted donkey.

It adds intelligence to the brain
And cures disease too, some maintain,

He who Senior-wrangership would gain,
Must eat some fatted donkey.

The 'Varsity Crew, 'tis by all agreed,
Upon the Thames would take the lead,
If they were all made to feed -
On a good fat donkey.

In Athletic Sports they're now so fleet,
By being fed off Donkey meat,
They can perform almost any feat, -
E'en up goes the donkey.

Soon the fashion will combine,
Instead of mutton, beef or swine,
Off Baalam's breed all will dine -
On a goodly fatted donkey.

In the future it may be seen
If the members are very *green*,
And the partakers *ass*-inine -
Who enjoy'd the roasted donkey.

USE THIS VERSE LAST – PERHAPS CROP SOME OF THE EARLIER VERSES IF
NECESSARY

Knifefum, forkum, feedem fum,
He haw! He haw! He haw hum,
How do you like your donkey done,
The wonderful donkey feeding!

John Cordy Jeaffreson' "A book of recollections, vol.2" was published in 1894 and can be read on the Google Books website.

Pictures
Trinity college kitchen 1814 – skilled chefs prepare fine meals
Dining in college – Trinity college dining hall – but what's on the menu
Sidney Sussex College – choice of two showing horses

Meat displayed outside Haslop's shop, Silver Street 1892
Butcher on Cambridge market 1938

Memories 25 March 2013 by Mike Petty

The other evening I gave a talk in the WI Hall at Wickhambrook, an old wooden structure that has been a focal point of community life since it was erected in the 1920s. But it was not new then. It was a throwback to the Great War that may even have sheltered wounded soldiers just across the Backs at Cambridge.

Philomena Guillebaud has lived much of her life off Grange Road. However it was not until she was researching the history of the area that she noticed a series of buildings marked on the Ordnance Survey map for 1927. She asked various people what it was but it was some time before she met somebody who could tell her. It was a massive military hospital. How did it

get there, what was its role and what happened to it? Now, after months of research, she can reveal its story.

It was through the efforts of Florence Nightingale that people became aware of the sufferings of wounded soldiers in the Crimean war. A Royal Army Medical Corps had been established just in time for the Boer War when once more the treatment of wounded hit the headlines. In 1908 the War Office made plans for some 23 Territorial Forces general hospitals to be set up in case of future conflict. By 1911 it was decided that Cambridge would be the site of one of these receiving medical and surgical cases. The headquarters of the surgical division would be at King's College and the medical wards in the Senate House. The nurses would be quartered in Downing College.

In 1914 the Cambridge medical volunteers went to summer camp in Kent under their commanding officer, Colonel Joseph Griffiths, a surgeon at Addenbrooke's Hospital. They got back home just as War was declared and were quickly billeted in the University Physiological Laboratory while nurses moved in to Downing, as planned, though later they transferred to King's.

The first patients were housed in the dormitories of the Leys School where an operating theatre was fitted out. But the school wanted its buildings back after the summer holidays so Griffiths approached Trinity College about using the famous cloisters under the Wren Library as an open-air Hospital.

Soon it was obvious that something bigger was wanted so Negus, a Cambridge builder, was commissioned to erect a large hutted hospital on the Clare College cricket field just across the road. The first patients were admitted to the ten-acre site on 17th October 1914. The buildings were made of wood with just three sides, the other being left open. It was felt that this would speed the healing of wounds. In summer it was quite balmy and in winter patients tucked up under blankets were kept warm by hot water bottles and an early version of an electric blanket. But they still got wet when rain lashed in and during the bad winter of 1916-17 snow built up on their beds. But nurses suffered worse. Eventually the fourth side was glazed in.

Thousands of wounded were brought by train to Cambridge station and conveyed to their hidden hospital down Burrell's Walk which was made wide enough for the motorised ambulances. Beyond the hedge there were flower beds between the wards, a Post Office, newspaper shop and canteen. The little town even had its own newsletter to which patients contributed their reminiscences and rhymes including comments on rats running over their beds – something they'd thought to have left behind in the trenches.

The site was usually out-of-bounds to townsfolk though ladies choirs entertained troops – some perhaps hoping for a glimpse of a son who had gone 'missing' or a comrade from his regiment who could have knowledge of his fate. Other entertainment was provided by John Gambling, a magician, who visited nearly every evening.

The Hospital was inspected by the King in August 1916 and J. Palmer Clarke of Post Office Terrace was commissioned to produce a detailed photographic record including the carpenter's shop, skittle alley, laundry, canteen and wards, the negatives of which are preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection.

One feature pictured was the Bath Ward – dubbed the Aquarium - where patients suffering open wounds were immersed for extensive periods in warm circulating water. Such modern treatment attracted the attention of the Princeton Alumni Weekly whose correspondent reported in November 1916: "One man who had his foot blown off by a shell has been lying in this bath for nine weeks without being removed. He suffers no pain from the ragged stump of his leg while the cure is proceeding"

Once the carnage of war had ceased and the last shattered men sent elsewhere for nursing, the vast wooden township had another role to fulfil. For many of the men returning from the trenches had nowhere to restart their civilian lives and so the buildings were used as temporary homes for heroes till council housing was ready. Remarkably there are still a few people who have personal recollections of a childhood in the huts. If you are one, Philomena would love to hear from you.

But the colleges wanted their field back – Clare had a Memorial Court to construct and the University needed a site for a new Library. So it was that the wooden wards were sold off, some went as chicken huts to Manea, others became village halls.

And people forgot there had ever been a hospital. Now, at last, its history has been told

From bats to beds to books: the First Eastern General Hospital by Philomena Guillebaud is published by Fern House of Haddenham at £14.50 – ISBN 13 978-1-902702-29-2

Pictures

Operating theatre

Detail of operation

Wounded soldiers doing needlework

Wounded soldiers playing skittles

Wounded soldiers outside the wooden wards

Detail of wounded

Wounded soldiers arriving by train at Cambridge station

Colour picture of the site with the Backs in the background

Memories 4th March 2013 by Mike Petty

Proposals for an underground link road beneath Cambridge are currently being investigated with suggestions for a network of bus routes linking Castle Hill and Coldham's Common, with stops beneath Christ's Pieces and The Grafton.

Back in March 1963 – 50 years ago – the News featured a very similar idea.

It was obvious back then that there would need to be redevelopment in the city centre, the question was how would deliveries and shoppers get there.

City Architect, Gordon Logie, came up with a scheme, hailed by the News as 'imaginative and daring'. The large shopping precinct off Petty Cury would be serviced by an underground road.

It would burrow from Emmanuel Road, under St Andrew's Street, Downing Street and the proposed new Lion Yard shops before crossing Market Street beneath Macintosh's shop – then scheduled for redevelopment - and below Sidney Street to emerge in Jesus Lane.

As well as keeping traffic moving, it would allow vehicles to stop, with parking for 1,500 cars on three underground decks, probably 30ft at the deepest.

Existing roads would retain their present scale and character with buildings in King's Parade and Trinity Street left virtually untouched while Sidney Street would retain its pattern of small shops. In St Andrew's Street individual rebuilding to the same general height and scale would be allowed but the rear of the existing shops would be redeveloped to give more shopping spaces and allow goods to be delivered.

Petty Cury would see radical change: most of the properties on the south side and some on the north would be rebuilt to the same height and scale as the existing buildings with a covered arcade, shopping hall and two shopping squares open to the sky, linked at ground and first-floor levels by pedestrian walkways. The scheme would include a new Central Library whose old site in Wheeler Street would be used to extend the Guildhall.

A pedestrian precinct would extend to Petty Cury, Market Street and Market Hill which would see a new Concert Hall and the return of Hobson's Conduit displacing the cars that currently clustered between market stalls.

But it was the underground access route that was key. It would be used by buses bringing shoppers from the villages right to the centre of the town and pick them up again on the way home. It would also carry customers' cars and vans delivering stock to replace that sold

If the redevelopment was profitable enough, the developers would be willing to meet the cost of the underground road, bays and car parks without expense to the Council. They would have to fund just the entrance tunnels - not an unreasonable price to pay for future commercial prosperity.

All the technical problems of building such a road could be overcome and it would probably be developed separately from either end. The route would be designed to avoid the temptation of non-shopping motorists using it as a by-pass, returning to almost the same point from which it started

Inevitably there would be opposition but the only main sufferers would be two colleges.

At Sidney Sussex the wall on the corner with Jesus Lane would have to be set back by thirty feet to allow for one of the entrances to the tunnel

More badly affected was Emmanuel College where the underground road would run beneath part of the building. While this might be acceptable, there was a major problem

For the new tunnel would also go beneath the college lake. This would have to be resited, disturbing the college's most famous residents - the aged carp that had been a pet of undergraduates for years

Needless to say, the plan came to nothing. But at least public opinion was tested before the council became involved in heavy expenditure on investigating the many legal, engineering and financial problems involved.

There have been other plans, both before and after. Now we start once more.

Pictures

News report of the underground route March 1963

Cambridge traffic problems of 1960s

142.41 - traffic warden in despair

152.53 - a bus squeezes down Petty Cury

155.83 - view from Corn Exchange of cars parked on 'Lion Yard'

158.66 - Sidney Street looking from Market Street to Petty Cury

170.89 - Petty Cury – THIS HAS BEEN USED SEVERAL TIMES ALREADY

6375 – Market Hill would see return of Hobson's Conduit and cars banished

Emmanuel College lake

choice of 1983 or 1905 – News Library will have others

Memories 11 March 2013 by Mike Petty

Early March 1913 was a busy time for Huntingdon firemen.

Out at Papworth Everard, Kisby's Hut, an old thatched coaching inn filled with valuable antique furniture was razed to the ground in less than an hour, the landlady and her daughter escaping barefoot. The pub, a frequent meeting place of the Cambridgeshire Hounds, had recently been sold to Marshall's brewers of Huntingdon who had now to face the prospect of replacing it by a more modern building

Huntingdon Brigade had raced to the scene with their steam fire engine but were only able to prevent the flames spreading to a large shed nearby. Next afternoon they were called into action once more, this time to Swavesey. But again by the time they arrived, it was too late.

At Swavesey the fire had started when a spark from the chimney was blown on to the thatched roof of George Hepher's house in Taylor's Lane. As the family rushed to save their furniture a strong wind sent more sparks to the adjacent properties in Church End. The Railway Tavern and two houses burst into a tremendous sheet of flame sending burning pieces of thatch flying through the air to ignite Mr Williamson's large barn. The livestock were rescued but poultry had to be left to perish. Nearby Old Fred Dodson was in bed when his cottage caught light and he had to be roused to escape the blaze.

The flames were now literally leaping down both sides of the street towards the railway station, and the spectacle was at once a grand and terrible one. The intense heat from the burning buildings, with the dense clouds of black choking smoke, combined with the patches of burning thatch and fragments of wood which filled the air, made the road practically impassable.

The village Bobbie, Pc. H. Plowman was one the first on the scene, soon joined by Sergt. Day of Longstanton and other officers. Scores of willing helpers faced the danger and discomfort bravely and did their best to assist their stricken neighbours. The Rev. J. F. Cooksey set a brilliant example rescuing furniture and poultry, carrying a large sofa some distance on his back. He was joined by various Parish Councillors.

But where was the Parish Council's fire engine? It was some time before it could be brought into action: there were rules to be followed; the Captain of the brigade could not take the engine from its shed until he had been formally asked to do so by an owner of a burning house. The village fire fighters were volunteers, but they'd not been paid for turning out on other occasions and so were less than enthusiastic. Eventually however they got to work, drawing water from the Swan Pond as they waited for the St Ives and Huntingdon engines to come to their aid.

But in truth very little could be done as old thatched house after house caught alight until practically the whole street was burning at once. Some were important parts of the village streetscape, others old properties that had already been condemned and were awaiting demolition. There was no hope of extinguishing the burning houses, so fire fighters concentrated on stopping the spread, playing water on the walls of brick houses better able to resist the flames. Then came a heavy shower of rain and after two hours it was over.

For a long distance the street was enveloped in a cloud of dense, pungent smoke. On each side were wastes of smouldering embers and blackened brickwork. As twilight began to fall a row of chimney stacks, where some half-dozen cottages had been destroyed, towered over the ruins like a line of sombre sentinels.

Passing down the darkened street, people stumbled here and there over a little heap of chairs and pictures or a bundle of household linen blackened by smoke and soaked with water. Heaps of furniture were all mixed up together presenting the gigantic problem of sorting out which belonged to who.

Some homeless families were sheltered by their more fortunate neighbours though the older and poorer people were taken to St. Ives Workhouse for the night

As day dawned and the news spread so thousands of visitors poured into the village by motor cars, traps, cycles, and train to witness the quarter mile scene of total destruction, the skeletons of cycles, remains of sewing machines, twisted ironwork of bedding and children's toys.

Collecting boxes were put out in the street begging donations towards the relief of the sufferers. At least sixty-seven people were homeless in a village that had been short of accommodation even before the first spark had ignited.

John Shepperson, the Swavesey historian recently awarded the British Empire Medal, has recorded some of the later developments in his new publication 'Swavesey Born and Bred' with personal memories of farming alongside some of the stories told by elderly residents.

Swavesey born and bred by John Shepperson is available from the author – 01954 230313 for £5.00

Other pictures of the great fire of 1913 can be seen on the Swavesey Community Archive Network website - <http://www.ccan.co.uk/>

Pictures

Choice of views of Swavesey following the fire

- 120 valuer from an Insurance Company at work
- 121 Station Road after fire
- 125 fire at Swan Pond
- 126 fire at Swan Pond
- 127 St Ives manual fire engine
- 128 remains of a cottage
- 129 cottage destroyed by the fire
- 134 remains of cottage near Swan Pond
- 335 Huntingdon Fire engine at the fire
- 344 sightseers in ruins of cottage

newspaper report – choice of two

Kisby's Hut Papworth Everard

Memories 18 March 2013 by Mike Petty

Memories don't have to be recent: Jean Turner from Queen Edith's has kindly shown me some wonderful recollections that were written back in the 1940s by her late father-in-law, John Turner

Composed in clear, copper-plate handwriting they record how he'd known in 1896, when 16 years old, that he wanted to be an engine driver,

"I went to the Cambridge Loco. Yard and saw Mr Maroch the District Superintendent and told him of my ambition. I learned from him that many years would pass before I should stand on the footplate with my hand on the regulator. He told me I could start as a cleaner at 1/10d a day and that it was a ten hour day. Also I should get a yearly rise of 2d a day with three days holiday.

So I started the next morning April 7th 1896 on engine no 454. I thought it would take me a week to clean this large blue engine, and I had to do it in a day! I set to with a will, with someone to show me how it should be done, and I rubbed away with my cloth thinking with each rub, that it brought me a step nearer by goal – the footplate. In the sheds at the time there was an oil-burner designed by Mr Holder, a Stratford engine, one of the first in the country. She was painted blue with 'Petrolea' on the splashers picked out in gold.

Three days after I started the Company's oil and tallow stores in the Loco Yard were burnt down, and the following night the stables in the Goods Yard were burnt out. In May the Coldham's Lane branch to Newmarket was opened which saved running over the main line and Good Yard at a busy spot.

After six months I was given my own engine, No.456, to keep clean. As an inducement to clean the cab I was given the driver's old great-coat. This suited me as I had to walk from Fulbourn four miles away and I had to leave at 5 am so needed some protection from the weather.

After three years of cleaning I was made acting fireman for local and relief work on shunting engines. This necessitated my living in Cambridge. Whilst on this job there was a vacancy at Huntingdon, then a small country town with only a single track and only one engine there, a 'Sharpie' which the other acting fireman and I had to coal and clean, as well as firing. With a light load these Sharpe engines could hold their own with any engine of that day.

In October 1900 I went to Newmarket. I was pleased as instead of coaling my tender, it was coaled off the stage at Peterborough, the run I was on. The type of engines I worked at Newmarket were 2-4-0 and 2-2-2, the latter having a single driving wheel. This type of engine was originally used to work on the Cambridge to York expresses, but as the trains got heavier they were taken off and sent to Cambridge for the Ely, Peterborough and Cambridge traffic. On April 7th of the following year the new Newmarket station was opened and I was fireman on the first train out of the dock, the 8.7 am to Peterborough. On my return I went to Ely and was made regular fireman on September 9th, 1904

The year 1906 found me firing on the main line goods. My run was through the Fen country, where in those days it was possible to buy twenty eggs for a shilling and butter at 9d a pound.

BREAK NARRATIVE

John seems to have had a narrow escape from injury. In April 1906 a serious accident occurred on the Great Eastern Railway at Shippea Hill station. The engine attached to the Norwich-London express jumped the line, the following coach reared up on end and fell down the bank into the ditch, breaking the telegraph wires. The second coach was hurled down the bank on the opposite side and the third, fourth and fifth coaches left the lines. Three

passengers were injured, two seriously, but all had a miraculous escape from death. Perhaps he was not on duty, certainly he does not mention it.

RESUME NARRATIVE

In 1910 I went as fireman on local passenger trains and the following year I started firing on expresses on an engine running to Lincoln, Norwich, Peterborough and London

I was only on this job seven weeks when I was made acting driver, and in those days there were no Improvement Classes or Instruction Vans so we acting firemen used to meet in each other's houses for discussion and exchange of knowledge for our mutual advancement. In 1917 I was made full driver, and I remember our instructions in the event of air raids were to bring the train to a standstill as any hovering Zeppelin could by stopping its engines, hear the training running.

In November 1919 I joined the Cambridge Railway Silver Prize Band as a drummer. This band won the First Prize, a shield valued at fifty guineas in the Brass Band Contest at the Crystal Palace in 1922.

During the war and for several years after I was supervising at Newmarket. On race-days as many as sixteen specials ran out. In July 1922 the Cambridge Royal Show was held in the meadows at Trumpington, and the company built a temporary station for the convenience of passengers visiting the show.

I went back to driving expresses on March 1st 1913 on 2818, Wynyard Park. My longest trip with it was from Cambridge to Manchester with an excursion of college servants. I had a pilot from Lincoln over the other Company's line.

In 1932 whilst standing at Liverpool Street Station I slipped off the engine and broke my right leg. This put me in hospital for 13 weeks and it was eleven months before I could report for duty"

This marked the end of John Turner's express-driving career. In accordance with normal practice he went back to the branch passengers trains and then to goods where he finished his service on the footplate. His final trips were made on the old Colne Valley and Halstead Railway which was taken over by the L.N.E.R. on the amalgamation in 1923.

John had enjoyed his career: "Looking back over almost fifty years of railway working there have been many improvements both with regard to working conditions and pay. Were it possible to live my life over again I should make no alternative choice. I have never regretted my decision, made as a boy, to become an engine driver"

Do you have long-treasured family memories – contact Mike Petty at the News

Pictures

Signing off – page from John Turner's memories
John's signature at the end of the memories

Dullingham station – a route he knew

Newmarket Station where he was based in 1900
A new Newmarket station opened 1901

Cambridge station c1900

The Railway Band – John was drummer when they won a national contest in 1922 – NB NOT NECESSARILY THIS PICTURE

Cambridge Loco Men – John started as cleaner, moved up through fireman to drive the expresses

Shippea Hill Accident – there is no mention in John's journal.

Memories 25th March 2013 by Mike Petty

Travellers journeying through Earith have been delayed recently due to maintenance work on the concrete deck and road surface of the bridge across the New Bedford River.

It has long been an important crossing point. In the Middle Ages the road from Earith to Haddenham was the responsibility of the Bishop of Ely who installed a hermit to repair the causeway and river crossing

The original bridge was constructed of timber. By 1286 it was so old and broken that footmen, horses and carts were unable to cross and the sheriff was ordered to make repairs. It had fallen down by 1346 but was brought back into use and in 1604 had nine twelve-foot wide arches through which 14 feet of water passed 'vehemently' along the West Water towards Chatteris.

Within half a century that single West Water had been replaced by a new and then a newer Bedford River, both of which had to be crossed. Travellers made their way over the first by a nine-hole sluice which was replaced by a seven holes bridge built by the Hundred Foot Wash Commissioners in 1824. This was topped by a fence along the parapet erected at the expense of Tom Benton in the 1880s. He had been driving across it in a light cart when his horse shied and jumped the parapet, taking the cart with him. There happened to be a boat moored nearby, from which Tom was saved from drowning. So he paid for the extra rails and ensured that a boat was always moored there for the rest of his life. This was replaced in April 1954 by a new sluice bridge.

The more major impediment was the New Bedford River; the drainers had dug it, so the drainers had to pay for a bridge over it. They constructed what was described as 'a very strong and high wooden bridge' probably similar to one that remained in use at Mepal until the 1930s.

But by the early 1840s the Earith bridge was unsafe for people to cross and tenders were sought for building a new iron one. The Directors of the Stockton and Darlington Railway Company offered a second-hand suspension bridge built in 1830 that they wanted to dispose of at a good price and numerous contractors submitted proposals for new ones. The Cambridge Eagle Foundry came in at £2,030 with an extra £229.10s for stone facing. After considerable debate it was agreed to accept a tender from Messrs Sharp of Long Sutton for a suspension bridge

Work started in October 1843 but the contractor found great difficulty finding a good foundation. What should have been completed in seven months dragged on and it was March 1847 before it was completed. But problems were quickly apparent: in February 1850 one of the iron girders broke and the deal flooring was also reported in a dangerous condition.

Then on 13th June 1863 a traction engine belonging to Messrs John and Stephen Feary of Bluntisham was making its way over the bridge when two of the cast iron girders snapped with a loud crack. This so scared the driver that he jumped off the engine, leaving it to cross by itself, which it did without mishap. Additional timber struts were fixed as a temporary measure but it would need the replacement of the fourteen cast-iron girders with others made of wrought iron, Richard Reynolds Rowe, the Isle of Ely County Surveyor, advised.

It was decided to build a complete new suspension bridge which was finished by July 1865. Its strength was tested by driving over it that same threshing engine that had damaged the old one. This time it stood the weight. But there were other problems: the new suspension bridge swayed too much and additional anchoring needed to be put in place to hold it steady.

As traffic increased plans were commissioned for the present bridge which was officially opened on 5th April 1963.

It was not the end of the difficulties, as engineers made clear at that time.

Eventually a high-level viaduct would need to be constructed across the 150-yard section of often waterlogged road causeway between the two Bedford Rivers. It was blocked to cars for sometimes 15 days a year providing a lucrative income for locals who leapt into action as cars spluttered to a halt in more than a foot of floodwater. The price for motorists who lost the gambol to get across was £1 for a push out and clean-up with a rag, £2 for a tow out with a Landrover. "If they can't pay we'll take anything: watches, foreign currency, cheques", one rescuer told reporters in 1977. However he had cut-throat competition from two enterprising schoolboys from Bluntisham who made £20 during one week.

In March 1978 this income was threatened after the County Council spent £23,000 in raising the level of the road by more than ten inches. Hopefully when the present works are completed this vital route for travellers will once more carry them dryly on their journey

captions

5938

In 1960 Eric Hard run a shuttle service in an ex-army lorry taking school children through floods to the village. The children look upon it as something to be greatly enjoyed. When the lorry trundles up to the school in the evening the children rush to mount the step-ladder and climb into the vehicle. Being driven through the actual flood waters was the best part of the journey.

Sluice over the Old Bedford c1929

Earith suspension bridge over New Bedford c1929

Choice of two pictures of present bridge

Map showing the original bridge across the West Water c1604

Mepal wooden bridge, typical of those erected by the drainers in the 1630s.

Memories 1st April 2013 by Mike Petty

'Memories' readers often write to share their recollections of Cambridge shops and businesses

Mrs J. Jenner from Bourn was in the A.T.S. stationed on Donkey Common during the war. She writes: "We A.T.S. girls, mainly from Lancashire, with me being the odd one out coming from Yorkshire, made a bee-line after lectures to upstairs Woolworths for tea and eats before going sightseeing. When I was posted to Guildford and had a weekend pass I wrote to my then boy friend (later my husband) and he would book a double room for me and my friend,

Punchy, at the Central Hotel. We had to go down the side to get in. Our room was looking out on Guildhall and the market". She remembers many of the shops: Bacon and Ora the tobacconists, Eaden Lilley and Joshua Taylor, but others have slipped from her memory

Cambridge had a number of shops selling ladies fashions: George Stace in Petty Cury was one which filled a special niche in the local fashion trade for many years. The name came to stand for a good, solid, middle class trade. It catered for the matron, and for the essentially well-to-do family of both town and county. Their shop windows curved inwards to reduce reflections making the glass invisible while spotlights inside made customers feel they had only to reach out and touch the articles. Its closure in 1951 was mourned by many.

Coads' department store had arrived in Burleigh Street Cambridge in May 1929 offering keen prices, up-to-date goods and an immediate refund if the customer was not satisfied. 'Value and Variety with a smile' was their motto, and it worked. A new Sidney Street store opened in 1935 with three floors and a splendid oak-panelled stairway. Its arcade and island cases were a glowing example of the shop fitter's craft. Coad's were famous for their remarkable values in coats, woollies and blouses and the millinery salon was well lit. At the farther end was the Lingerie and Corsetry Salon and a Younger Ladies' Department where girls could shop like their mother did. Coad's ceased trading in September 1958, the site being acquired by Woolworth as an extension to their adjoining store

But who remembers Heyworth's, a ladies department store in Cambridge which was run by two generations of the Heyworth family from 1914. George Heyworth first opened his shop in Burleigh Street, quite near the Co-op, before moving to the corner of Sidney Street and Market Passage in 1928. He offered a fashion service to women of every age, claiming to clothe them from the 'cradle to the grave'. In 1952 the firm completed their ambition of clothing ladies from head to foot with the opening of a new show department in the basement stocking Lotus and Delta shoes for both day and evening wear.

Its sale attracted large crowds in 1950 with fur coats marked down from £37 to a tenner (about £250 at today's values). But can anybody help date an advertisement that I have in my files. It was published probably about 1923 when ladies cosy winter knickers could be bought for one-and-ninepence-halfpenny - though outsize pairs were one shilling extra.

Heyworth's closed in the 1960s and has virtually faded from memory. Now Ellee Seymour, a former News journalist, is seeking information about this almost-forgotten emporium. If you worked there, have pictures of the store or can tell her about the Heyworth family please contact me and I will put you in touch.

And if you have memories of being behind the counter in any other Cambridge or village shops, then share them with other readers. Life cannot always have been straightforward. There must have been those customers you looked forward to – or dreaded. Tell us.

PICTURES

George Heyworth with two of his sales girls on the store's trip to London for the Festival of Britain 1951

Heyworth's shop on the corner of Sidney Street and Market Passage in 1937

Heyworth underwear advertisement – can you date it

Heyworth's advertisement from 1950

Procession in Burleigh Street c.1910 – Heyworth's shop was near the Co-op, in the background

Coad's shop, Sidney Street at closure in 1958

Selling undies at M&S 1966 - but did you work in ladies fashion?

Hi Mike,

I had a very interesting morning meeting another Heyworth lady called Eve (children's wear) and then going to the Cambs Collection and researching the tragic death of a salesgirl in a coach crash in 1950 on her way home from a dance at RAF Lakenheath. I believe the girl, 18-year-old Molly Rolfe from Suez Road, had gone to the dance without her parents knowledge as they were very strict. Her death shocked and saddened her working colleagues at Heyworths.

A couple of memoirs from Betty which you can mention are how the Marchioness of Cambridge would regularly buy her hats from the store, a different one to match each different dress she wore to Ascot on each of the four consecutive days that Ascot was held then. She would bring some fabric from the dresses that she had cut off from the generous hem or seam to make sure it matched. Betty would take the fabrics to London and match them up and select one or two hats from the wholesalers which she thought would be suitable. These hats would no doubt be worn in the royal box as Lady Cambridge, who died in 1988, was the oldest member of the royal family. She belonged to the so-called Old Royal Family who descended from King George 111. She had no airs and graces and was a delight to serve, confiding in Betty that she liked to buy Marks and Spencer dresses for Ascot, and dress them up with special hats and accessories.

Heyworths was a very smart shop, very upmarket, all the women wore hats back in the 1940s and 50s - and Easter was one of their busiest times of the year. There were separate drawers for feathers and ribbons of all colours to decorate them with.

Betty remembers the strict working conditions, and how the younger Mr Herbert Heyworth had a red light which flashed outside his office to indicate a member of staff was in trouble. On one of these occasions, a terrified Betty was summoned before him and was shaking like a leaf. She was told she had to sack a sales girl for leaning against the fixtures, after he told her: "Here's her cards, I don't pay my staff for leaning against the fixtures." The woman was out straight away, she left that Saturday night, you didn't get a week's notice in those days. You couldn't stand there and look around, you had to be busy all the time.

Betty has has fond memories of the older Mr George Heyworth, and remembers the excitement when all the staff were taken to London for a day out to see the Festival of Britain in London in 1951. I have attached a picture of this outing showing Betty left, and fellow millinery sales girl Maureen, right.

Eve remembers starting at Heyworth's as a junior in the children's department at 14. Mr Heyworth senior felt sorry for her as she was one of seven children her widowed mother had to support and increased her starting salary from the normal 15 shillings a week which was

given to newcomers to one pound. She had to work 5 1/2 days a week, including every Saturday, and was not allowed to have a Saturday off to be bridesmaid when her cousin married, even though a gold taffeta dress had been specially made.

I hope this is ok. Stephen and I are going to Norfolk tomorrow for a couple of days. I will be able to answer emails and other queries about this before 11am tomorrow, it may be hard to get a signal in Norfolk.

Thank you again, wouldn't it be wonderful if we had a good response from this.

We are meeting Joy for a birthday dinner this evening.

Memories 8th April 2013 by Mike Petty

Recent proposals for a new Cambridge University boathouse at Ely have prompted concern about the impact on wildlife along this peaceful stretch of river.

But it has not always been peaceful. During the Second World War a version of the Oxford & Cambridge Boat Race, banned from the Thames because of fears of bombing, was held along the stretch of river from the junction of the Rivers Ouse and Lark to Adelaide Bridge. The event was recreated in November 2002 when some of the original crews who had competed in 1944 came back to the scene of the battle. They recalled how Cambridge had led for much of the contest, only to be overhauled at the end as they neared Ely.

Film footage of the original race shows that crowds lined the river banks, with some on horseback galloping to keep up with the rowers. And amongst scores of people who had come to relive the occasion there were numbers of local folk who as boys and girls had journeyed from Littleport or Prickwillow to witness a once-in-a-lifetime occasion.

The river caters for many other types of craft as Hugh Easton, a marine consultant based in Lowestoft, recalls. Hugh was born in Cambridge in 1932 and worked at Ely's Appleyard Lincoln boatyard as an apprentice making pleasure cruisers both of wood and later fibreglass which provided many a pleasant holiday on fenland rivers.

Both holiday-makers and rowers had to share the water with the heavy working barges used to transport clay from Roswell pits for repairing river banks. During the great floods of 1947 lines of heavily loaded barges were guided by tug-boat drivers to fill the breaches in the river banks that were releasing water to gush over fertile fenland.

The barges had another use, as Hugh recalls:

“Until the early fifties, Ely Sugar Beet Factory, beside the Ouse at Queen Adelaide, ran a fleet of about sixty, large, steel, dumb barges together with three diesel-driven tugs. These were used to pick up harvested beet, during the annual 'campaign' season, having been loaded from river-side fields, into previously delivered, empty barges

When a sufficient number of loaded barges were ready, a tug would be despatched, to tow them back to the factory, near the Adelaide bridge. Thus, during the season we at Harry Lincoln's boat yard, had to be very much on the 'qui vive', when we heard the 'toot-toot' of a loud horn, signalling a warning that a string of loaded barges was approaching from upstream hidden by the rail and river bridges because ahead, lay the sharp bend in the river, by the Annesdale (Cutter) quay

On average there were probably about eight or ten barges in a 'string' - but occasionally, there could be a dozen or more - and on one occasion I counted seventeen! The barges themselves, were connected to each other, by chains at each 'corner', and in order to negotiate any of these bends, barge-men were stationed at intervals along the 'string' - able to hop from one barge to the next - and when approaching a bend, they would slacken the outside chain at intervals, to allow the 'string' to bend, as the tug altered course. Also, in order to try to prevent the tail-end barges from swinging outwards too much, a drag chain was deployed, dragging along the bottom of the river

But sometimes these efforts still did not have the desired effect, resulting in the last barge coming into violent contact with the quay-heading - or possibly a boat. Thus we had to endeavour to move any boat, moored at the quay - dinghy, launch or cruiser - further up stream, clear of the actual bend. But occasionally, for what ever reason we were not always successful - oops!

But then the Ely Sugar Beet Factory began to collect everything by road. Whether they did that as a matter of policy, I know-not - but it did happen at just the right time because they were able to sell their entire fleet to Derek Crouch Construction Limited, when they won the contract for digging out and constructing the 11 mile, flood relief channel, between Denver and Kings Lynn!

Derek Crouch contracted Appleyard & Lincoln to pull each and every barge out of the water, scrub it, do any necessary welding repairs and give it a coat of black tar-varnish, before relaunch. We also pulled out the three tugs to have their bottoms scabbed and tar-varnished as well as any welding - plus overhauling the stern gear and mechanicals! Ted Appleyard was put in charge of that operation with Harry employing a separate gang of labours to do the 'dirty' work! And Appleyard & Lincoln finished up with one of those barges in its fleet!

Do you have memories of working on the river, write to Mike Petty

Pictures

114.90 tug towing barges loaded with sugar beet 1930s

2803, 8906 choice of pictures of barges at Ely Beet Factory, 1930s

118.32 loading barges with gault from Roswell Pits 1920s

187 a tug pulling a line of barges 1976

101.15 Oxford v Cambridge Boat Race on Ouse, 1944

Memories 15 April 2013, by Mike Petty

I have been sent a small scrapbook that was treasured by the late Christine Newman of Cambridge. It was compiled by her father, Mr William Ewart Lile, who was born in Fitzroy Street in April 1886, and contains snippets relating to his family, to Holy Sepulchre Church and especially his interests in the Bumps, with numerous cuttings devoted to the '99 Rowing Club of which he was Secretary

For 40 years William worked for Cambridgeshire County Council's smallholdings estate established under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act that came into force on 1st January 1908, two years after he'd started his scrapbook.

Smallholdings were pieces of land of not less than one acre and not more than fifty which could be acquired by the council and rented out to local people, should there be demand. And there certainly was. There was demand from Cottenham when 200 people asked for 663 acres of land, from Steeple Morden, Isleham and Willingham, where it seemed everyone was an expert gardener.

But it was Soham that attracted the attention of a special reporter from *The Standard* of March 1909. For of all the experiments under the Small Holdings Act he'd investigated this was the most interesting.

Soham was then a quiet, little, by-way town, with a population of just over 4000, forming a most interesting, even extraordinary, community that was synonymous with work and thrift. If the smallholdings experiment was to succeed anywhere it was in here. They had the right kind of land for the experiment, and the right type of man to work it

"Take Mr. T. Everett, the secretary of the Soham Small Holders' Society. He has lived in this town over forty years, is a local magistrate, and out of his labours has fashioned that coveted armchair of retirement to which the majority of us vainly aspire. Yet, to-day, despite the bleak east wind sweeping over the long, low-lying fens, I found him hard at work branch-logging in his three-acre garden adjoining the house.

"Work is a religion in Soham. It should go into history as the Town of Toil. What would some men say to such a day's schedule as that of one of the small holders here: 'Rise at five o'clock and see to my horses. Go down the street and see to Mr. Blank's cows. Get across to my holding and put in an hour there. Then off to my regular job of "claying" (lifting the sunken clay of the fields to the surface before back for an hour or so on my holding.'"

From the very first the Act was taken up with enthusiasm. The County acquired Tile House Farm on a fourteen years' lease and sixty-four applicants came forward. They wanted men with a little capital who were able to pay the rent and some sign of security was sought. The sequel was dramatic, almost comical.

"These humble men, these toilers of the field who regard a wage of £1 a week as princely, came forward hesitatingly, bashfully, as though thrift were a thing to be ashamed of, and gave proof of their solvency. I heard of one man, a labourer with a large family, who went to the house of one of the committee men and laid before his astonished gaze a bank book showing £56 to his credit, and a bag containing £70 in gold. 'Where did I get it?' he echoed; 'I worked for it, sir; just worked'. 'And why in the name of conscience didn't you put that £70 into the bank and let it work for you?' he was asked. He merely pulled his forelock foolishly"

And others came in similar manner. Gold that had been hoarded for years in the dark recess of their humble cottage was brought, out and displayed as proof that the owners were men of substance.

They were also hard workers: there was a quantity of manure for disposal among the several successful smallholders. In the ordinary course this would have remained in the heap until the summer, when the roads across the farm were more accessible. But no sooner was the money paid than every man secured his rightful allowance, and, by hook or by crook, conveyed it to his holding. The ownership fever was on him, and he could not rest until he had his due.

But who were these men with money to invest in their future. Although a few had been small holders for years the majority were merely agricultural labourers or drainage workers earning from 15s. to £1 a week.

"You may term these small holders a superior class of labourers," Mr. Everett told the reporter. "Most of them have never done any farming before excepting at harvest time. But they know the work intuitively, and they will succeed because they can work and because they are thrifty." A Soham Small Holders Society was set up to purchase heavy farming implements, such as a manure drill, a corn drill, a reaping machine and a Cambridge roll to be hired out to members, though drills and reaping machines could only be used by somebody competent. .

Were your family one of these hard-working men in 1909; and did they survive the trauma of war that was to follow five years later and the depression that was to succeed it. And is Soham still a paradise for poor people. In 1909 there were no fewer than 300 acres of common land, and he was a poor man indeed who had not at least a few geese to turn out on the common. Perhaps its time to return to the days of self-sufficiency.

William Liles retired in 1948 after forty years service and retired to Clacton, dying in 1981. He was in youth a passionate photographer and in the 1980s Mrs Newman deposited copies of many of his photographs in the Cambridgeshire Collection. Now this scrapbook will be joining them.

Pictures

Article from the scrapbook on Soham

Harvest work– reaping machines could be hired by smallholders at Soham

Soham 1920s and 1960s – have conditions changed

Claying – described in the article

One of the 99 Rowing Club snippets – Liles was secretary

Memories 22nd April 2013 by Mike Petty

Keith Ward from Canada has been a welcome correspondent for many years. Back in September 1999 he appealed for help in arranging a reunion of pupils who'd attended the Central School for Boys between 1945 and 1949. This went ahead in 2005 and he has sent a photo of the lads who got together to revive their memories.

Keith keeps in touch with Cambridge happenings and recent reports of how water-filled pits near Brooks Road might become a leisure facility have encouraged him to share his recollections of the days when he trespassed into similar out-of-bounds areas.

I have many memories from my childhood days during WW2 ranging all the way from scrumping fruit from orchards to finding pieces of shrapnel and the foil tape that was used to block radar waves.

Our "gang" were an adventuresome lot. During the WW2 period the four or five members of us would venture into the aircraft dump on Coldham's Common (I once used this term several years ago and received an angry reply from a former worker and was told that it was not a crash dump but a MRU which I think was the acronym for Maintenance and Repair Unit).

We used to play hide and seek in the fuselages of the British, American and German planes that had been shot down and heaped on top of each other. The site was patrolled by RAF personnel and their German Shepherd dogs so it was a challenge to hide in the planes and not be discovered during their patrols. We had a perfect record of never being discovered.

All of the planes were basically scrapped and it's my understanding that any re-usable parts

were removed to repair other planes. During our play in the "crash dump" we used to find all sorts of things that had been overlooked or ignored by the maintenance crews. This involved coins, cigarette lighters, and other personal items of the aircrew. We manually transported the belly and wing fuel tanks and oxygen bottles to the old Brick and Tile Works water-filled pit adjacent to the Coldham's lane bridge.

At the bottom of the pit there was a flat area with an old barn type metal storage area in which there were two or three old rusting tractors that we played on. The aircraft fuel tanks had bullet holes in them and we filled the holes with clay and grass and then let the filling bake in the sun. Once the clay mixture had dried we applied more clay to make sure the tanks were watertight. After testing the tanks in the water we'd sit on the tanks and paddle around the pond using our hands as paddles. The wing fuel tanks were round and obviously were not stable in the water so we used the oxygen tanks as outriggers.

All this will strike a cord with Bob Giddings who lives in a line of cottages at the entrance to Denny Abbey. As a lad Bob in 1951 watched the wartime military activity in the adjacent newly-established Waterbeach airfield and had his own special playthings – the remains of wrecked aircraft that were being cannibalised for spare parts. He has snaps of them amongst his collection of old postcards

But back to Keith:

Another favourite place for our games was the Rifle Butts on Coldham's Common. When we were not digging out spent bullets from the chalk mound we played a game of Indians. We had made bows and arrows that would shoot over the Butts so we used to have two people on the top with bows and arrows firing at the rest of us hiding in the moat like area that surrounded the base.

This bottom area also had large bushes so that it was difficult for those on top to shoot at us whereas those on top were fully exposed. The oldest in the group nearly always insisted that the youngest had to be on top of the Butts since they had virtually no protection from those firing from below.

In order to make the arrows fly straighter we would wrap the point with electrical copper wire and then wrap black electrical tape or white adhesive surgical tape around the wire in the hope that it would be less damaging if you were hit. But you'd still have a nice round bruise the following day. It's a miracle that none of us suffered any serious injury..

We also used to visit the Norman and Saxon pits between Brooks Road and Cherry Hinton. One of the big dares was to travel through the small tunnel connecting the two pits since you were in total darkness for most of the way. Several years later I went fishing in the Saxon pit with my father hoping to catch the monster pike that was purported to be lurking in the waters"

If the current plans go ahead, perhaps others will enjoy a spot of – legitimate – fishing at 'Romsey Beach'

Pictures

Reunion of Central School pupils in 2005

Cement works were a playground for Keith and his chums [SUBS – NO GUARANTEE ITS THE ONE KEITH PLAYED IN]

Coldham's Common where Keith played amongst scrapped planes – seen here in 1976 when used by fairground followers

Bob Giddings and friend in a scrapped Hawker Hurricane at Waterbeach airfield in 1951. The wings and engine had been removed to keep another Hurricane flying

A general view of Cambridge children at play in the 1950s

Group of maintenance workers at Marshall's who patched up planes during wartime

Memories 29th April 2013 by Mike Petty

Keeping warm has been a problem through the ages and for many years the principal source of heat in the home was coal. But how did it get to the grate?

Initially coal was transported to Cambridge down the Cam in horse-drawn barges and offloaded at coal yards beside Magdalene and Silver Street bridges. However the arrival of the railway in 1845 meant it became possible to carry greater quantities to supply the increasing needs of an expanding town. Major enterprises such as the Gas Company constructed sidings at Coldham's Lane from which a fleet of vehicles conveyed coal to the gasworks and some families went with barrows or old prams to collect coke for their homes.

By 1904 there were some 25 coal merchants listed in the Cambridge Street Directory. They included Austin & Company, Patrick Beales, Coote and Warren, Arthur Swann and J.O. Vinter whose horse-drawn carts or motor lorries delivered sacks of coal to individual households

In 1953 the now combined firm of Austin Beales opened a new coal depot on a piece of waste ground off Clarendon Road, beside Hills Road Railway Bridge. Here coal arrived by railway wagons and was unloaded by a crane or 'Jumbo' into hoppers or direct onto lorries using electrically-controlled conveyors to reduce the heavy, dirty process of filling sacks by hand. Within a decade 45,000 tons of different types of house and industrial coal, coke & smokeless fuel was arriving each week to be delivered by a fleet of lorries to domestic and commercial customers around Cambridge.

But times moved on and the development of oil-fuelled heating brought new challenges to the suppliers. Initially heating oil was fetched from the Mobil refinery by a fleet of tanker lorries but as demand continued to grow Austin Beales and Coote and Warren added a new fuel oil terminal to their yard in 1961, making it the most modern coal/oil distribution centre in Europe.

The oil arrived from the Mobil refinery at Coryton by rail in 5,000 gallon tankers and was discharged into three main storage tanks. Soon the number of deliveries increased until trains were arriving at the siding every night to be unloaded and sent off before the morning rush. Yet more trundled in during the day. As demand increased the firm constructed more storage tanks each holding 131,000 gallons of different types, including 'Medium' fuel oil which had to be kept heated by a boiler to ensure the thick heavy oil remained fluid enough to pump out into insulated tanker vehicles.

Such a complex organisation required an office staff to ensure it ran smoothly. And that is where John Poole of Comberton came in. He started at the firm in 1952, aged 22, and worked there until his retirement. John took great interest in the technical details and, as a talented amateur photographer, built up a wonderful pictorial record of the site and its activities.

His pictures show two of the first tankers. He points out that the headboards were interchangeable since they delivered for other companies, thus sometimes they read 'Coote and Warren' or Ridleys Fuels. Those names disappeared as they became part of the Charrington Group

John snapped the construction of new storage tanks and loading bays, the long lines of rail tankers waiting to be emptied, the engineers and the men who worked alongside him behind the scenes.

Inevitably accidents happened; there were derailments, spillages and on one occasion men were cutting redundant pipe work when some oil ran out and caught fire, quickly spreading to a contractor's lorry. Firemen were soon on the scene to quell the blaze – and John was there with his camera to record it.

But it is his views over the site towards the old Foster's Mill at the station that gives some impression of the scale of an enterprise which might otherwise have disappeared largely without trace.

Did you work in the coal or oil distribution industry – write to Mike Petty

uej.couns@hotmail.co.uk via tiscali.co.uk

30 Apr (4 days ago)

to mikepetty

Dear Mr Petty

I phoned Chris Elliot concerning the Charringtons coal oil depot Clarendon Road Cambridge, in the memories section on Monday the 29th of April 2013, and he told me to drop you a line. It brought back many happy memories and I am the driver standing in front of the newer tanker. I worked for Charringtons for over 30 years and I could write a book on all the things that happened, some of them unbelievable. I'd just like to add, John Poole was the best manager you could wish to work for.

I would be pleased to talk to you if you would like to contact me this is my landline number 01353 664020.

Kind regards

John Davies

Memories 6th May 2013 by Mike Petty

Last Wednesday's News reported how parents and children have been anxiously waiting to see whether they have gained a place at the school of their choice. That very afternoon I met Ivy Jude, a lady who had first-hand experience of that issue. For she had been one of the children who turned up at her village school, day after day, only to be sent home again.

Just 75 years ago, in 1938, parents and children at Meldreth School went on strike. The dispute started after the County Council ruled that 21 pupils over 11 years of age should transfer from Meldreth Council School to the school at Melbourn.

To get there the children would face a journey of anything up to ten or twelve miles a day in all weathers, passing a dangerous corner, parents complained. However old inhabitants re-

called the time when there had been no Council School in the village, and all the children had gone to Melbourn. One lad used to walk daily from Hauxton, six miles distant, and another, Charlie Hart, came from Barrington, 4½ miles away

Eighty protestors packed a meeting presided over by Mr. Hubert Ellis and decided to fight. They had an excellent head in Miss Grace Butler, and her two uncertified staff, Miss Rose Pearce and the infant teacher. Meldreth School had always turned out good, clean, honest and straightforward workers.

But as the County Council had decided to remove the older children they'd reduced her staff and Miss Butler felt she could not on her own do justice to the children whose ages ranged from eight to 13. Their capabilities were so different that they would not progress. She would be sad if the older ones had to go to Melbourn but it was for their good. Even now the older boys and girls went there one afternoon a week for instruction in woodwork or cookery.

Mr H.W. Dainty agreed: theirs was an elementary school and although the children could be taught reading, writing and arithmetic, this was now a scientific age; what chance would Meldreth children have in life against those from other villages? His arguments were downed in shouts of disapproval.

Hubert Ellis, chairman of the Parish Council, had been one of the Managers when Meldreth School opened in 1910 with space for 120 children. He greatly enjoyed fighting for what he believed to be right and was convinced that no child could be compelled to go to another school if he could learn reading, writing and arithmetic at the one he was attending. Anything beyond that was optional.

There had been a new Education Act in 1936 but did not come into force until September 1939. In the meantime their children should be taught in the village until the age of 14 and competent teachers employed. After all they were paying their rates.

So parents continued to send their older children to the school; the head took their names, but did not let them in. Ivy was one of those who went each morning, then once registered, turned round and came back home. Miss Butler was not allowed to teach her and anyway the county had moved the desks to Melbourn

Various resolutions were passed which were sent to the Board of Education, the Education Committee and the local Member of Parliament demanding that "proper education be given to our children in our own village." They even started to plan for a private school for the children concerned to open after Easter. The parents would, of course, have to pay for the children's education.

A deputation from the County Education Committee, together with Melbourn and Meldreth school managers, called a meeting to discuss the issue. But passions were inflamed when Mr. Ellis, who had presided at past protests, was not invited to attend. The parents, who turned up in full force, sent for him but he was refused admission by Education Secretary Henry Morris. The Press were also refused entry, and this was a cause of further dissatisfaction.

After the meeting, one of the parents, Mr. T. Meikle, told a reporter "They asked us to try sending our children to Melbourn for 12 months, and they would meet the parents at the end of that period to see if everything was working all right. We refused and told them we were going to keep our children from school unless they could remain at Meldreth. We told them they could send us to prison if they like."

In May 1938 parents were summonsed before Melbourn Magistrates and, despite the arguments of Mr Ellis, were ordered to send their children to school forthwith. As Meldreth

School had been closed to children over 11 years old by an order approved by the Board of Education, it could not be deemed a 'suitable school' within the meaning of the Act.

The parents were given a chance to choose which other school their children would attend, but only two had any suggestions to make. Ivy together with the children of Stanley Wing, Richard Lockwood, Harry Jacklin, Charles Plumb, Frank Course and the others were ordered to go to Melbourn School. However the charges against Stanley Wing, Frank Course and Cornelius Dash were withdrawn – their children had reached school leaving age of 14 and were free to leave.

Hubert Ellis challenged the ruling through the courts but eventually lost his case. Although his initial fight had made him the most popular man in Meldreth his protracted legal actions were expensive and various village events had to be organised to pay the costs.

But Meldreth folk still remember their battle with bureaucracy, a fight that has been fought by other parents in other villages ever since.

For more memories see the Meldreth Local History Group website - <http://www.meldrethhistory.org.uk> where you can read about the village and its story

Pictures

Choice of headlines from 1938 – yy/mm/dd

Meldreth school – the younger pupils who remained, 1938

Meldreth school before the numbers were reduced

Meldreth street scene

Meldreth composite postcard, including school

Memories 13th May 2013 by Mike Petty

As I entered the Afghan compound I was charged at by a demented shape in a woollen coat and only through the greatest fortune did I escape being left sprawling on the bloody, bullet-littered ground.

But how had the intruder entered what should have been a secure area? Incredibly in the middle of a restricted military complex, somebody had left the gate open. And nor was that invader alone, she had brought members of her family with her, one of whom causing consternation even after the main threat had been removed. Fortunately it was just a lamb who eventually responded to repeated efforts to encourage it to regain the flock in the open grassland just feet away from the 'native' buildings

All this happened last week, just across the county border in Norfolk where, in the days when invasion had seemed imminent, the small communities around West Tofts had played their part in the Second World War by packing their belongings and leaving the villages they had called home.

Since then it has been part of the Army's battle training area where different facilities have been constructed to give troops an insight into the conditions they would face for real when they are deployed to various areas of conflict. The surrounding thousands of acres of rolling countryside are dotted with crashed helicopters and wrecked tanks together with churches which are carefully preserved and some of the original buildings, their thatch roofs now replaced by corrugated iron and transformed from family homes to military checkpoints or forward observation points

The visit had been arranged by the Waterbeach Village Society amongst whom was Jim Swainland who has passed to me a souvenir of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in June 1897. Cambridge had celebrated the occasion by singing the National Anthem on Parker's Piece, a cyclists' lantern parade, a salute of 60 maroons, flight of 1,000 pigeons, sports on Midsummer Common and a procession of flower-decorated carriages in Queen's Road. It concluded with a water carnival on the river between Walnut Tree Lane and Jesus Locks, a great bonfire and a gigantic display of fireworks.

But the programme had to be paid for, and it is the advertisements which capture something of the commerce of that time. They include a cluster of traders in Fitzroy Street: G.P. Hawkins, pastrycook and confectioner, baker of fancy bread and biscuits, William Thompson, the cheapest for furniture and bedding or mangles and wringers, while ladies were encouraged to take their hair combings to Cartwright's who would transform them into swishes for just half-a-crown.

In King Street W. Robinson made travelling trunks and children's mail carts while H. Rooke and George Smith were house decorators and sanitary plumbers and M. Smooty a greengrocer. St Andrew's Street advertisers included Barton the tailors, Rawlings' British and Foreign Cigar Warehouse and Alphonso Smith, a boot and shoe maker. Alphonso was obvious a man for adventure for he later ascended to the heavens in the 'Enchantress' balloon on August 7th 1911, landing at Exning one hour later.

On Mill Road George Bailey was a stone, marble and granite monumental mason on the corner of Covent Garden – examples of his work are doubtless to be found in the nearby cemetery. There were two cycle sellers, Woolston & Sons and H.J. Storey, maker of the 'Ruby' Cycles, whose advertisement depicts an elephant seated on one of his 'Jumbo' bikes.

It would be great to have more details of these men who were once such an important part of local life.

Now the Heritage Lottery Fund has backed a two-year project to document the Mill Road area. It is being launched with a display at the Playhouse Cinema, currently the Sally Anne's charity shop, which opens today and runs till 25th May. If you are able to assist, or have things that should be recorded then contact the Mill Road History Project, email millroadhistoryproject@gmail.com

A News' photograph of the early 1980s shows a greengrocers shop across the bridge in Romsey Town, looking somewhat different to one we saw in the battle area. And although cycling elephants may not be a regular feature of Mill Road today, the area has had its experience of errant animals as a correspondent to the paper in September 1903 recorded:

Sir – last evening I met three horses running loose and apparently unattended along Mill Road. Some distance behind them two men were being dragged along by a young horse which they were evidently trying to 'break in'. Carts, cycles and other users of the road overtaking them had to slow down until they could dash past & foot passengers had to seek safety in doorways. These things ought not to be allowed in our streets

Pictures

'Afghan' street – Norfolk style

'Afghan' green grocer

Mill Road green grocer

Mill Road when the horse was king c1910

'Jumbo' on bike made in Mill Road, 1897

Playhouse at opening 1913 – now Sally Anne's

Interior of the Playhouse when a cinema

Memories 20 May 2013 by Mike Petty

Coronation Street was once part of Cambridge's 'Royalty Square' connecting with George IV Street, Prince's Street and Queen Street.

It had started life as part of the New Town that grew up on the west side of Hills Road following the enclosure of the Barnwell open fields in 1807. The names have strong Regal connection but need to be put in the context of the time

Before his accession George IV had been Prince Regent during the madness of his father, George III. He'd married Caroline of Brunswick in 1785 but their relationship was not an easy one. He accused her of adultery and left her for a Mrs Fitzherbert. When George succeeded to the throne in 1820 he tried to prevent Caroline from attending his Coronation at Westminster Abbey. Many Cambridge people believed 'Queen' Caroline had been badly treated and there were town and gown riots on Market Hill with 250 special constables sworn in to try and keep the peace. Although the University voted a loyal address they also voiced their detestation of infidelity.

Over the years various readers have recalled their memories of the area.

Jim Langford was born in Coronation Street in September 1921 and spent many happy years of his early life there, he recalled in March 2008: "I would often be sent to the snug at the Ship pub to fetch my grandmother a jug of ale". Across the road stood St Paul's Institute, which he used to attend and where he threw fireworks in the reading room. The street was lit with gas lamps: "I would wait eagerly for the gas man to come and light them. When he arrived on his bicycle he would use a long steel pole which he poked through a flap under the lamp at its base and light the mantle above. If I was lucky or near enough I was allowed to operate the trigger and do the job for him", he wrote.

"On the same side of the street there were various shops: Daisly and Stubbs, general stores, Maskels the barber, Gillingham who sold hardware, firelighters and coal, Barbers joinery and undertakers. I could write much more but I am sure it would bore the pants off you", he'd added.

One of the great characters was Albert Craske, who had a muffin and crumpet bakery. In November 1980 Mrs Clare Driver, one of his daughters, recalled that he'd set up after the Great War. It was hard work; muffins were made of a dough, crumpets from batter. They were all mixed by hand so they had to be up at four in the morning to beat the mixture. Muffins and crumpets were supplied to all the Cambridge colleges, several cake shops and to places as far afield as March and Chatteris, to which Albert travelled by train. He was also given patronage by the Prince of Wales who became Edward VII. Apparently he had sampled some of these muffins on a visit to Cambridge, liked them so much that, when he came racing, Albert sent a supply to Newmarket by bicycle!

His wife, Harriet, was on call to anyone in trouble, the dying, those in labour at child birth, the sick - people used to come and knock the door at all hours of the day or night asking for her help.

In February 1983 a News reporter visited the Jug and Bottle at the Panton Arms where a tight knot of locals were wont to congregate in deep discussion. She chatted to two of the older residents. Frederick Christian and his wife Alice recalled when it used to be a real community with two breweries, three pubs, a general store, hardware shop, tailor's and a greengrocer's.

Small houses with pretty cottage gardens lined the street and the inhabitants knew each other's business in the nicest possible way. It was all families in those days – some with two, three, four or five children. “We knew everybody. You really did know people, although we were not in and out of each others’ houses much, Mr Christian told her.

Change came when the council demolished ‘Royalty Square’ and rehoused residents in new blocks of flats in the 1960s. More work bulldozed the Victorian streetscape into the twentieth century and by 1983 it was one of the most modern-looking in Cambridge.

Now current residents of the area are seeking to recreate some of the old spirit by organising a party to emulate that staged on Coronation Day, 1953. It will be held at St Paul’s Church, Hills Road, on Saturday 1st June from 2-5 pm. There will be people dressed in ‘50s clothes, period games such as Pin the Tail on the Donkey and even fish paste sandwiches.

A prime attraction will be a wonderful series of photographs showing the scene in Coronation Street 60 years ago. They would love to put names to some of the faces. Were you one, do you recognise somebody

Contact Lydia Lebus - lydialebus@hotmail.com
Or John Quysner - johnq@centrestpauls.org.uk

Or drop me a line and I’ll put you in touch

Pictures

9126 – Coronation Street 1972 showing new flats with St Paul’s church in background

0006 – similar view at the Coronation Street party, 1953

2001, 1005, 1006 details of party

George IV Street, party of ‘Royalty Square’ 1950s

Memories 27 May 2013 by Mike Petty

Flora Falanaki from Auckland, New Zealand has emailed me a photo of a group of Officer Cadets that was taken by Thomas Stearn of Cambridge in 1917

It shows her grandfather, Albert Victor Waitford (later changed to Waetford) on the 3rd row down, looking to his left. On the lower right-hand side he has recorded handwritten a note to his parents dated 5.7.1917.

Flora will be visiting Cambridge in September and would like to visit the actual place where it was taken ffalanaki@orcon.net.nz

The Garrison (22nd) Officer Cadet Battalion was formed in December 1916 with its headquarters at Westcott House, Jesus Lane. Companies were accommodated in Jesus, Sidney Sussex, Magdalene, Gonville and Caius and Trinity Hall colleges.

Albert was part of the Maori Pioneer Battalion and later wrote about his wartime experiences in a article published in his local paper, The Wanganui Chronicle. Amongst the others in the

photograph is Rikihana Carkeek who went on to publish 'Home Little Maori Home, A Memoir of the Maori Contingent 1914-1916'. Flora visited and spoke to his 77 year old daughter Nellie Carkeek in Otaki, New Zealand, a few days ago.

Albert may also have met John Lawton who went to Magdalene College as an Officer Cadet in January 1917. Whilst there he penned letters which were published by his son, Ray Lawton of Cottenham in 2001 under the title "A soldier writes home – John Lawton's wartime letters"

John recorded: "Our College is a magnificent old pile with many fine traditions. The Cadets here are collected from all parts of the United Kingdom & from nearly every regiment in the British Army. The majority of them are N.C.O.'s, but some of them belong to the R.A.M.C., & do not know much drill. They are all very nice & pukah gentlemen"

Their daily routine started with roll call at 7.30 am and progressed through physical training, drill, map reading, engineering and trench digging lectures till bed at 10.15

But as well as learning to be soldiers, they had to learn to be officers and gentlemen: "We are treated as officers all the way through & are to behave ourselves generally as 'cadets & gentlemen'". They mixed with the few undergraduates left in the college – invariably public-school boys - & every evening they dined in Hall with the Dons. The table was covered thick with plate emblazoned with the college arms & lighted by innumerable red-shaded candles.

A Latin Grace was said and then all that one could hear was the tinkle of silver & the subdued murmur of conversation. It was a memory that was to last, for John Lawton survived the war, trained as a teacher and obtained his first headship at Dry Drayton School in 1927.

There were practicalities to be considered: "We have to provide ourselves with cadet uniform. However the usual procedure is to buy better cloth & to have it made into officers' uniform so that it will be ready for us when we get gazetted. Otherwise we shall have to discard the ordinary cadet uniform in a few months time & that would be a waste of money. We are all practically certain of getting our commission: in the last two classes only one chap failed to pass the final exam, and even he got his commission" Given the slaughter in the trenches officers were badly needed at the front

The contrast between the peace of Cambridge and the horrors of the trenches was captured in a poem of 1918 by Alan Mackintosh of the Seaford Highlanders. After being gassed at the Front he taught bombing to the Cambridge cadets for eight months and became engaged to Sylvia Marsh, daughter of a Quaker family. They planned to make their home in New Zealand when it was all over. It was not to be: Alan returned to his Regiment and was shot through the head shortly afterwards..

In a poem entitled 'Cambridge' he'd written

Here there is peace and easy living,
And a warm fire when the rain is driving,
There is no sound of strong men striving,
Here where the quiet waters flow,
But I am hearing the bullets ringing,
Hearing the great shells onward winging,
The dead men's voices are singing, singing,
And I must rise and go.

Back to the trench that I see so clearly,
Back to the fight I can see so nearly,
Back to the friends that I love so dearly,
The dead men lying amid the dew,

The droning sound of the great shells flying,
Filth and honour, and pain, and dying
Dead friends of mine, oh, cease your crying,
For I come back to you.

The Cadets recorded their own experiences in various souvenir publications copies of which are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library. Some include the autographs of the men for whom a Cambridge Education was a brief period of peace before a return to the horror of war. It will be a first stopping-point for Flora when she makes her way here in September.

‘Home Little Maori Home, A Memoir of the Maori Contingent 1914-1916’ by Rikihana Carkeek (Totika Publications January 2003)

‘In the Pink’ : the letters of Lieutenant John Lawton, 1915-19 / John Lawton ; edited by Raymond Lawton (Audley and District Family History Society, 2003)

“War, the Liberator and other pieces” by E.A. Mackintosh, (Bodley Head 1918) can be read online on the Internet Archive website

Pictures

Group of Officer Cadets, 1917

Details: Alan Waitford, centre left and wider shot showing inscription at bottom of photo

Punch cartoon showing cadets in college

Echo Echo – souvenir from St Johns

The Blimp, souvenir of Cadets at Christ’s College 1917

Autographs of some of the soldiers from a copy of the Blimp in the Cambridgeshire Collection

Cartoon from the Blimp depicting cadets at lectures

Additional notes

to ffalanaki

28 May 2013

Dear Mike

Thank you so much for being able to publish our story along with other documented accounts from that time – it is fascinating that these accounts could be published together after so many years. I have spoken to my Mum and she is so pleased that when we visit we’ll be a little bit closer to where her father trained nearly 100 years ago. We will let you know what information comes through.

Before visiting Cambridge on Wednesday 18th September, on Tuesday 17th we plan to go to the Commonwealth War Grave of my husband David’s great-grandfather Pvt Filitoua (service no. 16/1046), from Niue Island who was part of the Maori Pioneer battalion WWI, buried at Hornchurch (St Andrew) Churchyard, Essex 19 June 1916, and then on Saturday 21st September, my grand uncle Eugene Waetford – who is my grandfather Albert

Victor's 1st cousin (service no. 16/1297) at Longuenesse (St Omer) Souvenir Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France.

The Auckland War Memorial Museum sent us the attached Scroll which contains the signature of the Pioneer (Maori) Battalion and was presented to the ships captain at the time. Albert Victor's signature is 9th down from the 1st column in the closer picture.

Interestingly Albert Victor was named after his uncle Albert Victor Pomare who was the first Maori born in England and was the son of Hare & Hariata Pomare and became the godson of Queen Victoria – he was born around 1864. I have also attached the photo of myself (on the right) and Nellie Carkeek holding the original photograph.

Thank you once again.

Flora Falanaki
Grand-daughter of Albert Victor Waetford

Memories 2nd June 2013 by Mike Petty

Recent television programmes focussing on Votes for Women cause me to reflect on what was happening locally.

Generally the struggle for the Parliamentary vote was conducted in Cambridge and the neighbouring villages by serious political lobbying, torchlight processions and debate. Such meetings usually passed peacefully though occasionally there were protests, some of them rowdy.

Cambridge's early experience of more disruptive protestors came in December 1907 when ladies shouted 'Votes for Women' as the War Minister left a meeting in the town. The following November a reporter described a 'very exciting' incident when a struggling female had to be carried out of a meeting - they would soon find out that Cambridge was not a congenial place for this sort of activity, the paper commented.

However the ladies were not to be ignored: 1910 saw a visit from the leading militant, Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst, who was greeted with hostile demonstrations. Next year a local minister's wife was arrested during a suffragette raid on the House of Commons and women walked the streets of Cambridge to avoid being counted on census night.

In 1912 a large crowd gathered when a militant suffragist spoke from the back of a lorry as it made its way across Parker's Piece – pushed from one side to the other by a large crowd of unruly youths. The Conservative Women's Franchise Association was formed, and the University Men's League for Women's Suffrage lobbied on their behalf but it was the suffragettes that hit the headlines.

They disrupted a garden party at Magdalene College, landed by boat at St Johns College to paint the gates purple, green and white before daubing "Votes for Women" on the stone work, and generally caused such mayhem that Colleges closed their gates during the Long Vacation.

Women even tried to set fire to the Varsity rugby pavilion – or did they? It was claimed that an improvised bomb had been found in a mustard tin with, nearby, a 'Votes for Women' card

and a lady's shoe she'd – apparently - left when dashing away from the scene. However several of the 'suffragette' outrages were later confirmed as undergraduate hoaxes

There was no dispute of one act of incendiarism. Early one Saturday morning in May 1913 two plain clothed policemen spotted smoke coming from newly-built houses in Storeys Way. The new motor fire engine roared off from St Andrews street, followed shortly afterwards by the firemen, some cycling, some running and some riding in a covered van. They were too late to save the home of a widow lady, Mrs Spencer. Flames had quickly spread to the upper rooms and roof, leaving the £1,150 house a charred shell

The adjacent property being built for H.A. Roberts of Gonville and Caius had resisted attempts to set light to it. However the newly appointed Professor of Genetics was not so fortunate. There was no sign of fire when the brigade arrived at his house but very shortly afterwards flames were spotted and damage caused to a staircase and some woodwork.

Detective Sergeant Marsh was set on the case. He discovered somebody had broken in through the study window, poured paraffin over sawdust and packing cases and set them on fire. There were three clues: bloodstains from broken glass, footprints and a ladies gold watch. On Wednesday he travelled to Norwich and arrested a schoolteacher.

The accused, Miss Miriam Pratt, was an active Suffragette. She admitted being in Cambridge on the evening in question and she had a fresh wound on her hand. The crucial evidence was the watch, a present from her uncle, a Norwich policeman. She was convicted and sentenced to 18 months hard labour but went on hunger strike and was released in October.

When women were accorded the parliamentary vote in 1928 the Cambridge Committee for Equal Citizenship celebrated with a meeting at Newnham College. Invitations were sent out to all members of the Cambridge Women's Suffrage Association to meet Dame Millicent Fawcett, one of the most prominent fighters in their cause. She had been one of those attending the inaugural meeting of the Women's Suffrage Association in Cambridge in 1888 along with the Mayor and Vice Chancellor. Sadly she was unable to attend but those present recalled their part in the struggle, the battles they had fought with undergraduates and the support they'd received from certain University dons.

One of the most militant of the suffragettes spent her latter years living quietly in a local village. Miss Mary Richardson had slashed the famous Rokeby Venus in the National Gallery as a protest against the imprisonment of their leader Mrs Pankhurst, she'd planted a bomb which practically demolished a new railway station at Birmingham and set fire to a big uninhabited country house. Mary served many sentences in Holloway and wrote a book about her experiences called 'Laugh a Defiance'. She settled at Castle Camps intending to keep ducks 'to provide birds for the tables of the Cambridge colleges'. But her heart failed her when it came to killing them and in the end there were over three hundred birds running free.

Do you have other stories of militant or more peaceful struggles by Cambridgeshire women that should be added to the history books. Write to Mike Petty at the News

Pictures

Votes for Women – from Cambridge election postcard 1910

The house in Storey's Way destroyed by fire

Suffrage stall on Peas Hill

Suffrage banner in St John's Street 1913

Suffrage march King's Parade 1913

Suffrage lady – not local

Memories 10 June 2013 by Mike Petty

The recent discovery at Whittlesey of a number of Bronze Age boats that had been abandoned centuries ago on the edge of watercourses is nothing new. Ely historian John Titterton painted a picture of one such craft found in the fens near Manea in the 1880s: "she came up when the fen was drained. Grandfather pecked her to pieces".

Antiquarians might lament such destruction, but once such craft are removed from their watery graves they will crumble away without specialist, expensive, conservation. More recently such a fate has overtaken the wooden remains of fenland lighters discovered in various fenland backwaters.

Originally pulled by horses they were later towed by steam tugs such as the Olga and Nellie. These were joined on the river about 1900 by the 'Nancy', a steam driven barge which plied between Kings Lynn and Cambridge carrying whatever cargo she could, principally timber and bricks, until 1914. It was then towed to near Ely railway bridge to be cut up for scrap. But the work proved too expensive and she was left to rot until the 1940's. Then when the Ouse was widened Ted Appleyard dug a hole on the Babylon site, dragged Nancy out of the water and dumped her in it. She was rediscovered in 1981 during excavation work on a new marina

Nancy II, a successor 70-foot long steel diesel-driven barge from Holland, was brought by Cambridge boat builders H.C. Banham in 1927 to carry goods along the fenland waterways, unloading at the Pike & Eel. The River Cam Conservators were approached to make the river navigable up to the Quayside near Magdalene Bridge. This would involve dredging but they had recently taken a lot of trouble to make Jesus Green a beauty spot and would not sanction the mud being placed on the grass. Nancy II was taken out of service after nine months: she was really too big to pass through the locks and the tall chimney made it difficult to squeeze under the bridges on the tidal section of the river.

An older craft, the Viscountess Bury, is still fondly recalled. A pleasure boat originally powered by 200 storage batteries, she was on charter to the Prince of Wales for four seasons. It then became a public passenger launch plying the Thames until acquired by H.C. Banham in 1910 and brought around the East coast to the Cam. Here it gave pleasure trips to numerous groups and individuals including a young A.F. (Bill) Leach who in 1911 paid his sixpence to take a voyage down to Clayhithe, admiring the bright varnish and polished brass of what had once been described as "the largest electric launch in the world".

Bill became a school teacher with an abiding love for things mechanical. In 1926 he discovered an old steam boat capsized and sunk beneath a boat builder's shop. It was the first of a number of craft that he was to restore. For twenty years this relic of a bygone age could be seen steaming up the river, a dirty, stinking old thing to some, a source of unmitigated delight to its owner who renamed her 'Kathleen' after his wife. But finally the hull was just too weak for the choppy waters of the Cam.

One day Bill was in Banham's boatyard when someone called in with a steam engine in the boot of his car. It had come from a tender called 'Artemis', which was being converted to a motor boat. Bill journeyed to an Essex creek where he discovered an elegant little boat built of teak and cedar. He acquired the hull and machinery on the spot and arranged its transfer to Cambridge. There it was restored by Banhams Boatyard and the engine reinstated.

This remarkable survivor of a bygone age is still gracing the Cam well maintained by the craftsmen at Two Tees boatyard, Chesterton and with a new steam boiler soon to be installed

will hopefully be around for many years to come. But just as it comes on to the market, so does the yacht for which it was originally made as tender over a century ago.

‘Artemis’, a 94 ton racing yawl, was built in 1899 at the Summers & Payne yard in Southampton, famous for beautiful racing yachts. She participated in races right up until 1938 but during WW II was laid up as a house boat in West Mersea and her lead keel melted down for bullets. In 1994 what remained of the once-elegant yacht was sold and shipped to Germany where after an extensive refit she was brought back under sail in 2008. But planking below the waterline was found to have been infested by a fungus during her long period in the back waters of the Essex marshes. Repairs were started, but it all proved too big a job and she is up for sale at an asking price of 350,000 Euros.

History will show which survives longest, the yacht or her tender. And will the Bronze-age boats abandoned centuries ago now outlive them all.

Memories 17th June 2013 by Mike Petty

Last week an intrepid group of historians from March Museum journeyed deep into southern Cambridgeshire to see what may be the oldest fenman in the world.

He rests on a pew in Balsham church, carved with care some 750 years ago. The figure is kneeling and wearing a pleated ‘cotte’, cloak or kilt; his left hand is holding a dog on a leash and he has stilts strapped to his legs.

Then it was on to the remarkable, and largely forgotten Roman burial mounds at Bartlow. Several were removed by the railway as they constructed their track to others had been flattened by a farmer in the 1830s to release land for agriculture. There were other excavations in following decades. At that time rumours had spread about finds of glass urns, human ashes, a gold ring and various beakers dating back to the Roman times. And in each one there was also a large iron-bound locked wooden chest. Work was stopped until a group of academics and clergy had gathered. They watched while the ancient boxes were opened to reveal a glass vessel filled with the cremated ashes of a single body together with flower petals, incense that still smelt of frankincense or myrrh and bottles containing wine mixed with honey, and blood and milk. But the oddest thing of all had been a folding iron chair with a seat of leather straps.

Now the mounds stand hidden in trees, which are extending to the ancient slopes themselves, and nettles are growing up among the steep flight of steps that can be climbed to the impressive heights

But alongside lies a mansion whose peaceful gardens were scene of conflict in 1806 between the village parson and the University Professor of Anatomy.

The Rev Joseph Hall had lived in harmony in his peaceful parish since 1782. Then Professor Busick Harwood became tenant of Bartlow Hall alongside and decided to divert a footpath that ran across his grounds, moving it somewhat nearer the rectory. The Rector objected, saying it would encourage people to look into his garden. But Harwood moved it anyway. He also planted trees and erected unsightly fences which obstructed the view from the parson’s windows. Then – according to the rector – he strung up a skeleton to provide him with an alternative prospect.

At this rector was prompted to vent his spleen in a letter, adding: “Schemes of reprisal have been shewn to me, one of which is calculated to destroy the beauty of your grounds; but I

cannot imitate your example. If ever you should be in want of bread, I will have no difficulty in denying it to you”.

Things deteriorated and the matter went to court. The Professor agreed that he had erected a skeleton but claimed it was there to frighten thieves who had robbed his garden. And anyway he'd taken it down the next day – given the shortage of bodies for anatomists to work on a skeleton was too valuable an object to be hung in a garden. The court came to its conclusion and fined the Rector as a punishment.

Bartlow is just over the border in Essex and so the remarkable dispute is not featured in a new book on historic Cambridge gardens.

But the story of nearby Horseheath Hall whose grounds were initially landscaped in the 1660s and changed eight years later is illustrated with an estate plan giving a glimpse of a now-forgotten grandeur. The owner in the 1770s had a taste for extravagant living and was soon in debt; the house was stripped of its furniture and the plants auctioned off. Later the mansion was demolished and even a newly-erected greenhouse sold. Today almost all of the parkland has been ploughed up.

The study by Professor Timothy Mowl and Dr Laura Mayer records the achievements of others to create peaceful havens, be they the grand works of Capability Brown or the lost gardens of Humphry Repton, University college gardens or the smaller oases of peace surrounding Village Colleges or private homes. It is an essential addition to the shelves of any garden-lover

Historic Gardens of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely by Timothy Mowl & Laura Mayer.
Redcliffe £19.95 ISBN 987-10908326-32-4

Pictures

Bartlow Hills c1900

Visitors climb Bartlow Hills (not the March group)

Archaeologists on Bartlow Hills 1920s

Balsham fen man with dog and stilts – carving on pew

Busick Harwood who strung up a skeleton to deter garden thieves at Bartlow

Bartlow – colour view c 1910 – was not always peaceful

Madlingley Hall gardens c1707

Memories 24th June 2013 by Mike Petty

The Ministry of Defence has now released the last of its official logs of Unidentified Flying Objects, covering sightings from 1997 to November 2009 when they closed down their UFO Hotline

Locally there are no dramatic claims of alien abductions though the log includes sightings of a long, thick, red streak which shot across the sky at Huntingdon at 20.56 on 11th February 2008. There was a silver ball of light attached to the front of it. It was rather large. The ball then got bigger and burst, they report

In August 2009 a Retired merchant seaman saw glider like objects in the sky flying around in an anti-clockwise direction at Hauxton. In November that year, just before seven in the morning, a Haddenham observer saw a large bright white light; there was no trailing light ray

ground-wards and no sound or vibration, so it was not a police helicopter or aircraft heading for Mildenhall. Then in April 2007 fifty objects, each with a single orange light gathered over Duxford before ascending directly upwards.

Now mysterious lights in the night sky are probably Chinese Lanterns which have been blamed for starting fires in trees or killing grazing cattle who come across them in the fields.

There have been confirmed reports from previous centuries. In 1785 an old man and a boy witnessed an apparition that descended from the heavens into the field in which they were working near Soham. The lad fled, his companion stood his ground - too scared to move; then seeing the shape appearing motionless he approached it - "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, what are you, speak and tell me" ... Reassured, he put it over his shoulder and carried it into the village – probably telling increasingly enhanced tales of how he had slain the fire-breathing dragon.

Others have reported seeing flying horses – but these reports were true. Mr Green senior, a celebrated balloonist made an ascent from Cambridge on horseback – or so an 1829 handbill claims. As he drifted over the countryside people looked up from their cottage gardens and watched as things descended from the basket to the ground beneath. Those keen on roses went running out. What they found were mice on parachutes!

In June 1909 there was such concern about unidentified flying objects that a postcard was produced depicting Sawston folk watching the skies. There were reports that an unknown airship whose nocturnal wanderings in East Anglia had caused such a sensation had been seen in Downham Fen. Other people observed something heading in the direction of Littleport while William Lack stated that when he was in Taylor's Lane, Swavesey, at 2.30 am, he saw a large object in the sky. It had a strong light at its head and another at its tail and appeared to be passing towards Huntingdon. However a police constable, who was patrolling at the same time, saw nothing of the apparition

In October 1913 a flying object came down in Eddy Read's field near Sutton Gault. This was not unidentified: it was an advertising blimp with 'Give her Bovril' on its envelope. But a couple of years later there was a more threatening presence in the clouds. In September 1915 a German Zeppelin crossed the coast between King's Lynn and Terrington St. Clement before following the railway to Downham Market. There the commander made a mistake in navigation and followed the Bedford Level, instead. When he was over Mepal he realized that he was off course and dropped a flare, startling villagers, who had been disturbed by the engines of the prowling Zeppelin and had come out to see if they could spot her. The light of the flare showed him his error and he crossed the branch line running west to St. Ives and Huntingdon, passed Haddenham and Histon, crossed the north-west sector of Cambridge and continued his bombing raid on London.

More recently in October 1985 students at Cambridge's Magdalene College were woken by the sound of something scraping over the roof. It was the steel cable of a wartime barrage balloon that had broken away from R.A.F. Cardington carrying weather instruments. It had dragged its wire rope thirty miles across country before becoming hooked on scaffolding. The College was evacuated whilst it was winched to the ground.

They were right to be worried. For in September 1940 a large barrage balloon had drifted over Cambridge when its trailing cable threw a wireless pole through the roof of a house in Mill Road. The interior of the house was not damaged and nobody was injured. The balloon then gained height and drifted in the direction of Teversham where the cable struck an old chimney stack at Teversham Hall before it shot up into the air and continued in an easterly direction. Telephone wires were damaged and the electricity supply affected for a time.

But there was a tragic side to the story: a 60-year-old platelayer, named as Daniel Dunston, was working on the railway between Mill Road and Coldham's Lane bridge when he was caught by the trailing wire and carried up into the air for a distance of over 30 yards before being dropped, sustaining fatal injuries.

Do you have tales of unexplained aerial sightings? The Government's files may now be closed but the News would be happy to hear them

Pictures

139.47 Mr Green and his flying horse

143.07 general view of balloon over cottage

5813 The Bovril blimp at Sutton Gault

8549 the barrage balloon that caused Magdalene to be evacuated

Sawston looking for object at Sawston 1909

Memories 1st July 2013 by Mike Petty

Last Thursday Stretham was awakened from its customary post-lunch calm by the boom of explosions. Looking out of their windows villagers were greeted by the sight of a massive, black cloud of smoke obscuring the afternoon sky over Top Street

Something was obviously very wrong. Beyond the windmill, just across the A10, some of the industrial units in what was formerly a farmyard, were blazing furiously. Police closed the roads as wailing sirens heralded the approach of fire engines while the flames burned fiercely. It was a frightening reminder of the power of fire. But it was not the first time that lesson had been learned

On May Day 1844 came what the Cambridge Chronicle newspaper reported as: "One of the most awful fires which it was ever our province to record. The destruction of property is enormous ... houses have been razed to the ground, including habitations of wealthy agriculturalists and humble labourers.

The fire started at Mr John Wesley's blacksmith's shop in Read's Street. Although at first just a small fire it spread with great speed to the adjoining farmyard and from there along the street. In little more than one hour 25 homes were ablaze. The thatched buildings and farmyards were tinder dry and nothing could be done to check the flames.

People who thought their own premises safe and went to help others found to their horror that they too were burnt out. Some lost 'every chip and every rag, save the garments they happened to have on at the time'.

On the south side of Top Street the fire destroyed the property of John Wesley blacksmith & Mr Boulentaft the miller. Farmer William Wright lost his barns and stacks, though his house was saved. Mr S. Coy, farmer, lost his house barns, outbuildings, stacks and stock, Mr I Murfitt his house, furniture, barns etc as did Mr Lester, a butcher, Mr Jackson & S.Wright. Mr Philips, a baker, lost his house and 'in fact every thing'. There were six families in almshouses who were burnt out, along with John Wheeler, a shoemaker & brewer before the fire was checked on this side of the street at a cow-lodge belonging to Mr Hazel.

On the other side the victims were R. Wheeler - house and out-buildings, Mr Gibbons shoemaker who lost every thing, Mr Dimock, Mr Langford, a linen-draper - house, furniture, stock-in-trade. Mr J. Baxter, harness maker & J. Savidge, tailor also lost everything they possessed.

Mr T. Grainger, farmer, saw his barn, stables, every out-building and stock consumed. His barn was the largest in the county but nothing but the walls were left, and so intense was the heat that the brickwork seems in some places to have been almost molten. The house was saved. However Levi Langford, Mr Dring, a veterinary surgeon & Messrs Sennitt and Graves all lost their homes.

The desolation was heart-rending & the Church was made the receptacle of the furniture that could be saved. Those 30 families burnt out of house and home were looked after as well as could be, several taking shelter in the church until their premises could be rebuilt. The Rev Baber organised subscriptions for the relief of the suffering. It was estimated that damage between £15,000 and £20,000 had been caused.

Work commenced to rebuild. Some started from scratch. others added new bricks to the remains of the old properties. Several properties still have plaques bearing the date 1844, a reminder of the devastation of one day's events of 169 years ago. For years a long pole with a hook on the end hung on the wall of one of the village barns. It was used to pull the burning thatch from cottage roofs. Similar poles can still be seen in Needingworth, Linton and other villages.

It might have been worse: in 1844 the fire engine was rushed from Haddenham and thanks to their efforts, the paper reported, 'may be attributed the saving of the great part of the village'. Last Thursday appliances forced their way through traffic halted due to the smoke and flames that closed the Cambridge-Ely road and turned the sky black.

Other drivers were faced with lengthy diversions and extended journeys via Wilburton and Haddenham as they made their way home to Ely. But they too were fortunate. For today the road from Wilburton towards Stretham and Wicken is due to be closed for major resurfacing. Thank goodness it was not last week!

Pictures

The warehouse fire
Smoke over the windmill
The sky turns black over Ely cathedral

Top Street was razed in 1844
A reminder of the fire – a plaque on a Top Street house
Stretham fire hook 1930s – several villages still have them on display
Some houses rebuilt – new white bricks added to remains of an old wall – house itself since demolished

Report of the fire, 1844
List of some who lost properties, 1844

Memories 9th July 2013 by Mike Petty

It is one of my earliest memories. I was standing with my Nan in her garden, beside the hutch in which Grandad kept his ferrets. And the sky was filled with planes. It was a memory that returned last Sunday when a Lancaster bomber made sweeps over the former wartime airfield at Mepal. But what was the occasion?

Then – quiet out of the blue – Mike Bowyer, the expert on all things aeronautical – sent me the answer without me having asked the question. For he had seen the same thing. It was a rehearsal for the Coronation Review of the Royal Air Force 60 years ago.

Mike Bowyer writes:

Central Cambridge, lunch time, 9 June, 1953. From the north a thunderous roar approached, produced by 36 RAF Avro Lincoln bombers some from Upwood. Following came 11 Boeing Washingtons (RAF B-29s). A dozen Canberras – several from Bassingbourn - passed over a little later. Not since 1945 had so many aircraft been seen together over Cambridgeshire.

All were participants in the first of ten ever bigger practises held that month for the RAFs largest and most demanding fly-past ever undertaken. It was to end H.M the Queen's Coronation Review of the Royal Air Force, held at Odiham, Hampshire, on 15 July 1953.

At Duxford I watched much of the assembly of the last full practice. It involved 637 slow or fast, big or small aeroplanes, of which 440 were jet propelled. Included were five new Lockheed Neptunes from distant Kinloss which overflowed Cambridge before slotting in with other types heading westerly. Some 45 Lincolns half orbited before joining the ever lengthening procession. Then nearly 200 Meteor 8s, 36 Vampires and 24 Venoms arrived overhead.

Literally within seconds, hundreds of aircraft were slipping in to a 49 element parade. Meanwhile a not inconsiderable number of unwanted 'spare aircraft' were flying in the opposite direction. It was an amazing sight.

Vampire 5 trainers and Meteor 4s of 206 AFS Oakington, (a dozen of each) joined in along with 24 Meteor 8s of 64 and 65 Squadrons which formed the Duxford Wing together with 24 Meteors, of Nos 56 and 63 Squadrons from Waterbeach. Then from 2TAF in Germany, 24 of the RAFs 'new' F-86E Sabres raced off from Duxford over which, just momentarily, the sky seemed full of aircraft.

Living in Cambridge or nearby at the time, almost daily and for nearly a month one had 'the last chance' to see hundreds of RAF aeroplanes flying together. Disturbingly, like many of the 300 aircraft on the ground for Review, a high proportion were obsolete. One formation of 12 Airspeed Oxford pilot trainers included planes overhauled in wartime by Marshalls.

But Mike did not just glimpse the rehearsal: he was in at the event itself.

Starting the Fly-Past, a Sycamore rescue helicopter flew by at 98 mph. Incredibly precise timing made enormous demands upon every participant. Each formation had to catch up with slower aircraft ahead in order to pass the saluting dais without a break and at the designated moment.

Lincolns, 18 from Upwood, flew at 166 mph, Vampires at 305 mph, and all the Meteors behind at 345 mph. A continuous stream of groups of aircraft flew by the Queen for nearly half-an-hour. Last of 639 aircraft were an early Hawker Hunter and finally the 'latest' Swift F Mk 4 fighter flown at 667 mph by test pilot Mike Lithgow who turned on the re-heat as he concluded the fly-past at exactly 16.07 hrs BST.

For the aircrews the event was far from over. Safely homing so many very assorted formations over much of the southern half of Britain was highly demanding. There was little time to play with and, over Cambridge, Meteors seemed to fill the sky.

Positioned at the Review by an Airspeed Oxford, I came very close to Queen Elizabeth II. I was amazed to see how much like any '20 something' she looked. She spoke and laughed with an RAF officer, looked my way and smiled! I was thrilled, but I'm not sure whether I dared to smile back. I remember thinking how nice and incredibly young she looked, the sort of girl to whom one would like to say 'Hi!' No, I didn't chance my luck, 'The Duke' was too close by...

As Dad and I motored home I thought 'how lovely to be able speak of "my" air force'! How daunting, and surely at times frightening, to have held high office at such a young age. Your Majesty, you did it brilliantly, and you continue to do so!

Mike Bowyer Pictures

HM Queen Elizabeth II Odiham Review 15 7 53.jpg

280K [View](#) [Download](#)

Airspeed Oxfords in flypast 15 7 53 Odiham - very much a wartime sight over Cambridge, but I never ever saw 12 together. Indeed such a formation must have been almost unique.

HRH Prince Philip meets a Cranwell cadet Odiham 15 7 53.jpg

134K [View](#) [Download](#)

Upwood Lincolns over Jesus Green 30 6 53

Other items

Programme for the review

Crowds inspect planes at Waterbeach Airfield, Sept 1956

Back home – a pilot returns

Memories 15th July 2013 by Mike Petty

Bernie Wallman of Great Shelford has sent me a most interesting picture. It shows members of all the racing pigeon clubs in Cambridge preparing their entries for a competition to celebrate the Coronation in 1953

There were three Cambridge clubs with others at Histon, Shelford and Ely. The Cambridge City Homing Society was the oldest whilst the Cambridge Premier had its headquarters at the Station Hotel, Station Road. The Romsey Town and District Homing Society was based at the Corner House pub on Newmarket Road, which is where this picture was taken – one can clearly see the old gas works at the rear that supplied Cambridge with town gas for so many years

Bernie can identify many of the fanciers of the day whose families enjoyed the sport over several generations. Today there are at least three descendants of those photographed that still race pigeons in the area. It also shows the publican of the Corner House pub, Harry Habbin and his wife. Harry was a leading light in the early days of Cambridge United as the Habbin Stand testifies.

Before a race members gathered to mark their birds. Each pigeon had a closed band on one leg containing its unique number. A numbered rubber band was attached to the other leg and they were taken to the railway station for the long journey North before being released to find their way back to their home lofts. On arrival calculations were need to compute the bird's velocity – the distance of each loft being precisely known.

The time taken depended on winds: in July 1913 a pigeon owned by Mr F. Pollard of Pratt Street, Soham, was released from Perth in Scotland at 7.10 on the Saturday morning and got to its Soham loft at 2.27pm – a distance of nearly 320 miles in about seven hours. This was an average of nearly 46 miles an hour. Nowadays, Bernie says, on a calm day a bird will fly at about 40 mph, coming down to 30mph with a head wind but soaring up to 60-70 with a strong tail-wind.

One of the most successful local fanciers was Ray Farrington who outshone his father and grandfather by becoming the first man from Cambridgeshire to win Britain's premier homing pigeon race, the North Road Championship Club from Lerwick in 2010. His pigeon completed a marathon 558-mile flight from the Shetland Isles back to Ray's loft in 18 hours and 20 minutes, a better time than any other bird in the country – including pigeons from the Queen's own lofts at Sandringham.

The Royal involvement with the sport can be dated back to 1886 when King Leopold II of the Belgians gave racing pigeons to the Royal Family as a gift and they started a racing loft on the Sandringham Estate. But it can be traced in Cambridge back to the mid 1850s with a Canary, Pigeon, Rabbit and Poultry holding its fourth show in December 1859

The birds homing instinct played an important part during both World Wars, carrying messages of importance. In September 1917 the Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire urged people not to shoot pigeons seen flying singly; should any carrier and homing pigeon be shot by accident it should be taken to the nearest police station.

It was not the only problem facing fanciers: in March 1919 five lads appeared before the Cambridge Justices on a charge of stealing seven pigeons of the value of £10 (about £500 at today's prices). One of them, aged 16, had been before the court on five occasions for similar offences. Magistrates did not like to send a boy so young to prison but there was no chance for the lad unless they marked this offence and made the boy realise how serious it was. He was sent to prison for a month with hard labour. The other lads were fined – they were too old to be birched.

Pigeon racing is a sport has given great satisfaction to thousands of people for generations, but one whose history seems not to have been recorded. If you have pictures or family stories, I'd be delighted to share them.

PICTURES

PREPARING FOR THE CORONATION PIGEON RACE, CORNER HOUSE PUB,
NEWMARKET ROAD

DETAIL OF MEN AND THEIR PIGEON BASKETS

A PIGEONS-EYE VIEW OF THE PUB AT JUNCTION NEWMARKET ROAD & RIVER
LANE

Memories 22nd July 2013 by Mike Petty

Charles Lingard Bell was born in 1854, the youngest of the five children of Charles and Ann Bell who were then living at 34 Gloucester Street, a 'rather squalid street' off Castle Street leading to his father's timber yard and business premises.

Cornfields and gardens came right up to the back of the house and his playground was the land around the County prison opposite. The castle moat was overgrown with elder and sloe and teemed with rabbits and bird nests. He and his friends were given food in the prison kitchens, played in the chapel and visited the debtors' quarters where they were treated to fruit cake (debtors had provisions sent in). There was also 'a fine garden with grapes and cabbages'. Rather gruesomely, they also played around the gallows, which were built in his father's yard before being taken across the road to the prison every time there was to be an execution.

Charles was sent to the nearby Cambridge & Home Academy where there were forty to fifty boys 'mostly of the lower orders'. There he learnt to write and was taught minimal Latin, Greek and French. In 1868, the family moved to a rather imposing terraced house at 73 Chesterton Road, now the site of Henry Giles House, where Charles lived until his death in 1941. In 1871 he started to compile a diary that he continued until 1938 which, together with some leather-bound sketchbooks, are preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Lion Yard Library.

By 1874 he Charles was training to be an architect in the office of William Milner Fawcett of Silver Street. This involved him spending much time touring the Cambridgeshire countryside drawing and measuring bridges and other structures, in preparation for building works. However he always took the opportunity to divert to sketch the local church and was pleased when he found one that had not yet been restored – “I went to old Chesterton church again to sketch. I have been there near a dozen times but the old Tower and spire are still unrestored, so I find something new every time” he noted. It could not last: the church was thoroughly restored in 1880 when some of the monuments he'd recorded were removed

By June 1878 he had left Fawcett's and set about trying to earn some money by entering competitions for small-scale architectural projects. He was unsuccessful and a year later noted “I have at last given up all thought & ideas of ever practising as an Architect myself. All my ambitious thoughts have vanished, died...”

He then had grand plans for producing a book of pen and ink drawings of Cambridgeshire and its churches, with notes on their memorials and bells, which he anticipated would take him ten years. It would have been a culmination of a lifetime's work, echoing the volume produced by the Lysons brothers in 1808. The material was compiled but the book was never published.

The manuscript was bought at auction in 2001 by Mike and Val Cowan of Gt Eversden. Now they have transcribed the handwritten text and reproduced Bell's illustrations including numerous coloured armorials in villages across the south of the county.

At Little Eversden he came across a shepherd resting on a tombstone while tending his sheep – perhaps Bell also used the monument as a place from which to draw. At other times he took photographs from which he produced his sketches. One of these shows the dovecote at Manor Farm, Barton. It was falling into ruins when he visited in 1914 but restored by its owners, St Catherine's College next year, when the thatched roof was replaced by slate. But where are the other photographs?

Mike Cowan has taken magnificent modern colour photographs of features described but never sketched by Bell. The result is two magnificent glossy volumes which are an essential addition to the library of any lover of Cambridgeshire and – more importantly – a long-overdue and fitting tribute to one of the county's greatest architectural illustrators.

“Antiquities of Cambridgeshire” by Charles Lingard Bell. 2 vols. ISBN 978-0-9551155-3, £100. (£60 plus p&p for local sales from Mike Cowham, phone 01223 262684 or email bell@brownsover.organgehome.co.uk)

Pictures

Coat-of-arms of the Steward family, Teversham

Lt Eversden church & detail of the shepherd

Gargoyle at Chesterton

Photo of the Dovecote at St Catherine’s Farm, Barton and his sketch

Choice of

Chesterton Church

A house at Milton

Gt Wilbraham church

Memories 29th July 2013 by Mike Petty

In July 1938, 75 years ago, Cambridge gained a new addition to its architecture with the completion of a scheme to transform Sussex Street from "a narrow, winding alley of ancient houses and shops, a picturesque survival of an older Cambridge, but none-the-less a slum" to one of its premier shopping destinations

There had been talk about change for many years: in 1865 residents objected to the widening of the narrow lane, concerned about the inconvenience created by the opening of the street to vehicular traffic. By 1904 Sussex Street was often blocked by traffic using it instead of Hobson Street where the pebbles were very uneven

Work finally started in 1930 when Sidney Sussex College announced plans for an artistically-designed crescent and colonnade of 12 shops and offices on the south side of the street.

This was a period of massive development in central Cambridge as the News observed: “There never was a time surely when there were so many works of destruction going on as at present. Little bits of old Cambridge are going one by one and elaborate new buildings are rising up in their place”. As the months past so both sides of Sidney Street were knocked down and rebuilt seeing the arrival of major new stores such as Sainsbury’s, Woolworths and Boots together with the Dorothy Café-restaurant and dancehall which was to remain the entertainment centre of Cambridge for over 30 years.

Around the corner in Sussex Street the first of the new shops opened in 1932. Then the College started on the north side.

It was all finished in July 1938 to great acclaim: Amongst the many improvements in Cambridge during the past few years there is none more striking than that which has been effected in Sussex Street. Those who recall the dark narrow lane of bygone days, with its overhanging roofs on either side, and its small, ill-lit shops, will hardly recognise the imposing street that has emerged from the builders’ hands

Amongst the early occupants were Rose’s Fashion Centre in the Colonnade. They sold attractive women's clothing at a reasonable price. Their sales attracted large crowds: in July 1953 the pressure of 200 people queuing outside broke one of the shop windows. It was a real family affair, the husbands standing for the wives from the early hours until the woman of the family herself arrived to try and grab some of the bargains such as gabardine suits reduced from seven guineas (£7.35) to 15s (75p) or a grey Melange coat at £1 (original price £8.8s.). Then there was Pigotts hardware shop which sold a wide range of tools, including up to 140 different types of pocket knife.

During a survey of shops in December 1980 the News featured Diane International hairdressers, “flamboyant and avant-garde, an experience in itself” who could create award winning styles with the flick of a comb. Charles Quality Leather had handbags, jewel cases, spirit flasks and gents dressing case while Millers Music Centre supplied televisions, hi-fi and records: “You can buy music for any age. If you do not know what your 13-year-old grandson requires the assistant will help. Although you may not know what ‘heavy metal’ means, Millers will”.

Times have changed, fashions and shops change too, but Sussex Street remains one of the most attractive of Cambridge shopping areas, described by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner as “the best piece of urban planning of the 20th century at Cambridge”

Pictures

38 07 22 The Transformation of Sussex Street – CDN 22 July 1938

9064 Sussex Street before development – “a picturesque survival of an older Cambridge, but none-the-less a slum”

Looking into Sussex Street from Sidney Street before development
Looking into Sussex Street from Hobson St before development

155.60 Sussex Street after completion in 1938

181.23 A 2013 view of Sussex Street taken by Claire L. Webb of Lt Thetford who specialises in taking modern versions of old pictures

Memories 5th August 2013 by Mike Petty

The present spell of hot weather has made travel by air-conditioned car the most pleasant of activities. It was not a luxury available to Thomas Baskerville in 1681. His experience were recorded in ‘Fenland Notes and Queries’ a wonderful miscellany of articles published between 1889 and 1908

“From Mildenhall we went the bank way through the depth and level of the fens, a great part of the way being by the river side. As we rode along this bank we saw here and there some poor cottages and wretched farms where some poor souls, at a hard rate, do weather out a winter to look after the cattle that feed here”

This was May after a dry winter and scorching dry spring or else it would hardly have been possible to make the journey so early in the year. But “As dry as it was we could hardly get over the rotten bridges with our horses, being glad to alight for fear they should break through and stick in the rotten bogs under them.

“The level from Mildenhall to Ely being nothing but turf or peat it is by its insufferable heat and dryth having exhausted all the moisture out of the ditches it was so suffocating hot by

means of the brimstone or sulphury vapours, we could hardly breathe or endure it, so that I generally think it was possible to have set the country on fire, the earth then so dry”.

The peat could indeed catch fire as in 1949 when firemen were called to Barnold crossing, Waterbeach, where the railway embankment had been alight for about a month and a considerable quantity of peat land was smouldering. It was notoriously difficult to extinguish and the firemen were out all night to try and contain it.

It was the combustible quality of the peat that made it a valuable fuel, as described in ‘The Lost Fens’ a new book by Prof Ian Rotherham of Sheffield Halam University. An ecologist and environmental historian, he views the transformation of the fens from wet bog to intensive arable as ‘England’s Greatest Ecological Disaster’. He contrasts various area of fenland across the country, detailing the wildlife and flora, the drainers and the fenland peat cutters

In 1909 there were some 300 men and boys, plus a few women, engaged in the turf industry in Wicken, Burwell and Reach. It was hard work: Men using beackets dug blocks of peat which had to be stacked and dried before they were ready for sale. Boys wheeled barrows loaded with peat along planks over drains. The turf diggers let them know that should they topple into the drain, barrow, turves and all, they would be compelled to buy a gallon of beer for their workmates. It happened quite often and caused fun more than anger, local historian Anthony Day has recorded.

Peat was not only used for burning. Crude dwellings were once made of turves bound in withers with roofs of osiers and reeds. The outer walls would receive a facing of clay to keep the weather out. A cottage pulled down in Lode Lane, Wicken some forty years ago revealed a layer of turves under the roof, each harder than bark.

Peat had a boost in 1921 when a miners’ strike reduced the amount of coal available and in 1935 there was still a demand for peat as fuel in private houses. It sold in Cambridge at a cost of twenty-four shillings for 600 pieces (technically called 1,000) delivered. While not suitable for closed stoves and grates it was very pleasant for the hearth fires found in many houses. It was clean to handle and took up little room when stacked. Orders should be placed as soon as possible not with a coal merchant but with the Cambridgeshire Rural Community Council at Cambridgeshire House, Hills Road

The last of the fenland peat diggers like Bert Bailey, Seth Badcock and Harold Sennitt have ceased to ply their hard trade & now we look to other fuels to keep our homes warm in the future. But perhaps peat could be an answer:

In 1908 James Smith wrote to the News: “The idea of electricity generated by peat gas appeals to residents in the Fen country where peat is so plentiful. The black swamp possesses theoretical heat values not far below coal when thoroughly dried. When economically farmed, stored, dried and made fit for burning by steam boilers or ‘producer gas plants’ it becomes a formidable rival to coal with its ever-fluctuating price”

Who knows: if fenland around Wicken is flooded once more and peat builds up, it may be seen in a century or two as a replacement for ‘fracking’. Doubtless such suggestions would generate as much opposition as energy - not least from the Professor of Environmental Geography at Sheffield University, Ian Rotherham.

“The Lost Fens: England’s greatest ecological disaster” by Ian D Rotherham. History Press, £17.99 ISBN 978-0-7524-8699-4

pictures

10056 boys trundles barrow loaded with peat at Wicken 1909

9161 Peat industry, Burwell fen c1900

103.23 Peat diggers at Burwell as seen by Robert Farren 1882

7394 Peat digger at Burwell – a postcard of c1900

Memories 12th August 2013 by Mike Petty

The village pub has been a centre of village life for generations. It has been a debating shop and sports venue as well as a place for entertainment and refreshment. It has been a refuge from the woes of the world, somewhere to be away from the wife and something that has been blamed for the ruin of many a marriage

But what was it like from the other side of the counter? One who knew better than most was Elsie Stowe: her father took over as landlord of the Red Lion Histon in 1912 and she was born there.

Elsie remembered the old days: The tap room was on the left of the front door. This contained two oblong tables and one shaped to fit the bay window. These were scrubbed white by her father. The fireplace was high and the smoke curled round into a square hole in the wall. The floor was plain white bricks, which were scrubbed regularly. An iron spittoon stood beside the iron fender. The wooden chair legs scraping on the brick floor made a very loud noise. Round the walls and in the bay window were fixed wooden seats. A dartboard made of wood was on the wall at the side of the fireplace; this dartboard was regularly soaked in the water butt. Dominoes were played every evening, which she could hear rattling noisily on the wooden table.

The cellar where the beer barrels were stood on racks was down three steps: Her parents' legs must have ached from so many trips up and down the steps with trays of drinks. The ginger beer bottles had a marble in the top which was forced down by a special gadget attached to the spirits serving shelf near the door. Smilax, Robin, Gold Flake, Kensitas, Players and Black Cat cigarettes were in stock with Woodbines sold at 2d for five.

Opposite the cellar door was the door to the 'Little Room', a sort of snug, which should really have been the kitchen as it had a cooking range on which stood a copper kettle. In the winter the kettle was usually on the boil, for hot water to add to tots of rum. There was an ancient red plush settee, which would seat about six people and wooden stick-back chairs formed the rest of the seating. Many a sing song was held in this 'Little Room' as the piano was there,. Elsie and her sisters were taught piano and were expected to play for the customers if needed.

The 'Club Room', which was quite large, housed a large billiard table with a long gas bracket above it. The Share-Out Sick Club held their annual dinners there at Christmas when her mother cooked all the food herself as she did each Whit Monday when the 'Stock Club' dined, though then Matthew Kimpton (a baker on Station Road) roasted the huge joint of beef with accompanying Yorkshire pud in his bake-oven. The preparation of the vegetables for these dinners was a mammoth task and Elsie recalled a copper full of bundles of asparagus.

One of the highlights of summer in Histon was the 'Flower Show and Sports Day'. Masses of people came from miles around and the Red Lion was a hive of activity. Teas were served on

long trestle tables in the Club Room: bread and butter and home-made jam or cheese, with a slice of Mother's huge slab cake, plain or fruit, all for about six pence per head, including a cup of tea.

The annual village Feast was also a hectic time. The little snug room was cleared of furniture – the piano was moved to the Club Room for dancing - extra barrels of beer were installed upon racks and crates upon crates of bottled beer and minerals formed the serving counter. Much was served through the window, to people in the yard where there were three or four long wooden tables and forms for seating.

When it was finally time for last orders, once the clearing, counting and other chores had been done, the landlord and his family could finally make their way to bed. But, Elsie recalled, upstairs only had two double bedrooms and one very small one. No bathroom! The family toilet was quite a walk from the house so a three sided lantern was kept at the ready for the dark winter evenings! The lantern was kept on a bamboo 'what-not' in the passage next to the cellar. The lighting in the passage was a gas jet with no mantle, the flame formed a fan shape and gave off quite a roar.

The Red Lion has changed over the years but still provides a centre for refreshment and chat for locals. It is one of several pubs whose story has been told in a carefully-researched well illustrated publication by the Histon and Impington Village Society. It should be essential reading for anyone whose families have imbibed in the establishments or for those who like to discover village hostelryes.

“Cheers! To the pubs and people of Histon and Impington, 1686 to the present day” (ISBN 978-0-9527172-1-7) costs £11.99 from Histon Library, or by phoning Cambridge (01223) 233397, 564716 or 232744.

Pictures:

40 - The Red Lion Histon before the Great War, where Elsie was born

45 - Elsie Stowe (right) with landlord Mark Donarchy and regulars outside the Red Lion in July 1997 after they raised over £2,000 for the Histon Feast

41 - Mr Rice, decorator and Mr Goldsmith (fish and chip proprietor) enjoy a pint at The Red Lion, Histon c1930

The cover of the new book

Detail showing beer being poured at the Walnut Tree pub, Impington c1880

Memories 19th August 2013 by Mike Petty

The current controversies surrounding proposals over ‘fracking’ for gas have a reflection in Cambridgeshire’s past. But then it was not gas that was being sought but Coprolite - fossilised "dinosaur dung" which was extracted by the Victorians on a massive scale for use as fertiliser and again during the Great War to be made into explosives.

One man who knows all about this largely forgotten industry is Bernard O’Connor from Gamlingay who has researched its impact on many villages along the Cam. One such was Horningsea where St John’s College owned land deep in the countryside near where

Bottisham Lode and the River Cam joined. They were keen to benefit by this new source of income and encouraged their tenant, William Banyard to exploit the buried treasure.

Banyard spent money on new buildings and cottages at the isolated North Hills Farm and iron wash mills, steam engines, sheds and pumps were put in. But the investment paid dividends. By 1857 labourers were working over two acres, raising about 800 tons of coprolite a year. By the autumn of 1867 the workable deposits had been exhausted so Banyard moved on to nearby land owned by King's College whose bursar was delighted to welcome the diggers on to his land

The coprolite was washed and piled into heaps before being carted to the river where it was loaded on to barges near Bottisham Sluice. But in 1862 the sluice was in poor condition and there was a dispute between the Cam Conservators and the South Level Commissioners as to what should be done. Agreement was reached and 18 navigation between Cambridge and Kings Lynn was suspended for three months whilst work took place

This hit trade at the Green Man pub beside the sluice which provided refreshment for bargees and coprolite digger alike. Anglers however were warned in 1855: "the present house is a dog-hole & the arrangement of such a nature that he must be a bold man indeed who, going once, would venture there again". However crowds did gather when public Baptisms were held in the river at this isolated spot.

The coprolite industry led to considerable employment opportunities for local people and even attracted many from outside. Blacksmiths were needed to make and repair iron spades, shovels and crow bars, carpenters cut the planks and built the sheds, carts and barrows while engineers, engine drivers, wheelwrights were also needed.

Many of the labourers came from Waterbeach, but first they had to cross the Cam and the only way was a ferry. In March 1872 eight men packed on the small boat when another man jumped on board; his weight caused the ferry to capsize, throwing them into the water. Although James Beasley, an engineer for the Cam Conservators launched his boat to rescue them one worker was drowned.

This was by no means the only accident:: there had been various incidents when threshing machines or loaded farm carts had got stuck while being ferried across. William Banyard was amongst those who organised a petition for an Act of Parliament enable the construction of a bridge which opened in October 1875.

The Clayhithe Bridge Company also invested in the adjoining public house which had been known for 100 years as the Pike and Eel. It was renamed 'The House of Lords' and then became the 'Bridge Inn'. They improved the grounds making it one of the prettiest places in the county. Soon numerous groups were enjoying river trips from Cambridge.

There were skittles, billiards and swings with dancing on the lawns or ballroom every evening. Then in 1912 the landlord added a Zoological Garden with pythons, boa constrictors, lemurs, apes, baboons, kangaroos and cockatoos together with Shetland ponies for boys and girls to ride. The zoo continued till 1916 when a bear was roasted on a spit and sold in sandwiches in aid of soldiers' comforts.

But there was a problem: those coming from Horningsea had to pay a toll to cross the bridge. This was very narrow and the approach roads were difficult making the County council very reluctant to take it over. However in September 1938 – just 75 years ago, the toll was removed and then in June 1939 a new Clayhithe bridge was formally opened.

Each morning it is busy with commuters making their way through Horningsea into Cambridge, totally unaware of the intense mining activity of a century and a half ago.

For more on the coprolite industry see Bernard O'Connor's excellent website <http://bernardoconnor.org.uk/coprolites.html>

Pictures

Building Clayhithe bridge 1939

The Bridge Hotel was site of zoo in 1912

Horningsea village was centre of mining industry in Victorian times

Bottisham Lock 1880s

Bottisham Lock 2007

Baptism at Bottisham Lock 1886

Coprolite workers

Horningsea from Cam c1900 –the river was used by barges carrying coprolite in Victorian times

Memories 26th August 2013 by Mike Petty

At a meeting of the Cambridge Instrument Company pensioners recently, memories turned to the Northampton Street area.

Northampton Street used to be one of the busiest routes through Cambridge and was the scene of two 'firsts' in the struggle to keep traffic flowing: the first traffic lights in the city were erected at the junction with Magdalene and Castle Streets in 1930 while Queen's Road saw the first mini roundabout in 1975. Now much of the chronic traffic congestion has gone, but have memories also disappeared?

Writing in 1963 – 50 years ago – Erica Dimock remarked: "There must be fewer people living in Northampton Street at present than at any other time during the last three hundred years. Every other house stands empty. Historically and architecturally it is a street of some interest, yet it is already difficult to find anyone with really deep feeling about it and in the future this is likely to be even more so"

It is a street of two sides, one regularly recorded by artists and photographers, the other largely overlooked.

The south side is more impressive having what Erica described as 'several highly picturesque but insanitary looking buildings of great antiquity'. They include Cory House near the corner of Magdalene Street, a late 16th century range of two storey houses with attics, which still maintain some of their attractive Elizabethan appearance. In the 60's they were home to various businesses including the Castle Aquarium, The Merton Grocery Stores run by members of the Robinson family and the Merton Arms Hotel a popular rendezvous for undergraduates and others who enjoyed a snack lunch.

Standing back are two exceptionally-interesting properties unglimped by most travellers. The School of Pythagoras, the earliest secular building in Cambridge, was home to the first Mayor. But his family lost its wealth and it was sold to Merton College, Oxford, in 1270. For several centuries it was leased to farmers and became a granary until it was acquired by St John's College. Adjacent stands the 15th-century timber-framed Merton Hall, former home to Lord Rothschild and both now part of St John's College.

Almost next door was a building representing the other side of Cambridge life – St Giles' parish workhouse later altered to the Borough Boy public house. In 1911 it consisted of six cottages with two open privies and a large room where the paupers dined together. After the poor law reforms of 1836 the buildings were let to Mr Benjamin Clark for £20 a year, the tenants being allowed the use of the pump and privy. The yard was sometimes called 'Gentle's Yard' from the name of the chief tenant, a tradesman who was coffin maker to the Mill Road Workhouse.

In July 1998 Sally Hatton from Sawston shared with me memories of her grandmother who had lived in a cottage in Gentle's Yard for 50 years. It was one in a cobbled passageway with a toilet across the yard and an outside tap from which she drew buckets of water to carry into her kitchen. Inside there was a single room housing her old gas cooker, a table with a bowl and bar of soap, the black kitchen range and the cupboard under the stairs where she kept the coal – the coalman carrying the sacks in through the one door.

Across the road lanes and alleys ran from the north side of Northampton Street to some of the most densely packed streets in Cambridge. Collins Passage consisted of a number of very dilapidated houses. They had low ceilings, the floor was insecure, there was no ventilation behind and a high brick wall at the front so they got no sun at all except for half-an-hour at the height of summer. In 1906 they were judged unfit for human habitation and cleared. But as old properties were replaced by new houses the landlords demanded higher rents that the former residents could not afford, driving them out and reducing the trade of pubs and shopkeepers.

In 1936 the Corporation acquired properties in the Spotted Cow Yard facing Northampton Street with a quarter of the cost paid by Cambridge Preservation Society and Magdalene College. But the war intervened and the site was a blot on the landscape for many years. Some of the old cottages in Kettle's Yard were bought by Jim Ede and formed the nucleus of the Kettle's Yard gallery. Then in March 1956 the Lord Mayor of London opened a new block of flats for old people at Honey Hill. I have photographs of their opening, but very few that show what was there before – do you have snaps in your files?

There was change almost next door when a new cottage was built for Enid Porter, the Curator of the Cambridge & County Folk Museum. This had opened in the former White Horse Inn on Castle Street to record the everyday life of ordinary folk, a role it continues to this day. Now the renamed 'Museum of Cambridge' are planning to commemorate her lifetime's work by the unveiling of a blue plaque on the site of the building she called home.

Pictures

133.15 south side of Northampton Street looking to Magdalene St

154.72 looking west, 1963

109.45 looking East 1907, showing Spotted Cow which closed in 1931.

110.27 the opening of Honey Hill flats in 1956

184047 - site of the Honey Hill flats

150.45 - News picture of site in 1936

Kettles Yard from Northampton Street showing Spotted Cow, 1930s

Memories 2nd September 2013 by Mike Petty

Jim Neale could have been a Stagecoach driver. He would have been one of a long line of men who have travelled the roads around Cambridge conveying travellers to their chosen destination.

Some have gone down in history. There was Richard Vaughan – known as ‘Hell-Fire-Dick’ whose skill in driving the Cambridge Telegraph was recorded in verse in the ‘Cambridge Portfolio’ in 1838. Or Sir St Vincent Cotton, Baronet, of Madingley Hall whose love of gambling reduced him from an income of £5,000 to penury and saw him making a living driving the Brighton "Age" only to be accused of assaulting the driver of a private coach who when blocked in overtaking at a turnpike gate had subsequently harassed the "Age", passing, slowing and speeding up to the great rage of its aristocratic coachman.

Few have left an account of their life and times, though Thomas Cross who regularly plied the roads between London and King’s Lynn shared his memories in a three-volume Autobiography of a Stage Coach Man in 1904. His ‘Union’ coach was not one of the most favoured on the road: its main income came from carrying Lynn shrimps whose smell advertised the arrival of the stage almost before the sound of the horses’ hooves. Even the down coach, hung round with empty baskets on a sultry day, would emit an effluvium that was very uninviting to the gentry and undergraduates alike. A group of wealthy Ely farmers decided to start a rival coach which they named ‘The Red Rover’, mainly so they could have the fun of driving it. They soon found this was not as easy as they thought. One night the coach nearly overturned as it was travelling through Milton. When the driver investigated he found they’d run over a drunken man who’d been lying in the middle of the road and had crushed both his legs. They had to take him to Addenbrooke’s Hospital, which ruined their timekeeping that night.

But Jim Neale decided that being a Stagecoach man was not for him. His main love was Burwell and District where he started his driving career in 1970, transporting local people to Newmarket, Cambridge or to visit relatives in the next village. When the firm was taken over by Eastern Counties (who in turn became Cambus and later Stagecoach), Jim opted to drive for smaller companies such as Young’s Coaches from Rampton, Burtons of Haverhill and Cambridge-based Premier Travel with occasional shifts on the open-top Guide Friday buses where his love of history was invaluable in giving visitors an introduction to the city and its university.

He later drove for Cambridge Coach Services on routes to Stansted Airport, Worcester or even Bulgaria. Many thousand local folk will have taken one of their holiday breaks and tours enjoying the opportunity to leave the driving to somebody else, somebody who will become a friend and guide on their journey. Regular travellers will get to know the man or woman behind the wheel and Carol Budge, Roger Birch, Paul Crocker, Brian Sellars and Harry Nabai

are amongst the drivers depicted in Jim's latest book, 'Cambridge Coach Services from the Driver's Seat'

But few passengers will have given much thought about the vehicle on which they were travelling. Jim Neale knows each individually, be they Paramount 3500-bodied coaches, Leyland Tigers or Volvo Olympian double-deckers with Northern Counties Palatine II bodies. He has driven them, washed them and coached them to their destinations.

But his favourite remains a 47-seater coach, 932 BCE, which was delivered new to Burwell and District in June 1962. It was not the best-looking vehicle but had a door opened by the driver with a long chrome lever that could sometimes be mistaken for the gear lever allowing it to swing open while travelling along the road at the maximum 40 mph. Jim first drove it in August 1970, then rescued it from the scrap yard and took it home with him for restoration when it reached the end of its working life in 1982. It has found its last resting place amongst the exhibits at Burwell's museum.

Burwell Museum has a wealth of other exhibits from Roman pottery to the village's windmill, which can be seen, for free, at their heritage day on Saturday 15th September, noon till 5pm.

'Cambridge Coach Services from the Driver's Seat' by Jim Neale, (ISBN 978-0-9575996-0-4) costs £15 from Burwell Museum, Heffers, Tyndalls or Burrows Bookshops or from j.neale@btinternet.com

Memories 9th September 2013 by Mike Petty

Last week our wanderings took us to that part of Cambridgeshire where the countryside is more rolling and where, in the summer sunshine – or indeed moonlight – the harvested landscape seems peaceful and tranquil.

One evening we journeyed to the small community at Saxon Street, a hamlet of Wood Ditton, deep in the horse-racing country south of Newmarket. Here we met the ladies of the WI, told them of Sherlock Holmes' visit to Cambridge and learned something of life in their community.

The building in which we met was the Methodist Chapel, now bereft of pews. Tucked in a corner was a folder recording the work that had been done to convert it into a space that can be used both for worship and social gatherings.

It included a centenary history, compiled in 1985 which shows that all was far from peaceful at the time the congregation was seeking to establish itself. One of the early ministers, Richard S. Blair, left his version of the story in 'Nailing up the Barn Door', published in 1894.

In it he records: 'Ruffians from three villages used to meet here, and many a time I have seen the people pelted as they went to chapel and when they left it: I have seen the tiles of the roof covered with sticks, stones and cabbage stalks'. Four lads were summoned for snowballing people as they left the chapel; the leader was committed to prison for a month, the rest for fourteen days, which even the Minister felt was somewhat severe.

Saxon Street has hit the headlines at various times: in March 1903 two thatched cottages were destroyed by a spark falling on the roof. While some neighbours removed furniture another fought his way into the blazing building to rescue a 70-year old man confined to his bed following a fall from a stack. Fire struck again in June 1928, this time in a block of five cottages. Newmarket Fire Brigade was called out but it was an inconvenient time as all the firemen were at dinner. Then they had problems finding a motor to pull the fire engine and that, combined with a strong wind, ensured that three cottages were destroyed. A traction engine had passed along the road shortly before and it was thought that a spark from it may have caused the blaze. Then in March 1959 Rutland House, home of the 'Squire', Edgar Cooper-Bland, was struck by lightning; Mr Chapman, a representative of Baldreys, had called at the Reindeer Public House to collect an order when he noticed smoke coming from the roof. He drove to Cheveley where he alerted a policeman on motor cycle patrol, who called the brigade.

A day or so earlier we had been invited to John Lacey's Fulbourn farm to see a record of one soldier's service in the Great War. The small, leather folder contains just the barest of information: Name, Taylor, W.J., Rank – private, Number 762423. He signed up on the 18th September 1916 and was posted to the 1st Company of the 2nd Battalion, Artists' Rifles O.T.C.

This was a unit whose officers had to show credentials as a proper artist — musician, painter, poet, writer etc. (even journalists were regarded to be too vulgar and crass people for selection, unless they were of a very high class). Amongst those that Taylor served alongside was Barnes Wallis later inventor of the Bouncing Bomb, John Nash the Royal Academician, war poet Wilfred Owen & R.C. Sheriff whose play "Journey's End", was based on his experiences in the trenches. There is no emotional description of Taylor's war, just notes of the payments he received – one shilling a day (though sixpence was deducted as expenses), rising twopence when he was promoted Corporal on return from leave in October 1917. Tucked into the back of the little book is a Combined Leave and Railway ticket dated 7th December 1918 for a Third Class journey from France to Victoria Station. His war was over, at least for the time being.

In peacetime he established a successful lawyer's practice, his name living on in Taylor Vinters of Cambridge, London and Singapore.

But when fighting flared again in 1939 Taylor was called upon to play his part once more. On 15th May 1940 he was asked to form a Home Guard Group. Now a Lieut-Col, he commanded the 2nd Cambridgeshire & Suffolk Battalion stretching from Brandon to Brinkley – and including Saxon Street.

It took a while but eventually ammunition and equipment arrived, including a lorry load of Molotov Cocktails that, like the rest, were stored in Taylor's private house in Dullingham Road, Newmarket. He recorded something of his experiences in 'We Also Served', the story of the Home Guard published in 1943. One of the Home Guard contingents was drawn from Saxon Street & Wood Home Guard whose men turned out to ensure their wives and daughters would in the future continue to make their jam in peace.

Pictures

Choice of four views showing Saxon Street Chapel

Saxon St & Wood Ditton Home Guard c1943

Home Guard commanders 1943 with detail of Taylor (centre back)

A page from the pay book

A ticket for home from the front

A Christmas card from the Artists Rifles – before Taylor joined

Saxon Street sign

Hi Mr Petty

I saw your article concerning Mr W.J.Taylor in the Cambridge News (dated 9/9/13) and thought it was very good, especially as the Home Guard of WW2 is of great interest to me.

I decided to do an ancestry search on this man's military records, unfortunately the German Luftwaffe had destroyed William's service papers during WW2, but his Medal index card still survives (see attachment).

This gives his service Nos as 8410 and 762423 (not 752423 as printed in the paper); his Regiment was as you stated the 'Artist Rifles'.

William was commissioned into the 2nd Battalion Hunts Cyclists from the Artists on the 29th of October 1918.

William's full medal entitlement for WW1 was the British War Medal and the Allied Victory Medal, these he applied for on the 13th of December 1925.

Would it be possible for me to obtain a copy (via e-mail) of the photograph used in the article?

Kind regards

Martin Tingey.....

Memories 16th September 2013 by Mike Petty

A few weeks ago I was talking to a meeting of the Waddelow Society at Little Downham about various incidents relating to flying machines. We covered balloons and other early flying machines like the Wallbro that was built in a shed off Devonshire Road in Cambridge. It failed to get airborne in 1910, but was later rebuilt and flown by the son of one of the original inventors, the recently-deceased Wing-Commander Ken Wallis.

Towards the end I dealt with one or two of the later incidents including the secret American bomber that crashed at Isleham in October 1949. And then I touched on what happened at Lakenheath on 27th July 1956. I showed a report from the Cambridge Daily News – it didn't make the front page, it was just one of a range of accidents it was covering at the time. At this one of the audience, Gerald Harrison interrupted to say that he could tell me more.

Gerald has lent me a DVD entitled 'As Time Goes By' that was produced on behalf of the Lakenheath Royal British Legion in 2008. On it Len Flack told how he was cutting grass on the airfield when he heard the noise of the six roaring engines of a giant B47 bomber that was practicing take-off and landings. Then something went badly wrong: the plane's starboard wheel burst and the tip of the wing scraped the ground. The pilot managed to lift the machine over a fence but the wing hit an 'Igloo' – one of a number of earth-covered Nissen Huts where bombs were stored - ripping off the top and exposing the buried bombs which were then drenched by blazing jet fuel.

Fred Wootton was a lad playing cricket nearby; he remembered 'All hell broke loose' Ambulances and fire engines raced across the fields, driving through barbed wire fences to get to the scene of the devastation. There was talk that the plane was carrying an Atom Bomb

and that it had hit a dump containing 'Fat Boy', the code-name for a device more powerful than the bombs that had devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Later it transpired that the dump struck contained three Mark VI bombs, each containing about 8,000 pounds of TNT and depleted uranium – even had they detonated there would not have been a nuclear reaction just an almighty explosion. But in the heat of the moment nobody knew that at the time. As far as they were concerned East Anglia might any moment be turned into a nuclear desert. None of this was reported at the time – it was too secret to be told.

Since then a top-secret report has been published on the internet. It was a telex from General Walsh, Commander 7th Air Division, South Ruislip, England, to General Curtis Le May, Commander, Strategic Air Command. He reported: "I have just come from wreckage of B47 which ploughed into an Igloo in Lakenheath. The B47 tore apart the Igloo and knocked about three Mark sixes. Aircraft then exploded showering burning fuel over all. Crew perished. Most of the aircraft wreckage pivoted on Igloo and came to rest with aircraft nose just beyond Igloo bank, which kept main fuel outside smashed Igloo. Preliminary exam by bomb disposal officer says a miracle that one Mark Six with exposed detonators didn't go off"

He continues: "Fire fighters extinguished fire around Mark Sixes Fast".

Reports tell how Air Force Master Sgt. L. H. Dunn, the base fire chief riding in the lead truck, moved as close as possible to the building containing the A-bombs and poured flame-suppressing foam on the fire. Dunn, who ignored the four B-47 crew members trapped inside the wreckage on the presumption they were dead, utilized four foam trucks in extinguishing the fire around the storage building. All agree that the near disaster was averted by "tremendous heroism, good fortune and the will of God

But that is not quite the version that Gerald Harrison heard. Gerald was a volunteer member of Brandon Fire Brigade. He joined after this incident, but he worked with the firemen who had driven their engine through the perimeter fence to get onto the airfield. The five men of the crew saw large numbers of US personnel fleeing as the whole base was evacuated. They were themselves told to keep away from the blazing bomb store: the Americans knew what was down there. But they were civilians, not military men.

Sub Officer Frank Kybird had no great concern about the Americans – he was just worried about his friends and neighbours, the residents of Brandon. So his crew stood on top of the blazing dump, pouring water on to the bombs beneath until they were sure the danger had been averted.

Then the Brandon men went back to their day jobs. They'd signed the Official Secrets Act and could not talk about what they'd done. And the American and British authorities had no wish for the news to leak out. Although it made an inside page in the CDN, the Nationals did not cover it till the Omaha World-Herald leaked the story in November 1979. It reported that the incident had been hushed up, as the British people had not been told that nuclear bombs were being kept in the U.K.

That secret telex from 1956 concluded 'Plan investigation to warrant decorating Firemen'. That never happened and for over 50 years Gerald Harrison has striven to have his former Brandon colleagues' heroism acknowledged and the names of Frank Kybird, Ernest Norton, Ben Willet, Jack Riley and Bill Inns remembered.

And that's what Memories is all about

Pictures

News report from 1956

News report 1979

B47 bomber crash (no guarantee this is Lakenheath)

B47 bomber – a couple of images from internet

Report of the crash at Isleham in 1949

The top-secret Telex from 1956

Brandon town sign

Hi Mike,

Interesting piece last Monday, those local firemen certainly should be remembered. Co-incidentally, the Guardian ran an article on British nuclear accidents last weekend, mentioning the Lakenheath incident.

Just a slight mix-up on the technical detail however. The Mk6 bombs certainly didn't weigh 8,000 tons! They weighed about 8,000 pounds, and contained a couple of hundred pounds of high explosive. They did not contain depleted uranium (U238), that's the non-fissile waste bit. It's enriched uranium (U235) that is used in bombs and nuclear reactors. The fissile material in these bombs however, was plutonium. Whilst uranium is quite nasty, plutonium is far worse. There was no real risk of a nuclear detonation at Lakenheath but there was a very real risk that plutonium could have been spread widely across the countryside. This would have rendered a large area uninhabitable more-or-less for all time. Which makes the actions of the local men all the more heroic.

Best regards,

Tim

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Memories 23rd September 2013 by Mike Petty

In Memories of 27th May this year I mentioned that Flora Falanaki from Auckland, New Zealand had emailed me a photo of a group of Officer Cadets that was taken by Thomas Stearn during the Great War. It showed her grandfather, Albert Victor Waitford (later changed to Waetford) on the 3rd row down, looking to his left. On the lower right-hand side he had jotted a handwritten note to his parents dated 5.7.1917.

Albert was part of the Maori Pioneer Battalion and later described his wartime experiences in his local paper. But what he did not record is just where he received his Cambridge education. Flora was hoping to visit the actual place where it was taken. Thanks to local people, including Sally-Ann Greensmith who is researching the First World War for Cambridgeshire County Council's centenary project Between the Lines, the site was identified

Last Wednesday I met Flora and David Falanaki under the clock of Great St Mary's. It was a scene Albert would have recognised and we retraced some of his footsteps. The stones of the interior of the chapel of King's College still reflect the varying colours of the great stained glass windows as they did in the dark days of war, Clare College bridge still span a peaceful Cam. It was only when we crossed Queen's Road that the illusion that nothing had changed was shattered. For where the Clare College Memorial Court now stands Albert would have seen rows and rows of huts occupied by the First Eastern General Hospital where wounded young men – like him – were being patched up and made fit to be sent back to the Front.

Finally it was time for the highlight of the trip – the reason they had journeyed from New Zealand. For at Queens' College they were welcomed by the Rev Dr Jonathan Holmes who led them through the college courts till they gazed at the north wall of the Chapel, against which Albert and his New Zealand comrades had posed.

But that was not the end: for when Flora carefully unwrapped the original photograph she'd brought halfway round the world, Dr Holmes produced a second. At first they seemed identical – but no. For in Flora's picture Albert is facing to left, in this one he was looking directly at the camera. That second photograph is now heading off to the far side of the globe

But there was yet more excitement. For on a table in Dr Holmes' college rooms was a tatty, coverless, set of pages. It was the souvenir magazine produced by the trainee officers all those years ago. And there, amongst the list of men was Albert's name, together with just a few lines about him that had been penned by his colleagues. The only thing was the date: for that particular Officer Training Corps had been based at Queens' between January and May 1918 – it seems as if Albert had got his year wrong! For Flora and David it made the long, long journey so worthwhile.

But others are also seeking to recall wartime education; this time at another Cambridge College. St John's Choir School was never a very large institution. Until 1954 it comprised one main schoolroom approached from a blue door in All Saint's Passage. Usually the pupils were dayboys who went home for their lunch. Each Ascension Day they climbed to the roof of the College chapel to sing at a Carol at mid-morning, a tradition that continues to this day

The uniform consisted of Eton suits with their short jackets and uncomfortable white starched collars to which top hats and gowns were added on service days and covered with a white surplice when in chapel. Boys stayed on at the school until their voices broke; then went on to the Perse or County High School.

Some ex-pupils have recorded their memories: Cecil Longley attended during the Great War – perhaps he bumped into Albert. He remembered his Headmaster: "Mr Senior was a real character. He was neat and fastidious to a degree – never must a book or pen be out of place, nor a picture the least bit askew. Boys always referred to him by his real name, Sam. He could be jovial, but very strict, and the cane was never far from his reach" (something John Lacey can testify to). John was no scholar but he learned three essentials from his old headmaster: to say 'Please' and 'Thank You' and 'May I'. They have served him well.

If you attended St John's College Choir School under Senior's guidance you would be very welcome to meet with fellow pupils once again at a gathering on 25th October. Phone John Lacey or 01223 880385 or John Bull on 01440 702099. And if your ancestor learned to fight alongside the New Zealanders way back in 1918 then drop me a line. Flora and David would be delighted to hear from you.

Pictures

Officer Cadets at Queens' College 1918

Detail of Albert

Flora and David at the same spot – IT WOULD BE NICE IF WE COULD SUPERIMPOSE THE PICS

Flora and David copying the Souvenir magazine

St John's College Choir sing the Ascension Day hymn, 1950s.

All Saints' Passage, 1950s

NB the apostrophe: It is Queens' College but Queen's Road.

Memories 30 September 2013 by Mike Petty

A single sheet of paper has revived memories of a pioneering firm of Cambridge builders whose Railway Building Works were based at Devonshire Road; but does anybody remember them?

William Saint was born in St Ives and came to Cambridge at the age of 30, starting as a builder in Hooper Street. His first job was to construct two villas on Mill Road into one of which he moved. Others houses followed, including 20 in Mawson Road for which he gained approval in 1894. His firm won contracts from the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners for the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Romsey Town in 1884 and from the Town Council for a the new Cattle Market the following year. As business boomed he established the 'Railway Building Works' in 1888.

From December 1890 William Saint insisted that all of his employees join up to a Sick Fund, paying twopence per week contribution, though apprentices and those earning less than eight shillings paid half. Then in the event of illness they would receive eight shillings a week for the first month with decreasing amounts thereafter.

For building work could be dangerous: in May 1897 a labourer working at Saint's brick kilns in Needingworth was feeding lumps of clay into the brick moulding machine when he got his foot caught in the works, his right leg and thigh were torn off. Perhaps the bricks were intended for the new St Barnabas Institute where during work digging out foundations the sides of a trench collapsed sending a horse and cart tumbling into the hole. The horse was hauled out by ropes, little the worse for its adventure.

In 1900 Saint took on his largest job, the construction of Westminster College, which gained the firm a reputation for quality. This was down to the quality of the men who worked for them, William was quick to acknowledge at a dinner to 170 of his employees at the Lion Hotel at Christmas 1907. Builders could make or mar the work of the architects and they had good foremen who got on with the men. When men worked together the work went on smoothly and any grievances were speedily settled. By then some of their larger contracts were finishing but he looked forward with hope and confidence that they would be able to replace them with others equally large. One of these was the new parish hall at Trumpington. In 1909 they were featured in the Gentleman's Journal guide to local shopping in Cambridge..

Two sons joined the business and the firm expanded. Even during the pre-war depression in the building trade the Cambridge Railway Works employed more men than at any other time. They carried out contracts in the South of England & in the Midlands and hoped to conquer the North and West.

They also hoped to conquer nearer home and in 1913 formed their own Railway Works Football Club, playing in colours of green and blue. They beat teams from Heffer's Printing Works, Old Cherry Hinton and Duxford before thumping St Peter's six – nil in a match on Midsummer Common.

The firm also encouraged their men to learn to fight, forming their own section of the Volunteer Corps with Saint's son Edward as Lieutenant. But when the real war came Edward, then officer commanding the 1st Battalion of the Cambridgeshire Regiment, was killed and another son also perished. During that time William devoted his time to serving his neighbours, representing Petersfield on both the Board of Guardians and Cambridge Borough Council.

In 1918 his business was turned into a limited company but in the days of depression that followed work was harder to find. They built a new chapel at All Saints Church in memory of the late Alderman William Potter Spalding, one-time mayor of Cambridge. But in 1924 came a building strike which had a serious effect on William Saint, a man who had always cherished the importance of a bond between master and man. He died at his residence in Devonshire Road and was buried at St Barnabas church, where he had been churchwarden for 40 years. A tablet commemorates his memory.

His firm could not survive the great depression. One of their employees was Jack Lowe who learned his trade as a plumber with them. After it collapsed Jack set up his own plumbing business in 1936, then opened a tool shop in Mill Road before starting one of the first D-I-Y shops in the city.

The story of the Railway Building Works is incomplete: can you add something to my knowledge of this important building firm?

Pictures

Saints sickness fund

An advertisement for the firm 1898

Saint's saw mill, 1909 – NB the pic is out of focus and needs to be used small

St Barnabas church where Saint was churchwarden

Jobs undertaken

Westminster College

Mawson Rd

Trumpington Hall

Cattle Market

Memories 7th October 2013 by Mike Petty

The headlines were dramatic after fire broke out in one of Cambridge's most important hotels. Smoke poured from the upper windows in such volume that in a few moments part of St Andrew's Street was almost completely obscured with a great cloud of exceptional blackness and density. People groped through it as though a fog, gasping and choking at its pungency. Fortunately the efforts of the Fire Brigade were successful in preventing the flames spreading to the more modern part of the building including the saloon bar, large dining hall and at least 30 bedrooms

Not extracts from last Wednesday's News about the blaze at the University Arms, but a report from August 1934 of a much more serious outbreak just across the road

'Ye Olde Castel Hotel' was precisely what tourists dream of. Obviously old with a view across to Emmanuel, one of the famous Cambridge colleges, yet on the main tram route from the station. It was one of the rarest of places: a hotel whose story was told in its architecture, comfort without glitter and a generous table where soup was followed by cod, turkey & sausages or sirloin cooked to perfection by a chef trained at Queens' college, with baked apples & cream for dessert, then Stilton & port.

Yet all this paled into insignificance compared to the company that gathered around the blazing log fire afterwards:: the doctor of medicine full of good stories of the countryside, the vet who looked as if he could ride horses as well as cure them, the traveller from Leeds and an electioneer drinking gin were all to be found deep in conversation.

This was the picture painted by Herbert Railton in The English Illustrated Magazine of May 1904. The Castel ranked as one of the oldest inns in Cambridge, dating back to the 13th century. It was reconstructed about 1620 and the last extensive additions were in 1891.

But in August 1934 later disaster struck. Firemen were quickly on the scene – their station was almost next door – and every available policeman was withdrawn from other duties to play their part. Together they fought the ever-increasing blaze. Although hindered at first by a shortage of water, eventually the powerful jets of the brigade's two motor fire engines began to win the battle.

Dozens of volunteers rescued furniture as ancient tiles showered down from the crumbling roof. They also carefully removed crates of beer from the bar, though bottles of liquor were heard breaking in the intense heat. One room that attracted their attention was that in which Oliver Cromwell was said to have slept, still containing furniture from that period.

Despite their efforts the front of the old gabled inn was destroyed along with the bars and 14 bedrooms above. A large dining room and about 30 bedrooms in the more recent extension survived. Plans were made to rebuild but the damage was just too great and the hotel was demolished in January 1936 to make way for a new Regal Cinema, now once more a place where people gather to eat and drink. Its name however lives on in the pub nearby

It was not however the only time that a Cambridge hotel has caught fire.

In January 1904 considerable damage was caused to the Rose Hotel in Rose Crescent by a fire that started in the attic. Although the devastation was confined to a comparatively small area every room in the hotel suffered from the effects of water which saturated the ceilings. Fortunately none of the bedrooms were occupied at the time

Then in February 1958 fire seriously damaged the Garden House hotel; part of the roof and several bedrooms were affected. Hundreds of people lined the banks of the Granta watching while thick white smoke gushed from under the roof. More serious was the blaze in April 1972 when despite the efforts of fifty firemen much of the older part of the hotel was destroyed and although most of the guests escaped in their nightclothes, tragically two ladies did not.

Last week guests at the University Arms joined the crowds watching as one of Cambridge's major hotels again gushed smoke. They were seeing history repeat itself, but they probably did not appreciate it.

Pictures:

Choice of two pictures of the Castel Hotel before the fire

Castel Hotel fire – news report of 16 August 1934

Smoke billows across St Andrew's Street

Castel Hotel after the fire

The Regal cinema was built on the site

University Arms Hotel was just across the road from the Castel.

Perhaps view of the recent fire

Garden House Fire 1972

Memories 14 October 2013 by Mike Petty

Nearly fifty years ago, in early November 1963, Deborah Broadstock from Cottenham met the Queen Mother. She did not have to travel to Buckingham Palace – the Queen came to her village to open the new Village College. Her Majesty spoke of the 'faith and vision' which had seen the creation of this, the tenth in a series of such colleges providing opportunities for both young and old who were not seeking for higher qualifications but wanted to develop their interests and broaden their understanding.

Twenty five years later in October 1988, Cambridgeshire County Councillors considered whether to erect a statue to commemorate the centenary of the birth of the man whose vision had revolutionised educational thinking around the world. They said no.

But then Henry Morris was always a controversial figure.

In 1922 he'd inherited responsibility for education in the second poorest authority in the country with some 150 run-down elementary buildings which pupils left at the age of fourteen. Three years later he set out his ideas for a series of countryman's colleges with facilities for the whole community, with workshops used by the children during the day and their parents at night. It would include a hall for religious assembly – an essential part of education – but also amateur dramatics.

How was it to be achieved in the depression of the inter-war years when money was tight? Henry was not one to butter-up councillors; indeed he was a snob, rude, self-opinionated and insufferable to work with. He was also homosexual.

Big ideas needed big money, and that was in America. So Henry borrowed the cash for a ticket on a liner and came back with a cheque for £45,000. He also returned with a new passion - the young steward in the Tourist Class lounge. Henry, anxious to further that lad's education, arranged for him to study at St John's College, and to save money on lodgings by sharing his flat. The lad never completed his degree, returning shortly afterwards.

Henry returned to America on various occasions, being invited to advise the President on rural education. He travelled to West Africa to advise on new institutes in Nigeria and the Gold Coast. He was regarded as a senior national figure, but Cambridgeshire councillors complained he was spending too much time away from his desk.

Once he had funding for his first 'Village College' Henry got the site and a donation towards the building from a prosperous Sawston paper magnate, H.G. Spicer. In return, Spicer could put on cinema films for local people in the new College hall, he promised. But once it was up, the films were banned, leading to a major dispute.

The Sawston college needed to be properly opened, and who better to do so than the future King Edward VIII, then Prince of Wales, in October **1930**. Yet here too there was controversy – the Prince had been expecting to open a new Cambridge University College and not 'just a bloody school'. But such 'misunderstandings' were more than compensated for by an article in The Times – which some thought Henry himself has written.

More colleges were to follow. The Chivers family gave an Elizabethan Hall at Impington to be the warden's house for their village's new college. But this was not to the liking of the most famous architect in the world, Walter Gropius, who designed what was considered the best building of its age in England. It was to be graced by a statue of 'The Family' by one of the finest sculptors, Henry Moore – but councillors refused to fork out the modest fee he requested. They also blocked payment for a mural by the distinguished artist, Graham Sutherland. It was not that they did not appreciate art – they did not appreciate the hectoring style of their Chief Education Officer.

However Impington did have a garden where vegetable and fruit was grown pigs and poultry fed. There was a workshop where boys and girls made real things for the home and classes in cookery, housewifery and infant welfare. Pupils dined together with their teachers, the meal commencing with a sung Grace and concluding with a reading. A child who had sat through these meals for four or five years would acquire sound food habits for life and a fund of good manners, Henry believed.

Things have changed since then, laments David Rooney, former Warden of Swavesey Village College where the drama group was priced out by new charges for such community activities. His most thought-provoking account of Henry Morris and his ideals was launched at the unveiling of a blue plaque at Darwin College where Morris once had a flat.

David Rooney will be speaking about Henry Morris at the 'Fenland History on Friday' meeting at Ely Library on 15th November, 10.30-noon.

"Henry Morris, the Cambridgeshire village colleges and community education" by David Rooney costs £10 from Village Colleges and the Cambridgeshire Collection, Lion Yard Library. All income from the sales will go to the Henry Morris Memorial Trust, funding opportunities for local youngsters to explore areas outside the flatlands of Cambridgeshire.

Pictures

The Prince of Wales opens Sawston Village College Oct 1930
Darwin College where Morris had a flat and where the plaque was unveiled

Henry Morris and friends on the balcony
The cover of the new book
Impington Village College
Impington Hall which was pulled down to make way for it – choice of two

Memories 21 October 2013 by Mike Petty

Shirley Brown started her passion for compiling books on Trumpington back in 1985 when she visited to the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard library to start her researches for 'Trumpington in Old Picture Postcards' which was published by the European Library from the Netherlands the following year.

In the introduction Shirley wrote 'There has been more written about Trumpington than I imagined ... identifying the buildings and tracing the people on some of the pictures has been as exciting as trying to solve a mystery'. She turned for help to members of the senior citizens, encouraging them to sift through their photo albums for snaps of otherwise unrecorded corners.

Since then she has added to these columns on various occasions. In July 2000 it was about the prisoner of war camp on Hauxton Road, in May 2001 she appealed for information about Gilmerton, a large house at the junction of Long Road – next month she was telling us that she'd tracked down one of the people who'd worked there. Another year passed and she was researching the Manor House and the Dove Garden, in 2003 she had another new book.

Now, a decade later, Shirley's done it again. Only this time she's excelled herself. For now as well as identifying fascinating old snaps she and her husband have taken modern equivalents in colour.

One of the prominent local photographers of the 1920s was Ted Mott who concentrated on areas such as Chesterton, Shelford and Trumpington. His glass negatives were preserved by Ken Humphries of Milton and passed on to the Cambridgeshire Collection. One shows Trumpington High Street with a splendid array of advertisement on the side of Harvey's Stores which then sold a wide assortment of goods. It was succeeded by 'Sybil' selling wool, haberdashery and underwear, then became the Post Office, now it's 'Granite Transformations'. Next door the former Holmlea Hand Laundry is now home to 'Mandarin Stone'. It's hard enough these days to snatch a picture during a gap in the traffic but Shirley also wanted a bus to match up to the Ortona open-top double-decker that Ted photographed. Eventually she got one in – nearly – the exact spot.

But a community is not just buildings, it's people too.

One page features a painting of a skating match on Lingay Fen in neighbouring Grantchester where the National Ice Skating Championships were held. Costing only one penny it was a very popular venue for Trumpington families in the 1930s and 1940s when most of them had their own skates. During the Second World War evacuees were allowed to skate free. But how could Shirley find an equivalent? Easy, she just got skateboarder Niall Meehan to stand still for an instant. It's a snap for his grandchildren to treasure in the distant future. Perhaps it will start them researching local history

As I work my way through the files of the News of October 1938 for my 'Looking Back' column I am discovering articles describing the preparation for air attack with instructions on how to construct your own shelter. One who did so was Cecil Galley who dug down into his garden at 71 Alpha Terrace. He paused just long enough to be photographed with his children, Ann & John. Today his shelter still survives and Shirley has persuaded the children of current owners Neil and Sarah Stepney to recreate the scene.

Postal services are very much in the news at present and the delivery man is a feature of local life. However back in the 1920s the post came not on two wheels but by donkey – as is shown in a glass lantern slide taken by the schoolmaster P.R. Robinson to illustrate a lecture in Trumpington Village Hall in February 1931. His pictures have survived but how many similar snaps are tucked away in attics or cupboards. If you discover such items, don't let them be

destroyed. The Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library would be pleased to offer them a home where people like Shirley – and you – can appreciate them.

Trumpington through time by Shirley and Stephen Brown, Amberley Publishing, £14.99 – ISBN 978-1-4456-0633-0

Photos – before and after views

Cecil Galley's air raid shelter in the garden of 71 Alpha Terrace is still there

The village postman – past and present

Skating has always been popular – ice skating on Lingay Fen and skateboarder Niall Meeham

Trumpington High Street has changed somewhat over the last 80 years – as have buses

Memories 28 October 2013 by Mike Petty

Prince George was the focus of attention, “Oh, he’s lovely” was the general verdict and every detail of his dress, appearance and manner have furnished a fruitful topic of conversation in Cambridge homes. So the News reported back in November 1932, adding that the girls were especially enthusiastic.

They were covering the first Royal visit to a factory engaged in Britain’s newest and most progressive industry. HRH (later Duke of Kent) was not the only one to be impressed. When Pye Radio invited people to inspect their works in St Andrew’s Road Chesterton queues five or six deep stretched halfway up Haig Road. “It is amazing that a non-industrial town should have such fine works and few realised that we in Cambridge had such an important and highly organised industry in our midst. In these times of depression it is a novelty to find a works which is really flourishing”, the News commented. Pye became the first company to be granted its own Armorial Bearings; today its supporters are having difficulty getting permission to put up a Blue Plaque.

Last week scores of former Pye men and women made their way to a shed in the grounds of an old sewage pumping station just across the river from that old factory. They gazed fondly at obsolete equipment which was in its time the most up-to-date in the world.

On Coronation Day in 1953 many people had seen television for the first time. Memories of small black-and-white pictures flickering from large wooden cabinets are etched on their minds. But Pye were several steps further down the line, operating the first colour television outside broadcast ever seen in this country with three colour cameras sited on top of Government buildings facing Parliament Square and Whitehall. In Cambridge hundreds of people assembled in the Guildhall to watch the latest television screens. The picture was clear and precise but there was no control over the usual interference from electrical appliances which all TV owners are forced to suffer in silence, the paper reported. Six domestic TV sets were also installed in the Corn Exchange where because of the bright light, shields were fitted around the screens to enhance the image

In 1956 the Pye boss, C.O. Stanley, had prophesied that telephones for the use of the travelling public in aeroplanes, railways and road services were a possibility. Last week his former employees took pictures on their mobile phones of heavy metal boxes packed with

valves, resistors and wires that had been built into motor cars to allow taxi drivers or policemen to communicate with their bases. Some remembered how they had worked with hot metal to fashion cases for mobile radios, then learned to do the same with plastic as technology evolved, transistors came in and the size of devices shrank.

Others had worked in the various factories scattered around the region, some making televisions, others military components such as the proximity fuse that was devised during the second world war to allow anti-aircraft shells to explode around enemy bombers – a device whose robustness was tested by dropping it down the lift shaft of the University Library.

There were more memories: of husbands whose work on Pye's mobile television studios had taken them far away to Africa, leaving the wife to look after the home and children – not an easy task when all went down with the 'flu. A former Mayor of Cambridge recalled working with the girls on the assembly line at Ditton Walk – but refrained from disclosing quite what she'd learned from them, preferring instead to pay tribute to the technical brilliance of other colleagues. There were speeches reflecting on the significance of Pye in the growth of the Cambridge Phenomenon and sadness that such an important part of the city's manufacturing heritage is now just history.

"Did you ever build a television station, or a radio-telephone, or equipment for an atomic reactor? And have you ever been involved in helping ships at sea, providing entertainment for the home – or bouncing speech off the moon?" Again a snippet from the past, this time the CDN of 6th November 1959. Some of those who read that article over 50 years are still around and now a team of volunteers, armed with the latest digital recording devices – which once would have carried the Pye logo – are recording similar recollections of more recent times.

One day, it is hoped, their voices will be heard coming from the speakers of polished-wooden wireless sets decorated with the trademark Rising Sun fronts that were crafted in the firm's woodworking shop. It will be part of an exhibition paying testimony to the legacy of Herbert George Pye who learned his skills at the Cambridge Scientific Instrument Company, then diversified into wireless. His company took Cambridge expertise into space ... the story is so vast it needs its own Museum.

And that is what the event was all about. If you can add to their files, if you have copies of Pye newsletters, snaps of sports days or Christmas gatherings, a technical manual for a guided missile, or indeed one of the early round-tube televisions, they would be pleased to hear from you.

But most of all, if you were part of the Pye story don't wait to be approached. Record your memories, if necessary on one of those open-spool tape recorders that were once the latest devices.

As the gathering broke up, people emerged to the shadow of the massive chimney of the Cheddars Lane Pumping Station, now the Cambridge Museum of Technology which may one day be the base for the telling of the Pye Story.

If you have a tale to tell, email info@museumoftechology.com or ring Becky Proctor on 01223 321082.

Pictures

Pye Telecommunications Factory on Newmarket Road showing the Company Coat of Arms
The Rising Sun fronted radio

Old colleagues inspect the once-latest technology at the launch
Waiting to cut the cake as the Mayor launches the project
Pye logo
Some of the production-line girls, 1950s
Report of visit of Prince George 1932
Pye workers leave the Radio factory 1932
Visitors tour the works 1932

Memories 4th November 2013 by Mike Petty

It is 25 years since the eyes of the world were trained on a sporting event in Cambridge. Not for a cycle race but for a run round the Great Court of Trinity College whilst the clock struck 24 – twelve times for Trinity, twelve more on a diminutive bell for its neighbours, St Johns.

Two top Olympic athletes took part, Sebastian Coe and Steve Cram, the former being the victor, though the shouts of the crowd were so loud that he was unable to hear the chimes he was racing. They were repeating an event portrayed in a film entitled ‘Chariots of Fire’. But what was a ‘Chariot of Fire’?

It was a Cambridge hansom cab, commandeered by undergraduates as part of their Bonfire Night celebrations in 1920 and 1921. The vehicle was set on fire and then sent careering round and round Market Hill, being pulled of course by a most frightened horse! The cabman was handsomely compensated for the loss of his vehicle – in fact some say that they jostled to get their most decrepit conveyance taken off their hands – but I’m not aware anybody asked the horse’s opinion!

Numerous newspaper reports have chronicled battles between ‘Town and Gown. By 1860 attempts were being made to get the custom banned: Undergraduates have come to the conclusion they have something better to do than senselessly parade the streets followed by hooting Barnwell roughs and this year abstained from exciting the mischievous propensities of the hobbledehoy population by appearing in any numbers. Boys had crackers & squibs to themselves. One or two started a fire on Market Hill but was put out by police.

Even then things were not what they once had been: The Guy of former years was a figure dressed in modern but seedy clothes, supported on the back of a donkey by some partner of his saddless seat, his arms outstretched to denote the intensity of the torture he had undergone, his gloved hands bearing brimstone matches spread out fanwise to show his diabolical intent; his face red and apoplectic with no nose to speak of, eyes fixed and expressionless complexion highlighted by a large white frill and gigantic paper collar. The Cambridge guy this year was a hollow mockery, attired in a top coat of green paper copiously bedecked with spangles somewhat like a Chinese mandarin and borne on a stretcher, the Cambridge Chronicle reported on 10 November 1860

The classic picture of an old-time Guy was taken by a News photographers in 1932 It showed a gaggle of children outside number 39 Cam Road, Cambridge. They included Eric Ives, Paddy Bull and Ken Thorn – who later wrote in from California to add his memories.

“Bonfire Night damage worse than Enemy Action during the War” was how student magazine Varsity headlined the events of 1948. There were serious disturbances with a large crowd on Market Square including undergraduate women wearing gowns for the first time on bonfire night. Lamp standards had been bound with greasy tape to prevent climbers extinguishing the lights – but were themselves set on fire. Scores of fireworks and smoke

bombs were thrown while rockets were aimed at the Guildhall clock. The interior of the Senate House was severely damaged by an explosive charge and 70 panes of glass broken. The priceless medieval glass of King's College Chapel narrowly escaped destruction. Three motor vehicles were damaged and four constables and at least four civilians were injured.

The old bonfire nights were 'fun' for some, but terrifying for others, Judi Pollard (nee Moore) recalled in Memories for November 5th 1999: "Living most of our childhood in Sidney Street I remember that when we were young my father used to take us to a friend's house in Chesterton to share their celebrations. But inevitably we would return home to find Sidney Street blocked off by the police to avoid the Market Square crowd rampaging. On one such occasion my mother, who had stayed in the flat, was bombarded by fireworks being thrown up against our windows. I can remember when in my teens my boyfriend and I crammed on to Market Hill with a few hundred others. Somebody let off something – probably home made – because it was the loudest bang I'd ever heard and the ground actually shook. As a finale to that evening we were then pelted with bags of flour by the people residing in flats over the Milk Bar and other premises on that side of the Square"

It reads like some reports of Halloween! Hopefully this year things will be somewhat quieter.

Pictures

Granta Cartoon 1930 showing police and University proctors massed on Market Hill to prevent Guy Fawkes celebrations

Cow and Cram start their 'Chariots of Fiore' Race at Trinity, Oct 1988

Varsity report of Bonfire Night damage 1948

Bonfire Night cartoon c1900

Lads with Guy 1932

Memories 11th November 2013 by Mike Petty

Over the weekend communities throughout Cambridgeshire have gathered to 'Remember' people they have never known. The names engraved on village memorials commemorate those who fought and died in battle, for many of whom there is no other memorial.

In 1915 Arthur C. Benson, Master of Magdalene College, wrote "There is a little village near Cambridge the homely, summer-sounding name of which is Haslingfield. It is a straggling hamlet of white-walled, straw-thatched cottages, among orchards and old elms, full of closes of meadow-grass, and farmsteads with ricks and big-timbered barns. It has a solid, upstanding Tudor church, with rather a grand tower, and four solid corner turrets. Here Queen Elizabeth once spent a night". He does not note that before her father's dissolution of religious houses thousands of men, like himself, had made a pilgrimage there. Perhaps he never knew.

Benson was writing during the Great War when many Haslingfield men enlisted – or were sent unwillingly - to fight the foe. A sketch by William West depicts the scene in the Bushel and Strike where an old man sadly reflects that signs calling for volunteers are no good – nothing but 'scriptshun will save the country.

However men had left that village centuries before; one such was Lord Thomas Scales. Thomas had fought against the French army of Joan of Arc but been captured and imprisoned in 1429. Locked up in his cell he prayed to Our Lady and his prayers – and a ransom - proved successful. On his return home he brought back the shackles in which he had been chained – or was it the hinge from his cell door. He carried them to the top of the hill overlooking Haslingfield where he placed them in a little chapel that contained a statue of the Virgin Mary adorned with costly ornaments. The story of his deliverance by divine help spread far and wide, attracting thousands of pilgrims. None came empty handed, which enriched the priests

and yielded benefits to the residents for every year at the feast of Easter, the whole village was packed

But the very existence of the chapel on the White Hill might have been forgotten were it not for a Shepreth antiquarian. John Layer, the son of a successful grocer in Cheapside London, settled in the village on his marriage in 1611. With no need to earn a living, he devoted himself to local history; transcribing manorial documents and compiling family pedigrees. Layer stored his notes in wicker hampers in the attic of his manor house, hoping one day to publish them. But that never happened and on his death his papers were dispersed, some being sold as waste paper at an apothecary's shop at Royston. Later antiquarians managed to reassemble the bulk of his manuscript whose importance was recognised by William Cole of Milton, Dr William Mortlock Palmer of Linton and the Rev J.W.E. Conybeare, vicar of Barrington, all of whom drew on his notes to tell the story of the shrine on the White Hill

In the 1930s a Gt Eversden lady, M.S. Gabrielle Breeze, revived the idea of a communal pilgrimage to the former site of the chapel. She planned a pageant, set in 1395 so that Chaucer and his merry pilgrims might be there too. Costumes would be home-made but true to the fashion of that day, there would be heraldic banners and shields, music and dancing, pomp and spectacle. But her timing was unfortunate: the date clashed with the celebrations for King George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935. It was put off for a year but then never happened. Instead eyes became focussed on the newly-established shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham.

By the 1960s Haslingfield historians were debating amongst themselves as to whether the chapel had really existed. There was however tangible evidence of its existence in the form of a bulla – a thick lead disk - of Pope Martin V said to have been built into the wall

A modern pilgrimage was held in May 1978 when nearly 400 Protestants and Roman Catholics wound their way to the site. They continued for a number of years, ending up with tea in the vicarage garden.

Now Jonathan Spain, like Layer a Shepreth historian, has produced a detailed account of the chapel on the hill. But who knows what more there is to be found – are there more documents tucked away in a chest somewhere. And are there other details to be shared. If you can add to the story email jonathanspain@wordpress.com. Or drop me a line and I'll put you in touch.

“The Pilgrimage to Our Lady of White Hill” by Jonathan Spain. ISBN 978-0-9926324-0-4, £6

pictures

choice of views of Haslingfield church

View looking over Haslingfield from near the site of the shrine

Inside the Bushel and Strike, Haslingfield c1916

Haslingfield “white-walled,, straw thatched cottages”

Memories 18th November 2013 by Mike Petty

Some weeks just seem more dramatic than others. In early November 1913 the Editor of the Cambridge Independent Press had two special stories to enhance his sales; both featured deaths. One was of a man who had murdered his wife, the other of a man who had dedicated his life to caring for the sick, only to take his own. One man's ending provoked little reaction; the other sparked a riot.

Frederick Seekings had been to Brampton Feast with the woman with whom he had lived, then on to a pub where they started to quarrel. The two left together and were later found lying by the side of the road. The woman was dead with her throat cut. Fred stated that she'd done the deed herself, but the blood-stained knife was found in his pocket. The jury had no doubt it was murder.

So on 4th November 1913 Seekings was awoken at six in the morning in the condemned cell at the County Gaol on Castle Hill, Cambridge. He'd slept well. He breakfasted on mutton chop, tea and bread and butter but did not make any request for beer, spirits or other intoxicant.

During his stay at the gaol he'd slept all by himself always watched by two warders. The Prison Chaplain had also been a regular visitor. He'd done no work, condemned prisoners not being required to do so. He'd taken exercise daily and was allowed to smoke and read any books he fancied. On the Monday he'd been visited for the last time by his brother and uncle and had even joked with them.

The executioner, Thomas Pierrepont, had arrived that night and slept in the prison. He did not need to see the condemned man, just to check his weight to ensure the drop was set right. It was a wise move – during his imprisonment Seekings had put on a stone. The execution took place in a small dun-coloured coach house built in the exercise yard adjoining the main wall of the prison. At the designated time the condemned cell door was opened and Seekings was escorted to the gallows. The hanging was expeditiously carried out, death being instantaneous. Fifteen minutes later a notice was posted on the prison gates.

But outside there was little interest, just a handful of people, chiefly composed of errand boys and youths. The black flag was not hoisted nor was the prison bell tolled, and there was nothing whatever to indicate that anything unusual was taking place, the News reported. They did however give a full report of the inquest that followed.

Dr Horace Dimock's passing was different. In January 1911 an Insurance Act had come into force which enabled the low paid to have free medical treatment and sickness benefit. Although popular with the poor there was considerable opposition from doctors who saw it as a threat to their livelihood. In Wisbech only two had agreed to operate the new panel system so Dr Dimock was appointed to cope with the flood of patients. Aged 32, a Stretham man, Cambridge graduate & former surgeon at Addenbrooke's Hospital & he became highly popular with his patients. But not with other Wisbech doctors. His name plate was pulled off his door and he was frequently called out at night to non-existent calls.

Then other doctors started to receive anonymous offensive postcards and the police staked out postboxes. Then they arrested Dr Dimock. He denied all charges but, tired and depressed returned to his parents' home where he was found dead next morning from an overdose of morphine.

In Stretham blinds were drawn when the funeral procession left his house in Red Lion Street – now known as Chapel Street – towards the church. In the churchyard photographers and cinematographers waited to record the scene, one setting up his apparatus on the table top of a memorial. Dr Dimock had expressed a wish that no flowers should be sent but the coffin was covered in wreaths from Wisbech

The cortege was met at the gate by the Rev Samuel Stitt and the coffin was wheeled on the parish bier into the church packed with mourners. Then it was on to interment in the parish cemetery. The proceedings were orderly except that one Wisbech man gave vent to some

strong language referring to the way Dr Dimock had been treated. The police, of whom two were in plain clothes, had an easy task to perform, the reporter noted.

But not so in Wisbech where the news of Dr Dimock's death had sparked protest. A public meeting was held in the Market Place to express public grief and indignation. Feelings ran high and a thousand or more people marched to the home of one of the late Doctor's chief accusers where stones and bombs were thrown and windows broken – including that of a jeweller. Police reinforcements were called in from Kings Lynn and Peterborough, the Mayor read the Riot Act and constables charged the crowd, truncheons drawn. The riots lasted several days with every doctor's house guarded - except the two who had joined the scheme. Gradually all the others joined and peace reigned once more

Meanwhile in Brampton and Stretham two families were left to mourn their dead.

Pictures – select from

Seekings

The Brampton murder scene from 'A grim almanac of Cambridgeshire'

County gaol exterior and interior

County gaol staff 1913 – the chaplain was a regular visitor to Seekings' condemned cell

The gallows were sold in 1930

Dimock

Dimock funeral cortege at Stretham

Police control crowds at Stretham, cameraman in background

Red Lion Street Stretham where blinds were drawn

Wisbech – scene of riots

Memories 25th November 2013, by Mike Petty

It was in 1943 that John O'Donoghue left County Kerry and found work building a bomber station just outside Ely

The transport took him to the gates of a muddy field where in hard frost and thickening fog he waited to be assigned to a task. He tried to make some sense of the babble of voices around him, speaking in accents that varied from Scottish and Welsh to the almost incomprehensible Cockney, as well as the more familiar Irish brogue such as his own.

John was allotted to the gang working the giant cement mixer, shovelling stones and sand into the machine until his arms ached and he felt fit to drop - this was no work for a 43-year-old. Nor did he find pushing the heavy barrow piled high with concrete across narrow planks over deep and wide ditches any more to his liking. And when he tried carrying the bags of cement dust it got into his eyes as it did into every scratch on his hands.

By the end of three days he had had enough and said so in no uncertain manner. He was transferred to a gang of bricklayers but was not prepared to be bullied by the small foreman there and stalked off again. Surely somewhere in the mass of equipment that stretched across the site there must be something suitable for such a one as he. Fortune smiled on him, he was offered a post in the canteen, cleaning ranges, lighting fires, filling the big urns with water, dusting and sweeping. At lunch time he helped serve the plates of food, afterwards he had his fill from what was left. It would have been an ideal world were it not for miss bossy-boots – a local girl - who objected to his friends visiting the kitchen, whilst encouraging others who were in a position to supply her with fully-fashioned stockings.

When his ability to write resulted in a transfer from the kitchen to the camp office John was delighted, he was less pleased when he found that he had to add up columns of figures, and

still sadder when he found himself outside again, labouring. He was one of a large gang sweeping the newly constructed runways, singing songs of old Ireland while the large Lancaster bombers were flying in to take their places in the big black hangers that he had helped to construct, when the announcement came that his labour was no longer required. So with not too much regret John once more boarded the train at Ely station and went off to seek his fortune elsewhere

The airfield he helped to build is now fading from memory. Barry Aldridge first discovered it as a lad in 1955 when out on a bicycle trip with school chums. He crossed the abandoned runways, climbed the stairs of the old control tower with its smashed windows and cables dangling down the walls and sensed something of its sadness. Then he left

Nearly 40 years later a visitor to Ely Museum asked whether there was anything about Witchford Airfield. No, they replied. But the assistant, Barry's wife Sue, knew that they had some photos at home. So it was that Barry met his first rear gunner.

Since then he has met hundreds of men and women for whom RAF Witchford holds indelible memories. Some husbands and dads had travelled half-way round the world from New Zealand to play their part in the war. Some had perished over occupied Europe, some drowned when their damaged planes crashed in the channel and some had got home to Witchford, only to be shot out of the sky by an enemy fighter.

Barry was one of a team that located the wreckage in a fenland field and excavated the engine of the giant Lancaster bomber. It was unveiled during a reunion visit of 100 former members of 115 Squadron who'd been based there. In 1996 the News photographed that engine with Barry, Terry Strawson, Graham Austin and Christopher Tooth of Grovemere Developments who have generously allowed space in their office building on the old airfield for a display paying tribute to the men and women who served at Witchford and its neighbour, Mepal.

Each item has a personal story and Barry wanted to set it all down, to ensure the memories did not fade away, as sadly his own have now done. But with the help of Sue and a dedicated team of helpers that ambition has been fulfilled with the publication of a 460-page book detailing something of the story of the men, women and aircraft that collectively formed RAF Witchford.

It was launched at the magnificent collection of memorabilia housed on the Lancaster Way Business Park just outside Witchford. Today the old airfield is home to knowledge-based businesses complementing established agricultural, manufacturing and distribution companies.

But many of the now fading eyes of the visitors on Sunday still saw the hangars where bombers were housed, the Nissen huts, canteen, stores and bomb dumps that John O'Donoghue helped to construct.

Thanks to Barry Aldridge they will not be forgotten.

Memories of RAF Witchford by Barry and Sue Aldridge; published by Milton Contact ISBN 978-0-9571959-6-7 £16

"In a strange land" by John O'Donoghue was published by Batsford in 1958

Pictures

Witchford airfield display of memorabilia's principal exhibit is the engine of a Lancaster bomber that crashed in 1944 and lay buried for 51 years. Barry Aldridge and a group of enthusiasts masterminded its excavation and it was unveiled during a reunion visit of 100 former members of 115 Squadron who were based at Witchford during the Second World War. Here Christopher Tooth of Grovemere, Terry Strawson, Graham Austin and Barry Aldridge inspect the engine

The King, Queen and Princess Elizabeth visited Witchford in July 1944

A Lancaster takes off from RAF Witchford during the war, Ely Cathedral in the background

Flyers and their plane

Barry Aldridge talking to visitors to the Display of Memorabilia, May 2006

Nissen Huts on the airfield 1964

Memories 2nd December 2013 by Mike Petty

Photography arrived in Cambridge about 170 years ago. "People fancy that everything which is got in London is better than the same thing in the country; but prima facie a photographic portrait taken by the action of light will be more perfect when the plate is acknowledged up in the clear atmosphere of Cambridge than in the pea soup affair which Londoners breath", the Cambridge Chronicle reported in August 1844.

Now the new "Beard's patent Daguerre type or photographic portraits (taken solely by the action of light)" was available to both town and gown from William Nichols' premises in St Mary's Passage. Although readers were informed that "photography is no flatterer, it paints us as we are, with every wrinkle and every stray hair plainly marked" the paper was confident that "success will attend upon the enterprise in this interesting branch of science". And so it proved, leaving a legacy of faces and a record of places that has captured the changing life of Cambridge even since.

One of the earliest exterior photographs shows Hobson's Conduit on Market Hill, from which it moved in 1856, although whether this was taken by William Nichols or by his more famous near-namesake Arthur Nicholls is not yet proven.

Certainly it is Arthur who is credited with the now classic photographs of Market Hill with its stalls, cobbles and onlookers turning their full attention to the camera which was recording them for posterity.

The 1860s saw Cambridge undergoing radical change particularly in Trinity and St John's Streets where three major building projects were under way. Trinity College constructed Whewell's court opposite its Great Gate, St John's demolished and rebuilt its Chapel and, in between, the old All Saints' Church was demolished.

These alterations were recorded by Arthur Nicholls who took photographs before, during and after the changes which were taking place only a few feet away from his studio at 5 All Saints Passage. Perhaps it may have been this disruption which caused his removal in about 1867 to Post Office Terrace, a small lane off St Andrew's Street. Once again he found himself in an area of change and Corpus Christi College commissioned him to take a photographic record of the Red Hart Yard in Petty Cury that was to be redeveloped as Alexandra Street

Later other photographers moved into the studios. They included John Palmer Clarke, Helen Ramsey and Lettice Muspratt and finally Peter Lofts. Each acquired the files of negatives stored in the ramshackled outbuildings. They include thousands of portraits, pictures of the Corn Exchange decorated for dances and a wonderful record of the hospital that coped with First World War casualties.

The cream of the collection however remain the street scenes recorded on glass plate negatives in the earliest days of photography. They have been reproduced ever since.

But there have always been difficulties to be overcome in the darkroom due to the length of time needed to expose the original plate. While men would be content to stand stock still as the shutter took its time to snap, ladies would not. The movement of their frocks left a blurred image which had to be corrected through skilfully touching up each print.

But a new exhibition of these old photographs by Peter Lofts has taken the art of improvement to an extra level. It is most apparent in the sky for now there are dramatic cloudscape that give the pictures a new dimension. And Peter has not stopped there; he has carefully enhanced the lighting on some of the buildings, bringing out detail that has never before been obvious. And he has even added colour to the clothes of the people waiting for their turn to buy from a Cambridge market stall.

The pictures are on show on the third floor of Cambridge Central Library for the next fortnight and are featured on Peter's website - <http://www.loftyimages.co.uk/> alongside other examples of the work of photographers of Post Office Terrace, the vast majority of whose negatives are now housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection together with detailed indexes recording the name of each sitter.

Photos

Petty Cury looking towards the Guildhall c1865; many of the buildings on the left were demolished a few years later though the tall Lion Hotel survived for another century. Much of the right side was rebuilt 1929-1930.

St Andrews Street looking south showing Post Office Terrace on the right

Market Hill – Peter Lofts has added colour to this view of the 1860s, one of the first photographs of Cambridge but still a moving figure presents a blurred image

Memories December 9th 2013 by Mike Petty

Last week the Mayor of Cambridge joined local residents for the launch of a Cambridge Calendar with pictures looking back on their area of the city over the years

But there were no views of King's College Chapel; for this concentrated on another 'Royal' area of Cambridge – King's Hedges, to the north of the Arbury Road.

Now rapidly developing with new Orchard Park houses extending up to the Northern Bypass, it was one of the earliest areas to be settled, as archaeologists discovered during the postwar housing development that spread across the open fields

It included a Roman coffin hewn out of solid stone that was discovered by Mr C. Taylor when excavating a trench for a new sewage system in August 1952. He had lifted the lid, weighing many hundredweight, and there, completely enclosed in a lead lining was a complete skeleton. Nearby was another, also in good condition. It seems possible this was the burial place of an important Roman family, archaeologists speculated, as the stone must have been

imported and the coffin was enclosed in a layer of chalk. Others recalled how a similar coffin had been found centuries earlier and been carried by the Monks to Ely as a more fitting resting place for Saint Etheldreda than the simple wooden box in which she'd been buried.

All that was too far back for those gathered at the Buchan Street Community Centre; nor did their memories stretch to the whippet races that had taken place off Arbury Road in the 1920s. In those days King's Hedges was a narrow country lane but then a Cambridge Town Planning Scheme envisaged the construction of a ring road and houses replaced hedges, some of which were prefabricated using innovative building methods to meet the desperate need for houses.

More plans followed in the 1950s and since then the fields north of Arbury Road have become full of homes. Some folk could still recall corn growing where Campkin Road now runs and the shops that had opened in 1963, providing residents of the then new estate with greatly needed facilities including a newsagent, greengrocer, butcher and general provisions store. Today just two shops remain, a takeaway and a Tesco Express. It was a useful supplement to Arbury Court with its mixture of facilities including the much-appreciated Branch Library, recently saved from closure by its Friends, and a pub named the SnoCat after the tracked vehicles that had carried Cambridge explorer Sir Vivian Fuchs across Antarctica in 1958.

But people needed more than homes, food and drink; they needed an opportunity to meet together. The foundation stone for a new church, the Good Shepherd was laid in the presence of Princess Margaret in 1957 and she returned in 1976 to celebrate its completion. A new Manor School opened in September 1959 with boys and girls educated separately; not until 1970 did it become co-educational and now it has become the North Cambridge Academy. It is not the only centre for education with Cambridge Regional College offering a range of courses while youngsters are taught at King's Hedges School originally built in 1967 but which has expanded with a new school in 1995. There's been a replacement Grove School too, opened in 1985 in place of the 1963 building that was badly damaged by fire on the day before the Arbury Carnival of June 1982

The Carnival itself has been the highlight of the year for youngsters for more than 30 years during which time it has featured a procession and the choosing of a Carnival queen and her princesses. If you were one of these then do share your memories.

But kids have found their entertainment in other ways: the opening of an Arbury Adventure Playground in 1972 gave them the opportunity to build dens and climbing structures while others will recall that glorious period in June 1970 when a freak storm flooded Campkin Road and provided an ideal paddling pool – though parents were less pleased as the wakes of buses ploughing through the water send mini tidal waves that threatened their houses.

Older members of the community also enjoy companionship; many groups use the Arbury Community Centre whose café provides a place to meet and chat while the Buchan Street Neighbourhood Centre has been providing activities such as karate and life drawing since 1990.

For the last decade they have also issued a calendar which this year is packed with pictures and information gathered as part of a project led by the Cambridge & County Folk Museum, now renamed The Museum of Cambridge.

If this is – or was – your part of the city then you will find it stimulating memories you thought you'd forgotten. Contact Binnie Pickard or Rachal Creek, at the Buchan Street Neighbourhood Centre; ring 01223 508149 or email bsnc@cambridge.gov.uk to get your copy.

Pictures

Choice of

King's hedges 1854

House on corner of Arbury Road and future Campkin Road

The lane that became Campkin Road

Campkin Road 1972 or Campkin Road floods June 1970

Prefabricated houses were erected in King's Hedges Road in 1927

The King's Hedges Calendar is now out

Memories 2013 December 26

In December 1963, fifty years ago, a Cambridge News reporter overheard a conversation between two young ladies who were discussing the important issues of the day – Mods, Rockers and Mids.

“It makes life very much easier when you can see at a glance which group people belong to” said one. “You know immediately if they are one of you”

“The main thing is whether you think or not. If you do then its odds on you are a Mod. If you don't you're probably a Rocker. A 'Rocker' has long side-burns, leather jacket and tight jeans; drinks beer in half pints and loves to 'ton-up' on his motorbike without a crash helmet. He likes vintage rock'n'roll – early Presley or Buddy Holly. In fact he is rather Conservative – does not like change.

“Now a 'Mod' runs a sports or a scooter and wears Beatle-type jackets and bell-bottom trousers. He always uses a crash helmet and drinks gin and the like. He goes for the Beatles and country and western music in a big way and looks down on Rockers as inferior.”

But there was a third category and defining a 'Mid' proved more difficult.

“I suppose that's everybody who is neither a Rocker nor a Mod. The Don't Knows of the system. Either they don't care or can't decide which group they belong to. Or maybe they have just rejected them both”. She continued: “Take me. I'm a Mid because I can't afford to be a Mod and Rockers don't appeal to me at all.”

The system applied to all, boys or girls, she explained

“Girls come into this as much as boys. But it's the boys who set the pace and we just follow. The girl Rockers have short dresses, lacquered and back combed hair. They are never happier than when they are dancing in a tight circle with other girl Rockers. The boy Rockers are only thought of as a way to get home on the pillion of his motorbike. The funny thing is that girl Rockers marry boy Rockers earlier than the other two groups marry.

“Girl Mods are entirely different. They dance in splendid isolation – almost in a trance with skirts well below the knees and an arrogant stare on their faces. “Girl Mids cannot afford to be either of the other two or are getting into a new class – Respectable.

“Of course the whole thing stems from us young people wanting to be individual. To break away from set conventions. It shows in everything – especially in the way we dress”, she concluded. Her friend nodded in agreement.

But there was another issue occupying the minds of the musical youth: which were the better Beatles.

A few days earlier Cambridge teenagers had gone mad during a visit of John, Paul, George and Ringo. They'd queued for long hours to get tickets to hear them at the Regal, only to have heard nothing but the screams of other fans.

But out in Sweden youngsters were raving over their Scandinavian equivalent – Ken, Cliff, Dave and Robin, collectively known as The Phantoms. They had topped the Swedish hit parade with “Shakin’ All Over”, one of their ten best-selling singles and had also issued an LP. Now, rumour had it, they were each earning up to £70 a week, after expenses - about £1,200 in modern terms. And these rich, talented pop stars were locals.

Ken Leverington, a Pye electrician, had been in various local groups before he formed The Phantoms in June 1960. The group played at dances and cinemas throughout East Anglia and had a large following at Cambridge University, in fact two undergraduates wrote “Phantom Guitar”, which appeared as their first record in 1961 issued by Palette in America and Australia and Pye in England.

The record company's distributor in Norway had asked them to go over and things took off, Ken told the News in December 1963. The Twist had just started and they were such a success after a 14-day tour that they stayed on for two years working in Sweden.

They'd shared equal billing with The Beatles, Gerry and the Pacemakers and Chubby Checker and were due to appear with Cliff Richard and the Shadows, Heinz and Brian Poole and the Tremeloes.

Now Ken Leverington, Cliff Gentle, Dave Cooke and Robin Bailey were back home in Cambridge for Christmas. At least they could go to the Regal without being mobbed like the other pop superstars

But they would be returning for tours of Fenland, Germany and Denmark in the New Year.

So what became of them? And were you a Rocker, Mod or Mid?

Pictures:

The Phantoms in 1961, before fame came knocking; showing Ken Leverington, Dave Cooke and Cliff Gentle on guitars with Freddie Smart on drums (later replaced by Robin Bailey) and their then vocalist Johnny Cullum

Phantoms Swedish Idols - News cutting, 12 Dec 1963

Beatles on stage at Regal November 1963

Moder or Mids – youngsters at Mill Pool 1964

Two girls chatting, 1964

Bikers in Market Hill, 1963

Memories 23rd December 2013 by Mike Petty

Another Christmas finds many families separated from loved ones serving their nations in the armed forces. There are hopes that next year they may be home- but such hopes have been expressed before.

Seventy years ago Christmas 1943 was one such. After very dark years there was some hope that the tide of war seemed to be beginning to change. The Russians had repulsed the Germans on the Eastern Front, North Africa had been cleared and the Allied armies were pushing into Italy. The bouncing bomb had destroyed German dams and on Christmas Eve came news that General Dwight D. Eisenhower had been appointed Supreme Commander of Allied Forces with General Bernard Montgomery as his Field Commander.

But at home Christmas 1943 topped all others in the difficulties which had to be surmounted to make it 'merry'. The search for the Christmas dinner had been like the pursuit of a will-o-the-wisp, for never had the turkey - or even the humble goose, duck or chicken - been such a rare bird. Many householders sat down to an ordinary joint of beef or mutton, or possibly even a tin of Spam. Meanwhile nuts, crystallised fruits, tangerines, dates, figs and all the other tempting etceteras would remain merely a tender memory.

As usual every effort was made to provide a Christmas for those in institutions, though even paper decorations were very scarce. But at Addenbrooke's two Christmas Day babies received a set of clothes from Dr Wolf & every baby in the ward got a present due to generosity of other patients. The Mayor and Mayoress of Cambridge, Ald and Mrs. W. L. Briggs, made a particularly full round of calls to hostels and hospitals on both Christmas morning and afternoon, and it was well after tea-time when they made their way back to their own home.

And then there was the great Christmas drought. The landlord who could fill the flowing bowl that year was likely to be trampled to death in the rush of thirsty citizens.

Shopping had been little short of a nightmare, what with the acute shortages of supplies, depleted staffs (still further attenuated by the ravages of flu) and the problems of smuggling presents home when no wrapping paper was allowed. It had indeed been a case of 'he who hesitates is lost' for unless one grabbed a likely gift at first sight it was ten to one it would have vanished a second or so later!

There was however a new source of festive cheer - the Americans. The men had been saving their sweet rations for several months to give to the children whilst, it was rumoured, there would be Father Christmas and even Ice Cream at various parties.

Professor Frank Dobie was one American who recorded his experiences in 'A Texan in England': "On the afternoon of Christmas Eve I went to hear the carols in King's College Chapel, the singing of them by the Chapel choirboys being famous, through the radio, all over the British Commonwealth of Nations". Although the carol service was broadcast those who were present were aware that it was not the same: the interior of the chapel was dark and gloomy as the magnificent stained glass windows had been removed and replaced with wooden boarding for fear of German bombing.

Jack Overhill listened to the broadcast after dinner at the British Restaurant on Mill Road. He'd been woken early that morning by the sound of bombers setting off from local bases: "They kept roaring over ever so low; and then after going to sleep again I was suddenly awakened by a terrific explosion, the blast of which nearly sent the windows in. I guessed what it was: a bomber taking off had crashed bringing death swift and sudden to the crew; for I doubt if any of them survived that", he noted in his diary

That Christmas an Anglo-American services party was held at Cambridge Guildhall. There was a programme of music provided by the Thunderbolts Band with singers from America & the Cambridge Amateur Operatic Society choir followed by impromptu messages from the floor. There were lights, flags of Allied nations and bunches of mistletoe. These were a trap for the unwary amongst the 150 US servicemen & similar number of British women's

services present, but not - so far as one could see - used! -or so they reported to the folks back home, for the proceedings were recorded for broadcast both here in and in the States.

At Grantchester the postman was joined on his rounds by the BBC's Gilbert Harding who talked to those who received letters and parcels. And for some folk the best Christmas cheer came when letters arrived from Japanese Prisoner of War camps - from men who at the time they wrote them, many weeks earlier, were still alive. Amongst them were Private Hewerdine who was amongst 20,000 prisoners in camp near Moulmein, Sapper Howard of Gwydir Street, Private Cullum of Darwin Drive and the Turkentine brothers - Sergeant William and Sapper Allan of Albert Street who had last been heard of in February 1942 following the fall of Singapore.

There were hopes and belief that 1943 would see the last wartime Christmas and that the men would soon be back safe and sound. Sadly history was to prove them wrong

Pictures

American servicemen organised parties for children

King's College chapel seen from the roof of the Guildhall showing the blacked-out windows

Prof Frank Dobie and US servicemen at King's College

Gwydir Street celebrating Victory in Europe in 1945 – but at Christmas 1943 came news of one of their men missing in Malaya

Addenbrooke's Hospital tried to be festive in 1943

Memories 6th January 2014 by Mike Petty

Sylvie Short (or Coleman as she was then) moved to Swaffham Prior with her parents in 1954; she attended the village school before moving on to Ely High School then became a teacher, finishing her education as a Head.

But she has always had fond memories of her childhood village and sought for a book which would enable her to learn more of this unique community with its two churches, two windmills and a forge. Sylvie searched bookshops in vain, then decided she should fill the gap in Cambridgeshire's story

So one day in March 2010 she took the road that leads through Upware and along the concrete wartime road through the fen, the car bouncing over the humps and bumps caused by subsidence of the rich black fertile soil now under threat of being lost back to marsh under plans by the National Trust to expand the adjacent Wicken Fen.

On past the old station, now forgotten in trees, and the little stream where she caught sticklebacks in a jam jar, towards the school with its memories of dusty floorboards, trestle tables, dinners delivered in containers that had to be wheeled in from the gate on a trolley and the games of kiss-chase where boys would pursue their choice right into the girl's toilet block to claim their prize. And when ardour cooled there was the old coke stove searingly hot in winter and surrounded by tiny milk bottles whose cardboard tops were forced upwards and balanced on frozen milky columns.

Sylvie noticed the old Rose Cottage where headteacher Mrs Dowdeswell used to live, where pupils would be taken to dig the garden and pull up weeds. And does the tack room of

Baldwin Manor still smell of saddle soap like it did when she went for riding lessons there, she wondered. Many of the old houses still stand but now no longer the home of childhood playmates, no longer could she enter so freely

The Red Lion, its walls decorated with old photographs, still provides refreshment for visitors and locals alike as it has for centuries, but the nearby Baptist Chapel has become a house, its congregation now dispersed.

And then there are the two churches that stand high and proud in the shared churchyard – why should there be two when much larger communities made do with just one? Sylvie recalled how sometimes she'd been the only worshipper at the evening service, having run through the frosty streets in her riding mac. Then Father Hicks would ask her to go and kneel with him at the altar and they would say evensong together. There was the old organ that her brother and she used to pump, alleviating the boredom by letting the air almost run out until the notes started to sound squeaky before pumping like mad – and making a horrendous banging sound with the handle. And still at the back of the church were the old parish magazines recalling everyday events of years even longer ago.

Villages once had a bellman who would parade the streets to announce important events and the Swaffham Crier continues to fulfil that role, no longer a person but the village newsletter. Over the years it has been a place where locals have been able to share their own memories. These Sylvie has drawn upon for a fascinating tour around the village telling the story of little cottages and the large Hall which once housed the Land Army Girls who worked to reclaim the once marshy fen and grow food that to eke out the ration. She charts the cricket club, the now long-closed shops, the now-dry pubs, the bakery and those two windmills.

And then there were traditions such as that recalled by Mr R. C. Benstead in 1963, “We children, thirty six years ago, used to black our faces and visit the more well-to-do houses on Plough Monday, and on arrival we would sing:

A sifting of chaff, a bottle of hay,
See the poor crows go carrying away,
Squeak by squeak they wag their tails
Hi nonney! Hi nonney!

“The “Hi” was shouted as loud as we could yell. One farmer would make us come up one by one and present us with a sixpence which, once grasped firmly in the hand, we would turn and run as hard as we could, with the farmer’s hearty laughter and his huge whip cracking at our heels. I don’t remember anyone getting caught by him.”

These traditions were recorded by Enid Porter, former curator of the Cambridge and County Folk Museum, and are now being revived by the modern village children as part of a Lottery-funded project. They will be performing the old dances and telling the old stories for parents and visitors at their primary school on 30th April before entertaining the masses at Reach Fair on 5th May

Sylvie Short has drawn together much of the village’s story a 230-page history ‘Two churches together’. But she would be delighted to learn more; email sylvietoat@tiscali.co.uk or ring 01945 74443

Choice of Pictures

Tumbled-down cottages 1920s

Street looking to the churches 1920s

Church restoration 1901 – most villages only have one church to look after

Two churches 1806
Two churches photo c1900
Two windmills, 1928
Village sign

Memories 13 January 2014-06-12

Text to find

Memories 20 January 2014 by Mike Petty

The name of Joshua Taylor has a proud position in the annals of Cambridge shopping, its shop in Market Street becoming a firm favourite for many people.

But the firm had started in Ely in 1810 at a time when the trade of ready-made clothing was only just beginning. Their shop in Forehill had a sign that read ‘Tailor, Clothier, Hatter, Hosier & General Outfitter. Double-fronted with bow windows, the shop aimed to cater for the working man and its stock included plush forepart sleeve vest, pilot reefers, moleskin jackets, leather buskins and smocks. An assistant served customers with country wines and ales as well as clothing and transactions were chalked up on the counter – in those days a relaxed and genial atmosphere was formed which would become the hallmark of the store

Or so the story went.

But now research by Ely local historian, Pam Blakeman MBE, suggests that the story might not be true.

She has been investigating an ancient ledger from the firm between 1878 to 1881, now preserved in Ely Museum. It lists the customers and what they bought and now Pam has researched the bodies that were covered by their clothes.

Cole Ambrose, the Stuntney farmer bought tan gaiters, George Peck, the ironmonger, purchased flannel trousers, Angora coats and a felt hat, solicitor Harold Archer obtained clothes for his men and the Rev George Hall obtained his clerical coats, a silk hat and trousers for his servant.

But few other clergy patronised the shop. It was mainly used by well-off farmers and the better-off tradesmen such as Thomas Blakeman the currier from Fore Hill who was one of the firm’s best customers, his purchases including lawn tennis hats, cotton shirts and collars.

But why did his brother, Henry, lash out thirteen shillings for tweed trousers and another ten bob for gold studs and solitaires in 1879, when he was aged 22 – and why did he leave Ely shortly afterwards, never to be spoken of by the family again?

Like all history, the more you investigate, the less you know. Amongst the museum’s collections is a billhead showing the Ely shop with a note, ‘Fore Street, Ely – 1810’. But there’s another one from 1898 that reads ‘Established 1851’. So which – if either – is correct?

Pam’s researches find no mention of the firm in local directories before 1851. That year a man named Joshua Taylor, aged 34, was a lodger with Henry and Ann Bailey, eating house keepers where he’s listed as a clothier, hatter etc. He continued to live in the city as in 1865 he told the people compiling the Cambridge voting list he’d only slept in Cambridge six or eight times in the previous six months and had a residence in Ely

His shop was certainly established in Ely by July 1852 when Joshua Taylor appeared in court giving evidence against a man who'd stolen a waistcoat and a pair of stockings – he'd meant to pay for them, the accused claimed after he'd been detected. The magistrate did not believe him and he went to Ely gaol for one month's hard labour.

Sadly it was not just customers who shop-lifted: in April 1867 one of the assistants at the Ely shop stole eleven pairs of trousers and a large quantity of other wearing apparel – it was wholesale robbery. Two years later a manager at the Cambridge shop was accused of taking home two overcoats; he told the court that he was allowed to have goods at cost price and had borrowed a black coat so that he could attend a funeral. He'd intended to return it, but had forgotten to write it down. Joshua Taylor confirmed that it was their policy to take back goods within a reasonable time and exchange them, but they were not a second-hand clothes shop.

The wholesale and retail ready-made clothing warehouse in Cambridge's Sidney Street had been reopened by May 1862, advertising an entire new and well-assorted stock of the most fashionable, ready-made clothing including coats, trousers and vests for gentlemen and Scotch, Knickerbocker and Polka suits for boys. The advertisement thanked customers for the patronage bestowed upon the family for the last fifty years, but it does not say they were in Cambridgeshire all that time: at Whittlesey a draper by the name of Joshua Taylor was declared bankrupt in 1845,

In Ely the firm inspired loyalty in at least one member of its staff : Alfred Hammence spent all his working life at the shop where he had been apprenticed in 1863. Ely Museum has a picture of him standing at the entrance in June 1923 alongside Ernest Robert Taylor, who'd just purchased the business. Some of their garments are hanging outside, but it is a discrete display. Perhaps they'd learned the lesson of their founder, Joshua who had found himself in the dock at Ely in November 1865 accused of obstructing the pavement by hanging up goods outside his shop. He'd been fined eleven shillings and sixpence and had promised never to do it again.

If you can add more to the story of Joshua Taylor in Cambridge or Ely, I'd be delighted to hear from you

Pam Blakeman's 'Notes on the firm of Joshua Taylor in Ely' is published by The Ely Society – ISBN 978-0-903616-31-7 £4.50

Pictures

Joshua Taylor Ely ledger in Ely Museum

An entry in the ledge

Joshua Taylor's Ely shop 1923 and detail of the doorway

Joshua Taylor bill head with date 1810 – now proved to be wrong

Joshua Taylor bill head quoting the 1851 date – and detail

Memories 27 January 2014 by Mike Petty

Jesus Green footbridge is currently in the news as, owing to repairs, it has been closed for ten weeks forcing people to take a detour via Victoria Bridge or Magdalene Bridge.

It crosses the Cam near Jesus Lock and weir which were constructed in the early 1830s as a replacement for an earlier lock in front of the Fort St George public house on Midsummer Common.

A high wooden bridge was erected over the lock pen in 1851 with a lower one across the rest of the river. In 1860 the High Back section was very dilapidated and unsafe so estimates were sought from Mr S. Hurrell and Mr Headley for erecting an iron bridge to replace it. People would continue to cross, using the sluice keeper's swing bridge in the meantime. However things dragged on and it seems not until 1868 that work started. A correspondent to the Cambridge Chronicle had suggested the new bridge should remain the same height right across the river, making it easier to access from Chesterton Road. This was rejected as being too expensive.

Instead the replacement bridge was wooden and similar to its predecessor, being only inches above the water. This made for an exciting crossing especially in August 1879 when there was extensive flooding after more than three inches of water fell in six hours. The Cambridge Chronicle reported that "the lightning and thunder were awful in grandeur and the downpour of rain and hail terrible". The Cam flooded across Midsummer Common and water lapped within a few yards of Maids Causeway.

By 1892 the High-Back bridge had been condemned – it had long been out of date and frequently dangerous, councillors claimed. It was replaced by the present much higher structure, very similar to the one rejected in 1868.

It is a picturesque spot but has not always been a place to linger: a report from October 1873 expressed concerns about the state of the river which was polluted by the sewage of about 30,000 persons together with a vinegar factory and Ekin's Brewery. It was little better than a huge cesspool whose contents were churned up by the propeller of the Alma Mater pleasure boat, creating a serious nuisance. Other boats have continued to offer river trips into the countryside from near the locks.

Some people haven't needed bridges to cross the river here. In April 1903 Tom Barton, described as the world's champion log roller, entertained several thousands when he made a journey from the University boathouse and through Jesus Lock on a nine-foot long cylinder made of Bovril tins soldered together. A chair was passed to him, then a light table on which was placed a large bottle supposed to contain Bovril. It looked so easy that the challenge to any person to stand on the cylinder for two minutes and win £5 was irresistible – none succeeded!

In February 1913 the Cam Conservators received a petition from 50 regular users complaining about the satisfactory condition of the bridge and its approaches in wet weather. When there was any considerable rainfall the bridge became one huge puddle as there were no openings for the water to pass through, and the steps at either end were dangerous, being worn and sloping. The problem was that when old planking had become worn replacement planks had been nailed over it and water had got between them, rotting the old planks. One solution would be to bore holes right through both, so that the water could drain away – but that would soak people using the lock beneath.

More complaints came in July 1936: the bridge had not been designed for prams; two little children had been trying to push one across when it overturned and the baby was thrown out. However prams were getting less bulky and when one of the heavier ones came along people were not backward in giving a helping hand, councillors felt. A long sloping ramp would be very detrimental to the quaint old lock and increase the danger from cyclists. Instead the Surveyor was instructed to provide two cycle ramps on the steps on Jesus Green side of the bridge

When the bridge needed to be closed for repairs in June 1956 sappers from the Territorial Army were called into erect a temporary replacement using folding boats, road bearers and decking. It was capable of carrying three-ton military lorries but the City Surveyor added

additional handrails to keep pedestrians and cyclists safe. This is not an option today and so pedestrians and cyclists need to cross elsewhere

Do you have memories or stories of Jesus Green footbridge – contact Mike Petty at the News

Pictures

Jesus Lock in 1838

The floods of 1879

The old bridge skimmed the water

The replacement bridge of 1892 is higher

Bridge repairs in 1950s

The floating bridge of 1956

The old bridge rising high over the Lock

Memories 3rd February 2014 by Mike Petty

The news that troops have been sent in to assist with the flooding in the Somerset Levels prompts reflections of similar activities in Cambridgeshire following the flooding of February and March of 1947

It had followed an exceptionally cold frost and snow that seemed it would never stop. Then came a quick thaw and heavy rain which filled the streams that flowed into fenland rivers. But there was nowhere for that water to go since a high tide in the Wash prevented its discharge to the sea.

The melted snow that had laid white on the black fen soil could not sink in to ground that was still frozen as hard as concrete. Nor could the ditches drain it away as they were full of ice. And anyway there was nowhere for it to be pumped to: the fenland rivers were already filled from high flood bank to high flood bank.

Then came the gale that brought down chimneypots, sent trees crashing and halted the men who'd been patrolling the banks looking for danger spots. Inevitably some banks gave way or were overtopped and acres went under water. Despite all their struggle the fenmen were beaten.

On 18th March 1947 floods devastated the area. Next day the military was sent in, choosing Bedford House in St Mary's Street, Ely, as their command headquarters.

One priority was to prevent further devastation. Scores of troops were deployed alongside river board workers attempting to keep the banks intact. But they could not stop a burst on the River Wissey near Hilgay. As water flooded towards Southery soldiers sandbagged the edge of the main Ely to King's Lynn Road, hoping to use it as the base of a dam. Their sandbag walls held but a culvert carrying a drain under the road collapsed and the pressure of water rushing through the confined space blew the road apart.

The hole in the road was filled temporally by army sappers who were based at the camp on West Fen Road, Ely. They were equipped with Bailey bridges and transport including 'Ducks' – amphibious craft that could both drive on roads and float on water. These were to prove essential in ferrying men and equipment around the flooded areas and gave many local residents the opportunity to take a voyage to view their flooded homes.

The most serious burst was in the banks of the Great Ouse opposite Bluntisham church where water was thundering through a ninety-foot gap. The breach had been stabilised with the help of German soldiers – now prisoners of war – but it needed to be filled. Sandbags, tarpaulins and men could be got to the battlefield but they were powerless against the strongest force of all – nature. Reinforcements came in the form of nine 20-ton amphibious track vehicles known as Neptunes that were used to form a metal box around the hole, checking the pressure of water and allowing repairs to be made up again.

Then, as now, the use of military might to help civilians made headline news and proved an excellent excuse for a Royal Visit. Pressmen arrived with their cameras to record the scene, the pictures were duly published and for the soldiers this operation came to an end. They moved on to other assignments leaving their Neptunes to be scrapped once the banks were built behind them. Perhaps the Ministry of Defence will sanction similar sacrifices of expensive equipment should rain continue to fall in Somerset.

Meanwhile the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester had headed north to offer encouragement to those troops and fenmen labouring to fill the breaches nearer Denver. They took a Duck along the Wissey but the engine of their craft cut out and they were swept towards the gap in the bank. Soldiers jumped into the freezing water to attach a rope and pull the stricken vessel to safety. This was however not a story that the army wanted to get out, everybody involved was sworn to secrecy. But one picture survives.

It was taken by Walter Martin Lane, an Ely shop manager, who had talked his way into becoming the unofficial army photographer and joined the soldiers on several of their expeditions. He'd been invited to cover 'Operation Neptune' and seen at first hand how the Naafi had provided much-needed refreshment for the soldiers deployed (though it was not a facility he was entitled to use). He'd also waited late into the night to photograph drivers who'd driven long hours bringing pumps from the coalfields to suck water off the fields and push it back into the rivers – just like the recent tv pictures from Somerset. Sadly once he developed his negative he discovered it was slightly out of focus. Like the drivers he'd been so cold he could hardly stop shivering.

Without Lane's pictures, now preserved in the Cambridgeshire Collection, much of the story of the 1947 fenland floods would have been forgotten. Today there is extensive video to ensure the devastation in Somerset is remembered, giving less excuse to forget.

But were you one of the troops deployed in 1947 or do you remember the troops who fought to reclaim the fen?

179.05 Military vehicles at the Ferry Boat on the A10 near Southery

130.212 soldiers being briefed before 'Operation Neptune'

179.15 refreshment for troops during 'Operation Neptune'

ns5 Amphibious craft were used to fill breach in bank of Gt Ouse

102.31 soldiers rescue Duke of Gloucester

130.17 soldiers based at Ely

HS030 Bomb disposal squad soldiers assisting during floods at Aldreth March 1947

130.17 pontoon bridge at breach of the A10 near Southery

Memories 10th February 2014 by Mike Petty

Many feel the Cambridgeshire countryside is changing as never before; almost every week it seems that there are plans for new houses, industrial facilities or solar farms that will radically transform the landscape.

But things were much more traumatic a couple of hundred years ago, as Shirley Wittering has discovered.

Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, agriculture had been badly hit: there was no longer an army and navy to be fed and unemployment was rising.

Some farmers tried to keep their workers throughout the year. Joseph Ellis from Thriplow employed 60 labourers and never turned them off except in cases of gross misconduct. But many others laid off men when they were not needed..

But those in work found they could not make ends meet. At Fowlmere in 1830 labourers went on strike for higher wages refusing to disperse for three days until a troop of mounted constables came out from Royston and read the Riot Act. After skirmishing five men were arrested and sent to Cambridge gaol.

The poor were looked after by the parish overseers, usually the farmers for whom the men worked when there was something for them to do. The relief was funded from the parish rates so officials tried to ensure they got something for their money; the able-bodied poor were set to work maintaining drains and ditches, pulling thistles, or picking up stones from the fields to be used for maintaining the roads.

But there was a major change under way – Enclosure. New farming practices meant it was better for large landowners if all their land holdings were together rather than being scattered across open fields. So they got together to apply for an Act of Parliament to tear up the map of the parish and start again.

The old system of individual strips of land in open fields had led to problems still common to allotment holders: the slovenly operations of one man had serious consequences to his neighbours, everyone was aware of the noxious quality of weeds whose downy and winged seeds are wafted by the wind and deposited upon the lands adjacent to him, officials reported

One of the great concerns was what would happen to the commons where the poor could traditionally keep a cow. However often they were damp moors of little value, being too wet and boggy to be of any value to stock and only suitable for grazing cattle in the summer times. Some parishes, such as Gt Shelford planted trees on them to provide firewood or fruit such as greengages and apples.

At Fowlmere villagers had nearly 200 acres of waste and common land which they could mow for fodder, gather dry manure and turn their cows on. They had another 20 acres as allotments on which they grew potatoes and other crops. They were worried that when the neighbouring parish of Thriplow had been enclosed the poor were left with no land for their use, except a recreation ground, and did not want the same to happen to them.

So the labourers called a meeting at the Black Horse and decided to seek legal advice. The landlord wrote to Samuel Wells, an Ely solicitor. who agreed to support them. He drew up a petition which was presented to Parliament and was successful in ensuring the amount allotted to the poor for spade husbandry was increased to 28 acres. The money raised by rent was also to be used for their benefit. By 1888 the income was £1,200 which was distributed among 90 people.

Fowlmere folk were also granted three acres for a cricket pitch – similar to the amenity land now being set aside during housing developments. But they were not satisfied, complaining that this was not much use and trying to get Wells to intervene to get it changed. However they still had not reimbursed him for his expenses and nothing further happened.

Shirley Wittering describes the ecological impact of enclosure as the new fields were surrounded by hedges to create what is now regarded as the typical South Cambridgeshire landscape increasingly under threat from development.

At Fowlmere, despite improved drainage, lands on The Moor remained wet and attempts to grow arable crops were largely unsuccessful. So in the 1890s an area was dug out to form watercress beds. By the 1930s it was giving full-time work to ten men growing cress that was sent by lorry down to Covent Garden Market in London until the mid 1960s. It was recognised as a site of special scientific interest and is today an RSPB Nature Reserve.

“Ecology and enclosure ... society, farming and the environment in South Cambridgeshire 1798-1850, by Shirley Wittering is published by Windgather Press 2013 ISBN 978-1-905119-44-8 £35

Pictures

Fowlmere allotment rules 1830s

Fowlmere church and street 1902

Fowlmere Chequers pub – the landlord of the Black Bull wrote a letter

Fowlmere watercress beds

Hardwick Enclosure Award – they transformed the village landscape

Barton showing the open fields before Enclosure

Farmyard scene at Fulbourn, 1870s

Memories 17 February 2014, by Mike Petty

A bright sunny morning makes it perfect for a stroll along the banks of the Old West.

The river glistens in the sunshine, the boats gently swaying at their moorings while on the land alongside men with machines are busy at work preparing the next crop in the black fertile fields. All seems tranquil.

But look again: those craft are not elegant holiday cruisers but long narrow black boats with signs in the windows warning of dogs and rubbish piled up on the bank adjacent. And those machines are not planting lettuce or celery but the high metal supports for a mass array of solar panels surrounded by a security fence that seems to go on for ever.

Agriculture is an industry that has diversified over the years. Today for some it is sunlight or wind that provides the best returns. For others it is bed-and-breakfast on a traditional farm, or a working holiday where visitors can recoup the cost of their stay by helping with the harvest.

That idea seems to have started in the 1860s when Richard Bath hired Osborne Farm at Friday Bridge, near Wisbech. By 1895 he had laid down 400 acres of raspberries and strawberries together with 27 acres of currants. At the peak season there was far

more work than local pickers could handle so some 1,300 people flocked in, many from the East End of London.

By 1925 it was usual for them to stay for a month – men, women and children of all ages. They lived in tin huts, old stables or converted railway carriages. It was not pleasant, “in dry weather we were plagued by dust and in the wet we waded in mud”, some recalled.

It was not the farmer’s duty to provide amusements for his workers and the only entertainment was in public houses. Mothers brought their children but there was nobody to look after them in the fields and the working conditions produced a host of minor ailments such a sceptic finger. To leave it untended would be dangerous; to go to Wisbech to the doctor would mean a day’s lost pay.

Cambridge University started a ‘Fruiting Campaign’ to cope with such problems. Dons and undergraduates journeyed into the fens to organise canteens, arrange lantern shows, give recitals or teach boxing - and to preach the gospel to the poor whom they thought had been neglected by the churches in their industrial homes.

During the Second World War the workforce included Italian and German Prisoners of War who were housed in a POW camp. By 1968 it was Friday Bridge Agricultural Holiday Camp where board and lodging for the week cost £6 for men, £5 for women. Packed lunches were provided and sheets, blankets and pillows supplied. But guests had to bring their own Wellington boots and thick gloves if coming in June or July. That year they expected between 400 and 500 visitors during the peak holiday/harvest season.

But by 1968 the Friday Bridge camp had discotheques and television, billiards and table tennis, even a swimming pool. It was for a while the most popular entertainment place in the Wisbech area with local folk packed six deep at the bar.

However it was far from luxurious as John Mallon found when he arrived in June 1980. He paid £29 for his first week’s stay, collected sheets and pillow cases and made his way to a hut containing twelve beds. The mattresses were urine-stained, the roof leaked and the food unpalatable.

One of his companion campers had earned £19 for a single day’s strawberry picking but John laboured from 7.30am to 3.30pm and didn’t make half that. He was surprised how hard the work was, how much fruit it took to get to a pound in weight and earn himself five-pence halfpenny in cash.

When there was no work to do he deserted the camp with a lad who owned a three-wheel van and found work nearby, sleeping cramped in the vehicle when not moved on by police. They poured themselves a cup of tea from the urn brought out to the fields for other ‘campers’ who smuggled out food for them. And when security was not looking they sneaked back into the camp for a quick shower

John went on to other camps in Greece, Israel, Canada and Australia but regularly returned to Friday Bridge working alongside Latvians, Slovaks and Bulgarians. They sometimes laboured for more than 14 hours a day, seven days a week, picking courgettes or vegetables already frozen in icy fields. Many of them could not believe what they had let themselves in for, returning home impoverished and disillusioned.

But they had no voice to tell what they had experienced. John Mallon does, and he has recorded something of his findings in a book entitled 'Disorderly Fields'. Now he has given up the agricultural labour camps for a less stressful life in his native Wales.

But the crops must be harvested and the prospects of earning money by picking are still there. If you are tempted be warned that a statement from 1925 is still as valid as ever – "Don't come if the mere sight of work makes you go all of a tremble. We can guarantee plenty of work and we don't want you if you don't care about doing it"

Disorderly Fields by John Mallon is published by Diadem Books – ISBN 978-1-908026-45-3, £10.99

GOOSEBERRY PICKERS NEAR WISBECH 1930s
FRIDAY BRIDGE AGRICULTURAL CAMP 1950's
Solar panels – the new crop
Friday Bridge camp today

Jo Edkins
17 Feb (2 days ago)

to me

I saw your article in today's Cambridge News (Feb 17) about fruit pickers, including an account from 1980. Terrifying what is history now, isn't it! It brought back memories for me. I had a fruit picking holiday as a student in the early 1970's, and I wondered if you'd be interested in an account of it. Feel free to use any of it in an article if you wish, but I realise that it might be a bit dull or repetitive.

I was a student at Cambridge, and I wanted a holiday job in 1972. So I got a job for three weeks at Tiptree, the jam people, in Essex. This job was directed at students, mostly foreign ones. The conditions were much better than described in your article. The board and lodging was £5. There were bunk-beds, with four of us to a room, and the bedding was included in the price. I assume that it was clean and comfortable, since it didn't register at all! The food was plain, but certainly edible, and there was plenty of it. We worked during the day, a normal day, and there was sometimes overtime in the evenings if we wished - that wasn't compulsory. One day a week, there was a coach trip to London for anyone who wanted to go. The foreign students were using this job as a means of seeing Britain, so naturally they all enjoyed these outings, but the British students (there were a few of us) stayed behind and put in an extra day's work. There was a disco in the evening one day a week. I can't remember the other entertainment - I think we just hung around and chatted to each other. It was certainly a wonderful opportunity to meet people from round Europe. I remember Danes, Turks, Hungarians.

I didn't find the work too hard, despite not being used to manual work. I aimed at getting £15 a week above my board and lodging (that would be £20 earned) and managed that with some extra. I remember using the extra to buy a traditional Yugoslav tunic from a student who was short of money. I did ask her if it was OK for her to sell it, but she said that she'd get another one when she got home. However, while I could earn £20+ a week, there were some foreign students who were shocked that I was working there to get a bit of cash. They said that they couldn't cover their board and lodging! There was also a row because we were paid per basket of fruit picked, not per pound, and some of the students had filled the bottom of their baskets with earth, putting strawberries on top to hide it. I gather that there had been a strike the week before I came to get the price of fruit picked raised. They got their extra price, but one of the

farm workers told me that was because the height of the season was over, and it was getting harder to pick enough strawberries, so they always raised the price at that point!

The fruit was strawberries, raspberries and currants. Most of the strawberries were large strawberries, good for jam. We were allowed to eat as many as we wanted, but somehow after a bit, you didn't want to. At night, trying to get to sleep, when I closed my eyes, all I could see were images of strawberries, waiting to be picked! There were also Little Scarlets, the small strawberries used for the famous Tiptree jam. Those were very fiddly to pick, and we were paid by the pound rather than the basket. And we were NOT allowed to eat those!

The relationship between the farm workers and the foreign students weren't too good. I can remember that the Turks were communist, and they asked the farm foreman whether he was rich. He indignantly denied this, naturally. Then they said he must be a communist, and he was furious! Generally the farm workers seemed to think that the British students worked harder (and we probably did, as we were working for money rather than to visit a foreign country), but the farm workers also said that the best workers were another group of foreign workers, who were real farm workers, not students. So it wasn't just xenophobia.

Despite being a privileged Middle Class girl, at a famous university, I thoroughly enjoyed myself, and the work. I was proud that I could earn some money at a manual job, if only for a short time, and even that I could work harder than other people, and men - at that! Other times, other attitudes... Would any student want to prove their worth by doing a manual job now? Or a girl try to out-compete the men, because she was so fed up with being patronised? I realise that someone working on the land for a living would have a different experience, since we were working in the summer, and only for a short time. Still, even at the time, I knew that, and respected the 'real' farm workers.

My best memory is picking strawberries with a line of other students, and suddenly we started singing Beatles songs. Privately I felt that 'Strawberry Fields for ever' would be appropriate. But they didn't know that. So we all sung 'Yesterday', note perfect, word perfect - and I swear that there was even a hint of a Liverpudlian accent! Sung by people whose English wasn't that good. Beautiful.

Memories 24 February 2014 by Mike Petty

Its just 100 years that horse trams ran for the last time in Cambridge.

They had been part of the transport scene since 1880.. There was no doubt that they were too slow, and served too few places – plodding from the Railway Station down Hills Road either to St Andrew's Street or the Market Hill via Lensfield Road, Trumpington Street and King's Parade before finally returning to their tram shed on East Road for the night.

Back in 1904 there had been plans to electrify them - no smelly piles of horse droppings, no motor fumes. A new Cambridge Electric Tramways Syndicate came up with radical proposals for extra tramlines down Victoria Avenue to Chesterton, along East Road to Newmarket Road, down Mill Road to Romsey and Hills Road to Blinco Grove. There would be a service to Castle Hill and along Victoria Road as far as Garden Walk, they promised. But to break out from the town centre meant using Silver Street and that was already too narrow for the existing traffic. Then there were the overhead power lines which would be unsightly. The electrification scheme was scrapped.

The horse trams proprietors were jubilant, even their rivals, the horse omnibuses had gone out of business. But there was already talk of a new form of conveyance – the motor bus. They arrived in 1905 when not one but two companies started up, competing for the same

passengers, racing each other to bus stops. However they proved too noisy & too unreliable. Within a year both companies' buses had been banned and the old horse trams, now renovated and repainted, reigned supreme. It was not to last; in 1907 J.B. Walford introduced the Ortona motor buses and competition resumed.

The motor buses were not restricted by tram lines, nor did that company have to pay a hefty annual charge to the Council to cover the cost of maintaining the roads. As the Street Tramways Company's funds ran out, the Corporation petitioned for them to be wound up.

On 18th February 1914 the horses were hitched to the trams for the final time. People were encouraged to take their children for a ride, something they would remember forever. When veteran driver Ephraim Skinner left Cambridge station he was joined by two of the town's prominent citizens, Dr George Cunningham and Alderman A.S. Campkin who were intent on making a last journey to the Market Hill. They never arrived, for when the tram reached Hyde Park Corner it turned right and trundled alongside Parker's Piece to the depot.

Also on board was a member of the Cambridge Constabulary, for there was little doubt that undergraduates would not allow such a momentous event to pass without a 'rag'. About twenty of them climbed to the upper deck of the last vehicle to leave the St Andrew's Street terminus for the station. Some carried musical instruments – a euphonium, bugle and trombone - on which they accompanied the chant 'The Cambridge trams lie mould'ring in the grave' to the tune of 'John Brown's Body'. Others followed on foot behind ensuring that the journey was a decidedly lively one.

But they got off at the Catholic Church and transferred to another tram making its way to East Road. The trumpets brayed, the men shouted and cheered, then started whacking the metal advertisement plates on the side of the vehicle. The din startled the horse out of its usual sober pace to something approaching a gallop. Fortunately as it neared the junction with Mill Road it was met by P.C. Dilley and other members of the Force who brought it to a halt and turned the 'raggers' off.

Soon the tram was safely inside the depot alongside the other vehicles under police guard. Then it was that some of the younger drivers indulged in a farewell cakewalk on East Road before joining the grand procession of undergraduates as they made their way back to the Post Office terminus where they formed a large circle, joined hands and sang 'Should Cambridge Tramways be forgot?' to the tune of Auld Lang Syne. Disturbances continued into the evening culminating with a final attack on the tram depot which was well protected by the boys in blue.

But it was not completely over. A few days later an auction was held of the company's stock. Crowds sat in the single and double-decker trams that were auctioned off.

The vehicles were well made, claimed the auctioneer; they would make good sea-side bungalows, summer-houses or cycle sheds; you could get your money back by charging for admission to see them. It tempted Mr Hunt of Coton to buy a double-decker for £10, Mr Hudson got a pair and the two single-deckers went to Mr Pamplin and Mr Wright of Haddenham.

Several undergraduates had expressed an interest in acquiring one for their college; if broken-down horses could pull it, then fit young men would have no problem in getting it home. There was one snag; it was illegal for them to use the tramlines, they would need to take it on a wagon. So instead grads bid for other mementoes: conductors' leather bag sold for nearly three times the estimated five shillings, drivers' caps made four-and-six.

Then it was the turn of the twenty-four horses which made prices ranging from 40 guineas for a bay down to twelve for ten-year-old 'Tiger'.

Drivers Ephraim Skinner and David Reader retired, others like Ben Sharpe were taken on by their formal rivals, the Ortona Omnibus Company.

The tram's epitaph was written by Will Thomas of the Black and White Concert Party

Who killed the Tramways?
I said the motor bus, for there wasn't room for both of us,
I killed the Tramways.

Although the trams had passed into history, the lines on which they ran remained. Those in St Mary's Street were removed in 1927 though sections have been discovered from time to time during road works.

Pictures: 141.53: crowds pack on to a tram on the last day
Choice of cartoons lamenting their departure
The Company staff in 1914
A choice of two photos of the trams, one of Market Hill
Auction particulars of stock

Memories 3rd March 2014 by Mike Petty

I was recently shown some snaps taken in the centre of Cambridge. Unlike most they did not show the grandeur of the colleges. Instead they featured details on the walls of shops and businesses.

Elsewhere observant explorers might see sundials and initials, reminders of pets and even missing chunks of stone gouged out by the explosion of wartime bombs.

If you look up in Fitzroy Street you will see a bandstand on the roof of a shop.

That shop used to be Laurie and McConnal which opened in 1883 serving mainly people from the surrounding area. In 1900 they almost faced extinction after an employee noticed smoke coming from stacks of brooms, a bag of feathers, a stock of confetti and other material in the cellar, probably caused by a match dropped by a passer-by. Their staff set to work to extinguish the blaze and by dint of the application of water from a line of buckets and from a hose attached to the tap, the fire was practically extinguished before the arrival of the fire brigade.

Three years later they were not so lucky. On Friday 13th February 1903 flames again ripped through the store. Once more the fire fighters rushed to the scene but in those days they had no fire engine they could bring – just six hose reel carts stationed at various parts of the town. With no pumping equipment they relied entirely on the poor mains water pressure and quite expected the whole of Fitzroy Street to be devastated. In the event the street was saved, though the shop was left just a mass of blackened ruins.

But Mr McConnal was not one to accept defeat. He moved some of the salvaged stock to the garden of the house in which he was lodging, opened a temporary shop in Fair Street, accepted an insurance settlement and set to work constructing a magnificent new building.

They even had a roof garden specialising in sixpenny ham teas. It was most pleasant in the hot summers when ices were served to patrons lounging on deck or cane chairs at small tables

surmounted by large striped parasols. Tubs of flowers dotted the roof and patrons enjoyed a really wonderful view of Cambridge as they listened to the music of a violinist

Then in December the shop would engage eight instrumentalists from the Cambridge Town Band to play carols on the two or three Saturdays running up to Christmas. One of those who performed there was Robert Austin, president of the East Anglian Band Association who shared his reminiscences in the News fifty years ago.

“I was very much the junior of the Town Band and it was probably because of the difficulty of getting senior bandsmen away from work on Saturdays in those days, that I was included to make up the number. It was, on occasions, intensely cold up there, so much so, I remember, that one particular night the trombone player had to pack up because his slide refused to ‘shift’. My share of the ‘spoils’ was four shillings per Saturday which, having in mind my tender years and the then value of money, made me a temporary millionaire”

It was not an easy place to get to: he had to climb three flights of stairs, borrow a ladder, open two fanlights, climb a railing and walk across the roof of the store, 100 feet above shoppers

“The immediate view below was also interesting. Fitzroy Street was a very busy market place in those days with shops open until, 9, 10 or 11 p.m. on Saturdays. Each side of the street was lined with costermongers’ barrows and both footpaths and the whole roadway was chock a block with pedestrians. The sight of hundreds of white faces staring up at the bandstand was, from the latter point of vantage, one really worth seeing”

It was an idea reprised in June 1975 when the Kite Community Action Group arranged for eight members of a local jazz group to revive the tradition, but by then there was precious little to sing about.

Throughout the century Lauries had expanded until it occupied much of their side of the street. In 1950 a planning report suggested that the Fitzroy Street should be reconstructed as a valuable relief for shopping pressure in the historic centre. The debate dragged on for over 25 years blighting other developments. Eventually Laurie & McConnal announced their closure, blaming planning indecision. In January 1978 the store reopened for the last time as the auctioneers moved in to sell off the fixtures and fittings. Between 200-300 people came for one last look, most of them strangers, but a few of the old employees called in to pay their last respects as a giant of the Cambridge shopping scene passed into history.

Since then other shops have traded from the old building and the bandstand on the roof continues to dominate the skyline.

Pictures choice of

Fitzroy street c1910 - once lined with costers’ barrows

The bandstand prominent in c1970

Laurie & McConnal bill showing bandstand on roof, 1920s or 1933

View from roof towards New Square 1964

Painting from roof, looking towards Burleigh St 1938

Bandstand pictured in News of Dec 1963

Memories 10th March 2014 by Mike Petty

James Reynolds Withers was born at Weston Colville, near Newmarket in May 1812.

His father had been village shoemaker but had fallen on bad times so, when the boy was born, he was a less than welcome addition to the family's precarious budget.

There was no money for schooling so the lad was sent out at an early age to pick stones, weed corn and scare birds, gaining what little education he could from his mother as she sat and stitched from morning till night. Writing he never cared for and arithmetic left him cold but he did learn to read the old ballads and broadsheets that found their way into the village.

As he watched the farmer's sheep he read of Robin Hood, Robinson Crusoe and the Pilgrim's Progress. He also absorbed something of the natural life around him, the flowers of the fields and the birds he was employed to keep in the air. When aged 12 he went to work for a market gardener at Fordham, finding more reading matter in the tattered pages from Shakespeare among the waste paper from which he made seed bags.

There was much more reading at Magdalene College, Cambridge. So there he went — not as undergraduate but as under-porter, though he soon felt confined in the bustle of the town and returned once more to his old job and old wage.

Good fortune came his way in the form of a legacy from his deceased grandmother with which he entered into his father's old trade, learning from the man who had succeeded to that business. It was not a success; he returned to Fordham, took a wife, started a family and failed to earn enough to support them. In 1846 in desperation he turned to Newmarket workhouse for relief.

*Two days in the week we've puddings for dinner,
And two we have broth so like water, but thinner.*

All the while he was composing rhymes, though his inability to write made it difficult for him to set them down until a farmer's wife took notice of him and funded his first volume of poetry, published in 1854. Two years later a second volume appeared and *Macmillan's Magazine* of 1860 hailed him as Cambridgeshire's hedge-side poet.

His fame spread, he travelled to Windsor, Bath and Bristol, and received many letters of encouragement from Charles Dickens, Tom Hughes, author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and Her Majesty Queen Victoria who included a welcome gift of £50.

His output and his income increased but soon his literary friends passed away and his capital was lost in a disastrous investment. Villagers in Fordham rallied round to ensure he could continue to live a thrifty life in his cottage. When he lost his daughter and then his wife one of his remaining admirers built him a house in the north of London, though Withers decided to stay in Cambridgeshire until his death in 1892.

His verses cover many topics, some of them local. Fordham fire brigade ("They all stand ready, full equip'd, against the hour of need"), Wicken ("Going to your church, is like going out of town, Not pleasant at all when the rain is coming down," and his native village of Weston Colville:

*The foot-paths leading through the fields and grove,
Where once a careless boy I loved to rove,
Are overturned by the encroaching plough;
And I should trespass if I walked there now.*

Others deal with the many hardship of life including a complaint to the lady whose cow insisted on eating his flowers, a final frustration for a keen gardener as he grew old

*And when I try to frighten her, and stamp and loudly bawl,
She licks her nose, and coughs, and stares,
And does not mind at all.*

It was in his old cottage by the stream that James Withers finally ended his days. Fellow villagers erected a memorial in the churchyard, and have named a housing complex in his honour. But latterly his fame has somewhat faded from memory

Now a display dedicated to the poet and his work has been established in Fordham church. Copies of his poems are on sale and the writings of the man who was compared to Byron or Burns can be appreciated.

The books of poems have long been out of print, though now if you have a computer connected to the internet you can just enter his names in the Google Books site and download them to your laptop.

Pictures

Withers at his fire
Withers' cottage at Fordham
Some of Withers' poems
A newspaper article at his death
One of his volumes
Fordham 1910 showing church in background
Fordham street scene

Memories 17th March 2014 by Mike Petty

The news that Peterhouse, Cambridge University's oldest college, is participating in an innovative Community Land Trust initiative on some of its land at Stretham has echoes of a previous scheme set up in the 1830s just a few miles away at Manea.

There a Methodist Lay Preacher produced plans for a new Garden of Eden for socialists. William Hodson from Brimstone Hill, Upwell, wrote a letter to the Wisbech newspaper 'The Star in the East' announcing his intention to establish a colony for working class people on 200 acres that he owned at Manea.

Initially 50 families would cultivate the land and eventually buy it from him. They would construct their own homes and lead a life of perfect unity and equality, having as their motto 'Each for All'. The houses, built from bricks made on the site, would be heated from a central point to avoid the labour of making 50 fires, the cooking will be done communally and a spacious dining room erected. A school taught by the best available masters would educate the children to a level far superior than the present nobility", William promised in 1838.

There was more: machinery would be introduced, a steam engine for threshing, and a windmill to drain the clay pit and provide power to operate brushes for cleaning knives and boots. They would have a four-hour day and leisure time would be passed in study or sport, in walks along the river bank or trips on the Colony's boat.

This was not all just idle chat - it actually happened. The workers wore their own uniform - men in a Robin-Hood like tunic with straw hats in summer - and they had music whilst they worked in the fields. Money was abolished; instead colonists were given labour tickets and 'he that shall not work, neither shall he eat'.

Of course this was far too far advanced for the Cambridgeshire fen-folk, to understand. Cambridgeshire newspapers would be biased in their reporting so they had their own paper 'The Working Bee' to put their point of view.

William Hodson the prime mover and disciple of socialist idealist Robert Owen, toured the Midlands encouraging more workers to forsake the grimy factories where they had to touch their caps and say 'Sir' to the industrialists and participate in this Utopian experiment. It would only cost them £15 a head to join the community (about £12,000 in today's money).

Hodson also tried to get a union formed between Manea and the other experimental communities then being set up. He failed. What was worse, his wife did not support his ideas and soon great tales of immorality & drunken orgies were spread about him and his famous colony. Some of the early members were not what he would have hoped – they were people 'penniless in pocket and bankrupt of moral qualifications' who gave up and went home, spreading gossip to disguise their own inadequacies. Then his banker friend James Hill of Wisbech went bust.

In February 1841 the Manea Fen venture was abandoned - though there's still a name 'Colony Farm' and one or two reminders of what was once a revolutionary ideal

Thus Manea's third chance for national fame evaporated. The first had been in Roman times when a new town with a massive tower overlooking the fens had been constructed to demonstrate their dominance of an area previously the centre of resistance to their authority. The great Stonea camp disappeared into the peat, only to be rediscovered and excavated centuries later.

Then in the 1600's King Charles I planned to build a new town at Manea to celebrate his achievement in draining the fens. Sadly he found himself in dispute with a fenman named Oliver Cromwell and his grand plans for 'Charlemont' came to nothing except for pile of earth and rubble in the middle of the village. Dubbed "Charlie's Mound" it was levelled to make room for the Co-op. Recently the name has been revived for a housing estate.

Time will tell if the present scheme succeeds in accomplishing what the Romans, Royals and Socialists have failed to achieve.

For more on the Manea community see the website at <http://www.maneacolony.info/>

Pictures

Peterhouse [NOT PETERHOUSE COLLEGE] 1814

The Manea colony as depicted in their newspaper The Working Bee

Manea village c1905

Stonea Camp – a model of the Roman settlement

Memories 24th March 2014 by Mike Petty

I've been attending Women's Institute meetings for nearly 50 years – usually as speaker.

The first was in a WWI wooden hut on the corner of my village recreation ground when the room was filled with ladies who'd known me all my life. There was the singing of Jerusalem, the business meeting and all the traditional aspects of WI meetings.

Since then there have been many meetings. Probably the most memorable was last year when I travelled out to Somersham to the most scary audience I have met so far. The ladies were

welcoming and hospitable. It was just that they had spiders in their hair and had left their black pointed hats on the table. But then it was near Halloween and I had been warned!

So the prospect of a trip out to the village of Caldecote was not especially exciting. The sat-nav told me that it was somewhere near Bourn and, thinking about it, I remembered I'd been there many years ago to visit a gentleman whose name now eludes me. He'd lived in a somewhat unconventional house – but then Caldecote had a large number of such dwellings. I'm told that recent refurbishment has recently revealed an old railway carriage concealed within the structure of what appeared to be a bungalow.

His home appeared to be built of concrete blocks. The main room was full of piled-up furniture with just space to sit on a settee facing the fireplace. Then from somewhere beyond he carried in a large watercolour painting of a local scene, a milkman in a barn. It was followed by another canvas, then another. I was allowed to take them outside to the garden so that I could take colour transparencies for the Cambridgeshire Collection. Doubtless they're still there

The artist was Charles Brock, best-known with his brother Harry for their drawings published in *Punch*. In 1905 he'd produced a sketch of Cambridge Free Library to mark its 50th birthday, showing dons and undergraduates, old men and schoolboys sharing the wealth of material collected for their use. Ronald Searle had been in that library browsing through the pages of *Punch* when his eye was caught by a Brock cartoon. The name was familiar as he had often admired his paintings which hung in the Y.M.C.A. Searle decided to write and seek the great man's autograph. Turning to *Who's Who* he discovered to his surprise that he could deliver the letter by hand, for the address was Storey's Way. Later Brock's work had gone out of fashion and nobody had wanted it - which is why it had been amazing to find so much preserved by a Caldecote enthusiast.

I didn't mention this to the WI ladies. Instead I'd just jotted down some of the stories I'd carried in my daily Looking Back column in the News over the last 18 years.

They didn't seem concerned they were 'living on the edge of a volcano' and might at any time be overtaken by a grave outbreak of disease, as warned in an article in 1948. Then water had been delivered weekly by council water cart as otherwise there was just rain to drink. Today it appears they are on the mains. They also now have electricity – it had arrived just before Christmas in 1952 when WI talk had doubtless been about all those new domestic appliances such as cookers and washing machines that would make their lives easier.

But would they be allowed to stay in their homes? In those days the planners had wanted the Highfields area of the village to be allowed to rot and all the people to drift away. They had banned all permanent development on the smallholdings that made up the community. However this was overruled by the Ministry of Housing in 1954, giving residents the chance to improve their properties. Some of the ladies had first-hand experience of what happened afterwards, recalling the support families been given by Captain Adrian Hudson, a self-confessed 'Colonel Blimp', who'd fought a long battle against bureaucracy, becoming one of the best-known of eccentrics until his death in 1973.

One asset Caldecote did have was a village hall. When it opened in 1931 it had heralded a new era in the social life of the village. Made of timber – the ladies called it a wooden hut - it was tastefully decorated and had a piano. Some had worried it would become a young 'hell on earth' with dances continuing until two in the morning, but several of the members recalled it most fondly.

It seemed I'd spoken there last time I'd come to their WI about ten years ago. This week we met in a grand new modern room complete with electricity and water. Things have obviously changed.

Some things have not. The warmth of their meeting, the companionship that embraced both those born in the community and those who have arrived only recently from far-away places such as Mexico, were in the best tradition of the WI. And as for the cakes ...

Pictures

Caldecote in 1928

Brock painting of milkman in barn

Brock illustration of Cambridge Free Library 1905

Caldecote fete coconut shy man 1954

Somersham WI meeting ladies and their hats 2013

Memories 31st March 2014 by Mike Petty

A couple of weeks ago I received a letter from a firm of Cambridge Solicitors to tell me of a bequest. Mr Frederick Stanford had passed away and bequeathed me all his photographs, many of which related to Cambridge.

My first step was to consult Chris Jakes at the Cambridgeshire Collection who refreshed my memory of how Fred Stanford had made a photographic survey of parts of the city in the 1980s after I'd suggested this would be an important project. He'd deposited many of his pictures in the Collection over 25 years ago and Chris confirmed that he'd be pleased to add any others to their files.

So last week I made my way to a terraced house in one of the streets off Mill Road and, with the solicitor, climbed the uncarpeted stairs to the back bedroom that had been Fred's photography laboratory.

Then it was a case of systematically searching, opening suitcases full of clothes and discovering mementoes of a long life. Amongst them were albums and boxes of photographs together with folders of negatives.

Mr Stanford was obviously greatly into things military for he photographed the royal Anglian Regiment march through Cambridge when they received the Freedom of the City in July 1984. He also snapped former members of the Cambridgeshire Regiment parading to Ely Cathedral in June 1992 and various Burma Star Day events in Cambridge and Barkway.

There were photos of the signal box at Waterbeach crossing pulled down on 28th April 1985, of the construction of Elizabeth Bridge and the bus shelter at Drummer Street bus station. There are also copies of pictures of members of his family during the Great War, of J.R. Odell chimney sweeps with their bicycles and of a street party – but which one?

Amongst the albums was one containing a picture of soldiers being photographed in front of a sign that reads 'Bops Line Hakuna Ruska Kurpita Hapa' which seems to relate to Kenya in the 1950s. It continues with snaps of Nairobi, Benghazi and a Pay Corps dance in Lumsden cookhouse. Further into the album are pictures of a garden fete at St James' church Cambridge, probably in 1955, one of which is captioned 'Colin and I running the cub's treasure hunt'. However these were not taken by Fred. For the album comes in a bag labelled 'These photos are the property of Ron the Brake, Young Street, Cambridge'. I'm sure he would wish them to be returned to the family and I'd be happy to do this on Fred's behalf.

However amongst all the pictures there are very few of what I had expected. For Fred had spent a great deal of time walking the streets of Cambridge photographing areas not normally recorded. Yet there are just half-a-dozen such pictures, including one of the Tapei Meal restaurant in Mill Road, snapped on 5th April 1996 and views of Castle Street

But this had been his grand project. Thinking back I recall that the last time I'd seen the photos was about 12 years ago in a second-hand book/antique emporium under the arches of Coldham's Lane railway bridge. I wondered whether they might still be there, so braved the road works to revisit the scene. Now the store has gone.

So what happened to the pictures? Obviously they were Fred's property and he was entitled to dispose of them as he wished. Hopefully somebody who appreciated their significance will have snapped them up. But if they're tucked away in the back of a lockup or stored in an attic then do let me know so they can be reunited with his other photographs and be appreciated by researchers both now and in the future.

Pictures

Royal Anglian Regiment parade Emmanuel Road July 1984

Mill Road April 1996

Copy of a photo of a street party – but where

St James' church fete 1955

Treasure-room – Fred's photo lab

Soldiers in Kenya 1950s from an album amongst Fred's possessions

Tony Claydon claydon.scout@btinternet.com

20:52 (12 hours ago)

to me

Dear Mike

What a surprise to open today news and see photos of two of my friends . They are the Rover Scouts in the photo at Queen Edith School .

I say friends unfortunately I have lost contact with one of them but in regular contact with the other and we both would like to hear from Ron

The two are Colin Chambers (on the left) and Ron Milton . Colin rang me first thing this morning to say had I seen the photo. I said he had beaten me to ringing as I was just about to ring him on the same subject .

Colin cannot remember the actual event and why they were there as they were in the 13th Rover Crew based in Marmora Road .The only explanation he could come up with was that Ron lived in Godwin Way and his Farther play the organ at the church. As Ron and Colin were good friends he assumed that Ron had asked him to come along and give him a hand.

Hope this helps

Memories 7th April 2014 by Mike Petty

Last week I joined a group of children from the Robert Arkenstall School at Haddenham as they made their way on an excursion into the past. With dockey boxes packed we clambered

up onto a luxury coach to make a journey to a place I myself had visited for the first time when I was their age.

In those distant days of the 1950s the object of our expedition had been the chapel at King's College Cambridge with its high vaulted roof, walls adorned with magnificent carvings of lions and crowns - though nobody pointed out the graffiti carved by the soldiers who'd used it as stables during the Civil War. It made a tremendous impression on a young fen lad.

But last week we were not going into any of the Colleges. Instead we were heading to what was in my day the Cambridge and County Folk Museum, now renamed the Museum of Cambridge. There the children would learn something about the work of Enid Porter and see some of the objects that she and other curators have amassed recording the fascinating history of county folk.

So we set off, past the site of a museum that had been started by children of their own age and which had gone on to attract worldwide attention, even being featured by Dave Allen on one of his television programmes. Now that Farmland Museum has left its Haddenham roots to find a new home near the ancient Denny Abbey where the Delanoy brother's treasures, many given by Haddenham people, are now displayed beside other farming memorabilia.

The newly opened Methodist chapel tearoom with its home-made cakes was a tempting stopping point. The last time I was there I'd chatted to a carpenter who casually mentioned how he'd restored the woodwork surrounding the grave of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey, just one of the many commissions he'd undertaken whilst a craftsman at Rattee and Kett. But such a pause could easily take hours, this time there was not the time to spare.

Ahead we spotted the sundial and the high spire of the Baptist Chapel and wondered why Holy Trinity Church did not have one too – was it true that there had been a collection to raise the cash, only for it to go missing at about the same time as the treasurer had emigrated to America?

And there was the pub whose door step stands as high as the top of Ely Cathedral, near where was discovered a mounting block for a horse which on investigation was found to be an memorial stone to Ovin, steward to St Ethedreda. Inside the thatched inn is a hiding hole where Catholic priests could take refuge from fellow clerics stoutly opposed to their preferred method of worship. And there in the ground beyond were the graves of ancient people whose bones had been discovered only recently following excavation work for new homes.

For those on the right there was the fire engine house from which the manual fire engine had been fetched on the February night in February 1939 when a cottage had caught fire just down Hill Row. Sadly when they arrived they did not have enough hose to reach to the hydrant and so had to resort to passing buckets of water from hand to hand. By the time the Cambridge brigade arrived it was too late to save the house or its occupant.

Now those on the left could crane their necks in the hope of a glimpse of the Hinton Hall, once home to the man celebrated for composing the words of the hymn 'Land of Hope and Glory', who would set off on his bicycle down to the village station in Grunty Fen as he returned to the Cambridge college of which he had been Master. That college was Magdalene, just down the road from the museum to which we were journeying.

Across the road was the water tower, erected to replace the roadside pumps where you had to queue to operate the large handle that forced a supply of liquid, often contaminated, into a bucket to be carried on a yolk all the way home to a cottage where running water was

something known only when it rained, dripping into the bedroom through the decaying thatch of the roof.

Now the view opened up, the fields sloping steeply away across the old pit which had supplied the clay to make bricks for village homes, examples of which are to be found in the village's magnificent brick museum that has been open at the Blossoms and Bygones celebrations.

The blossoms were to be seen on the remains of the orchards which had formerly spread along the south-facing slopes of the great island in the fens on which Haddenham stands. On those slopes monks once planted vineyards to produce grapes for wine to quench the thirst of pilgrims who passed this way to Ely. For until the late 1700s the main road clambered up from Aldreth and the ancient causeway that led through the mashes to Cambridge. Was this the route defended by Hereward the Wake when the Norman king, William, had attempted to overcome the rebels defying his conquest?

Now the grapes have gone but there's a new crop – acre upon acre of solar panels to harvest the sunshine to turn into electricity. Beyond lurking in the polluted haze was journey's end. But that was still fifteen miles away for we'd just reached the boundaries of their parish. Ahead lay Wilburton with all its mysteries.

And who says history is boring?

Ps the kids finally arrived and had a wonderful time learning about witches, cures and country tales.

Pictures

The children at the Museum of Cambridge - choice

Enid Porter at the Folk Museum in the 1950s

Haddenham's farmland museum in 1971, now rehoused at Denny Abbey

Haddenham High Street photographed by the News in 1965

Memories 14th April 2014 by Mike Petty

The new BBC TV series 'The Crimson Field' features the work of volunteer nurses coping with the casualties of the trenches during the Great War

There were a number of Red Cross VAD hospitals here in Cambridgeshire, continuing the recuperation of soldiers who had been patients at the First Eastern General Hospital in Burrell's Walk

The first opened on 2nd November 1914 for Belgian refugees and patients from the hospitals of Antwerp. Three large empty houses in Cintra Terrace, Hills Road, were placed at the disposal of the Cambridge Women's Voluntary Aid Detachment. Now the volunteers who had been practising since the outbreak of war and had learned the practical side of nursing at Addenbrooke's Hospital had a Hospital of their own. The houses were swept and scrubbed and the girls drove around Cambridge collecting the furniture which had been promised by the Red Cross Society bringing in mattresses, coal scuttles, glasses, dish-cloths and all the other essentials. Despite their efforts Cintra House was old fashioned and inconvenient and lasted only a few months but then other homes for wounded soldiers sprang up.

There were three in Cambridge: St. Chads on Grange Road with lofty sunny rooms facing south, croquet on the lawn and a recreation room with a billiard table, Wordsworth Grove, under the Command of Alex Wood and "Huntly" in Herschel Road.

In surrounding villages accommodation varied as Church Schools, Baptist schoolrooms, Parish Halls, houses and Institutes were pressed into service. One was Mount Blow at Great Shelford which had lovely views and even a chalk pit which was adapted to form a miniature rifle range so the soldiers could practice shooting once again.

At Cottenham the VAD hospital on 14 May 1915 with twenty patients being received at the Baptist chapel schoolroom. A bathroom containing a bath with hot and cold water was added in December 1916 at a time when few houses in the village had such facilities. The Hospital produced its own magazine containing lists of patients with contributions reflecting their feelings – "Oh, Nurse, it's like 'eaven" But in October 1917 the patients were discovered dancing and playing cards in the chapel so the Deacons closed it down. The hospital transferred to the Rectory. When Commandant Cox died she was accorded a military funeral

At Linton the Belgians refugees and wounded soldiers were initially housed in a wing of the Workhouse but in June 1915 the hospital relocated to the Manor House at the corner of Coles Lane and High Street. This had a surgery and five wards containing 39 beds with another 14 men sleeping in tents in the garden. However the patients had to return to the workhouse for baths. Here 25 female and 15 male nurses cared for 648 British and 32 Belgian wounded by the time the war was done

Fulbourn was the fourth VAD hospital in Cambridgeshire when it opened in the former Church School in January 1914 catering for 25-30 wounded soldiers in two wards. During the summer the number of beds was increased by a marquee which soon proved popular with great competition for vacant beds. A kitchen was made in the small classroom of the infants' school and the Working Men's Institute was used as a mess and recreation room complete with billiard tables and piano. The hospital was run by Sister Whitmore who was presented with a silver medal by the King in May 1918 in recognition of four years service.

But like the girls in the television programme, some local ladies left home to nurse in foreign fields. Perhaps the most remarkable of these was Dorothy Nicholls, daughter of the Fulbourn doctor. She started her nursing at the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children in 1906 before moving to St George's Hospital and then the Women's Hospital in Brighton. She was part of a British Red Cross unit which embarked for Boulogne in October 1914. After six months she volunteered to nurse in a hospital in Petrograd, Russia with six other girls. It was April 1917 before she returned to Fulbourn for a well-earned rest telling tales of her experiences which included coming under fire in the Carpathian Mountains, for which she was awarded the Russian Medal of St George. But Dorothy was not done with war: she soon packed her bags and headed back to nurse in France. Even when peace finally came she was not one to rest at home and in 1921 set off for Estonia to organise and superintend the formation of child welfare centres. When her overseas nursing days were done Dorothy returned to Fulbourn where she took over the running of the village Nursing Association. Later she became a councillor and magistrate, dying in her home village in 1980.

Do you have members of your family who nursed during the Great War, if so please share their experiences

Picture of Dorothy

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/bristol400/4325134413/in/photostream/>

VAD recruitment poster
Cottenham Hospital magazines
Wounded soldiers at Cottenham
The ministering angel cartoon postcard
Nurses at Cottenham

Memories 21 April 2014 by Mike Petty

The village of Coveney stands high on a ridge with a magnificent view across the fens to Ely Cathedral. Its farmhouses, school, chapel and church present an image of a peaceful and unchanging way of life. But it also has a pound for straying animals and a lock-up for unruly parishioners which may point to conflict in the past.

It is always interesting to see a community through a visitor's eye. In January 1947 journalist Charles Hamblett was driving through the village when attention was caught by the sight of a man in dungarees chopping wood in his garden. His rough workman's hands showed that he was used to the hard life, his missing eye a result of a machine gun bullet at Dunkirk. He was also Rector of Coveney

Laying aside his axe the Rev Arthur Beale was happy to answer Hamblett's questions and led him into the home he shared with his wife and three daughters, twins and a baby. It was not much fun being a Rector's wife, he learned.

There was no electricity. At night she lit the lamps in the sitting-room, kitchen and study then worked till bedtime, washing dishes, attending to the children, sewing, darning and tidying the large, cold impractical rooms. An expert violinist, she rarely had time to play. Her violin went mouldy after only three months in the damp home that came with her husband's job. She only saved it from complete ruination by keeping it in the living room near the fireplace.

The Rev Beale was frank about his home: "The Rectory was in an appalling condition when we came. Altogether I have spent £180 of my own money on the house and garden during the three years I have had the living". He subsidised the church to the tune of £2 a week from his disability pension, allowances and tax concessions for the three children. The twins attended the village school because he couldn't possibly afford to send them elsewhere. "The present predicament of the clergy is a legacy of the days when parsons came from the leisured classes".

There were other problems: "One of the hardest things to bear is the isolation. We are apart from our people and we are apart from our own brethren. There is undoubtedly a decline in the sense of religion among countrymen as among townfolk"

The Rector outlined the routine of his day and Hamblett noted it down: 'The alarm clock wakens him at 5.15am, he then pours out his shaving water, which is kept hot overnight in a flask. Dressed and shaved, he walks across to the church, lights the lamps, prepares the altar and, at six-thirty, rings the angelus for matins. His reputation for punctuality is highly thought off by those parishioners who depend on his bell to wake them in time for work

'At seven he says Mass, having arranged for at least one person to be present each morning: on Monday his wife, Tuesday the churchwarden's wife, Wednesday schoolchildren, Thursday the schoolmaster, Friday the schoolmaster's wife, Saturday the senior server's wife.

'Having cleared up after the Mass, the rector fetches the milk from the dairyman, 400 yards away, and breakfasts at eight-thirty. Then he spends an hour or so at his desk answering urgent letters, going through accounts and dealing with school and parish business. On Friday

he gives religious instruction at the local school. Then he changes in working garb to do the fatigues till lunch when he glances through *The Times* before spending the remaining short period of winter daylight doing odd jobs or necessary maintenance work. At six he rings the angelus and says evensong.'

The Rev Beale was open: one of the greatest spiritual hardships was that he has to say so many offices alone. He spent an average of two-and-a-half hours daily in prayer 'for the good of my soul', But he welcomed such hardships 'because no man will come into the ministry today unless he has a vocation for it'.

And there were the benefits of the men and women of the parish: men like Tom Woodruffe and Henry Cobbin, who posed with the Rector for a photograph. Hamblett noted: 'They are firm friends, though Tom, known locally as 'The Ranter' preached in the village chapel and Parson Beale's religion would never recognise his type of nonconformity'.

The few pages in one issue of a magazine paint a picture of a parson's life in one small parish as it was nearly 70 years ago. Do you have similar memories?

Pictures

Rev Beale chopping wood
Clearing ashes from church stove
Ministering to school children
Studying bills, not writing sermons
Chatting to Tom Woodruffe and Henry Cobbin

Coveney church
Coveney village sign

Memories 28th April 2014 by Mike Petty

Until May 1914 visitors to Cambridge could not help but be reminded of misery.

For opposite the great King's College were two shops, side by side. One was that of a plumber and decorator named Henry Greef, the other that of Alfred Sadd. Yet although sad by name, Alfred was a cheerful figure and his shop was filled with curiosities of all kinds.

The Sadd family had been connected with the Parade for over a century. Alfred's grandfather had begun the business as a dealer in antique and a hairdresser in one of a row of old-fashioned houses that stood in front of King's College. When they were pulled down in the 1830s to make way for the present screen, Mr Robert Sadd moved to the shop immediately opposite.

The family preserved various records of the antiquity of their business including an advertisement which had appeared in 1818 announcing that Mr Sadd, described as a "ladies' and gentlemen's Hair Dresser, Puke Maker and Perfumer", had just returned from London with a stock of the latest wigs and materials for the dressing of hair.

In those days hair dressing was a fine art and Mr Sadd had a good deal of custom from the University beaux of that day. He had a room specially built as a hairdressing saloon and brought a man from London to tend to the locks of the fashionable. At one time the premises extended into the adjoining shops, as blocked-up doors testified. This side of the business was

given up after men ceased to wear curly wigs, and before ladies took to wearing green hair – as a reporter from 1914 noted.

Sadd was also a dealer in antiques and curiosities such as stuffed birds and rare eggs. He sold revolvers and even a Russian musket, bayonet and sword brought from the Crimean battlefields. Much of his trade was the supply of trophies and plate for sports clubs and as presents to dignitaries, though this was not without its difficulties. In 1847 the Town Council decided to present a handsome snuff box to each of the soldiers who'd fought at the battle of Aliwal in India, where Sir Harry Smith of Whittlesey had made his name. Sadd duly acquired the boxes and made arrangements to engrave the Cambridge coats of arms on them. Sadly the hoped-for subscriptions from the public were slow to materialise, causing some embarrassment to the councillors who'd commissioned them.

In 1851 Sadd decided to advertise by getting a London printer to produce name cards featuring a view of King's College, just across the road. The same engraving was to be sold separately at twopence a sheet to help defray the expense. However when the print was produced it proved of such poor quality that Sadd refused to pay. The case ended up in the courts. But such appearances became an occupational hazard as the company also bought gold and coins from individuals and found itself in trouble on a variety of occasions after an item they'd purchased in all good faith was found to have been stolen.

Inevitably with such an expensive stock they also found themselves the victim of theft. In September 1823 an enterprising robber removed a shutter from the shop window and broke a piece of glass before making off with gold seals, snuff boxes and a French opera glass amongst other things. Then, seventy years later, after a boy had accidentally cracked the window with a stone, some artful fellow pushed his knee through and stole a number of silver coins.

But Sadd took precautions: "I've a sharp dog and two loaded pistols", he told a reporter. He then vanished up the stairs at the back of the shop and presently what appeared to be an Indian picture hanging on a beam near the roof was removed, and Mr Sadd peeped through the aperture. "This is my bedroom up here", he said. "From here I can cover every inch of the shop. If anyone were to get behind the counter I could cover them from here. I had it put here myself for that purpose."

But, to his mind, the greatest villain was his landlord, King's College. Sadd was quite a poet and described the problem in verse:

They raised the rent to such an extent
That he would not stay longer, so out he went.
Then, to speak the next reason we seek,
They made him close Thursday every week.
Then trade was bad – not much to be had.
And he getting old. Now isn't that Sadd

In April 1914 he planned to move his old-established curiosity shop around the corner into St. Edwards Passage. But it never opened. For just before five o'clock on a Monday morning in September Mr Sadd's body was found lying on the gravel path at the West end of King's College Chapel. At the inquest a verdict was reached that he'd died from injuries received by falling from King's College Chapel

Mr Greef was devastated.

Pictures

Band passes shop of Mr Greef and Mr Sadd – names above doors, 1902

King's Parade – choice of views of 1896 and 1887

King's Chapel from which Sadd fell – choice of 1850s or 1908

There may be another to follow showing the original shop on the other side of KP

Memories 5th May 2014 by Mike Petty

It's not that often you get a chance to see the King of England on Cambridge's East Road. And it's not that often that East Road folk get the opportunity to impress their Sovereign.

His Majesty had been to Cambridge in 1912 when he stayed at Trinity College whilst inspecting the great army manoeuvres around Linton. But now, two years later, he would actually be driving down their street to open a new building at the Leys School.

Such a visit was bound to attract large crowds so the Great Eastern Railway laid on two special first and third-class express trains from London and motor buses brought a great many people in from the surrounding area.

Bottisham villagers however had no need to journey to Cambridge: the King came to them. Bugler Bowers, of the Boy Scouts, was been posted some way down the road to give the signal of the Royal approach and schoolchildren assembled by the Vicarage sang the National Anthem as the car slowly drove past giving the occupants time to admire the beautiful decorations on the Swan public house

Quite a number of people from adjacent villages lined the route towards Cambridge. On Newmarket Road crowds began to assemble about 9.30, their gay clothing putting to shame the dullness of the day with its leaden sky and searching wind. They were joined by hundreds of schoolchildren guided to their particular piece of pavement by Boy Scouts positioned to act as right and left markers.

The vice-chairman of the Education Committee rode along the route on his bicycle to see that the children were looking happy and not at all tired. The NSPCC inspector was also on duty. A kindly gentleman was standing outside the Jolly Butchers entertaining the youngsters with a cockatoo. The little ones laughed very heartily as the comical bird flapped its wings and laid down the law with its beak whilst conversing with its master.

Presently a large Daimler car was seen. "Here comes the King" shouted someone and the shrilling cheering and waving of flags told those at Page's Corner that his Majesty had come

East Road was not its normal self: appeals for people to decorate their houses had proved effective and an elaborate display of flags and bunting had been arranged including a tremendous banner inscribed 'Cambridge Working Men's Club' hanging across the road

Many of the side streets had put on good displays with a Union Jack hung from the bedroom window or bunting arranged along the window ledges. But the shops and houses on the Abbey Estate corner of Newmarket Road excelled themselves with rich red friezes fringed with gold-coloured teaselling and shields bearing the royal arms.

St Mary the Less Vicarage sported long streamers from the house to the garden fence but Mayor J.A. Sturton was intent on setting an example: he had decorated his home, Gonville House at Hyde Park Corner, with Union Jacks between the lime trees

But amongst all the patriotism ambushes were being planned.

As the Royal Car turned into Lensfield Road a woman threw something at the vehicle. It struck the top and bounced away. Police were immediately on the alert, for suffragette outrages had been in the news recently. When retrieved it was revealed to be a petition calling for the enfranchisement of women.

The King's progress was unhindered. He arrived safely at his destination where he was greeted by a band and members of the Leys School Governing body. Then it was on to the official part of the day, to inaugurate the new wing and lay the top stone of the new King's archway, visit the Moulton Memorial Chapel and receive a loyal address

Crowds still lined the streets when it was time for the King to depart; this time his motor passed more quickly than before, closely followed by the Chief Constable's car. But again the women were in wait; a second petition was hurled, this one hitting the royal chauffeur in the face. Off the vehicle sped, taking the King back to Newmarket races and leaving the police wondering how security could have been so easily breached. The suffragette activity went largely unreported

Few remember the day King George V came to Cambridge to open the Gateway driven past by thousands of motorists on Trumpington Road. Photographs of the event seem very scarce. Do you have any?

Pictures

Bottisham, where children sang the National Anthem
Leys School buildings opened by the King
Leys School gateway
Children line East Road
Horse & Jockey pub, East Road
Detail showing East Road residents
Newspaper report of the visit, mentions suffragettes – most reports didn't

Memories 12th May 2014 by Mike Petty

Last weekend windmill enthusiasts celebrated the remaining examples of the structures which have been so important a feature of the landscape for centuries. Inevitably many have now gone: "Windmills are disappearing so fast that in many parts of the country they are a forgotten race. Some day antiquarians will be examining and digging in mounds, having quite forgotten that they were the mounds of old windmills made to raise them a little above the surrounding land." Henry Hughes told members of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society in November 1928

Together with J.H. Bullock and Rex Wailes he set about making a record of the windmills then existing throughout Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely. It was not an encouraging task for such enthusiasts. They found the oldest mill at Bourn had been out of commission for some six years, its sails having been smashed in a gale in 1925, finishing its working life. But

fears that it would be lost were dispelled when it was acquired by the Cambridge Preservation Society who have continued to care for it.

In Cambridge the windmill that had given Mill Road its name had long gone and the mill at Long Road Trumpington had also disappeared. Miss Moore, the daughter of the last miller, told them it had been built in 1812 and stopped working in the spring of 1887. Photographer R.L. Lord snapped it in its prime. But French's Mill off Victoria Road was still standing (without sails) as was the tower of the windmill in Hurst Park Avenue which was finally demolished in 1957

Out in the surrounding countryside several mills were still working though their number lessened every year. The long irregular hours needed to make the most of windy weather and the long spells of enforced idleness were a great difficulty without some auxiliary power. Some millers, however, were still making wheat flour including Mr Lawrence of Stretham. Sadly he died after being struck by lightning in Grunty Fen and the mill lost its sails during the Second World War when it was taken over by the Royal Observer Corps as a look-out post. Although within recent years the sails have been put back, the machinery has gone for ever.

Madingley windmill is one that disappeared and then came back again. One July night in 1909 the tenant, Mr Charles French, was in bed when he heard the mill creaking ominously under the weight of the millstones and it collapsed. The great oak timbers were so shattered as to make restoration impossible. After standing abandoned it was replaced in 1935 by a post mill from Ellington which Ambrose Harding the Squire of Madingley had moved plank by plank to its present site. Such restoration was expensive and needed specialist skills such as that of the Soham firm of Hunts millwrights whose work was photographed by the antiquarians

In 1932 Philippa Burrell bought a cottage, granary and 20 acres of land together with the windmill at West Wratting for £600. High & isolated she found it a little paradise – and promptly left to study in Paris! She returned in 1934 when she wrote plays and learned about planting and pruning. All the while the windmill was watching her with its broken sails, cap all out, windows rotten and rain going in. It was an unwelcoming part of the property, and one she used to hide in when the bailiffs called. A millwright gave her an estimate of £100 for repair and to raise the money she studied cookery books and made date cakes which she sold from an old pram on Cambridge market, a picture of the mill fixed to the side. It was an immediate sensation and soon she was selling teas to the hundreds of people who journeyed to see the mill, sitting contentedly on rustic tables in the orchard. After two seasons however she closed the business as the mill was restored. It was not the end of the story; she wrote a play 'The wind and the mill' which was performed by the Festival Theatre Company in the fields around the windmill in June 1935.

As well as corn mills, drainage mills were once a very familiar sight in the fens, and the Cambridge Antiquarians took a picture of a group of small mills near Isleham in 1914. There was a large mill at Soham mere, belonging to the Cambridgeshire County Council with the old type of tail beam and old types of sail. "Long may they be preserved by the bodies that own them" Hughes exhorted. Sadly it was not to be. By 1947 the mill was thought to be dangerous and the Council felt that the only answer lay in demolition. Enthusiasts protested at the loss of this rare survival of a large drainage mill but to no avail - it was just too rickety officials claimed. So the demolition men moved in to pull it over with a tractor. They failed.

Undaunted they returned with gunpowder. They failed. So in the end eight charges of gelignite had to be used to topple the "dangerous" structure. Ironically just eight years later another drainage mill, much younger, much less impressive and in a much worse state, was re-built and erected just next door at Wicken Fen, where it is lauded as the last of the fenland wind drainage mills.

The photographs taken by the Cambridge Antiquarians are deposited in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library alongside many others taken by enthusiasts over the years.

Pictures

French's Mill, Victoria Road with sails, 1912

Madingley windmill painted by William Matthison c1907

Detail of above

Mill in Long Road Trumpington, photographed by R.H. Lord c1880

Hunts millwrights of Soham, photographed by the Antiquarians

Bourn windmill under repair 1928

Soham drainage mill 1929

Memories 19th May 2014 by Mike Petty

One of the memories for those who attended the Lacey Family's annual charity lunch at Fulbourn last week was to witness the arrival of the bright yellow Air Ambulance. But this was not an emergency mission, the medics and crew had dropped in to express their appreciation for the magnificent funding these events have provided over more than 25 years with in excess of £200,000 being shared between various local charities.

Although in 2014 we are used to seeing such flying machines, it was interesting to get up close and peep inside. Similar excitement a century ago, in May 1914, prompted crowds to flock to Cherry Hinton Road where Mr Matthews had allowed his Rock Meadow to become a airfield. More than 6,000 paid to watch as Mr Gustav Hamel, the famous airman, gave exhibitions of looping the loop, upside-down flying, tail diving and other sensational feats in his Morane-Saulnier monoplane.

It impressed the News reporter: "Mr Hamel is a wizard of the air. He seemed to be able to do anything he chose with his machine. He swung her up end over end, tilted her sideways, rose and fell in dizzy spirals and plunged hurtling down in headlong dives at 80 miles an hour, until a collision with the ground seemed imminent, almost grazing the ground at the lowest point of his swoop"

Hamel then took passengers on joy rides, one was Mr E, Gee of Beach Farm, Harston – achieving his ambition of becoming the first Cambridgeshire farmer to fly. Another was Mrs Percy Heaton of Stetchworth. But the man who won the lottery for a free flight sold it, deciding that aviation was not for him.

Finally it was time for Mr Hamel to refill the petrol tank and fly back to Hendon. He'd return next week, he promised. It was a promise he'd never keep. The next day he headed to France to collect a new monoplane; he took off to fly back and was never seen again despite extensive searches of the channel by cruisers, torpedo boats and destroyers.

The impact on Cambridge folk was profound – who could have imagined they were the last people to applaud his wondrous feats, that their cheers were the last he would hear before he

disappeared into the blue forever. There was talk of a memorial stone to mark the spot where'd he'd left Cambridge soil.

Hamel's death was widely reported, other aviators have perished largely unrecorded. Harry Bye of Ely is one of few who now remember an incident that took place on 8th June 1945 – two days after D-Day. Harry was living near the Shippea Hill station when his wife saw a B17 Flying Fortress heading her way. They were quite used to these giant American planes, but this one was different.

Harry writes: "She witnessed the bomber so low the propellers were cutting the newly-formed ears of wheat and they were spraying both sides of the plane. My son, then nearly two years old, can remember that the silver plane rose over the house as he was in the back yard, then with all its engines running it turned over and spun into a field opposite on Plantation Farm and burst into flames"

Harry, a member of the National Fire Service, and Home Guard Don Thoday went towards the crash, but when the bombs and machine gun bullets started exploding he fell flat on his on the grass field. "There was wreckage spraying all around, some must have passed over my head", he remembers. Once it had quietened down he made for home and his wife was relieved to find he was still was alive. He found: "All the front doors of the houses who had their doors locked, the doors were wide open as the blast had bursted the locks and our fireplace was covered in soot from our chimney". The crew perished and the story stayed largely unreported, but now Harry's memories can be amplified by accounts on the internet.

Last week the yellow helicopter rose from the barley field and, with a wave from the paramedics and crew, ascended into the sky to head off to its next appointment, whatever that might be

Meanwhile, in the Queens Farm marquee, the essential task of fund raising continued long into the afternoon.

To learn more of the Shippea Hill crash see the Newsletters of the 288th Bombardment Group for Summer 2011, online at <http://388thbg.org/newsletters/662.pdf>

Pictures

Hamel looping the loop

Mrs Heaton was one of his last passengers

The Rock meadow showing Hamel's plane – choice of two

The Rock Meadow was later used by troops

Gustav Hamel

Air ambulance drops in

Air ambulance attracts crowds

Air ambulance controls

Memories 26th May 2014 by Mike Petty

When Kay Pargeter emailed to say she'd found an admission ticket to a celebration on Parker's Piece I thought I knew just what it would be

For in June 1838 15,000 poor folk had been invited to a massive sit-down meal on the Piece to celebrate the coronation of Queen Victoria. It was a never-to-be-forgotten event that had taken weeks to organise – who would cook the meal, who would supply the beer, where would they get the plates and dishes? Tables were erected like spokes in a wheel with in the centre a pagoda from which a band played.

But Kay's ticket was not for that. It was, she said, for a Peace celebration.

So it was on to story number two: how in 1814 an earlier sit-down meal had been held on Parker's Piece to commemorate the end of the Napoleonic War. Only, of course the war had not ended – Napoleon was to escape and continue the fight until the Battle of Waterloo two years later. There is a ticket and an engraving in the Cambridgeshire Collection to record the event.

But it was not that Peace celebration. Now it gets more interesting. It's time to recall how at the end of the Great War in July 1919 a Peace Day Festival was organised: Cambridge presented a gay appearance, all the principal thoroughfares being decorated with flags and streamers while nearly every side-street, too, had its decorations. And the highlight was a huge dinner on the Piece for discharged and demobilised men of the Borough. The arrangements were as near perfect as could be secured and the men seemed thoroughly to enjoy themselves, the News reported. The Cambridgeshire Collection has a number of photographs recording the occasion but this invitation would be particularly interesting.

Except that it wasn't that peace. This ticket was for an event in June 1856 when one of the longest civil wars in England finally came to an end. It was the centuries-long battle between the Town and Gown over who should have power over what, who should licence alehouses and should the Mayor have to swear an oath to uphold University privileges. Following years of debate agreement was finally enshrined in the Cambridge Award Act described as 'the most momentous piece of legislation affecting relations between Town and Gown since 1561, the nearest thing yet to a peace treaty'. It was granted the Royal Assent on 5th June 1856. I had not been aware that such a momentous event had been celebrated on Parker's Piece. And nor it was

For Kay's invitation was to another peace commemoration on that same day. C.H. Cooper in his 'Annals of Cambridge' describes how seven thousand school children were entertained to tea on Parker's Piece. They assembled on the Market Hill and, preceded by the Mayor and Corporation in carriages, paraded through the town with flags and bands of music, passing the central colleges.

However there was no sign of any celebration in the University except for a solitary flag at Corpus. Probably the dons were busy compiling their congratulatory address to the Queen – or minutely analysing the details of that other Peace treaty she'd just signed.

The newspapers reported things in much more detail. They recalled the Victoria Coronation day when 15,000 sat down to dinner, this one was similar – there were Union Jacks, a band and tea and plum cake for all the youngsters. Arrangements had been made to accommodate 5,000 children but an extra 2,000 showed up from surrounding villages "bless their little patriotic hearts". No one under six was to be admitted, but many seem to have grown to six specially for the occasion. The upper age limit was 16 but reporters noticed 'louts' devouring plum cake and many adults also indulging themselves.

So it was not surprising that the mountains of plum cake and piles of sandwiches disappeared leaving some poor little creatures with tears in their eyes. The helpers did their best to replenish stocks but many of the youngsters had to go home hungry

Each received a medal inscribed 'In commemoration of the Treaty of Peace between England, France, Turkey ... and Russia ... Goodwill towards Men'. That Crimean war was over, though the story of the charge of the Light Brigade would live on.

I have a copy of the programme, but there was another memento. For William Nichols, the photographer of St Mary's Passage had carried his camera to the top of the gate of the Town Gaol, from which he took a picture showing the layout of the tables. Later he took another of the afternoon's proceedings showing the children partaking of tea and the multitude of onlookers. These echoed similar scenes drawn in 1838. "The views are very good and cheap", the News reported. They were also some of the earliest photographs to be taken of Cambridge. But I've never seen them

Do you have the snaps amongst your family papers or can you add more to the story of this or the other celebrations on Parker's Piece?

Kay's 1856 ticket

Programme of 1856 celebrations + detail

Coronation invite 1838

Peace celebrations 1814 invite

Soldiers march to Peace dinner 1919

View of Victoria coronation celebrations taken from Town Gaol – in 1856 Nichols took a photo from the same spot

Memories 2nd June 2014 by Mike Petty

Where do footballers go in the summer time?

Doubtless the current stars at Cambridge United will be basking in their double Wembley successes by relaxing on a remote tropical island until it is time to don their boots once more.

But 50 years ago it was different, as the News reported on 17th June 1964

With the 1963/64 season behind them the professional footballers of the two then Cambridge Southern League Clubs, City and United, were turning to everyday jobs to earn a little extra cash, keep their minds active and – most importantly – to keep their muscles in trim.

United Forwards Matt McVittie, Graham Atkinson and Jimmy Gibson were employed by a brewery, loading crates and barrels from the stores on to vans and lorries and then delivering them to public houses throughout the county. Working in the summer heat with the heavy barrels and crates was thirsty work and they were offered a pint at every pub they visited. It was a temptation hard to resist, Graham explained: "A little beer does not do any harm but we must not accept too much drink or our aim to keep fit in the summer will be defeated". But working the brewery gave them plenty of exercise and when shifting crates they went through many of the movements they would during training.

Brian Boggis was spending his time decorating the club house in Quainton Close that he'd taken over after his wedding earlier in the month, wallpapering, painting and cleaning, while Dai Jones, the other full-back was employed at a subsidiary company of the Pye group at Sawston.

United's Footballer of the Year, Jackie Scurr was working in a garage while the captain, Bill Kelly, the only member of the playing staff who did not live in Cambridge, was delivering cars and lorries in Luton while the club's only part-time player, Andy Smith was back at his regular job at Marshalls where he was joined by Billie Welsh

Team-mates Graham Lawrence was helping Dudley Arliss with the club pools, delivering tickets to agents throughout the county whereas John Haasz was working for United's Chairman of Directors at Mr Woolley's Abbey Tyre Company in Newmarket Road and Rodney Slack was determined to get back to peak fitness after a leg injury by joining a firm of decorators

Now his players had turned their attention away from football, the United manager, Roy Kirk, was travelling the country looking for new talent to strengthen his squad. He had signed David Finch, a full-back from Rugby, Ray Wiggin, a centre-forward from Walsall and Billy Day, an outside-right, from Peterborough with a great ability to capitalise on the long pass inside the full back

Cambridge City players were lucky in that the chairman of directors, Harold Ridgeon could offer five of them a job with his building firm. Goalie Roy Jones, the only amateur in the team, was working on planes in one of the big RAF stations in East Anglia. He was expecting to go overseas in the near future, surrendering his goalkeeping role to Bill Heath. Bill was working for a local tailors, a job he'd obtained almost as soon as he'd signed from Lincoln.

Right-back Tommy Carroll, a tiler was working for himself on a sub-contracting basis and the rest of the City's half-back line was employed by Ridgeons, Alec Moyse as a driver, Alan Gregory as painter whilst Alf Craig had a trade. That left Brendan McNally who was living in Luton

Football aficionados will understand that to me these are just names. But if they mean something to you – or if you are one of those mentioned - then let me know

Pictures

The article from June 1964

Newmarket Road near the United ground, 1960s

One player worked in a garage, another for Marshalls – Marshall's garage 1960

Ridgeons group employees

Working for a brewery – men loading beer on to lorry

Memories 9th June 2014 by Mike Petty

Last week my wanderings took me to two small communities, very different in location but sharing a common interest

When the good folk from March Family History Society asked for another tour of Cambridgeshire we decided to head to the high (in fenland terms) chalk lands around Newmarket.

To fortify ourselves there was a pause for coffee in the hospitable Earith tearooms before heading off to Willingham, Wicken and beyond. By the time we'd arrived for our dokey stop the rain showers had drifted away and the group could enjoy their sandwiches on the green at Reach. A few weeks earlier and it would have been filled with all the paraphernalia of Reach Fair where once horses were tethered alongside the Devil's Dyke prior to sale and this year the children from Swaffham Prior school had performed traditional dances.

The visitors explored the attractions of two of the main amenities of any village, the pub and the church. Neither is particularly old though both are successors of much earlier establishments.

The church is said to be the latest of seven have existed from 1375, though this particular building dates back to 1861. It was designed to fulfil the function of school and church, a role it continued until 1909. But then in 1958 the church it was struck by lightning, giving an opportunity for a complete restoration and redesign. Behind it, tucked away and often missed by visitors is the ruined arch of a much earlier chapel dedicated to St Etheldreda which was swept away at the Dissolution of the Monasteries and now stands overlooking surrounding fields.

The March contingent boarded their coach and set off to explore further, leaving Reach to its tranquillity.

Then at the end of the week I found myself passing Earith once more en route to another small community with a welcoming hostelry dispensing food to appreciative diners.

Colne is a parish that I visited some years ago when it was a contender for the 'Best Kept Village' award and its streets contain some magnificent thatched cottages (which would not have scored points) and well-tended gardens (which would). Like Reach it had an ancient custom, an account of which I discovered only recently amongst the files of the Cambridge Independent Press for May 1914.

May Day celebrations had been a tradition in Colne as far back as the oldest inhabitants could remember. In the old times garlands of flowers surrounding a doll were suspended across the streets over which the children threw balls. In more recent years the school children had selected one of their number by ballot to be crowned as Queen and in 1914 an elaborate ceremony took place in the schoolyard.

The paper recorded how the children adorned their Queen, in a white dress, train and veil with a crown and garland of white and pink flowers. Her attendants were equally arrayed with apple blossom and she had a herald suitably attired in a green suit and three-cornered hat. Once the ceremonial parade had been photographed by Stanley Christmas the Queen and her attendants took their seat in a couple of horse-drawn vans which toured Colne itself before visiting the surrounding villages of Somersham, Bluntisham & Earith. They sang May Day songs and collecting money for the 'The Children's Summer Outing Fund', finally arriving back at school with light hearts and heavy money boxes.

Last week I made time to explore the church, standing stately by the village green. But like Reach it is not an ancient structure. For in 1896 the tower had collapsed and a complete new building had been erected on a different site. Memorials inside record that Cambridge University allowed the materials of the old building to be reused in the new, stressing that they no longer took any responsibility for the chancel upkeep. And there is a painting of the now-disappeared ancient building.

Only, like at Reach, it has not entirely disappeared. For down Old Church Lane the ancient porch still stands, now cleared of ivy and brambles that had threatened to choke it. And – had I but known it – whilst I was gazing with stranger's eyes at the new building, the man who knows all about Colne's history was continuing his self-imposed task of caring for the remains of the old.

Adrian Gibbs knows more about his native settlement than anybody else and has shared his knowledge in a village history, proceeds from the sale of which go to Cancer Research. He has kindly lent me some of his pictures of the May Day ceremony.

And if you too have a passion for the past, then make the journey to Fenstanton on Friday or Saturday 20-21 June where another local historian, Jean Ding will be displaying some of her old photographs in the United Reformed Church as part of a weekend of open gardens, demonstrations and exhibitions

“Reflections of Colne” is available from Adrian Gibbs on 01487 841699, £8.95

Pictures

Reach church with the remains of the old chapel and the building now the pub

Colne church – painting of the old church
Colne current church

Colne May Day celebrations

Fenstanton is celebrating its past and its gardens, 20-22 June

Memories 16th July 2014 by Mike Petty

Ely’s former magistrates court is back in the news after fresh plans for its future have been announced. Now one wing may become offices for Ely City Council, who bought the building for just one pound when it ceased to be used as a courthouse. The outlook for the rest of the building is still uncertain.

The old Sessions House with its white portico frontage on Lynn Road was designed by Charles Humfrey of Cambridge in 1820. It included ‘a handsome and commodious new court room with wings housing a chapel and the prison infirmary. These survive.

But immediately behind it was a House of Correction intended for the punishment and reform through hard labour of the poor convicted of minor offences. Those owing £10 or above continued to be placed in the Bishop’s gaol – the present Ely Museum almost alongside, where felons would be confined until their trial. But it became a place for the detention of vagrants and people charged with poaching, fathering bastards and various other minor offenders. Whether found guilty or not they were all were herded together with no separation between tried and untried prisoners and debtors.

The prison had 16 single cells for criminals but they were soon overcrowded. There were dormitories for debtors and women as well as four day rooms. These were warmed by stoves in severe weather - though fuel was only supplied to the convicted on Sundays.

The new House of Correction was poorly designed and constructed. In 1827 the Chief Justice described it as one of the most ill contrived and inconvenient places he had ever seen. It was now too late to remedy these evils but it was a great misfortune that the building had been left in its present state, he reported

Inspectors noted that the gaoler couldn’t keep order and the prisoners had not the slightest respect for him. There was no discipline, the chaplain never visited, the surgeon came only irregularly and the only other official was his wife who kept watch over the female prisoners. There was no water to wash, no soap or towels and the privies smelt abominably – and this at a time when cholera was raging in the streets of Ely, just the other side of the prison wall.

The prisoners were initially made to pick oakum though soon a tread-mill was installed. It did not actually do anything but they were supposed to work on it eight hours a day. For those too weak to walk there was a hand crank set into the wall which had to be turned usually 20 times a minute. If the prisoner found this too easy the warder would come and tighten the screw to make it harder

By 1842 it was recognised that the gaol was insufficient, inconvenient, and otherwise inadequate. Plans were drawn up for a new one designed by Mr Basevi the architect who also designed the Fitzwilliam Museum. While building work proceeded prisoners were transferred to the by-then disused Bishop's Gaol

The expanded Ely House of Correction was approached from Market Street through massive, spiked, wooden gates which opened into a spacious courtyard. There were four exercise yards and more cells, a chapel and an infirmary which was soon filled to capacity

For the new architect-designed gaol was damp: the doors and windows had to be kept open to allow ventilation and the heating turned off. The surgeon reported "My assistant noticed an unpleasant odour prevailing in the cells but being deprived of the organ of smell myself I could not detect it". On examining the water closets it was found they'd been wrongly constructed. Prisoners became ill and a new diet had to be introduced. There was no lighting so inmates had to sit in the dark for hours at a time.

Perhaps the harsh conditions deterred offenders as by 1846 numbers had fallen so low there were not enough to work the treadmill. Some of those that were imprisoned escaped, leading to the sacking of the long-term governor, who'd run the place for 26 years.

But the cost of maintaining the gaol was too great and the Government decided to close it down, together with the Cambridge Town Gaol overlooking Parker's Piece. Prisoners were transferred to Great Stukely County Prison, Huntingdon or the Cambridge County Gaol on Castle Hill.

Ely House of Correction closed in 1878 and the 18-foot high walls were pulled down. The site is now occupied by the East Cambridgeshire District Council whose planners must vote on the future use of the remaining Sessions House. It will be criminal if it is allowed to stand empty much longer.

Pictures

The Sessions House drawn in 1830

Lynn Road showing the front of the sessions house c1900

ECDC offices seen from rear of sessions house

A barred window of one of ECDC rooms overlooking the sessions house

Memories 23rd June 2014 by Mike Petty

Communities across the county are researching the story of the lads who left their village during the Great War, never to return. But few will match the record produced by Eltisle History Society.

You can't forget the sacrifice at Eltisley, for on the village green there are a row of 14 lime trees, each one a memorial to a man who died. They were planted, one by one as news of the deaths became known. Then in March 1919 a Peace Tree was added, planted by four of the soldiers who'd survived.

Four Eltisley lads were already serving as soldiers at the start of the war, twelve sets of brothers fought, three men joined on the same day – only one came home. But there nearly 40 more who left, fought and did return. For them, as they gathered beside the memorial on successive Armistice Sundays the names that were recited were of men they truly would remember, as they themselves grew progressively older.

But of the families of the fallen, only one direct descendant remains, and they live in Canada. They did not know of the activities of their great-grandfather, Martin Riseley until they were contacted by one of the Eltisley researchers. Then they remembered that down in the basement of their home in Toronto there was an old box containing some papers. It had survived a couple of floods but was still quite dry. Inside were a medal, a Memorial Plaque and letters that told of the circumstances of Martin's death – killed in a railway accident on Hatfield railway station.

At Eltisley patient research has enabled the historians to compile detailed biographies of each man his particular part of the carnage that claimed their lives, be it machine gun fire, shrapnel, gas or spotted fever caused by appalling conditions in the trenches.

Such news percolated home, week by week as 1914 turned into 1915, 1915 became 1916, then 1917 and dragged itself, weak and bleeding into 1918. Local papers reported everyday activities amongst the personal tragedies at home and abroad.

Take July 1915; one evening Mrs Paine was making up the fire in the kitchen of her mud-and-plaster cottage near the Green when it was blown apart. Mirrors were smashed and plaster scattered all over the room. As the house filled with dust and sulphur fumes her first thought was for her grandson asleep on a couch. Catching him in her arms she dashed outside, thinking a bomb had exploded – perhaps the result of one of the Zeppelins that were causing such havoc. But no, this was just a lightning strike, a reminder that nature could inflict the sort of damage being caused by man elsewhere. The cottage was still a wreck when a couple of weeks later the village feast was celebrated with cricket match on the green: some things must continue despite war.

Then soldier James Wiles turned up unexpectedly back in his cottage which proved a shock to his wife. Her first act was to introduce him to his new baby son who'd arrived shortly after he'd enlisted. Since then James had been in Belgium, taking part in the retreat from Mons and several bayonet charges. He'd nearly lost his life after falling into a shell hole full of mud and water. It was a brief respite. "Today he leaves for the Front and expects to be in the trenches tonight", the paper reported.

Perhaps he'd had time to meet up with Private Harry Hayden who was also then home on leave recovering from a shrapnel wound in the back. Harry too was soon back in the trenches only to be wounded by shrapnel again. He sent his mother a letter saying he was on the mend and would soon be home on leave once more. But this time he died of pneumonia. One of the trees on the green is dedicated to Harry's memory. Another commemorates his brother, Sidney killed eighteen months later, the last of the men to lay down their lives, but just where his body lays nobody knows.

More would have died without the work of volunteer nurses – there were about 20 of them in the Eltisley and Croxton Red Cross in July 1915. They'd gone to a great deal of trouble to learn first aid and nursing and were ready when part of nearly Caxton workhouse was

accepted as a hospital for wounded soldiers. Beds were prepared and stores brought in but then the plans had changed and it was decided not to open it after all. A few of the girls volunteered for work elsewhere but the majority were either over age or married women who could not leave the home.

At least they were there when 15-year-old Sidney Kidman was stung. He'd been helping to cut corn on Mr Russell's farm when the reaper hit a wasps' nest; the wasps stung the horses which started to kick and Sidney fell off under the machine. Before Mr Desborough could stop it the knives of the reaper had cut through both the lad's arms, one being cut right through at the elbow, the other only held on by the skin.

And this in just one month of one year in one small village. And just part of the story now revealed.

Next July, on Saturday 12th, the new book telling the story of their war will be launched at a fete on the village green. There will be displays and an exhibition in the church and, next day, a musical 'Tribute to our Tommies' will be performed.

The few dozen copies of the book will be quickly snapped up – they are too good a record not to.

But, when they are gone, the trees on the green will continue to stand in silent tribute to those lads who did not return from the carnage of war to the (comparative) peace of their home village

Remembering Eltisley's Fallen, 1914-1918 ISBN: 978-0-9929279-0-5 price £15 plus postage from Eltisley History Society, email secretary@eltisleyhistorysociety.org.uk

Pictures

*Cover of the book, showing some of the trees and photo of Harry Hayden
– can you also crop this to also feature the Memorial scroll to Albert Chappell, another of the fallen*

For a while the village also had a German Field Gun as a memorial – it was often tipped on to its barrel

Eltisley peace tree

Eltisley Green – showing cottages of three of the men who fell

Memories 30th June 2014 by Mike Petty

A small branch railway line once ran from Ely to St Ives, crossing the A10 at Little Thetford corner. When it was first constructed in 1866 there was little road traffic to be held up as the locomotive with its few carriages and goods wagons trundled through. The gatekeeper would open the gates and all would remain quiet until it returned from St Ives some two-and-a-half hours later having paused to deposit or collect passengers and goods at Stretham, Wilburton, Haddenham, Sutton, Earith Bridge and Bluntisham en route.

Each station had its own staff, though when passenger traffic ceased in 1931 the porter, office boy and signalman at Wilburton were dispensed with and it became virtually a one-man operation. Life might be quiet but that did not mean it was dull. One night in the autumn of 1940 the stationmaster's son was awakened by a strange noise in the night; something had scraped across the roof of the house. There was nothing to be seen and it was dismissed as a

dream. A few weeks later when men were loading a wagon with potatoes they spotted a light-coloured object lying in a field. It was a large piece of cloth that turned out to be a parachute. Whatever or whoever had descended on it had disappeared into the sticky mud. It could not have been a man – it must have been a mine! The military were called and everybody was told to evacuate. But the afternoon train was due and it was too late to stop it. Several trains had already passed without incident but this one came and left extremely gently. Then the family made their way to St Peter's Hall in Wilburton while the bomb was detonated. When they were allowed to return they found the roof of the station had been punctured by falling debris, ceilings had cracked and buried in their settee was a thick piece of shrapnel four inches long. The blast had left a crater that looked large enough to take two of the nearby semi-detached cottages. It remained a reminder of their close encounter with a German bomb until a year later when a gang of Italian Prisoners of War arrived to fill it in.

Beyond Haddenham, Sutton station also suffered damage. This was where the line had originally stopped but when it was extended to St Ives a second station was built. The original station buildings burnt to the ground in 1921 and were not replaced until 1922. These buildings themselves were damaged by arson in January 1966. Now a team of enthusiasts have formed a group to revive awareness of its history and importance as a wildlife area. They have a facebook site and organiser Brian Watson would be delighted to speak to anybody interested in helping or with extra information to add – ring him on 01353 777006.

Memories of that station were recorded by John Humpfreys in 'A Countryman's Year' in 1996. In summer the train bore the heavy responsibility of taking our produce to market, he wrote. It would stand hissing to itself in the station while on the platform stood a cornucopia of punts of strawberries, bundles of chrysanthus, baskets of runner beans and trays of eggs. There were quiet days when there were only the usual four milk churns. But there were also special days when children from the combined Sunday Schools boarded with their buckets and spades for the village trip to the seaside that continued long after regular passenger services had become just a memory.

From Sutton one can follow the trackbed back to Haddenham, but the line to Earith has disappeared. Indeed it is easy to be completely unaware that there was ever a station there, although the buildings still stand on the bank of the Old West for those who have the eyes to see. Here the line turned to run alongside the Great Ouse before crossing the wide river on a viaduct, the pillars of which still remain. It was this bridge that proved crucial following the fen floods of 1947 when Bluntisham station saw its finest hour, as railway wagons loaded with sandbags and tarpaulins arrived to be shunted across that viaduct before their contents were transferred to a track laid along the top of the bank to the gap through which water was pouring into Over fen. It even welcomed a Royal visitor when the Duke of Gloucester came to praise the fight to reclaim the drowned farmland.

From here locomotives chugged the last few miles before journeys end at St Ives station with its links to Cambridge – a link that now forms the route of the guided bus.

Peter Paye is a man who knows more about the Ely & St Ives Railway than anybody. Back in 1982 he produced a 36-page illustrated history crammed with history. Now he has expanded this to over 170 pages of facts, figures, track layouts and photographs of signal boxes, locomotives and station buildings, both active and derelict. But no matter how much one knows, and how long one researches, there is always more to be discovered. So if you can add to the story of this now almost-forgotten line from its opening in 1866 to the closure in July 1964 and right up to the present, he would be delighted to hear from you.

And the enthusiasts at Sutton hope Peter will be able to visit their village to tell them more – and inspect the magnificent work they are doing on what was once their only link to the world beyond the island of Ely.

'The Ely & St Ives Railway' by Peter Paye is published by The Oakwood Press at £14.95
ISBN 0853617327

Pictures

Haddenham station c1900

One of the last trains crosses the road at Lt Thetford 1964

Bluntisham station activity during visit of Duke of Gloucester 1947

Sutton station c1900

Sutton station 1964

Wilburton station 1960s

Memories 7th July 2014 by Mike Petty

Last Wednesday East Cambridgeshire councillors grappled with the problems of housing. One application was for a cul-de-sac of homes, snugly tucked together within a village but with still room for a little garden space. Another was for a new development spread generously out over open fields.

Both present problems of access. At one residents watched while councillors on their tour of inspection gazed from their bus windows. Then a large brown dog strayed down the main approach road. There was no room for the bus to pass so officials waited until it placidly wandered off. It was a scene right out of the pre poop-bag past

Then I turned to the files of the News for 2nd July 1914, 100 years to the day since that encounter. There was in those distant days a major housing problem. One inquiry heard that at Oakington a small cottage with one lean-to bedroom was occupied by a man and wife and six children. There was also said to be a lodger. Three adjoining houses were extremely old and very dilapidated: the inspector felt almost afraid to walk across the bedroom floor. Another house was occupied by an elderly couple and was one of five that should be condemned. The landlord did not care whether it was closed or not. His tenants did not pay much rent and he would probably use it as stables or warehousing. But it was a serious thing to close five houses in one parish. The people could not find alternative accommodation

A similar inquiry into conditions in Barrington found many cases of insanitary conditions and overcrowding. There were houses which were unfit, but because there were no others to live in they continued to be occupied: poor homes were better than no homes at all.

William Hunt said his wife had to live in one room, and he in another, because they could not get a house. Mr Douglas was living in a cottage that was not big enough for the family but he did not know where to get another one while H. Neve wanted to get married but could find no home. However Barrington parish council reported that there were sufficient houses for local people. But a number of people who worked in Shepreth had moved in as there was no housing there

The cottages they had at present were not large enough for families. But if councils were to build larger cottages they could not provide them at rents people could pay. If they lowered that rent the ratepayers would have to make up the deficiency. But – others argued – if they did build better cottages people who could afford the higher rents would move into them leaving their old smaller houses free for those who could only afford a small rent.

It was not just homes: Mr Conder thought each cottage ought to have a little piece of ground to go with it. People wanted a garden, a fair-sized one where they could grow vegetables. There ought to be a quarter of an acre with every house, and never less.

In 1914 the Government had decided to build 120,000 cottages in rural districts to supply the present shortage. They would be provided with gardens as large as the applicants could cultivate and would be available not only for farm labourers but for town workers as well.

Authorities would be able to purchase the land at a fair market value, to be set by Commissioners. That would bring to an end the extortionate prices which public authorities had been compelled to pay for land in the past.

And they even had a solution to the problems of getting to and from work: cheap transit would be established so that townsmen could travel a few miles to and from their employment at fares they could well afford to pay.

This final debate took place in the open air in the Romsey area of Cambridge in July 1914 until speeches were cut short by the rain. At East Cambs councillors shivered on a hot day thanks to over-efficient air conditioning, despite the heat of the argument

But could the answer lie with a suggestion from 1914. They could build lath and plaster houses cheaper. They would last a couple of hundred years. They were much more comfortable and much drier than brick houses and they would last a sufficient length of time.

After all houses can be modified to meet changing needs, and how many former council homes now stand in unused overgrown gardens. But nobody's growing more good-quality agricultural land any more. We should use brown field not green field sites the Government says. But was that this year, or a century ago?

Pictures

Dog stops planners, 2014

In 1915 hens block the road at Oakington
Barrington cottages were too small

Memories 14th July 2014 by Mike Petty

A snippet in the Cambridge Independent Press for 10th July 1914 caught my eye. It was just a brief report: "The Chief Constable reported that as there were so few prisoners, the female side of Cambridge Prison had been closed, and in future all commitments of women will have to be made to the prisons at Ipswich and Northampton"

This was the County Gaol on Castle Hill, later to be demolished in September 1930 and replaced by the present Shire Hall. It had been home to numerous women prisoners. One who knew all about conditions inside was Caroline Driver, a 49-year-old Manchester lady, who spent 16 years within its walls. Caroline had never been convicted, indeed she was held in high esteem by all who knew her. For she was a wardress on the female side of the prison who'd died of heart failure one morning in July 1913, just as she was about to go on duty. Amongst the mourners were the gaol's Governor (W. Dobson), the Chaplain (Rev H.R. Whitehead), Miss Woods the Matron and her fellow wardress, Miss Mapston

But in July 1914 there was another death that was making the headlines. Out at Wicken Henry Houghton had spotted something floating in the river. It was a body wrapped up in a white blanket, nightgown and man's coat. He had not seen it earlier but passing barges may have moved it or it could have floated down the river for miles. The baby girl had been born alive and had lived a month. There was nothing to show whether she'd died a natural death or

been murdered. It was the third time in a month that the body of a young baby has been found in the Cam.

Even a peaceful canoe trip on the Granta could become life-threatening. Mr Cooke, a visitor from London took his wife for an evening excursion to Grantchester mill pool. But on arrival and without any warning the mill sluice was opened, releasing a torrent of water. The canoe was capsized immediately and the couple thrown into the water. Although the wife could swim the modern fashion in skirts did not allow any freedom of movement and she found herself in difficulties. A butcher's lad waded into the river and drew her to the bank where a passing nurse rendered assistance, taking her pulse and ordering brandy to revive the lady's spirits.

More and more ladies were learning first aid and nursing. That week the Cambridge Voluntary Aid Detachments and Red Cross had held an exercise at Newnham College. It assumed that a hostile force had landed at Cromer where much fighting was taking place and a large number of casualties had been sent to the First Eastern General Hospital at Cambridge. However when another train load of wounded arrived Newnham's Sidgwick Hall was converted into a temporary hospital where eleven beds were provided and patients were treated for crushed hands and fractured tibia.

As the make-believe battle raged the decision was taken to evacuate the Hospital from Cambridge to Bedford. Wounded from a battle near Duxford were taken by field ambulances to a field hospital at Whittlesford Station where the platform was used for refreshment and for re-bandaging the less serious wounded. Temporary wards were erected in the station yard to be filled with the 'wounded', represented by Perse School Boy Scouts who arrived in railway goods van.

Meanwhile other women were fighting to prevent war. In the north of the county Miss Priscilla. Peckover had organised a Wisbech Local Peace Campaign which brought together eight thousand men women and children bound by the declaration that war was contrary to the mind of Christ. She had spent a little fortune in helping the movement, publishing a quarterly magazine, *Peace & Goodwill* and her beautiful home had long been a place of pilgrimage

Miss Peckover's efforts were to fail and all too soon the nursing practice would be put into operation during the Great War that followed the tranquil days of that last summer.

Further information on the Great Eastern General Hospital, which was based on the site of the present University Library. continues to be discovered and has been incorporated into a revised edition of Philomena Guillebaud's history, *'From Bats to Beds to Books'*, published by Fern House of Haddenham. ISBN: 9781902702292

Pictures

Nurses at the First Eastern General Hospital
Whittlesford station was the basis for an operation to treat wounded
Wicken Lode, scene of a gruesome discovery
Female staff at the County Gaol
Canoe at Grantchester Mill

Memories 21 July 2014 by Mike Petty

The cover photograph on the July issue of Cambridge Magazine is puzzling. It shows a group of people dressed in very strange costumes.

Fortunately the photographer, Martin Bond has included an explanation of what it depicts and how it came to be taken. It was cast members of a production of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” which was performed on a small island in the Cam last September. Martin had hoped to snap the actors at St John’s College but they got chased away by a porter and finally paused under a tree. But if those notes ever get separated from that photograph it will prove a challenge for future researchers – was it really the way people dressed in 2014.

It is all very similar to another mystery currently occupying the mind of Christina Callinan from Victoria, Australia.

She contacted me about a photograph of her great grandparents Charles Walter Matthews with his wife Jane Emma Matthews (nee Prentice) and their first daughter Beatrice (Beattie). It was taken by Gates & Starr of Mill Road Cambridge just before they left to emigrate to Australia aboard the Habsburg bound for Freemantle in January 1890.

Various other local folk were making the long voyage at that time and doubtless their family’s eyes scanned the columns of local newspapers during the journey. They would have been horrified to read a report in the Cambridge Independent Press of 17th May 1890 recounting how over fifty crew and passengers of a schooner had been killed, roasted alive and eaten by cannibals after their boat had been driven onto reefs on Mallicolo, a large island in the New Hebrides. Fortunately the Matthews family arrived safely

Charles had been born in Saxon Street in the New Town area of Cambridge in 1866 and had wed Jane in January 1888. His father was a snob – the local term for a skilled shoemaker.

At his marriage Charles was a hairdresser, perhaps employed by Harry Mathews who had a barber’s shop in Fitzroy Street. Once he arrived in Australia Charles set up his own hairdressing business in Beechworth, Victoria.

That they know. But Christina’s files also include a photograph of Charles proudly posing in a university gown and holding a book, apparently after a graduation ceremony. So how did a hairdresser obtain a degree at Cambridge University?

Members of the family have made enquiries with University authorities and come up with the answer. He didn’t! The photograph was a fake. It seems Charles had borrowed graduation robes and cap for a jape. Alongside him is seated an older academic holding what appears to be a scroll – though it could equally well be just a rolled up piece of paper. (I remember doing the same thing outside the Senate House when I received my Honorary MA back in 1996)

But there’s another mystery. For I have another photograph that seems to show that second figure again in academic dress, complete with waistcoat and mortar board. This time he’s posed nonchalantly with his knee on the edge of a seat occupied by a young lady who is complete with hat and cane. They are not alone for alongside are three other couples, similarly attired, one of whom is standing on a seat with her arm draped around an older man.

Like the first picture, this one is probably not what it appears. Christina has her own ideas. Their poses, arms on shoulders by the women with the men, woman standing on a seat far left and also the difference in both the women’s and men’s ages denotes not young men and women posing for a graduation photo but rather a group escapade, an escape for a few moments in their time but forever in photograph.

The family believes that her Grandad Matthews had been a valet or footman in a large house in Cambridge and wonders if the other servants could be the people in the photo. The woman on the right would look right in a cook’s apron and spoon in her hand and the man on the left

side of the photo would make a good groom. The other men might have been butlers and the women housemaids in the big house, she says

But all that is speculation. Can you add anything to the story that's puzzling folk on the other side of the world?

If you can then drop me a line and I'll put you in touch.

Photos

Charles and Jane Matthews with daughter Beatrice before they left for Australia

Charles (left) and companion dressed in academic robes

Charles' companion with a lady from the group

Celebrating graduation – but is it a hoax

The Cambridge Magazine cover

Memories 28th July 2014 by Mike Petty

The news that pupils from Whittlesford's William Westley primary school had been involved in a coach accident en route to a seaside trip to Hunstanton made headlines. Fortunately all were securely belted-in to their vehicle and were unhurt despite their slip into the fields

It has been an exciting time for the youngsters, some of whom were a few days earlier to be found dancing around a Maypole at the Farmland Museum, Denny Abbey, in conditions more reminiscent of November rather than balmy July. It was the culmination of their involvement in the Lottery-funded Enid Porter project when, like a number of other schools, they had discovered something of the folklore and traditional customs of Cambridgeshire and learned of the lady whose lifetime had been devoted to ensuring such things have been remembered.

Their seaside excursion took them deep into the area they had been studying. As their convoy of coaches passed Littleport – scene of riots in 1816 at a time when people were having difficulty earning enough to live - a history celebrated in the name of the local Morris troop, the Littleport Riot, whose tunes they have come to appreciate – they had turned alongside the road that clings to the bank of the Great Ouse.

From their elevated position they could see over the great earth bank to the river beyond, down which lines of barges pulled by a horse led by a lad of about their own age, would have trudged all the way from King's Lynn bringing the necessities of life to Cambridge.

It would take little imagination to see other horsemen making their own lonely way deep into the fens along that raised bank and to wonder, like them, on just whose stirrups the distant approaching lights would have been fixed. Would it be a doctor making his way to a patient in an isolated fenland cottage, or a robber returning laden with booty stolen from one of the large farmhouses standing on their own individual islands of clay? And, friend or foe, just who would it be that would need to step aside from the narrow top to allow the other to pass. And would that stranger give a cheery wave or a blow from a cudgel to send you down that steep slope into the river.

The A10 road itself is narrow and was used by a variety of vehicles, including stagecoaches. One was the King's Lynn Union Coach that made the journey to and from London, changing drivers part-way at Cambridge. This was not a prestige vehicle but one avoided by passengers who had the choice. For its principal cargo was shrimps and fish and it could be smelled long before seen. Its driver, Thomas Cross, was an educated man who set down his reminiscences including those of a rival coach company, the Kings Lynn Rover. This was the plaything of a

group of wealthy farmers who delighted to take the reigns when weather was clement, leaving the regular driver to make the run when the fen winds blew and the rain trickled down inside the heaviest greatcoat. When one such had encountered the Union along the narrowest stretch of track he had tried to run it off the road until reminded by a less-than gentle swipe across his face from the other's whip. The matter had ended up in court, only for the farmer to lose out once more.

But the Whittlesford scholars had navigated this stretch of their route, they had crossed into Norfolk at Brandon Creek Bridge by the Ship Inn, scene of one of the tales they'd learned of how Irishmen fleeing the slave-labour gangs that had been constructing the riverbanks in the 1600s, had been hanged from a boat moored in the middle of the river. Their ghosts are still said to haunt the area. This was but one of the tales of the fens related by W.H. Barrett and recorded by Enid Porter that they had listened to with such attention when recounted by a storyteller at Denny

They'd covered the stretch of road swept way during the floods of March 1947 when, despite the desperate struggle of an army of men, a bank had burst and the road itself had been blown apart as water surged though the culvert beneath. The involvement of youngsters like themselves was recorded in a story entitled 'The Luck of Sallowby' by Malcolm Saville. It features the theft of Hereward the Wake's battle axe from the Elizabethan Wood Hall at Hilgay. The house can sometimes be glimpsed between the trees in its park beyond Southery where the ruined church stands an eerie reminder of the days when its residents lived literally on the edge of a marsh.

Beyond lay Snore Hall, where Charles I had hidden during the Civil War and from which he'd been led to safety by Mucky Porter, only to be stopped by Cromwell's sentries. Fortunately Mucky had his split grey goose feather, a symbol far more potent than any army orders, which had ensured the soldiers turned away and allowed the fugitive king to escape – another of those Tales from the Fens.

There was more to come – the great new river constructed only 50 years ago to complete the drainage started by Vermuyden, the complexities of the Denver sluices, the ancient port of King's Lynn, the Royal mansion of Sandringham and then the sea

Sadly the youngsters had to turn back before they reached their journey's end. Never can the fenlands have seemed less friendly as they retraced their route home to their own village with its wealth of stories. And never can the sight of their school and their anxious parents have been more welcome.

Pictures

A fenland stagecoach

River Road along the Great Ouse bank, showing barge towed by horse

Isolated cottage beside river bank

Ship Inn at Brandon Creek, where tales were told

Youngsters listen to tales from the fens at the Farmland Museum

The Luck of Sallowby – Whittlesford youngsters had their own adventure

Memories 4th August 2014 by Mike Petty

For years August Bank Holiday Monday was the date of the Mammoth Show, the biggest entertainment event in the Cambridge Calendar.

It was the day that country folk came into town. In 1914 they included a young Luther Brooks from Isleham fen. He recalled : “At this time August Bank Holiday was the first Monday in August we all went to Cambridge by train from Isleham Station, Mum, Dad, Sissie, Allan, and myself. I was 9 years .old-then”

It wasn't the best show ever: the weather was atrocious but thousands still turned out. The Cambridge Town Band played despite the deluge and Luther could wander round the various displays.

There were British Bull and Old English Sheep dogs along with Sealyhams, Cairns and Irish Terriers. The number of rabbits was higher than expected with some of the specimens having won shows at Tunbridge Wells and Durham while Mrs Western of Sandy's short-hair orange-tabby kitten was the best in the cat tent.

But it was the birds for which the Mammoth excelled. There was keen rivalry between Mr R. Morgan and Mr W. Driver in the young Jacobin pigeon class. Honours were even: one winning for cocks, the other for hens. But Driver also won the best black magpie beating rivals from Fife and Wellingborough

Though the number of vegetables was down, hit by the late frosts followed by a long drought, there were displays of potatoes, gooseberries and onions for Luther to inspect while the roses from Cambridge's Howe House Nurseries won praise in the flower show

The rain came just before the first cycle race, forcing a delay of some four-and-a-half hours. The few spectators in the grandstand were drenched as water poured through the canvas roof but at least the greasy track ensured several accidents to enliven the afternoon. And Sergeant-Major Cooper defied the elements to gave a brilliant display of jumping, his horse clearing a five-barred gate, then leaping over eight men laying on a table

Then for the brave there were trips into the air on a captive balloon. Seasoned aeronaut Alphonso Smith made his fourth ascent when with C. Kidman and J. Rayment he boarded Fred Spencer's 'Right-away' balloon and was last seen heading towards Ely. Earlier Miss Spencer had leapt from a balloon high above Milton Road parachuting gracefully to earth near the level crossing.

Towards the end the donkey races caused amusement though the fireworks were a disappointment – it was something to do with the weather, which matched the general mood of the time

Then it was time for the Brooks family to go back to Isleham fen. Luther recalled: “When we was coming home, on Cambridge Station there were a lot of soldiers all going on the train. This puzzled Dad all the way home”.

Soon even the folk of Isleham fen learned what it was all about. What they had witnessed was the start of mobilisation.

Army reservists, including a dozen members of the police force had received orders to join the colours without delay. About 20 left Cambridge station by the mail train next evening. They received a hearty send off from a crowd of 250 which included a cornet player from the Salisbury Club. The train was a little late and the men had a long wait which was enlivened when the crowd sang patriotic songs. As the train steamed out the crowd sang 'Auld Lang Syne' and cheered till it was out of sight

They were the first of many thousand.

Luther recalled: "What a to do; how terrible. There were four part-time soldiers or men who had done some time in the army living down Isleham Bank. They were Jim, Laws, Isaac Thompson, Charlie Place and his brother William. Of course, they were sent for the .first week.

"Then there was the eighteen year old and upwards to forty-fives; they were Fred Pope, Vernon Place, Albert Human, Clark Human, John Webber, Ernie Griggs. It was a lot of young men for just a small place like Isleham Fen.

"Of these four were killed in action, how terrible. They were Clarke Human, Vernon Place, his brother William, and John Webber, they were about 20 years old. Charlie Place was a bit older, he was taken prisoner at the battle of Mons and was in Germany all the war years. How very sad to lose these young men from Isleham, beside a lot more.

"I don't think there is a day go past but what I remember them"

And now, a hundred years later, we remember them once more. By the time the Mammoth Show was revived in 1922 the world had changed forever.

Pictures

Mammoth show advertisement balloons

Mammoth show headlines 1914

Soldiers depart from Cambridge station

Details of soldiers in carriages

Isleham station

Isleham village

Memories 11th August 2014 by Mike Petty

The speculation at the current Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, might stand be considered as prospective MP for a Cambridgeshire constituency has started the political classes speculating

Of course nomination for what is considered a safe seat is no guarantee of election. But it used to be.

Since the 1600's one of the safest seats was that of Huntingdon where the town elected two Members of Parliament. Both of them were traditionally nominated by the Earl of Sandwich and his Montagu family based at Hinchbrooke House. But in 1818 local solicitor Samuel Wells tried to galvanise voters into action. He could find nobody willing to stand against the Earl's choice, so he nominated a candidate without actually asking him. The proposal was warmly greeted and numerous electors backed the idea. Sadly the selected candidate declined to accept the nomination and embark in what would have been a ruinously expensive contest.

So in 1825 Samuel Wells and Henry Sweeting told the mayor that they intended to stand as candidates. On the morning of the election they turned up with several supporters. One of the Earl's candidates got five votes the other seven. The Mayor then asked for votes for Wells and Sweeting and a much greater number held up their hands. The Mayor consulted with the Town Clerk and pronounced that the Earl's men were duly elected!

This was so clearly irregular that Wells petitioned Parliament for an Inquiry. A Committee of the House of Commons decided that only the Mayor and Corporation – all 13 of them – had the right to vote for the two members of parliament for Huntingdon. Nobody else counted.

Nineteenth-century elections in Cambridge were somewhat more complicated. Here there were two powerful families, one based at Wimpole Hall, the other at Belvoir Castle. But perhaps the most influential figure was Samuel Long. His name comes up time after time in the inquiries that followed election after election. For no sooner had the results been declared than somebody raised the spectre of bribery. And Sam was the acknowledged expert.

On the day of the election voters headed to Parker's Piece where after the four candidates had made speeches the Mayor called for a show of hands in the usual manner. But then someone would demand a poll. So next day they'd erect a hustings and all those with votes turned up to say who they preferred

It was Sam's job to make sure that his party's supporters were crowded in the front of the voting platform to cheer like mad those who voted for them, and boo them that didn't. Meanwhile Sam was making a note of who'd voted, and who had yet to vote. As the day progressed it was time to encourage the dawdlers. Many people felt all politicians were as bad as one another and were happy to accept a ten-pound note, a good drink at the party's expense or a free visit to Berry's 'house for girls'. to influence their choice. And the amount of encouragement increased as the hours ticked away. It was a tricky decision for electors to make: leave it too late and you'd get nothing.

Those who would not be bribed could be kidnapped, or kept well away from the hustings till it was all over. Or their vote would be challenged. In a small electorate Sam would only need to influence 80 folk to ensure victory.

Once the election was over the successful candidates would be paraded through the streets, as in August 1830 when Lord Francis Godolphin Osborne and Henry John Adeane were carried down Sidney Street on decorated chairs preceded by the discordant sound of a band of music comprised of bugles, fife and drum. From windows and rooftops jubilant supporters waved handkerchiefs

It was expensive, Sam knew. Each flag had to be paid for, every flag needed men to carry them – and men need paying. Then every flag needed to be protected – and those men need paying too – five-bob apiece. Somebody had got to find those men – and you're talking about 200 men who know how to handle themselves in an altercation with the opposing party. As well as flags you needed election posters – and that was a good source of income for a printer. You needed men to put the posters up, and night-watchmen to make sure they weren't torn down in the dark. Such men were not the sort of people who'd have a vote – but they'd be recommended for the job by those that did. It was one way that a tradesman could repay a good customer – to promise to put his name forward for a nice little earner.

Of course it's not like that now. Perhaps the turn-out would be greater if it was!

Dr Ian Lawrence has published a detailed study of Cambridge MPs between 1832 and 1885; its title comes from a comment from one of the many inquiries: 'The Notorious Borough of Cambridge' (Tantalus Press ISBN 978-0-9573371-2-1 £12.50)

Pictures

Sidney Street following the election of 1830
A political poster alleging bribery, 1840

Hustings on Parker's Piece – people said who they wanted to vote for
Lion Hotel, Petty Cury plastered in election posters 1874
Huntingdon where councillors elected 2 MPs

Memories 18th August 2014 by Mike Petty

Alf Peacock was born in Histon. In the mid 1960s he wrote a book about the Littleport riots which was hailed as a valuable piece of social history. He was appointed warden of the York Educational Settlement, where he lived in a house increasingly filled with a mass of recordings, tapes, paper and publications on a wide range of topics. Two in particular fascinated him: the history of the railway and the Great War.

Alf edited a series of publications for the Western Front Association under the title 'Gun Fire', one of which, entitled 'A Rendezvous with Death', was devoted to a remarkable series of letters from the trenches by a Wilburton man, Oliver Hopkin.

Ollie was just an ordinary lad, the son of an agricultural worker – like Alf himself – and when men were needed for the war he made his way to the Cambridge Corn Exchange to enlist. . He wrote his first letter home from the Gog Magog Hills: "Dear Father and Mother i now take the plesure in riteing you a few lines hoping it will find you all well as it leaves me at present".

This was a greeting he was to repeat in letter after letter from far less pleasant surroundings.

In July 1916 he continued: "i am sorry to tell you that i have been wounded ... there is not many of our Battalion left and i don't now nothing about the Wilburton Lads at all i got 4 bullet wounds ... i am pleased i am alive". He recovered and went back to the front. But then in April 1917 the letters from Ollie stopped. The family got another, signed Sergt W. Gilmore. "Sir, These photos & pocket wallet was found by one of my men in a dug-out. The man thinks they belong to the dead Corporal who was in the dug-out, therefore I am sending them to you".

The family kept and treasured the letters that Alf transcribed, annotated and published back in 1986. But then they were stolen.

Alf also spent many hours talking to and tape recording old soldiers. One was Eric Haylock from Newton, who was called to report at Cambridge Corn Exchange, only to find there were sixty there before him. They were all told to go home. But they'd given up their jobs, nobody wanted to go home. So they went and got half a load of straw in the Corn Exchange and lay like a lot of pigs for about a week in their clothes. Later he wished he had gone home when following a massive barrage... "We clambered on to the parapet ... then the Germans come out of their dug outs and got on the machine gun ... men were going down like corn in a field. I looked who was with me and there weren't nobody within the length of a cricket pitch on either side. Then I felt this thing in my leg ... the bullet had exploded and I sat in this hole till 11 o'clock at night ..." After two days crawling he got back to his line, "A few minutes afterwards another boy fell on top of me. Then a shell come and hit the front of the trench and buried the pair of us"

Not all were brave as Alf's own father recalled ... "as we prepared to embark a soldier with several wound stripes stuck his bayonet into his rifle and chased the regimental sergeant major around the parade ground, threatening him. This sergeant was one of the lousiest cowards ever. When we went into the trenches he would get himself into the first dugout and remain there. He was petrified. But when we got further from the line he reverted to type like

the parade ground bully he was. He was shouting, swearing cursing when out of the blue sky came a little German aircraft. It flew along the column machine gunning us. And the only person hit was that sergeant major. A bullet went straight through his head". He does not say who shot it.

But Harry Bendall from Cambridge recalled how on 1st July 1916 two young men from the 11th Suffolks refused to go over the top. So the colonel shot them. One had five or six children. The colonel became deranged as a result of the experience.

Charles Minett from Cherry Hinton was shot by a sniper: the bullet went through his arm, broke all his ribs and penetrated his lung. The army said they would not discharge him, but would send him to work on a farm in Suffolk. But why couldn't he work on the farm where his father was a bailiff? "I took out two half crowns and laid them on the table in front of the officer and he picked them up". Charles was away from the war, but the wound took five years to heal.

William Stubbings from Sawston won the DCM for leading his platoon after its commander was killed. As a result he was posted to an Officer Cadet course at Trinity College. Later he recalled how troops had been playing football in a period of calm when they saw a huge green cloud rising high above the trees. They did not know what it was until Algerian soldiers fled towards them, calling out 'Gas'.

Alf's tapes, 200 of them, were deposited at a Cambridge College where they lay largely forgotten in a cupboard for many years. Now York Oral History Society has reclaimed, digitised and transcribed them. Some extracts are included on a CD included as part of a volume full of memories of horses, signallers, medical corps, Royal Flying Corps, prisoners and pacifists, 24 of them from Cambridgeshire men.

"These were earth's best: voices of the First World War" by Van Wilson. York Oral History Society 2014, £9.95 ISBN 978-0-9513632-6-7

pictures

a choice of WWI postcards

Memories 25 August 2014 by Mike Petty

The current debate about charging to park-and-ride and the future of Cambridge's Park Street multi-storey car park prompts reflections about a controversial topic – where do you leave your car.

It was an issue back in October 1925

Hark, hark the cars do park
But I am always in the dark
Exactly as to where I can
Station my ancient shandrydan.
How long can I abandon it
Ere constable lays hand on it.
I do not know, I cannot say,
I only know that ev'ry day
Policemen move me on and on,
And further still, until I've gone

Miles from the place where I would be –
Nobody's got any room for me.
I seem to be very unpopular –
Oh, where can I, where can I park my car?

Park Street, once just sufficient for two cars to pass along, was transformed in 1963 by the building of the new multi-storey car park. The increased traffic did not seem to have worried local people unduly: One resident said she thoroughly enjoyed watching the people going in and out of the park: 'It's like Piccadilly on a Saturday morning'

Earlier car parks had attracted controversy. In 1925 the construction of Drummer Street bus station almost prompted a riot as it included parking places for cars on a strip of the adjacent Christ's Pieces. Yet there was no opposition to the opening of the New Square parking place in March 1932. Initially few people used it and one reader launched an appeal for books that the attendant could read while he waited for customers who never came. The park survived until the construction of the Grafton Centre when it returned to grass once more

There were proposals for an underground car park beneath the Market Hill that could be used as an air-raid shelter (1938), or a municipal car park on Midsummer common (September 1949) while in 1957 came suggestions that Cambridge Castle Mound should be used a multi-deck car park with tunnels driven into it to provide space for hundreds of cars. There will no doubt be many objections, the News commented.

Later there was talk of multi-storey parks at Saxon Street, Parkside and Butt Green. The city council wanted one in King Street with space for 260 cars together with a filling station and shops. Motorists were reluctant to use parks away from the city centre as they wanted to get as near as possible to their places of work, an Inquiry was told. The Inspector disagreed.

The Park Street site was selected in April 1957 only to be delayed while proposals were investigated for an underground car park beneath Parker's Piece that would be capable of accommodating about 5,000 vehicles. Even after it opened the City Architect described traffic conditions as 'frightful'. "It will be impossible for everyone to drive into the centre in the future. I am afraid that most people will have to walk in from the outer fringe car parks or travel by shuttle-service public transport", he said in January 1964.

In October 1971 another multi-storey car park came into operation at Queen Anne Terrace, a long stroll across Parker's Piece, followed next year by another in the city centre.

The Lion Hotel in Petty Cury had provided stabling in its yard for guests arriving by horse, then made provision for their motor cars. Over the years adjacent buildings were cleared to provide a waste-land from which parking charges could be taken. The debate had taken 25 years, about the same period that the car park lasted before it was demolished and replaced by the present structure. The initial parking fees of 5p for the first hour rising to 75p for ten were designed to discourage people who work in the city centre

It would be even cheaper to leave the car well outside the centre. An experimental 'Park-and-ride' scheme based the Cattle Market got off to a slow start in November 1976. The concept proved controversial and it was officially scrapped in June 1989, only to be revived later. Since then a ring of parks have been established which are hailed a great success, though numbers using them have fallen recently following the introduction of a parking charge.

But a car park was needed on the West side of the river to help clear Queen's Road and in June 1964 came suggestions for an underground car park at the Backs. Proposals for a tunnel under Queen's Road were floated and sank and in February 1981 Cambridge councillors condemned as 'barbaric' suggestions that a multi-storey a car park either above or below

ground, could be built on college gardens, playing fields or open spaces along the Backs. Yet now vehicles nestle beneath the trees on either side of Queen's Road and nobody seems to have noticed.

Instead the all-day parking used by those early-birds working in the city centre has been exchanged for provision for short-stay visitors, allowing tourists to pause, stroll, admire the Backs and drive off without contributing to the city's economy - except the ice-cream vendors and council parking meters.

Pictures

Corn Exchange Street with parking meters and Lion Yard Car park

Proposed tunnel under the Backs as envisaged in the 1980s

Queen's Road showing trees c1900

Park Street car park at opening 1963

Cartoon from 1948

Cutting rejects Backs parking Feb 1982

Photographic may have pictures of modern parking in Queen's Road

Memories 1st September 2014 by Mike Petty

The front page headlines for the Cambridge Daily News of 1st September 75 years ago summarised events that were to change the world.

Poland invokes treaty with Britain. Full scale attack by German troops. Polish towns bombed from the air. Mobilisation ordered in Britain".

Other reports are headed: "Hitler: 'No choice but force'", "Would seem to mean war"

Similar stories were appearing in papers round the globe. But the CDN brought the news home with a photograph showing children from Ramsden Square, off Milton Road, being issued with gas masks. The few faces that are visible capture the uncertainty of the times.

There's one more headline: "Greatest evacuation begins. Today's scenes in London". It continues: "Britain today began its giant four-day task of evacuating 3,000,000 children, mothers, blind and maimed from the big cities of the land – an exodus on a scale without precedent in human history".

Inside pictures show some of the train loads of children arriving in Cambridge, a town that was supposed to be safe from bombing. Some of them would die when bombs fell on a row of terraced houses just off East Road. But that was in the future. Newmarket council was ready for them, making arrangements to use a disinfection plant to deal with verminous bedding and clothing through the arrival of evacuees.

The main stories have been told time and again, the smaller snippets present a local perspective

Look back a further 25 years to the news of September 1914.

It too reported the arrival of train loads of evacuees, only this time they were British soldiers evacuated from the battle field of Mons, part of the 'Contemptible Little Army' that stopped

the Germans breaking through to the channel coast. Rooms on Cambridge's Great Northern platform were converted into temporary wards for the most serious cases.

Outside the station a fleet of motor cars and tradesmen's vans converted to ambulances were ready to ferry the men to the First Eastern Hospital at Trinity College. It was not easy to lift the badly-wounded men out of the carriages but stretchers were placed on luggage trolleys and wheeled slowly along the platform. There were tears in the eyes of onlookers, reporters noticed.

One of those men was Leonard Cornwell of Gwydir Street, who had been the very last to be placed in the train. So within a month of his departure from Cambridge he was back in his own town bearing marks of the terrible conflict.

Other men were unable to return to their homes: they included a number of foreign students who had attended the Cambridge Summer Meetings and were now being found lodgings locally.

Reporters in both 1939 and 1914 considered the impact the war would make on the town

In 1939 shops found their income boosted by the new arrivals & locals, whose travel was restricted, were realising that Cambridge was quite a good shopping centre. There was demand for black-out materials and also higher-priced merchandise such as fur coats. Millers reported a boom in the sale of gramophones and radio sets; they also expected heavy demand for pianos.

In September 1914 too trade prospects were good. Cambridge was full of soldiers: they were camped on commons, billeted in private homes and accommodated in boathouses. The end of the Long Vacation was always a slack time but now the town was busier than usual. Sadly it was not certain Cambridge could rely on the continued presence of troops throughout the war and many firms were unsure how they could keep going.

Men's tailors had sufficient work owing to army orders, but women's outfitting departments reported a shortage of custom. The printing trade had been hit by the stoppage of trade circulars and advertisements and builders reported contracts had been postponed throwing plasterers & stonemasons out of work. Laundries noticed that demand from ordinary householders had dropped and soldiers did their own washing. Two men were convicted of pinching clothes that had been put out to dry on hedges whilst a respectable Chesterton tradesman was spotted by a plain-clothed policeman putting two pairs of thick woollen military underpants into a pillowcase. They had been sold to him by a soldier who had no use for them, he claimed.

Amongst those suffering in 1914 were the lodging house keepers faced with the prospect of far fewer students. Their plight might be overcome by the billeting of officers and the presence of relatives of the men in the hospitals. But they might not get the high rent usually paid by undergraduates.

In 1939 there was little choice: if you had spare rooms you had to take evacuees, they would bring in much-needed income – 10/6 a week (about £30 today) for the first child, 8/6 if you took more than one.

Day by day the stories were published and, day by day, you can read brief summaries in my 'Looking Back' column.

Headlines of 1st September 1939

Two stories from the (weekly) Cambridge Independent Press of 4th September

Memories 8th September 2014 by Mike Petty

On 6th September 1939 air raid sirens sound over Cambridge for real for the first time and 200 people ran to the first public air raid shelter in converted wine cellars under Peas Hill, opposite the newly-built Guildhall.

They included shop girls and other workers as well as mothers with babies in arms, Mr R. Smith, the warden in charge, reported. A group of young women from King's Parade came in wearing their gas masks but he'd assured them they were not needed. Even the Chief Constable visited to see how they were coping. By the time the 'All Clear' was sounded shelterers were being supplied with cups of tea from the Central Hotel adjacent.

Down below wooden forms had been installed around the walls of the cavity designed for 400 people. There was electric lighting supplemented by oil lamps in case of emergency and lavatories for both men and women. The shelter was terribly damp when first used but after a few days became quite comfortable. Quite a number of people used it during day-time raids and some slept down there when there was night bombing. 'Roadsters' used them every night.

Nearby, Barclays Bank in Bene't Street had converted two of their strong rooms into air raid shelters and customers could join staff deep down underground. Doubtless people fantasised about what would happen should they survive a near hit only to find that the shock had sprung open the vault doors revealing bag after bag of half-crowns.

The basement under Herbert Robinson's garage in Regent Street provided the largest shelter in Cambridge, capable of accommodating over 700 people. The three steel-reinforced floors above ensured that even if the first or second floors were damaged by a direct hit from a bomb, people sheltering would still be safe.

British Portland Cement constructed an emergency headquarters at the disused Saxon Cement Works in Coldham's Lane. Built by William Sindall it included a complete set of offices, decontamination rooms with gas proof windows and splinter-proof steel shutters. There was an air-filtration plant, central heating and electricity supplied from an accumulator driven by a crude oil engine. The seven bomb-proof dugouts, which were covered with eight inches of reinforced ferro-concrete and two feet of earth, could each accommodate 30 people.

Public shelters were constructed in streets, taking up half the carriageway, below various parts of the town and alongside the river. Those under Parker's Piece were criticised as spoiling the grass. Although they protected against air raids, at least one person died in them. In the shelter under Christ's Pieces a policeman discovered a body of a Dutchman who was lodging in Cambridge. He'd been shot through the head. When they inspected his rooms they discovered a radio transmitter capable of reaching Germany. The news of the death of a spy was hushed up.

Nor did many people realise what was going on in the new luxury flats at St Regis, Chesterton Road. The advertisement for April 1939 had promised buyers a staircase covered with cork, all-metal windows, electric fires, hot water from an Ascot heater above the sink and panelled baths. The flats also boasted a unique feature: the provision of a large air raid shelter built under the garages. It had a concrete roof and would be perfectly safe against all but a direct hit by a heavy bomb. It could also be gas-proofed. This may be why the building became the base for the Regional Commissioner for Civil Defence, Sir Will Spens, the Master of Corpus, from which plans were made on how to cope in the event of invasion.

The News issued a cut-and-keep guide to constructing a refuge room at home. A cellar or basement was the best. The stronger the walls, floor or ceiling the better. If possible the room should be without windows. If this was impossible steps could be taken to lessen the danger of the windows being blown in by blast allowing the entry of gas-laden air. Sandbags or boxes filled with earth should be placed outside them. Otherwise trenches could be dug seven foot deep with at least two entrances and covered with corrugated iron topped with two feet of earth.

Mr P.C. Grimwood built his own shelter in the garden of 44 Chalmers Road. He used a wonderful variety of iron work to strengthen it including a fender, large keys, a sewing machine, part of a bedstead and wire netting. The family never used it as they thought it too shaky and after the war it was left because the cost of demolition was prohibitive. It was finally removed in June 1960 after three days hard drilling with two pneumatic drills, leaving 20 tons of rubble. Workmen said it was well-built and only a direct hit in the doorway would have destroyed it.

When the war was over Cambridge borough council started to demolish the shelters. By May 1947 they'd demolished 175 12-person units, 44 20-person units and 44 50-person units. There were another 42 to go and work should be completed in about eight weeks. That would leave 23 50-person school surface shelters, 95 48-person underground school shelters, 26 static water tanks and 18 wardens' posts.

But do you have memories of sheltering in any of them. Or do you still have a shelter in your garden.

Pictures

Headlines from 9th Sep 1939

A news survey of shelters

Memories 16th September 2014 by Mike Petty revised

My appeal for memories of air raid shelters in last week's News has brought some interesting recollections.

Rodney Dale grew up in Chesterton. He recalls: 'In the cellar my father built a pillar of tin trunks filled with books to support the ceiling. Later, while others were building Anderson shelters in their gardens, or Morrison shelters under their tables indoors, father tricycled down to the Atlas Stone Company in Coldham's Lane and ordered a reinforced concrete shelter. It was duly erected around the three-piece suite in our sitting room, after the floor had been strengthened. The concrete shelter exuded a dry cold (unlike the cellar's damp cold); its doorway was opposite the fireplace, but we never lit a fire lest some explosion should blast lighted coals into the shelter'.

The postman has brought letters from Pam Ford and Patrick Mills of Cambridge. Both attended Romsey School. Pam was in the infants and girls building and recalls that every time the sirens went the teacher's formed them up into twos to walk in an orderly fashion to the boys' school where the shelters were. It was something she looked forward to for there was a big box of books to keep them quiet. One of them was a Shirley Temple annual that she was always anxious to read. But sadly the all clear sounded before she had chance to finish it.

Patrick started in Romsey boys' school in September 1939 just in time for gas masks and warnings about raids. The lads practiced diving under their desks in case of a very sudden attack but in fact always had a good warning from the sirens. Both remember that at home

they had large metal shelters the size of a double bed with a solid steel sheet at the top and metal mesh at the side. Patrick used the top for his model railway layout, his wife's family used it for billiards. They lived in Cherryhinton Road and had a bomb fall in their long back garden; the house was covered in earth and the windows and ceilings damaged but the occupants escaped unhurt

Marion Pocock lived in a house on Maids Causeway. Her shelter was inside the house and situated in the lobby which was in the middle of the semi-basement. It was made with heavy planks of wood to hold the shelter walls up. Whenever the air-raid siren was heard she and her brother had to go into it to sleep in chairs with pillows and blankets. One of Marion's friends lived in Norfolk Street and she had a shelter in her back garden. They used to play there with their dolls and her mother made jam sandwiches when there were no air raids going on.

Marion went to the Brunswick School where Air Raid Shelters were built on the slope of the school grounds. During one of the air-raids the whole school went down to the shelters where they sang songs and played games like 'I Spy'. One of her school pals was aviation historian, Mike Bowyer. He writes: 'A shelter I knew well was at the Brunswick School. We first used it on 18/19 June 1940. Bombs had fallen fairly near and as warden Mr Clover entered the shelter someone called 'Where did they fall?' 'I cannot tell you, it's a military secret'; he replied at which point a fellow rushed in shouting him down with 'They've got Vicarage Terrace.'! I felt quite sorry for Mr Clover...

'In February 1941 we had quite a few cloud cover excursions over the area by Dornier 17s. On one memorable day the siren in Rustat Road wailed an air clear when it should have been a warning. We all sat tight as a Dornier 17 wandered our way. Soon after it passed the alert warning sounded and the school took to the shelters. After about an hour we were wondering what was going to happen because we knew the wrong warning had sounded! The Staff just wouldn't accept that. We missed over three hours of valuable wartime schooling before the matter was resolved. A few minutes after settling to work blow me if a true warning didn't sound again. The right one. But...no one took cover and I was delighted to hear another Dornier purring over in the clouds!

'Mum asked how we'd got on at school. 'Splendid day', I said.'

But it was not always fun. In a private diary Evelyn Ansell recorded a harrowing account of the consequences of one high explosive bomb on a house in Barrow Road on 15th October 1940: "Only heard its final whistling descent then the house rocked and shook, doors blew open or off their hinges, plaster and ceilings fell, panes of glass burst in, pictures and ornaments crashed to the ground".

He noted how their neighbour rushed in, half demented screaming that her husband was buried beneath their house.

"So I out with shovels, observing their house half collapsed and rim of gigantic crater against the part where he was ... then the wrecked house was ablaze, the flames took some two hours to subdue and rescue work was impossible. The poor man's body was recovered next morning, otherwise miraculously no casualties of any kind".

The husband had been playing the piano in the drawing room and was killed outright. His wife survived the bomb damage because she was getting the supper in her strengthened kitchen.

Would a few concrete blocks, planks of wood or trunks full of books made any difference.

Pictures

Brunswick School

County Boys school trenches being dug

Advertisement for a concrete shelter

Wrecked home in Barrow Road

Memories 23rd September 2014 by Mike Petty

For nearly 50- years the Best Kept Village Competition was something to be welcomed, or feared, by parish councils. As the day of judgment neared councillors knew that, quietly and without fuss, a couple of strangers would be strolling their streets, peering at their notice boards, pausing at the bus shelters and casting an eye over cottage gardens. They were not looking for the prettiest village, but those with a community pride. At the end of the process would come the unveiling of 'Best-Kept-Village' signs – something else for the hard-pressed parish councils to keep maintained until the next year.

Some villages took the whole competition to heart. In June 1968 Witcham parish councillors set up a working party to trim the playing field hedge and tidy up the bus shelter. But although the village roadman was particularly diligent they still dropped marks on the previous year. They finally achieved the award in 1973 when the sign was unveiled by MP Clement Freud. Three years later it was the turn of their neighbours, Lt Downham.

Manea won in 1985, beating more than 200 others. Judges described it as 'exquisite', 'a gem' and 'a real eye catcher'. Locals had been beavering away for months and had been helped by a poor summer which meant their grass stayed green. Head teacher David Wilson described Manea as 'a tight-knit place where people take interest and pride in their village' and butcher Jim Bent said it was community spirit that won the award.

Wilburton were serial winners: In 1965 they scored 88 points out of 100 to win the Competition for the fourth time in five years. For their first success in 1961 they received £15 with which the parish council bought an electric clock for the parish hall

But inevitably there were disappointed communities.

Grantchester was slated in 1972: The church clock has stood for far too long at ten to three, and had deteriorated with time. "The whole village can only be described as scruffy Its inhabitants seem to be living still on past glories and cannot see that their world-renowned village is but a shadow of what it was" the judges commented..

Some parishes sulked, others responded. In 1974 Melbourn was judged South Cambridgeshire's worst kept village and determined to remove that insulting title from its records. One of the worst spots was village green near the traffic lights. Nearly every evening it was crowded with young people who tended to throw Coca-Cola tins and other litter on the green but the biggest rubbish culprits were people driving through the village.

Longstowe won the 'Best Kept Village' competition in 1976 but life in the community has not always been idyllic. In October 1935 the chairman of the Parish Meeting described conditions: The housing position is scandalous with no working men's cottages built for over 70 years. There were three families living in one house. Two old thatched cottages had been condemned but when the tenant's daughters got married she and her husband moved in with them in the condemned house as they had nowhere else to go

Even if there were homes there were not the facilities to support life. At Longstowe in 1935 part of the parish had to depend on water collected from the cottage roofs. This was inadequate and of unsatisfactory quality. Half the residents had to go half-a-mile for drinking water and mothers complained they were unable to wash their children's clothes. However Hunts Water Company was adamant that the village suffered no special hardship. During the drought the villagers only had to fetch water a matter of 500 yards and improvements would need a new mains.

Water supply was still an issue nearly 20 years later in February 1954. One councillor said: "During this spot of bad weather I was ashamed to see children going along before school early in the morning, carrying sacks containing bottles of water for cooking and for washing. Some are having to walk over a mile". Education was expensive: it cost £26 a year for nine years to educate every child. Yet when they left some could hardly read or write their own name.

Things have changed since then as a display in Longstowe Village hall on Sunday 5th October will demonstrate. Visitors can be assured that water has now been connected so they will be able to enjoy a cup of tea while inspecting the exhibition of photographs, parish registers and school documents.

Part of that change has been as a result of the work of the organisers of the Best Kept Village Award, now known as Cambridgeshire Acre, who today are celebrating their 90th anniversary. When they were set up as the Cambridgeshire Rural Community Council in 1924 agriculture was in crisis, unemployment rife, cottages crumbling, and villagers were moving to the towns to seek work.

In 2014 part of the pressure on the countryside is caused by people moving away from towns and buying up village cottages, pricing locals out. But building more houses would destroy the country community that people enjoy. Many schools, shops, churches, chapels and pubs have closed reducing the opportunity for villagers to meet socially

What is needed is a meeting place and that one of the things Acre has been working to provide from the very start. Today they continue to help communities meet modern challenges at a time of economic difficulties similar to those experienced by the previous generations.

Pictures

Unveiling the Fairhaven award for the best-kept village in Cambridgeshire by Lord Fairhaven at Lt Downham

Witcham councillors tidied up in 1968

Witcham won the trophy in 1973, unveiling by Clement Freud MP

Grantchester was 'scruffy' in 1972

Longstowe sign unveiling 1976

Wilburton often won – here in 1963

Memories 30th September 2014 by Mike Petty

Its funny how things happen sometimes. At a meeting of Newmarket Gardening Club, in a chapel hall beside a stable, I got talking to a gentleman about petrol stations. He'd run a number of filling stations in the days before self-service pumps.

Next day I was searching issues of the News for 50 years ago, looking for interesting snippets to feature in my Looking Back column. The last one I came across was an article by Rodney Tibbs, this paper's motoring correspondent for many years. In November 1964 he'd written about self-service petrol, reviving memories of experiences I'd almost forgotten. This is what he wrote:

Two musical 'pings' sound in the interior of the filling station as the car rolls to a standstill, the rear pointing to the pump marked 'mixture'. Through the wet and wind a streaking figure approaches the driving side window. The moment of decision has come. Do I get out or do I stay in?

Most men insist on getting out of the car while it is being filled but the majority of women stay put, checking make-up or tidying a hairdo or hat. As always I get out ... "Five gallons please" and stand shivering in the glistening wetness of the forecourt.

The time taken by the average garage pump to transfer a certain volume of motor spirit through a hole in the side of a vehicle can be compressed to a certain degree. What remains is a dreadful microcosm of time during which two perfect strangers must remain strangely, silently and uncomfortably apart or stuff the gap full with suitably polite, meaningless nonsense about the weather as the pump whirrs and a procession of figures and waving lines on its face signify the passing of time.

Inside the car the radio plays to a world of warmth and cigarette smoke. Why am I not there? What is this inner compunction which forces me to stand, chilled and unhappy to undergo this conversational ordeal? Something in me just cannot bring itself to bark an order out of a window at a serf running round in the rain, hand him the cash and then sit in arrogant ease while he returns with the change and the trading stamps.

"Oil and water O.K. sir?" "Yes thanks". "Air?" "A little in that front offside tyre please"

I always follow the attendant to his glass-sided box and wait in hangdog fashion for the change – and the stamps. Why? Its not that I fear I might get a few drops too little. It's just that I like to make certain that the filler cap is correctly screwed on. Or so I justify it to myself.

I'd mentioned petrol pumps only a day or so earlier when speaking at a meeting of Cambridgeshire Acre, which has been helping the community since its formation ninety years ago. They'd been participants in Cambridgeshire's first regional planning report of 1934, when 'petroleum filling stations' had been one of the contentious uses. They should not be detrimental to neighbouring property or cause danger or inconvenience to traffic, the report recommended

Earlier, in October 1922 Cambridge had rejected petrol pumps, to the astonishment of the Mayor. He could not understand objections to the 'putting up of such an appliance, which would fill a car up in one minute, instead of having to run it into a garage and back it out again, taking up certainly five minutes. The petrol pump today was a thing everyone looked for if he motored. He did not know of another town of any size that had not a petrol pump, so it seemed a most extraordinary thing that an enlightened borough like Cambridge still refused to allow a pump to be put up on the footway. In a street like St Andrews-street or Regent-street there did not seem any reason why a pump should not be put up', he'd told councillors.

Others were adamant that petrol pumps were dangerous: *Many an "undergrad" would simply love to tear it from the pavement and cart it in triumph to his lodgings, and when he went "down" to take it home and say, "Look, mater, what I did". No, sir, undergraduates' pranks are bad enough at times, and no one desires to see a flaming chariot of burning wood deposited near a petrol pump* a correspondent exclaimed.

In June 1925 a new garage opened in Hills Road in front of which was a petrol filling station from which four different kinds of fuel could be obtained at a moment's notice. However councillors were still concerned about the arm of the pump blocking the footpath and causing women with perambulators to go out on to the road.

In December 1977 there was a petrol pump nestling among the rose bushes in a well-kept front garden at Abbotsley. It had been put there before the Second World War when petrol was just 1s.6d a gallon. The proud owner, Mr Harry Smith, told the News he enjoyed a handy supply of petrol on tap. *"It is always nice to have petrol, but it still costs us about 79p a gallon, so I suppose there is no real reason for keeping it"*, he said.

Of course he did not have anyone to pump it for him – but anyway such personal service is now a thing of the past, I suspected.

However on Friday, at a Macmillan Coffee Morning at the Nyton Hotel, Ely, who should I meet but Rodney Tibbs. I told him I'd found his article from 1964 interesting, which promoted him to raise the topic with the ladies on his table, between mouthfuls of cake. And one of them reported that there is still a petrol station at Littleport where attendants still fill her tank

If any of this jogs memories with any of you, I'd be delighted if you'd share them

Pictures

Garage at Fulbourn 1964
Garage at Hills Road Cambridge showing pumps
Garage in Shelford Rd, Trumpington 1920s
Ideal filling station – from 1934 report
Typical 1934 filling station – from 1934 report
Petrol delivery to garage in Downing St 1950s
Gamlingay petrol pumps beside thatched cottages 1930

Memories 7th October 2004, by Mike Petty

The Guildhall occupies a prime site in the centre of Cambridge; it is home to the City Council, its Mayor, officers, staff and associated facilities.

Historic engravings of Market Hill show what is generally referred to as the old Guildhall. But it wasn't. The building that fronted on to the Market Hill was the Shire House, built in 1747 for the use of the County justices. It contained two assize courts on the upper floors while underneath was an open colonnade where market stalls were set up. The Town Council had let the County have the site for a peppercorn rent, provided that they could use the building for their business when the courts weren't in session. The town also had the income from the rent of the stalls and the cellars underneath.

Forty years later the Corporation commissioned Cambridge architect James Essex to design them a new building. It opened on 25 May 1784 but did not feature a grand elevation since it

was almost invisible behind the Shire House. It can just be glimpsed in the background of one of the old prints.

When a new Assize Court was built on Castle Hill in 1842 the Shire House was handed back to the Corporation who occupied both buildings and bricked in some of the arches to provide extra space for offices.

Then in 1859 the council obtained plans from a number of architects for a new Assembly Room to hold 1,400 people together with a School of Arts and a Free Library. It was completed in 1865. The Library was extended in 1884 with the erection of a Domed Reading Room, now Jamie's Italian restaurant. Further modifications came in 1895 with a wing containing police and county courts together with more offices.

In 1888 a new tier of local government was established: the County Council. They held meetings at the Guildhall and designs were prepared for a new building with a greatly improved entrance, grand staircase, public meeting rooms and an enlarged council chamber. But the proposals were rejected by ratepayers as too extravagant.

The two councils were soon at loggerhead with Cambridge petitioning for County Borough status, allowing them to manage their own affairs (which failed) and seeking to expand its boundaries to include Chesterton and parts of Trumpington, Cherry Hinton and Grantchester (which finally succeeded in 1912). More offices were needed and they came in 1916 with the development of the site of a corn merchant's on the junction of Peas Hill and Wheeler Street that had been destroyed by fire twelve years earlier.

In 1914 the County moved out to a new headquarters in Hobson Street. Their chairman thanked the Town Council for allowing them to use their council chamber and committee rooms for the past 25 years. But the enormous development of administrative business made it essential to bring together departments distributed in all parts of the town. By 1930 that County Hall had become too small so the old Gaol was demolished and a new Shire Hall erected on Castle Hill.

The Borough responded with proposals for a new Guildhall. They debated relocating out of the town centre to the corner of Parkside and East Road but instead decided to rebuild on their old site.

Plans commissioned from C. Cowles-Voysey provoked controversy, with protest meetings attacking the design. But this time there was to be no delay. Work began in 1936 with the demolition of properties on the east side Union Street – now known as Peas Hill. It revealed a building dating back to the Tudor period hidden between a later mock-brick façade which was taken down, beam by beam and re-erected in Long Road. On its site rose a wing of the new Guildhall, dominating the streetscape.

Only then was the old Guildhall flattened and rebuilt to give the building that stands today. From Market Hill you can still see the join between the two stages. It was to have been officially unveiled on 9th October 1939 – just 75 years ago. But it wasn't. The planned ceremony was cancelled because of the war and the building that had been agonised over for so long opened with the first meeting of the Council a few days later.

Cambridge was designated a City in 1951 and welcomed Her Majesty the Queen to their Guildhall in 1954. Since then councillors have continued to struggle to gain independence from their former lodger, the County Council. They have lost out time and again, in 1974 surrendering powers over their library service as part of Local Government Reorganisation.

Now more change is being debated and who knows what will happen on the Guildhall site over the next 75 years

Choice of illustrations:

1800 PRINT SHOWING SHIRE HOUSE WITH GLIMPSE OF THE TOWN HALL
BEHIND IT TO THE RIGHT

GUILDHALL 1840 showing buildings alongside which were demolished for the present building

New and old Guildhall during reconstruction

The newly-finished Guildhall 1939

Old Guildhall with the new wing alongside

Old Guildhall from invitation, 1907

Memories 14th October 2014 by Mike Petty

Travellers approaching Foxton do so with some concern for here the road is crossed by a railway line and once the barriers are closed to allow trains to pass through, traffic on the main A10 road grinds to a halt. Some motorists have risked their lives by crossing whilst the barriers are descending.

In 1972 Government announced proposals for a bridge to keep traffic moving. The news was welcomed by the Chairman of the Parish Council. "It has been a black spot for longer than I care to remember, and the only way to stop it is to do away with the crossing, and the only way to do that is to run a road bridge over it", he said. "I am honestly very pleased at the news; it is a major step forward. The next thing will be to get the actual work done"

But that has been the problem.

There had been similar debate back in July 1929 when the County Surveyor reported he had been in negotiations with the LNER who were prepared to erect new crossing gates that were mechanically operated from the signal box for the sum of £600 [about £33,000 at today's prices].

The Minister of Transport was prepared to approve the scheme and pay 60 percent of the cost. But County Councillors vetoed the proposal and pressed for a bridge to bypass the crossing. The issue was still being aired in the first Cambridgeshire Regional Planning report of 1934 which included a photograph of what they described as one of the most obstructive crossings in the county.

Don Challis remembered it. Writing in 1998 he recalled the situation 60 years earlier:

"At that time the station layout was considerably different to the arrangement we see today. Standing as it did then on a cross road, probably the only one in the country, it had a double set of gates, opened and shut by the signalman, an exercise that took several minutes. After negotiating the dozen or so steps down from his box, two sets of gates had to be swung into position, steps re-traced, the gates locked and signals set.

"If that situation pertained today (1998) there would be a queue of traffic a mile long before the train got anywhere near the station. But Mr Funstan and Mr Hale, the signalmen, didn't have to worry about such details; two or three cars at the most would be waiting at their gates when eventually they descended to open them. There were two exceptions however. One was when the Newmarket Specials came through on race days, elegant Pullman trains filled with

the landed gentry and prosperous bookmakers en route for a days racing. It would have been unthinkable for their journey to be delayed by a set of gates at an insignificant village in Cambridgeshire, which is why they were opened so long in advance to give the signalman plenty of time to get back to his box and set the signals. On these occasions the traffic would have stretched back to Capt. Martin's cafe! There were times when it would have been even further than that. The sight of such a queue and a uniformed policeman standing at the station could only have meant one thing - the Royal Train was coming through. I saw it several times on its way to Sandringham”

So how did the station get there? It was part of a line from Royston to Shepreth, Foxton and Cambridge that had been proposed by the Great Northern Railway Company. They got as far as Shepreth in 1848 but its continuation into Cambridge was blocked by the Great Eastern Railway Company.. So passengers left the train there and took a forty-minute coach ride for the rest of the way until 1851 when the Great Eastern built a short line from Shelford to Foxton and Shepreth, allowing their rival's trains to complete the journey to Cambridge.

It is not just road users who have faced disruption. On 7th June 1866 several passengers were bruised when a train derailed just after it had passed through Foxton en route to Shepreth. One carriage was turned on its side while another was left hanging over a bank. Seeing the coaches swaying the guard had applied the brakes and the driver reversed his engine, bringing the train to a halt after 480 yards. Inspectors found that the track was in poor condition and that the driver had been going too fast – estimated at 50 mph.

Foxton station was under threat in September 1955 when the British Transport Commission proposed closure. They claimed less than 70 passengers boarded and left the train each week. But the Mr Challis knew the reason – the fares were prohibitive. Some 280 people signed a protest petition claiming a replacement bus services would be inadequate and would increase the drift from the countryside to the town. Today trains still stop and traffic continues to wait

But now archaeologists have revealed that this road may be even older than originally thought. New investigations and analysis of aerial photographs indicates that it formed part of a track dating back to the Iron Age linking Baldock with Cambridge. For part of the way just north of Foxton it followed the line of the present A10. In places they have discovered wheel ruts that had been filled in with sand and chalk to try and keep the road level.

Perhaps this will give motorists something to ponder whilst they wait at the crossing.

The archaeological report on ‘Avenell Way’ is published in the Cambridge Antiquarian Society's Proceedings for 2014. ISSN 0309-3606

PICTURES

Foxton railway crossing 1934

Foxton station c1900

Foxton village sign

Newspaper report on threat to close station Sept 1955

Memories 21st October 2014 by Mike Petty

The recent statement that the 1871 Pedlars Act which requires travelling salesmen to have a permanent home address and to be of “good character”, is not to be scrapped after all prompts me to delve into my files for information on such hawkers

The most famous of these travelling salespeople is a woman who never lived. 'Zita' was the daughter of a 'Cheap Jack' whose adventures at the time of the Littleport Riots of 1816 formed the basis of a story by Sabine Baring-Gould that was published in 1894. In it he describes their arrival at Ely:

"Very little of the sides of the van was visible, so encrusted were they with brooms, brushes, doormats, tin goods and coal scuttles. Between these articles might be detected the glimmer of the brimstone yellow of the carcase of the shop on wheels. The front of the conveyance was open; it was festooned with crimson plush curtains, drawn back; and deep in its depths could be discerned racks and ranges of shelves stored with goods of the most various and inviting description. The front of the van was so contrived as to fall forward, and in so falling to disengage a pair of supports that sustained it, and temporarily converted it into a platform. On this platform stood the Cheap Jack, a gaunt man with bushy dark hair and sunken cheeks; he was speaking with a voice rendered hoarse by bellowing"

Who were the real pedlars and hawkers? Many appear briefly in the columns of newspapers, accused of various misdemeanours. In 1910 a 58-year-old Chesterton woman told a court she'd earned her living by travelling about the country with a caravan visiting fairs in summer and in winter time hawked coal and coke. She might have passed her life quietly except that a 50-year-old labourer, with whom she was living, cut her brother's throat with a carving knife in a stable in Water Street.

Some have left fuller records. One such was Thomas Holcroft whose 'Memoirs' were published in 1862: "My father was so straightened in his circumstances that my mother agreed to turn pedlar. She hung a basket with pins, needles, tape, garters and other small haberdashery, on her arm, and hawked them round the villages near Cambridge. We passed on to the Isle of Ely, hawking our different wares in every village we came to, always taking care to be present at Wisbech fair"

In Cambridge John Nicholson was a unique sort of pedlar who went his rounds of the University with a moveable stall laden with textbooks calling out "Maps" to attract buyers. However he also allowed free use of his library to poor students unable to pay even the moderate charges he made.

Another was the pedlar-poet James Chambers. In the 1820s his father had been a leather-seller in Soham, earning a fair living by hawking his wares around the surrounding villages. He discovered that having a young handsome boy as his companion was no bad way of winning the support of the ladies of the grand houses he visited. Soon James believed he had learned the knack of selling so he left home to earn a living as a pedlar only to find that country housewives wanted little to do with an increasingly scruffy and smelly urchin hawking increasingly tattered goods.

My stockings are torn as I walk in the dirt,
And some months I've existed without any shirt.
My feet they go wet, and my neck takes much cold,
And rustics despise me 'cause mean and old;

Barns were his favourite sleeping places but farmers were disinclined to let him stay there for fear he would contaminate the other animals. So he slept in sheds, pigsties, in the open fields, under hedges or in the shelter of haystacks. He would often wake in the morning covered with snow, his limb so numbed that he could not feel them.

At last his luck changed; he was befriended by a Suffolk gentleman who took him to his mansion. There he was cleaned and clothed and introduced into polite society. A cottage was hired for him, furniture procured and a printer commissioned to ensure that his poetic musings

were published to provide him a steady source of income. But within a few weeks the wanderlust returned. James walked away from comfort and took once more to the bushes and tumbled-down shacks of the countryside.

A century later Albert Barrett was a familiar figure in Newmarket dressed in his shining black gaiters. He was better known as "Ackie Barrett", the Old Moore's Almanac man, but also sold ice-cream. Similar 'hokey-pokey men' would turn up at Cambridge schools during playtime with a barrow containing paper-wrapped slabs of ice-cream for sale at a penny a time. Other travelling vendors included Albert Craske, the Cambridge muffin man from George IV Street who walked the streets with his tray and handbell, as others had done before him, while in 1955 a 19-year-old caravan dweller told magistrates how she would go from house to house selling lace and pegs as well as collecting article left for her rag-merchant father.

Few hawkers made their fortune. For years bachelor Harris Norman lived in extremely poor circumstances in Romsey Town. He'd started as a hawker of cheap jewellery, then speculated in stocks and shares but never spent more than would suffice to keep soul and body together. When he died in 1908 he was found to be worth £12,000 which he bequeathed to be divided between Addenbrooke's Hospital and the London Jewish Synagogue

One man who took an interest in street traders was Percy North who lived beside the old Festival Theatre on Newmarket Road. He would recall the names of tradesmen in Burleigh Street as they were in the days of his youth, nearly a century before. His memory was not only of names but sounds - the calls of the traders who hawked their wares around the small streets off East Road. "Jam jars or bottels" encouraged children to bring such containers to be exchanged for a paper windmill, the lavender girl attracted their older brothers, the trotter man none at all. And then there was Bowie O'Dell with his home made chicken coop on pram wheels from which he sold freshly-killed chickens for dinner.

Do you remember such itinerant traders, were you one?

Share your memories with Mike Petty at the News

PICTURES

9877 – John Nicholson 'Maps' who touted books round colleges
6875 a Cambridge muffin man
2904 street vendor's barrow off Lensfield Road
choice of three engravings of a pedlar
166.68 woman pedlar using her apron as a bag for carrying articles
a pedlar's tray
painting of a Cheap Jack at a country fair
Soham – home of James Chambers

Memories 28th October 2014 by Mike Petty

Kathleen Fowle was appointed headmistress of Coton village school in 1956 and taught its youngsters for 20 years, during which time the school moved from its old building to the premises it still occupies. During that time she developed a passion for the history of her adopted village, writing a short booklet to provide the children with some basic facts about their home in the hope that it would instil in them a lifelong interest in their local history.

But there is always more to be discovered and now an expanded version of her history has been published containing additions contributed by others who share Kathleen's enthusiasm.

One of the village's most notorious characters was its rector between 1788 and 1827 about whom Kathleen would only say that he was disappointed in love and ambition. Now a successor incumbent, Rev Canon Hugh Searle has added a little more

The Reverend Joshua Waterhouse had lived an unusual sort of life for a parson. He'd started off as apprentice to a shoemaker, but had run away. Then he'd enlisted in the army and been wounded in a battle of Foutenoy. He recovered and went up to St Catharine's college, Cambridge where he earned only a poor degree but was awarded a Fellowship. Despite his poor academic ability when the old Master died Waterhouse decided to stand for election. There were only five electors, including himself, and he was so sure he'd be appointed that he moved in to the Master's house – only to have to get out when it was discovered that another contender had received one more vote. Several times the college tried to eject him from his Fellowship but he always outfoxed them.

In his younger days he was one of the handsomest, best-dressed men in Cambridge; he visited Bath and other fashionable watering places, mingling with the best society in the bustle of the busy and the flutter of the gay. He developed a reputation with the ladies.

When appointed to the college living of Coton he soon manifested eccentricities that were to follow his later career. During one Sunday service in church he'd spotted a young man enter the Rectory. He knew the lad was in the habit of visiting his housekeeper and it was not a courtship he wished to encourage. So he'd told his Clerk, Mr Agar, to give out a good long psalm and left the pulpit. Agar sang on till the rector returned by which time he'd accomplished some twenty verses.

In 1813, when nearly 70, Waterhouse moved to Lt Stukely, though he retained the living of Coton. Although he had been a dandy in his youth by then he was somewhat careless of his dress, wearing the same clothes day after day, washing them in a pond when they got too filthy.

His new home was large and elegant but it did not remain that way for long. The bachelor rector lived only in the kitchen and one bedroom upstairs, blocking up the other windows to evade the payment of the window tax. Then he used the otherwise-empty rooms to store the grain from his farm. As a result the rectory abounded in rats. Indeed while his corpse was laying in the kitchen before burial a tremendous rat mounted the table and ran off with the candle

One morning two boys entered the rectory kitchen to eat their lunch, as they usually did. When they sat down they noticed the rector's legs hanging over the side of a large brewing tub and heard unusual, deep groans. Alarmed, the lads ran to the house of a neighbour, Ann Whitney, and told her what they had seen. She thought the Reverend was probably drunk and told the lads to finish their dokey at her house. Then a young man named Frederick Rogers knocked at the Rectory door, entered and saw what the lads had seen. He went for William Ashby who lifted the rector out, lying him on the floor. That's when they noticed his throat had been cut.

A Bow Street Runner was called in and Joshua Slade was arrested after his brother gave evidence against him. It appears the rector had disturbed him as he'd burgled the house. It had not been the only time: Waterhouse had frequently recovered property from Slade's house but abstained from legal prosecution fearing that his own immoral conduct would itself be exposed to public reproof!

Slade was given a public hanging at Huntingdon, though crowds of onlookers were sent home disappointed when the execution was postponed at short notice. It did not deter the souvenir seller who sold his account of Slade's last words and confessions anyway

A memorial was erected in Stukely churchyard:
Sacred to the Memory of the Rev Joshua Waterhouse BD who was inhumanly murdered in
his parsonage house about ten o'clock on the morning of July 3rd 1827 aged 81

Beneath this Tomb his Mangled body's laid
Cut Stabb'd and Murdered by Joshua Slade.
His ghastly Wounds a horrid sight to see

And hurl'd at once into Eternity.
What faults you've seen in him take care to shun
And look at home enough there's to be done
Death does not allways warning give
Therefore be carefull how you live

"Coton through the ages" by Kathleen Fowle can be obtained from Carolyn Postgate on
01954 211033, email carolynpostgate@yahoo.co.uk, for £8 including p&p

pictures
Coton Church
Lt Stukeley church and rectory
Author Kathleen Fowle
St Catharine's College in Waterhouse's time

Memories 4th November 2014 by Mike Petty

Huntingdon High Street is a pedestrian's nightmare - the News' reported just 50 years ago in November 1964. The narrow road and pavement were just not sufficient. But, it added, "in the not too distant future it will be a pedestrians' dream where traffic is forbidden". For already a new High Street with modern shops was under construction

The need for improvement had become imperative as more and more people poured onto the new Oxmoor estate created under the London County Council expansion scheme. Since 1959 the more ambitious members of London's overspill population had found a new home and a new life in Huntingdon. Only 12 families had gone back, the paper reported. The influx of over 3,000 Londoners combined with people moving into the privately developed houses at Desborough Estate had increased the town's population by a third, to 12,000.

Already there was a minor shopping area north of Hartford Road with six shops, a public house, church hall and – probably soon - a petrol station. A much larger centre was promised south of Sapley.

The inner-city youngsters were to be educated with those of Hartford villagers. Their old school had been replaced with a new one for 320 pupils and another for 240 infants was due to open next year. The hope was that by integrating the children they would settle down into a combined community.

Nearly 700 houses had been built since the first was completed in 1961. And more were coming to the market. Huntingdon estate agents Ekins, Witherow and Handley had homes people could be proud of: exciting new houses and bungalows in family-friendly settings complete with model kitchens and luxury features at prices varying from £2,642 to £5,000 (£48-£91,000 in today's money).

Furnishings could come from Elphick's shop in George Street with carpets, curtains and loose covers made and fitted by competent staff while Stiles supplied high class confectionery,

crusty bread and celebration cakes for the moving-in party. The one thing needed was a Murphy television rented from J.V. Robinson for just eight-and-six a week (£7.70), although they also stocked sets from Ferguson, Bush, Ekco, Sobell, McMichael and Decca at their High Street store.

The new residents found work in new factories. Over 140 Londoners employed by Horatio Meyer, the bedding manufacturers, had volunteered to move 60 miles with their families to a new life Huntingdon. The workers, drawn from the company's four London factories, had formed the spearhead of the staff to man the new factory in St Peter's Road making mostly mattresses and divans. There were three other firms producing machine moulded plastic products with another planned on the St Peter's Road estate - and that could well be the type of light industry for which the town made its name.

Huntingdon was well-sited. It was just off the Great North Road, and astride the A14 which joined the A10 to make a good road into the more easterly parts of London and the docks. And the Ministry of Transport had just included the long-awaited bypass in its rolling programme of road building

The expanding population – estimated to soar to 20,000 when the scheme was completed in 1970 – would also need leisure facilities. At present there was one cinema, a dance hall for just over 300 people and several smaller halls. Soon there'd be another where local beat groups such as Strawberry and the Fruit Drops, The Wreckers, The Huntsmen, The Inmates, The Ancestors and The Spyders could perform. New facilities for amateur dramatics, a bowling alley as well as a restaurant and coffee lounge would follow. Already there was the fine new Cromwell Museum opened by the Speaker of the House of Commons in October 1962 although it was sad that many of the artefacts could not be displayed owing to the restricted floor and wall space.

And now there was optimism that an open air swimming pool might be constructed at Bushey Close. It would be the realisation of a dream that had been born 30 years earlier with plans for a pool on Hartford Road fields using water from the river.

But there was little in the way of shopping. That would soon be remedied, the News forecast. The Chequers Court shopping precinct had pointed the way for style while F.W. Woolworth had acquired the Grand Cinema site for a much larger store. The Peterborough Co-operative Society had three different types of shop in the High Street and had recently acquired another. Some small shops were empty but Thackerays, the local builder, were erecting three new ones almost opposite Trinity Church

Historians might lament the “unmitigated tragedy” that Trinity Baptist Church, a landmark for nearly 100 years, was to disappear. It had opened for worship on 16th September 1868 but there was no minister and for five years services had been carried on in a small hall at the back. It would have cost £10,000 to make its 182 feet steeple safe. Now Tesco had bought it at auction for £42,000 and a new supermarket would rise on the site

Then Huntingdon truly would be ready for a prosperous future in the swinging sixties

pictures

Huntingdon High Street 1993

Copy of the News headlines for Nov 1964

I will search the News Library for other photos on Monday morning

Memories 11 November 2014 by Mike Petty

Recently Peter Biggs invited me to his Histon home – he had something that might be of interest in this centenary year of the start of the Great War

There I was shown a small leather photograph album recording how five members of this one family had been involved in the war: three brothers and two sisters.

When conflict broke out in 1914 Wilf & Albert joined the 12th Lancers and were sent to serve in Ireland. But soon they were sent to play their part in the fighting proper. Theirs would be a war fought on horseback.

Within days of the outbreak of war several local soldiers were home again, wounded. One of these was Lieut Macleod of the Royal Field Artillery from Waterbeach. He told his fellow villagers of the fighting at Mons ... *The Germans outnumbered us five to one. They came on in masses and we mowed them down. Even then they kept coming on. We hung on to the position as long as we could but they enveloped us from both flanks. We managed to save all our guns, though lots of teams were shot down. I was wounded.*

Then he added: *But the Germans are afraid of cold steel, both bayonet and cavalry charges. The cavalry are doing fine work. They are going right through the Germans and the German cavalry dare not face them*

It was worrying information for the Biggs family, whose fears were heightened with the news of the death of Capt Percy Pemberton of Trumpington Hall, the first local officer to fall. He'd been a cavalry instructor to the Cambridge Officer Training Corps but was recalled on the declaration of war and killed in action on October 19th 1914

The Histon brothers, Wilf and Albert fought on together, they transferred to the Royal Field Artillery together, were commissioned together and came home on leave together. Together they met their younger brother Arthur who was also serving with the Artillery. But then they were separated. Wilf was sent to Italy, leaving Albert in France. And Albert got gassed.

You may search Histon war memorial for their names; they are not there. You may scan the thousands of names of Cambridgeshire men commemorated in Ely Cathedral. They are not there. Nor are they listed on the records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. For Arthur, Wilf and Albert all came home to Histon once the killing was done.

They had seen terrible sights – young Arthur had been standing beside an officer whose head had been blown off by a shell.

But their sisters, Myrt and Eva, had also seen suffering. For the girls had volunteered to be nurses in the military hospital established at The Firs in Histon.

By November 11th 1914 Cambridge knew the cost of war. Already train loads of hundreds of wounded soldiers had arrived at the station and been transported by horse-drawn ambulances to the First Eastern General Hospital beds under the cloisters of Nevile's Court, Trinity College. And already a massive wooden hospital was being erected just across the Backs at Burrell's Walk.

Soon patched-up soldiers were coming to Histon for further nursing. And that is when Eva started her album of photographs – the one treasured to this day in the family home.

She snapped her brothers when they came home on leave, she photographed the nurses working alongside her at The Firs, and she took pictures of the men she was helping to mend.

Her pictures show that hospital supporters organised bazaars and garden fetes and in August 1915 took wounded men for a picnic on Appleyard's boat at Ely.

The men penned their thanks and signed their names. Many of them were Australians – for troops from around the globe were fighting - including Lance Corporal James. Lineham Beard of 82 Spring Street, Geelong. And one stole Eva's heart.

Alongside the album there is a locket containing a photograph of one of the Australian lads; he was nursed back to health and sent back to fight again. He never returned to Eva and she treasured his memory until the day she died.

Her small tatty, leather album is a tangible record of the impact of war; the faces of young men – many of whom never did grow old – smile out at the request of their ministering angel.

But as I turned the pages, one pair had no photographs. And it was this that hit home the most

For instead of faces there were flowers. Flowers brought back from French fields in 1918. Eva had lovingly mounted them in her album between the faces of wounded warriors.

And amongst the flowers is a poppy, slightly faded but still blood red.

photos

Memories 18th November 2014 by Mike Petty

Last week I was taking a rare opportunity to browse in David's Bookshop in St Edward's Passage, that marvellous treasure-chest of all things antiquarian, when my attention was drawn to a recent acquisition: a series of hand-coloured engravings produced by W. Mason in 1819 and 1820

Mason was at this time working from a shop near Addenbrooke's Hospital in Trumpington Street; he was later to move to St Mary's Passage where he traded as a print seller, picture frame maker and bookseller

It was from there that in December 1825 he published portraits of local characters such as Gilbert Ives who had started as a barber and hair-dresser then turned bookseller amassing a considerable fortune by selling old prints with which he endowed four almshouses. Squire Jacob Butler of Barnwell Abbey was renowned for his eccentricity; he planned his own funeral and had a huge packing case made to serve as his coffin. It was large enough to hold several people and numerous 'house warming' parties were held to christen it. Another was Jemmy Gordon, a solicitor who turned to drink and delighted to mock members of the University hierarchy – Mason issued his memoirs.

Two years later, in November 1827 he published the first of a series of 'Illustrations of the University of Cambridge': picturesque views of the colleges, halls and other University buildings, each featuring four engravings produced from original drawings by James and Henry Storer.

The Storers' works are comparatively well-known but those produced by Mason himself are somewhat rarer.

There is an attractive tinted view of Trinity College library from the river, another of Christ's College with its decorated gate, Sidney Sussex with its stately trees dominating the street, the Old Court of Corpus Christi with two ladies, one apparently a bedder, the other perhaps a visitor.

Several show interesting details. His view of Trinity Hall also depicts the buildings in Trinity Lane that were to be replaced by the University Library a decade or so later, that of Gonville and Caius shows part of their buildings in Trinity Street swept away by Waterhouse whilst Market Street features in the background of a sketch of Holy Trinity church

On Market Hill Mason sketched a man fetching water from Hobson's Conduit with the Guildhall behind. This I had seen before.

But one picture particularly caught my attention. It is headed 'Cambridge from the Hills Road' and was published in 1820. We now call it Regent Street

It shows a wide, rutted track leading towards the town with a few figures making their way in and out. To the left is a wooden fence enclosing a field in which cows are grazing, then a few bushes before the newly-constructed Downing College. Dominating the background is the chapel of King's and the tower of St Mary the Great.

It is an area of Cambridge I had never seen depicted before, a unique image of a tranquil Cambridge now disappeared.

PICTURES

Two views of same area of Regent Street; one 1820 the other 2000 – please compare

others

Hobson's Conduit and Guildhall

Trinity college library

Holy Trinity Church with Market Street behind

Memories 25th November 2014 by Mike Petty

Two colourful animals have been in the news during the last week: a Red Cow and a Red Lion.

The Red Lion, a large wooden statue commissioned for a London brewery, was displayed in the Lion Yard shopping centre until its removal during construction work on the Grand Arcade. Despite persistent attempts to get it restored to its pedestal the decision seems now to have been taken that it will leave the commercial jungle of the city centre for the leafy spaces of Grange Road, becoming a mascot for the University Rugby Club.

The Lion Hotel fronted on to Petty Cury from medieval times. With the coming of the stagecoach it became a coaching inn where passengers disembarked after their journey, utilising its outbuildings to provide stables and a smithy. The Hotel became an institution under the guidance of Mrs A.A. Moyes who took it over in the 1890s. Under her rule it grew famous as the headquarters of visiting sportsmen and athletic teams. Each visitor was made to feel that he or she was the only person the hostess delighted to honour - so they came back time and again.

The old courtyard off Petty Cury was covered with a glass roof and the rooms alongside became shops for travelling salesmen who laid out samples. Buyers from the big stores came to inspect the goods that were despatched by rail.

The practice died out with the increased use of the motor car. It was realised that motorists would need somewhere to leave their vehicles. By now the old stables, smithy, bottle store and laundry were no longer needed. They were gradually demolished to provide car parking space. By 1950 over 80,000 motorists were using the Lion Hotel yard car park. In 1961 in the single largest property transaction the city had seen it was purchased by a property company. Two years later the hotel closed, though the bars remained until the demolition men moved in during the construction of the development that perpetuates its name.

Nearby the old Red Cow public house in Guildhall Street was rebuilt in 1897 by Rowe & Scott, architect of the nearby Corn Exchange. The erection of these buildings would greatly improve the neighbourhood, it was claimed. Two years later the Red Cow advertised a Concert Hall featuring 'artistes of undoubted merit' including Miss Maria Farror, Miss Edith St Aubyn and the comedienne and dancer Miss Sadie St John. Initial response was good and an American bowling saloon was also opened. But during the Second World War Frank Dobie, the first Professor of American History was not impressed – he found the pub 'too cave-like for cheer'

In October 1972 a London development company applied to demolish the Red Cow and replace it with a four storey office and shop block. But planners invoked new rules over the future of old but not historically important buildings to keep it together with the adjoining Guildhall Chambers. It would provide a buffer between the city centre and the massive Lion Yard redevelopment behind. Now it has been purchased by the Grand Arcade Partnership sparking concern that the pub might be converted into shops and luxury flats.

But it was not just Red Lions and Red Cows that have attracted people to the area beyond Petty Cury.

The first printed map of Cambridge, dating back to 1574, shows open fields on which various strange animals are grazing. By the 1830s the area was called Hog Hill and was home to the cattle market and pig pens. It was also the base for visiting menageries including ten-foot high elephants, onagra - like the zebra but larger, aurochs with two large horns growing from their forehead, polar sea-monsters, anaconda, panthers and spotted laughing hyena. The howling of the caged animals quite distracted attention from the stench of the squalid back-street area bordered by Slaughter House Lane until it was renamed following the construction of the Corn Exchange.

Perhaps oddest of all was Snowy Farr with his menagerie of animals who became a regular feature of Petty Cury in more recent times. Who will forget the cat sitting on his top hat as mice scampered round the brim while Mother Duck and Mrs Chicken looked placidly on? There is a memorial to Snowy alongside the Guildhall. Campaigners hope the Red Lion and Red Cow might continue to keep him company.

Pictures

Lion Hotel 1960s

Snowy and his animals

Red Cow in Wheeler Street 1950s

Poster for lions on Hog Hill (now known as Lion Yard)

1574 map showing fields and animals south of Petty Cury

Lion in Lion Yard 1983

Memories 2nd December 2014 by Mike Petty

Rock Road Library is tucked away in the streets south of Cherryhinton Road. This is not one of the oldest areas of Cambridge, having been created at the end of the Victorian era.

By the start of the Great War it comprised just a few roads bounded by Hills Road to the west and an undeveloped Hinton Way to the east. It was home to families who together were pioneering a new community.

And like all communities it was greatly affected by the Great War. They saw sons and fathers leave to fight in foreign fields and, like all communities, followed the news of their exploits; they heard of men taken prisoner, sons wounded, husbands killed.

But it also found itself invaded by soldiers, many of whom they did not welcome.

Right at the start of the war in September 1914 Cambridge was filled with troops and commons were covered with tents and horses. Soldiers were billeted in homes, stationed in schools, the Corn Exchange and University laboratories. On East Road a new Territorial Drill Hall was being constructed.

Then in October 1914 came news of a barracks is to be erected on Cherryhinton Road. It needed to be completed in six weeks; the task was entrusted to William Sindall and jobs were found for 400 men, working day and night.

By November all the frames and roofs had been erected and it presented the appearance of a miniature town. There was accommodation for 1,000 men, thirty to a hut, a guard house with offices for the Commanding Officer and clerks and a number of cells lined with sheet steel. The regimental institute contained a games and reading room, supper room and canteen while nearby was a coal yard and shower baths. A parade ground and miniature rifle range were to follow

It was occupied by the locally-recruited 11th (Service) Battalion (Cambs) Suffolk Regiment who moved out of their temporary quarters in Melbourne Place School to the new hut barracks. Their stay was brief. Soon they left to an enthusiastic send-off. In every sense of the word they were a credit to the town and county which had reared them. As they marched along with a fine swinging stride, upright and manly, they looked a picture of health and happiness. No wonder people cheered.

But what was to happen to their barracks? Soon they were surrounded by barbed wire fences. There were concerns that these were inadequate – they should be made unclimbable, though then desperate men would just burrow beneath them. The camp was guarded but there were not enough of them – the Mayor wanted 200-300 soldiers with a sentry every two to three years. But the military thought they had better use for such numbers.

And the 800 inmates were unruly, they went around in groups of fifty men with just one escort. No wonder they escaped; one was found in a Cambridge hotel, two or three others were discovered in London. Residents and councillors were incensed and questions were asked of the Secretary of State for War, Winston Churchill, in Parliament

Things got worse. One inmate died of alcohol poisoning. How was this possible: there were no facilities for leaving and no visitors were allowed. There was a six-foot ditch and a hedge between the road and his hut window. However it would be easy for somebody to pass a bottle from outside at night when the sentry could not see, the military conceded

Then in May 1918 hunger drove two of those confined to desperate measures. They were spotted by PC Barnes in Mill Road each carrying a sack containing bread that they'd bought from Bainbridge's shop and intended to sell at a shilling a loaf. They explained that rations had been reduced, though they still got more than ordinary people – 10 ounces of meat, 14½ ounces of bread and a pudding every day.

Local residents wanted the camp to be closed. But those inside were not enemy troops. For it was one of two Isolation Hospitals – the other was on Newmarket Road - and treated British and Colonial soldiers who had contracted Venereal Disease

When the war finally bled itself to death it was time to address the problems of the future. In Burrell's Walk the huts of the First Eastern General Hospital were converted into homes to meet the accommodation crisis with the remaining patients moved elsewhere. But they refused to go to Cherryhinton Road because of the moral taint about the place. Many thought the huts would be a suitable place for retraining the men returned from war but the stigma attached to the site was too great.

Instead there were proposals for new roads linking the area to the Station and Mill Road; this would create work during a period of severe unemployment and provide the foundation for new homes for the returning heroes

Now residents of the streets around Rock Road have obtained Heritage Lottery Funding for a project to investigate the impact of the First World War on their community. If your family lived in Blinco Grove, Baldock Way, Hartington Grove, Hills or Cavendish Avenues they would be delighted to hear from you.

Already there is a display in Rock Road Library and more will follow. And for those with computers there's even a film of a talk I gave there last Thursday, demonstrating just how little is known and how important it is to ensure a proper appreciation of that conflict of 100 years ago.

Claire Adler would be delighted to hear from anyone interesting in participating in the project; email claireadler@btinternet.com or ring 07970671965

Mike's presentation is online:

<https://vimeo.com/113055939>, <https://vimeo.com/113057928>

Pictures

First troops arrive on Cherryhinton Road

The camp

Pictures of Cherryhinton Road and Blinco Grove just after the war

Memories 9th December 2014 by Mike Petty

December 1964 saw the arrival in Cambridgeshire of three media celebrities, two of whom are still fondly remembered, the other far less so.

The Daleks were mass killers and their arrival on King's Parade caused stares. The creature moved from King's College car park and stopped in front of Great St Mary's Church. There it accosted ten-year-old Timothy Shutter of Grantchester Street and demanded to know if he watched 'Dr. Who', the children's television series.

Tim said he did but that he was not at all frightened by Daleks. Other people were puzzled. One gentleman, who did not realise how close he was to vaporisation, asked 'What is that contraption supposed to be?' A woman enquired 'Is it a real one?'

Andrew Blackwood, manager of the Arts Theatre, was able to give the answer: the Dalek was taking part in their pantomime, 'Aladdin'.

But the real star of the show was Widow Twankey – otherwise known as Cyril Fletcher. Deryck Harvey the News theatre critic described him as a very funny man with an extraordinary range of facial expressions alongside his pop eyes and boyish, mischievous look. But to some youngsters the strange oddly-dressed figure was scarier than any monster from outer space. This was Cyril's eighth Cambridge panto and came with new jokes, old jokes, 'corny' jokes and ad-libbing in glorious abandon.

He was joined on stage by Princess Balroubador (his wife, Betty Astell), Frankie Murray, a wise and experienced actor and Peter Hudson as Aladdin. But Deryck did not mention the Dalek – perhaps it had been eliminated from the production.

The third celebrity, by contrast, had a reputation for cheeky charm. He came to promote a pop concert organised by the Huntingdon Chamber of Trade. Their idea of bringing in a top disc jockey worked: nearly 500 people turned up.

Many of the teenagers said they went to hear the groups, though others said they went to see the compere – out of curiosity. But he did not win over News reporter Elaine Rollings who travelled to Huntingdon to meet him in the flesh.

She reported: It is beyond my comprehension that Jimmy Savile should have won three top disc jockey awards. It is worrying that people can vote him above Pete Murray and Jack Jackson. In my view he is the biggest phoney in the record business

Yes, he is a millionaire, or very nearly. He owns four cars, including a pink Rolls, and seems to have three residences. But look how low he had to stoop to achieve all this. One can forgive the eccentric dress – but not that hair. "It is my smoke screen. I don't have it bleached. I have a fright a day", he said.

He is a patronising, screaming name-dropper – and a poor comedian, Elaine wrote. During and between his performances as a compere he chatted, using his usual patter and throwing in rude remarks, most of which did not bring the uproarious result he had hoped for. Some teenagers like him, but only about 20 waited to collect his autograph.

The sad thing is that teenagers could admire Savile the DJ in his zany clothes and be forced to listen to his 'kinky' comments. He is said to be an intelligent man who has lectured in nuclear physics at Salford Technical College. So why all the sham, Mr Saville? Leave out some of the phoney act and show your true character, Elaine urged.

Of all the extraordinary characters in Cambridgeshire that Christmas which was the scariest?

Pictures

Newspaper cuttings about Daleks, Savile and Cyril Fletcher

I will try and locate actual photographs from News files. If successful I'll send them through later, if not please go with these

Memories 16th December 2014 by Mike Petty

A recent survey has revealed that Cambridge streets are polluted by traffic fumes. But this is nothing new. Cambridge has had problems with motor vehicles for about as long as they have been around.

In May 1905 the News commented: It is doubtful if any town the size of Cambridge has as many motors and motor-cycles running about the streets as are to be seen in term time. All day long the 'pouf-pouf' of panting engines is to be heard in our streets.

There were problems: many residents were plagued by the clouds of dust raised by the motor cars. Dust-destroying measures usually involved evil-smelling solutions but in 1906 Cambridge experimented by pouring boiling tar over the surface of Hills Road and sprinkling it with granite chips.

In May 1907 the Cambridge Union Society discussed the regulation of motor traffic. They were in no doubt: the motor-car had come to stay and some day everyone would wonder how people could ever have done without it. The noise was objectionable and so was the smell. But there was no earthly reason there should not be a 'smell limit', one undergraduate claimed.

A Queens' man disagreed: as regard to smell from a motor car, had his friend never seen the boys of a village running out, cap in hand, after a car, to get the sweet, sweet smell? A considerable wrong would be done to a section of the community if the smell was abolished, he contended, to laughter.

But this was not a feeling universally shared. A correspondent to the News in October 1916 wrote: "Are the unfortunate dwellers in towns to be condemned in perpetuity to endure the fate of inhaling an atmosphere of noxious petrol fumes owing to the neglect of the so-called authorities? At any moment our narrow streets can be poisoned from end to end by dirty and callous motorists"

But it was fumes from buses that caused the greater concern.

Initially the arrival of motor buses in 1905 had been warmly welcomed: Two rival firms ran trial trips to demonstrate the suitability of this new form of traction and both were eminently successful. They created somewhat of a sensation in the streets and the way they threaded their way in and out of the busy traffic excited much admiration. The Thorneycroft's hill-climbing capacities were tested on Castle Hill and seemed to present no difficulties except a decrease in speed; the Straker-Squire passed with the greatest ease

But within months there were complaints: The buses were far too cumbrous, too top heavy and dominated the streets. Worse, they were very noisy and the stench from the oil was intolerable – in fact the streets were contaminated all day long with the disgusting effluvia, a correspondent complained in August 1905.

Giving evidence in September 1906 PC Wright said he was in Regent Street when he saw the Cambridge Motor Omnibus Company's bus discharging a great quantity of black smoke, it was filling the street as it went along and was the worst he had ever seen. The driver said they had just had a refill of oil but agreed to take it back to the garage, smoking all the way along Park Terrace. The company claimed there was nothing wrong but it was fined £2. Soon afterwards both bus companies were soon banned from the streets.

But in 1907 four new motor buses were introduced by J. Berry Walford. They were as noiseless as it was possible for motor buses to be, free from obnoxious odours, did not drop oil over the streets and were very easily handled, it was claimed.

Fumes might disperse in the open air, but it was another thing within the confines of the bus garage on Hills Road. In July 1933 two bus drivers were overcome by exhaust fumes after working with the starting gang. They were taken to hospital where one had to be revived from a state of unconsciousness through the use of a Novox resuscitation apparatus. A conductor was also slightly affected by fumes, but quickly recovered

That July, the News reported on a speech at a conference of the British Medical Association at which grave warnings were given of the danger of exhaust fumes from motor vehicles. The blood of traffic policemen had been found to be charged with carbon monoxide at a high concentration and that of motorists must be similarly polluted. Should the danger be intensified pedestrians would need to wear gas-masks in self-defence, delegates were told. Sooner or later authorities responsible for public health must take action, the speaker warned

Much has changed since then but obviously more still needs to be done before all Cambridge streets smell as sweetly as they did when hundreds of horses made their particular contributions to the aroma of the town.

Pictures

100.93 bus and car in Emmanuel Street 1929, today one of the most polluted areas in Cambridge

129.07 The bus garage in Hills Road c1913

143.04 Boys ran out to smell the fumes, an undergrad claimed

8835 and Market Hill bus – the two rival bus companies 1905

10081 early cars in Pembroke Street

8895 policeman and bus in Sidney Street, looking into Petty Cury

Memories 23rd December 2014 by Mike Petty

The first Christmas Day of the Great War is remembered for a few moments of peace amongst the carnage of war.

Rifleman A. Arnold of the 1st Battalion, Rifle Brigade, wrote home to his father in Swaffham Prior: “We had a fairly good Christmas under the circumstances. The Germans arranged it with us not to fire on Christmas Day and Boxing Day and they kept their word. We met them between the trenches and had chats. They appear to be very nice chaps. We had dinner – a pheasant and rabbit, vegetable, plum pudding, mince pies.

Miss M. Brown of 17 James Street, Cambridge, learned about it in a letter from a British soldier. He wrote: On Christmas Eve we started to sing carols and songs, and so did they. The Germans had put lighted candles on the top of their trenches – which looked very pretty across the white ground, for it was covered with frost. Then a German brought some cigars over, and we took them cigarettes and laughed and joked with one another, and had a jolly good time. I myself got some German money, five cigars and six names and addresses so I can prove I have been over to the German trenches. The trenches are only 50 yards away from ours, so we did not have far to go. This lasted all day and we were singing together, and even had our photos taken together

Here in Cambridge Christmas morning dawned cold and frosty and different. Many families were separated, not just by the fighting, but because of the fighters. For many homes had unexpected guests in the form of soldiers who had been billeted on them. The income they brought was welcome – nine pence per man per night just for providing a bed or a mattress on the floor and cooking their rations. But it meant people did not feel comfortable about leaving

their homes. It was their duty to provide hospitality for these lads who were away from their own families. So they shared their dinners and firesides.

However some troops were billeted in empty houses and they had to cope for themselves. Those based in Brookside were entertained to a Christmas tea at the Leys School – there'd not been time to arrange a dinner. However Mr G. Lambert of Sussex Street arranged a meal for 650 men at the Corn Exchange from which it was a short stroll to the Guildhall where a smoking concert had been arranged. The Mayor, W.L. Raynes, opened the proceedings with an organ solo. He welcomed the soldiers – coming from a manufacturing town they'd appreciate that in Cambridge the University corresponded to a big industry. Cambridge had done splendidly in providing officers for the army – and the heart of her industry had been taken away

More men would follow and many would not come back. At a short service for troops held in King's College Chapel on Christmas morning the preacher said so: Most of you are likely to come back from active service, but some will return no more. It may be you or the man next to you. Each of you should be prepared to die with a clear conscience. Do not leave a heritage of woe and shame to some poor weak member of the gentler sex, just because your own self-control failed you in the midst of temptation in Cambridge, they were urged.

Nearly 1,000 soldiers spent Christmas in wooden barrack huts in the muddy fields halfway to Cherry Hinton. They put up coloured paper chains, some streamers and Union Jacks to add a semblance of colour. But there was little in the way of festive fare, though a few got a turkey or roast beef thanks to the generosity of their officers. Afterwards the men amused themselves with impromptu entertainment in huts warmed by slow-combustion stoves. There were supposed to be athletic sports but the weather was so bad these were abandoned. Instead a boxing tournament was hastily arranged with – to add to the festive feeling – an exhibition of bayonet fighting.

While fighting may have paused on the battlefields, the casualties continued to come to Cambridge. On Christmas Eve a train loaded with 150 wounded men arrived at the station. Next morning another steamed in bringing 100, 99 of whom were stretcher cases. They were conveyed to the wooden military hospital in Burrell's Walk

There the wards were adorned with holly and mistletoe. Nurses ensured the wounded had festive fare with oranges and grape fruit from Jamaica which was washed down with mineral water courtesy of Barker and Sons. On Christmas morning each man received a gift from Princess Mary – an embossed box containing a dainty Christmas card together with tobacco, pipe and cigarettes. There were other cards from the King and Queen, the Vice Chancellor and Mayor

It was followed on Boxing Day by a present from Lady Waldstein of Newton Hall, wife of the Professor of Archaeology. It was a light-blue tin box printed with a view of King's and Clare Colleges. It would be a souvenir of their Christmas in Cambridge in 1914. Do you have one amongst your family mementoes?

Across the channel in the trenches, the fighting started again.

Pictures

First Eastern General Hospital where wounded were treated – choice of two
Cambs Regiment Christmas card

Silk Christmas card

Cherry Hinton barracks where men had to look after themselves

Kings and Clare, just across the river from the hospital – choice of two

Hostilities resumed after the truce – cartoon card
Wounded soldiers arriving at Cambridge station

Memories 30 December 2014 by Mike Petty

With sales mania rampant, television screens have shown customers fight for bargains. It was not like that in the past – at least not at Heyworths upper-class fashion shop on the corner of Sidney Street and Market Passage, Cambridge. It offered a fashion service to women of every age, claiming to clothe them from the ‘cradle to the grave’. In 1952 the firm fulfilled their ambition of also clothing ladies from head to foot with the opening of a new show department in the basement stocking Lotus and Delta shoes for both day and evening wear

Its sale was one of the highlights of the year for the store and attracted crowds, some of who queued all night. But the owner, Herbert Heyworth, couldn't bear the thought of crowds rushing in. Instead he insisted on admitting customers in an orderly fashion and giving them an assigned shop girl to serve them one at a time. The strict code of politeness and personal service was as important then as any other time, regardless of the large number of buyers still waiting outside to be served.

Those queuing were given a ticket which detailed what they wanted to buy and where it could be found in the store. Once the customer was in the store and had been assigned a shop girl, the same girl stayed with them until they'd got everything they wanted. Sometimes it would be as late as 3 p.m. before the queue had reduced to a manageable size and the last shoppers would be admitted all together in one batch

But there were other shops competing for their money in January 1952. The first arrival at Rose's Fashion Centre sale in Sussex Street was there at 5 a.m. and by the time the store opened there were about 100 people waiting, so many that only a few shoppers could be let in at a time. The biggest run was on heavily reduced taffeta dresses.

Joshua Taylor in Market Street reported people coming in from a radius of 50 miles with the first bargain hunter arriving at 4 a.m. to secure a handbag at one-third of its original price. Girls' double-breasted school coats were snapped up and there was a rush on children's felt hats. In the men's department ninety dozen socks were sold at pre-war prices whilst other popular items were gabardine trousers and sports jackets.

At Coad's in Sidney Street the main demand was for all-wool lumber jackets, though long-sleeve woollen jumpers were also snapped. It was a similar story at Messrs T. Tobin, of Mill Road who specialised in outsize clothes. There was a queue of over 60 people by opening time and all previous records were broken. This was down to country people who were now showing more interest in bargain hunting – and needed outsize clothes.

But business was not quite so brisk at Laurie & McConnal in Fitzroy Street: “There's just not the money about”, said Director A.E. Turner; “the sales are put on too soon after Christmas and before people have any money to spend on sale bargains”.

The names of the shops may be familiar to many Cambridge folk. But who recalls Ballard's on the corner of Petty Cury and Alexandra Street which opened in 1868.

On the Ground Floor one could buy straw hats, bonnets, ornaments, feathers – including those from, ostrich, swan or vultures. There was dress material from Paris, such as poplin, sultanas, taffetas alpacas and mohair. Other departments offered silks, plain and fancy, in a variety of shades and qualities, some originating from Japan. There were velvets from the Continent, black silks, ribbon in all the new shades and widths and lace in the form of imitation Valenciennes, new Brussels, Pointe and Maltese. The Hosiery department catered for ladies

and children, with drawers, vests and socks in every size, quality, material and make. There were gloves in all the new shades of every make, material, size and price while the 'Manchester & Heavy' department had the best makes of shirtings, white calicos, sheetings, flannels, blankets, quilts and counterpanes.

Gentlemen had a separate room with its own access from Alexandra Street All kinds of hose, half-hose, pantaloons, vests, shirts, collars, braces, belts, cricket caps, rugs, travelling trunks and umbrellas could be acquired at the lowest possible prices – for cash.

The first floor comprised one large showroom, three smaller showrooms, private sitting & fitting rooms and even a lavatory. The walls of the large room were covered with French moiré antique paper in panels depicting beautiful pictures of Swiss scenery. The brilliancy of the scene was completed by ten large glass chandeliers. Here the French Millinery department was under the direction of a French lady of experience in some of the best houses in Paris, who, with her staff of assistants, executed all orders with the greatest dispatch

Upstairs were three large workrooms capable of accommodating one hundred work-women with bedrooms for the lady assistants and servants while the attic floor housed a men's dormitory with twenty beds. All were well heated and ventilated. It was a model of its type.

But by 1880 Ballard's were finding it difficult to compete with competition from the new Co-operative Stores. The shops changed their name to the Alexandria Drapery Stores and slashed prices. They continued to trade until 1882 when major developments were planned for that part of Petty Cury. Now it has passed into history, largely forgotten, like many other Cambridge fashion stores.

Pictures

Heyworth sale advert for Jan 1965, they closed that November

Joshua Taylor queue 1987 – they closed 1991

Coad closure 1958 or Coad 'Our Advertisers' feature 1937

Petty Cury from Sidney Street c1970 showing Alexandra House, former home of Ballards

Memories 30 December 2014 by Mike Petty

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Memories 6th January 2015 by Mike Petty

Cyclists and pedestrians making their way into Cambridge from the west will know Garret Hostel Lane. It links Queen's Road with Trinity Lane and is the last of a number of such lanes that once linked the town centre with the main source of commerce, the River Cam. The others disappeared over the centuries with the construction of the colleges.

The lane once led to an island in the middle of the river. Garret Hostel Green had once been one of the Cambridge commons but was not much use for anybody, being often waterlogged and so infested with college students taking their exercise on it that no townsman dared graze his cattle on it anyway. Then in 1612 it had formed part of a land swap with Trinity College. The Corporation gave up Garret Hostel Green and a bit of ground alongside in exchange for College land in the town centre that was then leased out to their cook, Edward Parker. That bit of land now universally known as Parker's Piece.

Though Garret Hostel island has disappeared, a bridge remains. The current one is the latest in a line of bridges dating back for centuries, with one being swept away by floods in the 1520s. The most famous was the 'Mathematical Bridge' erected in 1768 to a design by the eminent architect James Essex. It survived until July 1810 when the Cambridge Chronicle reported: "In the evening of Thursday the 2nd of July, the lofty wooden bridge over the Cam ... frequently called the Mathematical Bridge, broke down. It had been in a decayed state for a considerable time, and boards had been put up several days previous to its falling in, to prevent persons going over"

The same paper also contained proposals for a new cast-iron bridge at Silver Street. This would be almost alongside another Essex bridge, a wooden structure he had erected at Queens' College some 20 years previously. This was rebuilt in 1902 and is now known as the 'Mathematical Bridge'.

Back at Garret Hostel Lane in 1835 tenders were sought for a similar cast-iron bridge. The contract was awarded to the Butterley Iron Company and the work undertaken by Finch's iron foundry. The result was a fine bridge in the Gothic style which featured on as many postcard views as some of its older college neighbours.

But by 1959 settlement had caused the cast iron to fracture, making a replacement essential. Designs were approved in January 1960 for a new structure designed to be an honest example of twentieth century craftsmanship. It was exceptionally light for its 80 foot span but nevertheless strong and rigid. It was also very steep. Soon fit young undergraduates were soaring over it on their bicycles. But others were puffing and panting. A News reporter watched as a lady pushed her bicycle, its basket loaded with laundry, up the high approach ramp. A gentleman followed, pulling himself up the slope with the help of the elegant bronze balustrade.

Usually the wheezing of cyclists and the swish of bicycle wheels are the only sounds to compete with the chatter of visitors and the commentary of the guides in chauffeur-poled punts passing beneath.

But recently it has been joined by that of construction vehicles bringing materials for the renovation of Trinity College's New Court. One of the complications of having buildings in such a world-famous location is the difficulty of gaining access when essential repairs are needed or new work added. Thus in the autumn of 1838 blocks of stone destined for the new University Library, were unloaded by barge and transported down Garret Hostel Lane to the site in Senate House Passage

For hundreds of years the river, now the preserve of pleasure craft, was a principal commercial artery for Cambridge. Barges towed by horses waded up the centre of the Cam to deliver black coal to a yard in Silver Street before crossing Mill Pool to load up with sacks of

white flour at the great Kings and Bishops Watermills. They also delivered supplies to the colleges along its banks.

It was a scene recalled on New Years Day when a number of narrow boats voyaged up and down the Cam to keep alive the rites of navigation. It was reported to be a tradition that has been going on for some years. But does anybody know more about it.

Pictures

Photo from News 2nd Jan 20125 showing narrow boats approaching Clare College Bridge, taken from Garret Hostel bridge by Geoff Robinson Photography

Print from 1814 showing a similar scene – this time of horse-drawn barges that have just passed under Clare College Bridge

Barges approaching St John's College Bridge 1814 in almost the same formation as at Clare in 2015

Garret Hostel 'Mathematical Bridge' c1810

Garret Hostel Bridge – present bridge

Trinity College Wren Library and barge 1800

Photo from News Jan 2 2015 showing narrow boat with Trinity College Wren Library behind by Geoff Robinson Photography

ello Mike,

I really enjoyed reading your piece about the Cam in 6 Jan edition.

In response to your question about keeping alive the right of navigation on the Backs - we are the navigation authority and as far as I know the right to navigate there is not under threat.

It is possible to navigate the Backs in a powered craft at any time between October and March with permission from myself. This year I've had about half a dozen requests - all of which are of course granted - it is great to see boats making full use of the River in this quieter time of year.

Part of our aim as an organisation is to protect and improve the River Cam, and maintaining traditions like the New Year's Day trip down the Backs is as essential part of that.

Kind regards,

Jed

Jed Ramsay MCIWEM C.WEM

River Manager

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Memories 13th January 2015 by Mike Petty

In January 1915 the armed soldier in his sentry box guarding Ely railway bridge found himself overwhelmed by fenland's oldest foe: flood. He was not alone: days earlier troops based in the boathouses on Cambridge's Midsummer Common had been marooned when the Cam burst its banks

Along the track residents of Babylon, across the Ouse from the Cutter Inn, could take a boat virtually to their front doors. The two cottages near the Cresswells railway bridge were waterlogged, the towpath, meadows and holts submerged, and the orchards in Willow Walk, the sewage tank and rod-peeling sheds were all surrounded by water.

Things were worse out in the fens themselves. At Isleham men watched as the waters of the Lark rose to the very top of the river bank. It was the same at Prickwillow where there was considerable anxiety as to the strength of the bank of the River Lark to resist the continuous pressure of water. When a crack suddenly appeared steps were taken without delay; a number of gaulters were called in to give it an extra layer of the sticky mud. The danger passed.

Such work could not save the Little Ouse between Feltwell and Hockwold. The river had been running abnormally high before about 60 yards of the bank collapsed with a roar that could be heard miles away, and innumerable tons of water passed into the fen carrying huge blocks of clay, each weighing from a ton to three tons for a distance of a quarter of a mile. Commissioners accompanied by labourers rushed to the site with a number of loaded lighters. Thousands of sacks of gault were sunk into the 50-yard gap and pile-driving machinery brought in but the water still rushed through.

Soon twenty four miles were inundated up to eight feet deep and the few residents fled to higher ground. Nor could they pray for relief: St Peter's church in Feltwell was engulfed by flood water and the furniture of St Peter's Mission Church in Methwold was floating about inside the building,

The stock for the most part had been removed as a precautionary measure but in one field a large number of horses were overtaken by the onrush of water. Half were rescued with difficulty while the rest rushed to some high land, which became an island. Late on Monday they were still there, the many attempts to rescue them not succeeding.

The damage to crops was considerable. When the floods came neighbouring farmers sent their teams to help and for a while the scenes of harvest time were reproduced. Women and boys as well as men carted potatoes, hay and corn to the higher ground of Southery village. Potatoes and mangolds were stored in new clamps or ridges covered with straw and a little earth, and the hay and corn stacked and thatched.

Reporters headed along the A10 past Littleport – itself partially submerged - to the hospitable Ship Inn at Brandon Creek where the Great and Little Ouse combine. It was a strange sight they beheld.

On the south side of the Little Ouse farmers were preparing their fields in the usual way. On the north was an inland sea dotted with isolated houses and floating corn stacks. The downstairs rooms of some of the dwellings were completely submerged and at one farm house it looked as though the water would soon be lapping the bedroom window. Now and again a rowing boat put out to one of the farmsteads standing derelict and brought back chairs, bedding, clothing and anything else that could be saved from the upper rooms.

But it was not a total disaster: the salvage of fences, gates and other floating wreckage became a regular business; there were pheasants among the flotsam and rabbits and hares were cheap for a day or two after the inundation.

And where the road from Southery to Feltwell dipped into the flood an old man was busy spearing mangolds as they floated on the lapping water. He handled the spear – a fork with a 10ft handle – with the dexterity acquired by a week's steady practice, and he pointed with pride to the growing pile of red and yellow roots, as large as footballs, on a wheelbarrow at the water's edge. 'Ten shillings a ton, they're worth ... and no one can stop me. You can't identify a mangold', he chuckled.

For weeks the tall smoking chimneys of the fen drainage engines going at high pressure testified to the battle to drive out the water. But despite their best efforts it would be September or October before it was possible for farmers to start back on their land and grow once more the food that was essential to maintain a country fighting another enemy – the Germans.

At any other time it would have been a National Disaster and appeals would have been launched for those who lost everything. But there was a war on and there were far more important things for politicians to worry about than just another flood in the fens.

Pictures

Ship Inn at Brandon Creek where reporters gathered [NB not taken in 1915]

The burst bank near Hockwold

Soldiers in a flooded boathouse on Midsummer Common

Floods at Littleport 1915

Cottages at Babylon, Ely – residents could take a boat to their door

Memories, 20 January 2015 by Mike Petty

Constable Frederick William Charter joined Cambridgeshire Constabulary in 1934 and served short periods at a number of villages including Melbourn, Shelford, Fulbourn, Bourn, Stetchworth, Histon & Willingham. It was there that he met and married a local girl, Ivy Munns, in 1938. Together they moved into to a small terrace Police House at Stetchworth Toll, close to Newmarket racecourse and what was then an active wartime airfield. Here PC Charter had a busy time during the blackout with frequent accidents, some fatal, at the dangerous divide of the London and Cambridge Roads close to their cottage.

They were a team with Ivy, a trained Pitman Shorthand and Typist, kept busy writing up his reports and taking telephone messages. Each Tuesday market day she would go shopping at Newmarket with friends. One week she did not go as she was visiting her family in Willingham. It was that day a German bomber dropped high explosives and incendiary bombs on Newmarket High Street, killing three of her friends and badly injuring a neighbour.

From Stetchworth they moved to Histon where Fred was promoted to Sector Sergeant and occupied a villa opposite the doctor in Station Road. There he was kept busy dealing with German incendiary bombs and fire drills. By now he had his own Morris Eight in which he carried out his police duties.

Then it was off to the Police Station and Magistrates' Court in Symonds Lane, Linton. Their new home lacked running water but there was always company. For the station included two cells and it was Ivy's job to cook food for any prisoners. They ate the same meals as the family with vegetables cultivated by Fred, a keen gardener who won the Cambridgeshire Constabulary Horticultural Show in 1955.

In 1957 the family moved to a newly-built Police Station and domestic quarters at Green Hill on the Cambridge Road where Fred completed his duties in 1965.

At his retirement he reminisced how the everyday life of a policeman in a rural area in his time focussed around domestic arguments, balls which were continually thrown over the garden wall, litter, riding on the footpath, and dogs. All required tactful yet firm day-to-day administration as they continue to do today

But there were highlights: one Christmas he encountered a wild man of the woods. "His hair was unkempt and enormously long and he had been living outdoors on cats. He would capture the animals, skin them and cook them on a camp fire. We took him in. I believe he had some sort of domestic trouble. Like many others; I think he was glad to be inside for Christmas."

Then there was the case which made headlines. The rector of Duxford became aware of a different light from the porch and noticed that half the lead was missing. Fortunately somebody had noted the registration number of a car seen standing near the church and Fred tracked down the vehicle. Then he spent a long time collecting tiny samples of lead carbonate oxide from its interior. These were taken to Scotland Yard where experts compared them with similar material from outside St Peter's Church. It was this forensic evidence – in 1952 – that lead to the conviction of two men, and brought him one of several commendations.

But it was another incident from 1952 that prompted memories last week. It related to a retired Linton coachbuilder who lived alone in the High Street. His shop looked deserted and gaunt, the front door had not been opened for years and the windows were so dirty they might have been made of opaque glass. After he collapsed and was taken to Linton Hospital neighbours investigated his dingy living room. Inside they found a barrel that was cracked and full of woodworm. It contained silver coins, six hundredweight of them. In another box were golden sovereigns and bank notes, some no longer legal tender, total value £4,000. One

of Fred's former constables remembered the event of all those years ago and was able to give his own recollections of counting the hoard.

He'd gathered, along with members of the family, to witness the planting of a tree in Sergeant Charter's memory as part of a new development of homes for local people built by the Cambridge Hundred Houses Society on the site of the old police houses.

While the photographer was recording the occasion for posterity the air was filled with a shrill sound that sent shivers down the spine of Fred's daughter, Judy Young. It was not that of a police patrol car speeding to an incident that Fred would have covered on his cycle. It was a pheasant and it freaked her out.

Pheasants had been part of her childhood: often they featured in cases where hungry men had helped themselves to a brace or two to feed their families. And they were a regular part of the Charter diet too. She recalls seeing the birds hanging in the kitchen of the police house and how her off-duty dad would pick them up and chase her mother around the room with them, laughing happily – it had been part of their family's private way of life.

Now it was, she felt, as if Fred was there once more, long after he'd finally taken off his uniform and moved out of the police house. For years his cheery face had remained familiar in the village streets, respected by those he had served from babyhood to adult life.

Now these long years service to the community around Linton have again been appreciated

Pictures

PC Charter in his early days

Police Horticultural Society certificate

Newmarket High Street showing bomb damage that might have killed his wife

Stetchworth Toll, scene of many accidents

A car at Linton in 1954

A cutting from the family's album recording one of Fred's cases

Colin Moule

From Colin Moule

Hello Mike. I'm glad you are as active as ever.

I was chuffed to bits to read last week's Memories of Sgt Charter. Where did you pick up the information?

I have fond personal memories of Sgt Charter when, as a junior reporter for the *Cambridge Daily News* in the 1950s, I regularly visited Linton police station to cover the next-door court. At one stage I had no transport of my own, but in those relaxed and more informal days, was able to get a lift with the clerk of court!

Sgt Charter and his efficient constable would greet us with cups of cocoa before the court proceedings began.

Over the time I knew him Sgt Charter became a good friend. He was a wonderful character and was respected throughout the Linton area by everyone - including the criminal element!

Best of all he would often telephone me at the *News* with interesting stories he had picked up - a journalist's dream . . .

One incident that still tickles me concerns the Press table in the courtroom right next to a massive coal stove. Every time I went to the court I used to put a small nick in the edge of the table with my penknife to record my visits.

One day, with a twinkle in his eye, Sgt Charter said: "I haven't missed what you're doing. One day I'm going to charge you with criminal damage!"

Best regards

Dear Mike

This was my original e-mail to you re Fred Charter. Although my list of messages sent registered as being sent I think I may have made a mistake in your correct address.

Dear Mike,

I was most interested in your article on 'Pc Fred Charter (Cambridge News January 20 2015) kindly sent to me by a friend in Cambridge.

From 1953 until 1962 I was a 'Bobby' at Sawston until posted to Balsham, where I remained until 1966 before emigrating to Australia. Sergeant Fred, as he then was, was my Sergeant at Linton, cruising towards retirement. As you have mentioned Fred was a very keen gardener. Also, at that time, I was keen cartoonist and dabbler in indian ink. (probably when I should have been studying for my law exams) It so happens that I drew the certificate for Fred when he won the Cambs Constabulary Horticultural Prize in 1955.....so I am PUBLISHED AT LAST!. Little did I know that he was probably the Pc at Bourn where I first saw the light of day.

Looking back to my days at Sawston, it may well be that I am the sole surviving member of the Police Force in that area which also covered Abington, Duxford, Ickleton and Whittlesford. The Sergeant there was Ted Sussum, an impressive and fair minded officer who should have gone much higher in rank and was a brilliant cricketer for the Force in his day. I do not know the reason he became stuck as a Sergeant but it was probably Police politics. I feel he would be the source of an interesting article. He and Mrs Sussum are now deceased but I know they had a son Graham who probably lives in the Cambridge district.

Finally Stetchworth Toll. When I was on duty at the Newmarket July Racecourse I dreaded doing point duty at that spot.....it was downright dangerous. One driver ran over my foot in his Mini. Fortunately I was wearing heavy duty 'beetle crushers' so got away with only bruising. Thank you Mike for that article.....took me back a long way.

Gordon Hunt, ex Pc 64 at bop1933@hotmail.com...now living in Adelaide, South Australia.

KInd Regards...Gordon.

gordon hunt

gordon hunt's profile photo

bop1933@hotmail.com

Memories 27 January 2015 by Mike Petty

Many people find great enjoyment in digging into the history of their locality. Some pore over ancient documents, decipher deeds, or transcribe wills. Others literally dig it up by taking part in archaeological excavations. But many more just enjoy reading what others have written.

Les and Joyce Price have made their home in Fowlmere since 1978. They spent many hours helping out at the RSPB Nature Reserve established on the site of former watercress beds. After retiring from the University Department of Biochemistry in 1990 Les started to compile a nature notebook. But Les does not do things by halves – by the end of 2012 the notebook had grown to 1,120 pages with photos, sketches and videos showing the myriad of plants and birds which make their home in this largely-unknown wildfowl sanctuary. Then in 2013 he decided to compile a pictorial record – a magnificent 200-page volume of colour photographs, illustrations and detailed observations.

But Fowlmere is much more than its wildlife. There have been people living there for centuries with a moated site that dates back to Saxon times, now disappearing beneath undergrowth. Then there's the tunnel.

Lots of villages have stories of mysterious underground passages, but Fowlmere really does have one. Some say it was dug by monks so they could have illicit intercourse with nuns living across the road, or that it dates to the time of Henry VIII when priests were persecuted. Certainly there was a priest's hole above the bar of the Chequers Inn.

Les believes it dates back to the Civil War when the Rector, John Morden was ejected from his living for scandalous practices – he profaned the Sabbath by playing bowls and three of his maidservants became pregnant. A High Church Royalist, Morden must have felt under threat for some time and decided to construct an underground passageway from his farmstead to the Old Manor House from which he could escape across the fields through a side bolt hole.

In 1991 Les and Joyce were given the opportunity to investigate the tunnel, which is not open to the public.

Les recalls: Our purpose was to make a video recording, including names scratched and written on the chalk wall, so we illuminated the pitch-dark tunnel walls with powerful torches. We entered through the doorway in the cellar of the Old Manor House, taking care not to collide with the metal brackets and old electrical insulators on the left hand side of the tunnel. They had been installed 1922 when an electrical generator in Jackson's Stores also supplied electricity to the Victorian Manor House. We soon had to crouch right down and almost crawl due to the restricted height as the tunnel sloped downwards. When the tunnel reached the road, we were, however, able to stand upright and walk along it with ease. We examined the niches and postholes along the edge of the tunnel, and the various names recorded the chalk: 'H. Ison 1891' - probably done by Harry Ison who was a grocery boy in Jackson's stores at this time. Other names included 'C. Kenzie June 28 1897', 'W Jackson Aug 19 1891' and 'C.E. Barnes 1933'. The workers who had installed the electric cables through the tunnel had also left their mark as well. - 'J Hill and W Haynes laid these wires Aug 2nd 1922 and Oh What a Job R.I.P'

The passage was not damp at all - very dry, and the air was fresh. It was, however, very spooky in the darkness with our torches turned off, and you could hear the sound of cars on the road travelling over the tunnel. At our exit point, we climbed out through an open trap door, with strong bolts, into a basement room in a cottage. Previously this had been a cellar with an access door to the tunnel. We speculated on possible uses for the large niches, which

might have been used as altars in underground religious ceremonies, for candle illumination, as seats in secret meetings, or even as a hiding place so that you could spring out and attack anyone coming through the tunnel.

Some believe the tunnel was at one time Y shaped with one arm going off to the cellar of the Swan. Certainly Les was told by one elderly resident that as a boy he had been told 'you could go down the tunnel and come up through a trap door and surprise people in the bar'

Les has compiled a magnificent 320-page history with its wealth of colour photographs which record Fowlmere's three aerodromes – the first dating back to the Great War, the way the village has changed (for better or worse), the listed buildings and affordable homes that make up the community of today. It is sold in support of the Recreation Ground and Village Hall for £25 and most copies have been snapped up. Contact Les Price on 01763 208678 for details

Pictures

Cover of the book

Interior of tunnel showing electrical insulators and some of the names

The Chequers 1901 – had a priest's hole

Old Manor House 1920s – the tunnel runs beneath the road

Watercress beds, now the RSPB nature reserve

Street scene looking towards Shepreth

Memories 3rd February 2015 by Mike Petty

The news of the closure of the American bases at Lakenheath, Alconbury and Molesworth has caused concern in local communities who have become used to their presence. There may be less queuing in Mildenhall shops where the sight of a female warrior with her pistol on her belt can be a surprise to casual visitors. As many service families have chosen to make their homes off the base, their absence from the rental market will be of concern to landlords and local schools will be quieter places without their American accents.

But communities have always had to cope with the arrival and departure of fighting men. In Ely in Victorian times the Cambridgeshire Militia were a regular and welcome sight, as a new history records. The recruits were mostly agricultural labourers who assembled each year for a month's training. Sometimes there were as many as 900 together with their officers, men from the local gentry, who supplemented the permanent resident staff of an Adjutant, Quarter Master and about a dozen sergeants.

Their barracks were in Silver Street, their parade ground the present Barton Road Car Park. There was a hospital fitted up with water, kitchens and lavatories. Another water closet was constructed for the use of the commissioned officers when on parade. The men had other arrangements.

The Militia had been revived at the time of the Crimean war, having been stood down following the defeat of Napoleon. The two men sent to rekindle a military presence in 1852 found the old big drum, but needed to hire somebody to carry it. There were no straps so it had to be tied to the man's back with rope, the drummer following behind him. They also found an old flute and paid for a player. The small group set off to tour the town, making plenty of noise if not much music and attracting many followers. But as they faced the steep ascent of Fore Hill the two-man band came to a complete stop, fully worn out. Only after a rest could they finally reach the Market Place.

Soon numbers of recruits flocked to the colour and a proper band could be formed. With the band came music, not just for marching but for dancing and concerts, adding greatly to the social life of the city. The men needed feeding and tradesmen tendered for the contracts to supply bread and meat. For many of the temporary soldiers the food was a feast compared to their normal work-day fare.

The sight of so many men in uniform, drilling and parading stirred the hearts of many young ladies. The sound of the musket fire as they practiced drifted across the quiet fenland fields. And then there were the sports days with donkeys ridden by officers entertaining the crowds.

But things cannot go unchanged; in 1881 a nationwide reorganisation of Militias saw them become part of the Suffolk Regiment and there were fears everything would move to Bury St Edmunds. So much money had by now been spent on the Ely depot that the War Office was lobbied to retain the local barracks.

The annual training continued, though in 1906 it took place at Great Yarmouth. Ely people were sad to see them go, but the men themselves enjoyed their holiday by the seaside and the railway company offered cheap tickets so wives and sweethearts could travel to watch the annual sports on the North Denes.

But in 1907 came news that the 4th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment – the former Cambridgeshire Militia – were no longer required. The announcement caused protest meetings, not least because £200 had just been spent on the drains at the Barracks. MPs wrote to the Prime Minister but to no avail. The King sent a letter of appreciation and thanks for past service and the Army Council issued an illuminated certificate to each man.

The disbandment would have a devastating effect: Hundreds of farm labourers looked upon the training as their annual holiday, the Christmas bounty meant they could afford to celebrate and many relied on the boots and army-supplied underclothes to see them through the rest of that year. There would be financial loss to the householders who provided billets for the men, to the businesses supplying bread and meat. Schools would miss the children of the permanent staff who would no longer be attending, even the football club would be hit by the departure of the soldiers who'd been such a mainstay of the team. There'd be no more recruiting, and the lovely scenes of springtime, the daily marches of the soldiers, the church parades and the stirring music in the streets would be no more.

The laying-up of the colours took place in the Cathedral in March 1908. It was a final grand occasion before the Militia marched out of the West Door for the last time and passed into history.

As they did so they looked towards the canon on the green, a reminder of the Crimean war that had prompted their formation. Members of the Volunteers had accompanied it in its journey from the station in 1860, deputising for the Ely Rifle Corps whose new uniforms were not ready in time. Today few remember its significance, and fewer still the Militia who were once so important a part of Ely's life.

Tales of the Militia in Ely by Christine Pownall, published by the Ely Society ISBN 978-0-903616-33-1 at £5.50

Pictures

Presentation of the colours to the Militia 1854

The canon on Palace Green Ely – souvenir of the Crimean war

Militia Band

Militia on their parade ground, now Barton Road car park

Houses built for the Militia sergeants, Silver St Ely

Memories 2015 02 10 by Mike Petty

Last Saturday evening I was invited to join members of the Cambridge Classic Car Club at a gala dinner to celebrate the 20th anniversary of their formation in 1995.

We were chauffeured to the hotel in the leather luxury of a powerful Rover 8, still effortlessly eating up the miles decades after its construction. We mingled and chatted to motoring enthusiasts waxing lyrical about their various makes and marques and synpathised about a Daimler's loose core-plug in the block (whatever that is). For like nearly half those present, to me motor cars are merely a way of getting from place to place.

After the meal it was far too late for some erudite talk to end the evening, so instead guests helped identify of various of the vehicles photographs parked in Petty Cury or covered with snow on New Street car park in the years when such now-cherished classics were almost brand new.

Reading through the files of the News for my Looking Back articles of 50 years ago I frequently come across articles by Motoring Correspondent, Rodney Tibbs, in which he reviewed the latest output of the Hillman, Sunbeam or MG factories.

Even then people were reminiscing about their motoring memories. One such, who Rodney interviewed in January 1965, was 86-year-old Bertie Baker of Victoria Road, Cambridge who would have felt at home amongst his fellow enthusiasts at the Club dinner.

Bertie had bought his Austin Seven second-hand 30 years earlier and it still purred like a sewing machine after a few seconds sustenance on the choke

He'd been born at Comberton and was originally apprenticed into the drapery business; he soon switched to carpentry and had worked for Marshall's for 25 years. It was that garage who carried out the maintenance work which ensured the old lady had no difficulty passing its 10-year test.

But ALU 474 was not his first Austin Seven; they'd been two others which together had taken him all over the country, only stopping on one occasion because of some 'temporary indigestion in the gearbox'. (I'm sure Bertie knew the technical reason)

The Seven was modest in its needs requiring very little oil and a modicum of petrol, returning 45 miles to the gallon and quite able to hold its own against the monsters of the early 1960s.

But it was an earlier Cambridgeshire carpenter that attracted the attention of the national motoring press 108 years ago. 'Autocar' for 17th August 1907 carried pictures of a home-made two-seater motor car that had been build entirely by its owner, Mr E. Everitt, a cabinet maker in the village of Wilburton.

The frame was of ash, the wheels slightly stronger than those of an ordinary bicycle, having done service on an old tandem bike. The band brakes on the differential drums were worked by a foot lever and the petrol tank was an ordinary two-gallon tin

For the technical amongst its readers, the magazine explained that the differential made use of the two wheels of a lawn mowing machine fixed at each end of the back axle. The back pulley was wooden and came off an old drum of a thrashing machine, the front pulley was also wooden. The car was belt driven using a belt taken from a trashing machine and was tightened or slackened by means of a hanging pulley operated by a side lever which had formerly belonged to a reaping machine.

The tiller steering device was most original, the front weight of car being supported by a single wheel in a part of the frame, pivoted in front, and gliding in a greased wooden groove behind.

The starting handle was a bicycle crank and the engine, a 3 ½ hp Brown, was air-cooled with the help of a wooden fan driven by a leather bootlace. It and the carburettor were the only items Everitt had purchased..

The reporter, F. Barker-Starkey, said he had seen the car with two people up climb a gradient on which many four-seated cars were obliged to change down. For at course Wilburton hill is famous throughout the fens and if you or your car do have to pause at the top the magnificent panoramic view from its crest makes the time well spent.

To discover more about the Cambridge Classic Car Club and its activities visit their website - www.cdccc.uk

Memories 17 February 2015 by Mike Petty

It is always fascinating to browse through volumes of cuttings carefully clipped by people in the past. You get an insight into the range of papers they were reading, the ways those papers presented the news and the particular topics that interested the person who compiled the scrapbook.

Recently I have been privileged to peruse two volumes compiled by members of the Martin family of Littleport who for generations have farmed the fens and played their part in the unceasing battles to ensure the good agricultural land remains dry, whatever nature can throw at it.

Sometimes that battle is lost and these albums reflect the consequences. Most of the fading snippets relate to the great floods of 1937 and 1947. But there are a few others that reflect the events in between.

Of these the one that particularly caught my eye was published in the Sunday Express on 30th July 1944, as the Second World War raged. It was written by Eric Bennett from Willow Hall in the Isle of Ely, an isolated farm in the fens between Thorney and Whittlesey. It was an unlikely place for a reporter to journey to in the days of petrol rationing.

But, if Eric is right, Willow Farm might have been on the front line of a German attack on England. He described the scene:

The large drawing room at Willow Hall Farm is pleasantly furnished. From its windows one looks across the lawn and the pergola of Dorothy Perkins roses to the dark line of trees, which is Gores Spinney.

Willow Hall Farm is part of a settlement of four farms and fifteen cottages, three miles from the nearest village. A stone-built T-shaped building it has twelve rooms and is one of few screened by trees. The land to the east of the farm is a 250-acre tract without a dyke, hedge or fence, whilst all the other farms have deep dykes cutting through their fields.

It would make an ideal landing ground for the German invaders. They could then capture the pillboxes built facing the other way, towards the anticipated enemy advance. Then, once they'd seized the Dog in a Doublet sluice they could have maintained deep water in the river sufficient for landing barges coming from the Wash as they launched an attack on Peterborough. Once they had control of its railway stations the Germans would have taken the first step in cutting off London from the industrial north.

Their advance would have been opposed by the 100 or so men, women and children on the farms, backed up by Thorney Home Guard. Their second-in-command, Captain J.W.E. Jackson local told Eric "In 1940 we had here 60 men to protect an area of more than 20 square miles. Our arms were 40 rifles with ten rounds of ammunition to a rifle. On top of that we had some pretty fearful homemade Molotov cocktails.

"Our defence plan was to hold road blocks in Thorney village with the object of denying the main, Peterborough, road to the enemy. One block was so badly sited that enemy armoured vehicles could by-pass it without hindrance. And the road towards Willow Hall was protected by nothing more than a few strands of Dannert wire.

To the south Major I. Burgess was commander of the Whittlesey Home Guard company who would have had the task of harassing the south flank of the German headquarters. He reminded Eric "This is where Hereward the Wake held out against William the Conqueror.

The fen man is used to fighting without natural cover – so he goes in with the bayonet. That’s the way he likes it – hand to hand”

Perhaps that was the reason the Germans plans for the invasion of England, discovered in an underground stronghold near Cherbourg, came to nothing.

But do you have more details of this or other wartime secrets amongst your own family papers.

Pictures

Thorney Abbey – their Home Guard numbered 60 men with 40 rifles

Whittlesey – Home Guard evoked the memory of Hereward

The Sunday Express article

Pill Box near the Dog and Doublet sluice, it faced the wrong way

A German admiral – the troops would have come in through the Wash and along the river to attack Peterborough

A Home Guard Patrol – ready to face the invaders

Memories 24 February 2015

Whilst compiling my 'Looking Back' articles for February 1915 I came across a story that caught my eye

A Lt Chesterford farmer claimed that sparks from a passing Foden steam lorry had set fire to the thatched roof of his cow house. But when the matter came to court an expert claimed this type of engine never emitted sparks under any circumstances and they were so safe they were even used in arsenals. The more likely cause was a spark from a Great Eastern Railway engine.

The fire had taken place the previous April when eleven houses had been gutted and ten families, numbering 43 persons, rendered homeless. The blaze had started at a stack at Bordeaux Farm before wind carried burning straw on to the roofs of three thatched cottages which were razed to the ground. Other balls of fire fell on roofs of houses up the street and those which were thatched fell easy prey to the flames. The Crown Inn and Bushel and Strike beerhouse were gutted. When the smoke cleared the village presented a strange spectacle for nothing remained but the chimney stacks. The paper even carried a photograph – a relatively new development at that time

Reporters looked back through their files to reflect that the fire at Lt Chesterford practically repeated the disaster that occurred at Swavesey in 1913. In these days of slated and tiled roofs, fires of this magnitude were comparatively rare but in the 'good old days' it was not uncommon for a dozen cottages to be destroyed in a single outbreak. Only that week a public house and two cottages had been burned down at Newport. Villages like Chesterford have been largely left alone by the modern builder and were still open to the danger of annihilation, they reflected, adding 'Soon perhaps the thatched cottages will have disappeared altogether save for isolated specimens regarded as curiosities'.

Twenty years later in November 1934 fire broke out at the White House in the adjacent village of Great Chesterford after a chauffeur had started a Sunbeam car which back-fired and enveloped the vehicle in flames. These spread to the corrugated-iron garage which was destroyed. Firemen obtained water from a large pond near the house. There were goldfish in the pond but an attachment on the hose prevented them from being sucked through the pipe

But in June 1938 the blame for a blaze was again being placed on a Foden wagon. This time firemen were called to the main road between Littlebury and Little Chesterford where they found a fairground wagon ablaze. The vehicle, owned by Mr J.H. Manning of Bedford, carried a Jollity Farm and was on its way to Coton. It was completely destroyed.

The in March 1962 an express freight train broke in two as it was passing through Audley End station. The two halves travelled about four miles downhill towards Cambridge and collided on the bridge outside Gt Chesterford station. A tanker wagon carrying 4,000 gallons of diesel oil ruptured causing the oil to spray out over the adjoining fields and seep into a stream. It did not ignite.

But the biggest story never made the front pages due to war-time censorship.

For it was on 30th May 1944 that violent explosions rocked the district, smashing windows at Saffron Walden and leaving the High Street stores boarded up for more than a year since plate glass was so scarce. An anti-aircraft shell dump near Rectory Farm, Little Chesterford, had exploded.

Brief details had emerged in March 1961 when local farmer Fordham, told the News he'd been finding shells on his land ever since. "I must have found about 100 shells and usually am

able to deal with them myself". But then while clearing some undergrowth he discovered a 3.7 shell which seemed to be live as it was complete with fuse and detonator. This time he decided to call the police to take the bomb away

Then in November 1978 the army returned to the scene to clear the debris of the explosion. It prompted Leonard Crickmore of Saffron Walden to recall how he'd been a member of the National Fire Service who had rushed to the scene at the time. "There were landmines bowling down the road at us and a shell dropped on the water carrier and blew it up. A box of ammunition dropped amongst us and then three haystacks were alight. There were shells hitting trees like darts and splitting them in two".

Those nearest to the blast were residents of the Jewish Home and Hospital for Incurables who had been evacuated from Tottenham to Little Chesterford Park in 1939. The patients were wealthy and had beautiful linen sheets and warm blankets on their beds. But as the explosions continued they were carried on their mattresses outside, as far away from the dump as possible though still fragments of red-hot metal landed nearby and there was the ever-present fear that gas shells would also explode.

It was, of course, all kept very quiet at the time, though the story was subsequently told by Janet Clark in 'Disaster at the Park', published in 1994 and still available from the Recorders of Uttlesford History website - <http://www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/>

pictures

There are images on the Chesterford website -
<http://www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/litchesterford/littlechesterfordimages.html>

I've copied and attached some, they may not be good enough

I've copied newspaper reports of some of the incidents

together with a Foden steam wagon (no guarantee it's the particular type involved in either event)

There will be 1960s pictures of Lt Chesterford in the News Library

Memories 3rd March 2015 by Mike Petty

Soham is 'The last place God made but forgot to finish', claimed residents 50 years ago when in March 1965 the News ran a major feature on the town that is a village

It was then an active community with its annual Whit Monday carnival while the Grammar School continued to despatch its students to a variety of universities both in this country and abroad. Both are now but history.

There had been a steady increase in housing including the new development at West Drive Crescent which comprised 'system-built' two-bedroomed timber bungalows for old people that could be completed in ten weeks, considerably quicker than traditional methods

With its busy shopping centre and brighter shops, Soham was attracting motorists but needed somewhere to put their cars. Meanwhile traffic wound its way past the church – a by-pass was being planned but that would still be some years off.

It was a predominately agricultural community but many of its 5,500 inhabitants who worked in light industry were collected by the firms' workers' coaches each day. The existing Soham industry was thriving, ranging from flour milling and bodywork to egg packing and light industrial machinery construction.

But there was a need for more. Planning permission had already been obtained for a six-acre site in Fordham Road, but industrialists were not waiting to come – they would have to be persuaded. Following much negotiation one firm had agreed to establish some light industry. They would have employed about 250 people initially, increasing to 1,000 within a year. But instead they went to Newmarket where land prices were less than a third of those at Soham.

Over five percent of the parish acreage was made up of common and charitable lands. But the traditional rights of grazing were dwindling and that land was then slowly slipping from usefulness before the Parish Council's eyes. Perhaps this should be allocated to more light industry, they were pondering.

But how did Soham get all those commons, who could use them and for what?

This is one of the topics addressed in a major new history by William Franklin who has delved into an immense number of ancient documents. He records the disturbances of 1632 which followed an attempt to inclose lands around Barway which led to a crowd of poor people halting Queen Henrietta Maria's coach as she passed through Soham, prompting King Charles I to order the sheriff to suppress the rioters.

He also includes notes on the route of a 'Perambulation Day' and a map of 1656 which enable him to explore street after street: Clay that lead to one of the two watermills, Fountain Lane where the steelyard would later be erected, Paddock Street where livestock were kept, Pratt – named after Thomas and Mabila who lived there in the 1300s.

Then there are the principal inhabitants like Thomas Chicheley, a name familiar to former Soham Grammarians since it was used as the name of one of the 'Houses'. At last we can learn something of his story, though the reputation of the more interesting William Dunn Gardner is allowed to pass relatively unscathed.

Nor is the social history overlooked: the cholera, constables, markets and inns all feature. So does the parish workhouse, where, according to the Soham peasant poet James Chambers 'A post with two ringles is fixed to the wall, Where orphans, when lashed, loud for mercy do call'.

The great fire of 1846 is described in graphic detail with a plan showing the extent of the devastation in Hall Street and there is an account of the railway accident on the line's opening day in September 1879. But you will look in vain for the story of the ammunition train explosion.

For this is a book that concentrates on Soham's earlier history; on its great Mere, the charities, churches and that great Minster established by St Felix before he moved to Dunwich and to which his body was returned for burial. Nobody knows for certain where his great church stood, so comprehensively destroyed was it by Danish raiders.

Truly Soham folk might feel that not only had their God forgot to finish his work, but that he failed to prevent its destruction. But they can no longer claim that its history has been overlooked.

William Franklin will be talking about Soham's agricultural history to the Fenland History on Friday meeting at Ely Methodist Church on 13th March, 10.30 am.

'By Mere and Fen: a history of Soham' by William Franklin published by Staploe Historical Publishing. ISBN 978-0-9930834-0-2, £22

pictures

Soham Grammar School parade from church to mark closure, July 1972

Soham church 1797 with man sitting on (not in) stocks

The Steelyard in Fountain Lane before 1934

High Street & Red Lion 1920s

Memories 10th March 2015 by Mike Petty

Caldecote is one of those places that send me looking for my Ordnance Survey map (or Google Earth since I can never find the map). Of course, I remember, it's that long thin village between the A428 and B1046 Toft to Bourn road.

But now there is no excuse for not knowing everything about it. For the Caldecote Local History Group have produced a massive 482-page history of this quite small little village. It really is a tremendous piece of work and essential reading for anyone whose families have had any connection with the area

They have researched the archaeology, plague, poor law, civil war, Bourn Airfield and the Short Brothers factory on the Madingley Road where Emily Howe repaired damaged Stirling bombers. There are notes on Josephine's Band and the growth of Tin Town – the smallholdings whose dwellings in Highfields with their lack of sanitation and electricity became so bad that the District Council wanted them cleared. Now redeveloped it is an important part of the village. There are sections on geology, farming, families, social life; the village hall and much much more including the double funeral of two old soldiers in May 1914

Villagers have also scoured libraries, archives and residents' albums to find a wealth of pictorial images with which to illustrate their book, including colour photographs of murals at Childerley Gate School that had been built after a Halifax bomber hit the old one when landing.

But however much you research inevitably something will turn up just after the book is out. Which is what has happened to Caldecote. For during my digging through files of the Cambridge Express for 1893 I have chanced upon probably the oldest picture of the village church.

It was produced by John Sebert Clarke, the most prolific local artist of the age. John's journalistic career had started with the 'Cambridgeshire Weekly News' at the beginning of the 1890s but between 1892 and 1896 his sketches were published in the Cambridge Express most weeks. They proved so popular that some were subsequently issued in two volumes entitled 'An Artist's Rambles in Cambridgeshire'.

Although his name and artwork survives little has yet been discovered about the man himself. Both he and his wife described themselves as "artists" and lived in several houses in Cambridge. In 1881 he was in Earl Street while the final entry in the street directory seems to be in 1907 when he appears as a builder and decorator with a workshop in Blinco Grove. But John continued to exercise his art for in October 1913 he produced an illustrated scroll that was presented to W.H. Smith at Trinity Place Mission Hall. He died of influenza and pneumonia on 31st October 1918.

The Cambridgeshire Collection has many examples of his work including detailed drawings produced to explain technical difficulties when iron pipes were laid across the bed of the Mill Pool during the installation of sewage in 1895. He depicted the large fire of October 1890 which caused £2,000 worth of damage to rooms at Clare College, destroying the roof, bringing down the ceiling of the Combination Room and cracking the college's 270-year-old bell.

Those sketches in the Express for 1893 include a view of Petersfield Lodge in Mill Road, Cambridge, then home to Mayor Samuel Leggate Young, the ford at Duxford, Biggin Abbey

near Horningsea. Wilbraham Temple and the Wale Memorial at Harston. But the majority are of churches including Toft, Lt Shelford, Bottisham, Longstanton and Grantchester.

Amongst them all is Caldecote (which he spells without the 'e') that was published on 16th December 1893. His accompanying notes refer to the restoration of 1861, the medieval holy water stoup and the extensive view from the tower. The picture is not really that exciting – except when it's of your village, when you start to wonder just who those figures near the porch might be

My daily 'Looking Back' column can also reveal snippets of the past that have otherwise been overlooked. Now thousands of these can be read online for free. Simply Google 'Internet Archive' and search 'Mike Petty Cambridge'

The Book of Caldecote published by Milton Contact Ltd – ISBN 978-0-9929289-3-3 - is available from sueday345@aol.com, at £19

Picture: the military funeral of May 1914

Clarke sketch of Caldecote church 1893
Petersfield Lodge
Biggin Abbey
Manor Farm, Eversden
Duxford ford

Memories 17 March 2015, by Mike Petty

Over the weekend fire devastated the former Tivoli cinema on Chesterton Road, near Mitcham's Corner.

It is not the first time it has hit the headlines

The "Tivoli", was Cambridge's sixth cinema when it opened in March 1925. A News reporter who was given a preview came away very much impressed with the attractiveness of the interior. It had comfort, excellent lighting and excellent decoration. Over 600 people could be seated in the body of the hall and gallery but if you wanted a private box for six people you might have one for the sum of 15s (75p), he informed readers.

H.G. Benstead was one of the first into the new building; he told me in March 2000: "When it was built the news spread that they wanted young people to help test the circle on the following Sunday, and a gift would be given. I and several mates went along and joined a long queue. When the doors opened we went up the stairs and were told to sit down until every seat was full. A man came at the front of the screen and asked us to stand up – sit down – stand up and mark time – sit down – stand up and then leave. When we got to the bottom of the stairs we were given a shilling (05p). We were well pleased!" And doubtless many returned to spend their coppers on seats for the films.

On the first night it was hailed as "Chesterton's super cinema" and had every justification for expressing itself in superlatives. With its courteous staff of brown-uniformed attendants it was elaborate, cosy, artistically lighted and efficiently ventilated. It also boasted an excellent orchestra and a screen sufficiently large to do justice to the most elaborate film productions. Sadly the evening was marred by one small technicality: the projection was not quite perfect, but this could soon be remedied

Not all the films it showed were professionally-made. In June 1927 the Tivoli gave a screening to "Grit" an undergraduate film directed by Mr Dennis Arundell and filmed on a little Cine-Kodak camera. It was believed to be the first serious attempt in an English University to obtain experience in the technique of film production and was one of the first amateur films to be exhibited in the country. It was a tale of how the stroke of a college crew was kidnapped so his boat might not go head of the river and featured some good views of Cambridge streets and colleges. More authentic rowing footage of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race was rushed to Cambridge to be shown on the evening of the 1930 event

That year a new sound installation manufactured by British Acoustic was installed when the first film featured Maurice Chevalier in 'Innocents in Paris' supported by the comedy 'Talkie'. Later a young Alan Kersey (later to be the News' film reporter) recalled how on one occasion he'd watched 'Tarzan and the Amazons' three times in a row and his grandmother rang the police to find out what had happened to him

But not all films were appreciated. In November 1933 a recruiting film 'Our Fighting Navy' was withdrawn following lively scenes. Fifty undergraduate anti-war students, including Alan Turing of King's College (later mastermind code-breaker at Bletchley Park), organised a protest against what they saw as blatant militarist propaganda. But a rival party, numbering about a thousand undergraduates, marched to the Tivoli with two bands playing war-time songs and carrying Union Jacks. Several tried to push their way in, a stink bomb was let off in the vestibule and cries of 'Down with Hitler' and 'Heil Hitler' were heard above the general uproar until four policemen with drawn truncheons, managed to restore order

The cinema itself featured in one of the Cambridge Accident Prevention Council's road-safety films. 'Horse Sense' made in 1952 featured the adventures of a horse called Patch that escapes from its stable and wanders about the streets of Cambridge passing the Tivoli where children are waiting for admission. The principal characters were members of the Rodney Dramatic Club who rehearsed in the 'Little Theatre' behind the New Spring pub next door.

Film star Diana Dors made a personal appearance in 1950 but in November 1956 the Tivoli closed, with Associated British Cinemas claiming the heavy burden of entertainment tax had made it uneconomic. It was one of 180 cinemas forced to close that year, including the Playhouse on Mill Road.

For a while the building housed Flinders electrical wholesalers but In March 1982 a plan to turn it into an arts and entertainment centre with featured films, fashion shows, music and exhibitions was rejected following residents' concerns over potential noise and traffic problems. It became 'The Exchange' a fitness club and bar with some of the most advanced computerised workout equipment in the country together with a Turkish bath and sauna. This was put up for sale for in May 1990 and later came its conversion into the pub and restaurant now so severely damaged

But even this is not new: in July 1939 an incendiary bomb hit the Tivoli and fire fighters were badly handicapped when they found no water was available from the hydrant. But within a few minutes a van-drawn Scammell pump pulled up outside. Firemen transported the pump to the riverside from which a hose was laid to a portable canvas dam near the burning building. Eighteen lorries with an illuminated red cross were used as ambulances to treat the casualties including two usherettes who suffered serious burns.

That fire was just an ARP exercise, the one last weekend was only too real.

Pictures

Diana Dors made a personal visit 1950 – choice of two
Tivoli cinema shortly after opening in 1925
Mitcham's Corner showing Tivoli advertisement
Building when used as Flinders warehouse Sept 1963
Tivoli fire headline from July 1939 – just an ARP exercise

Use modern fire photo

Memories 24th March 2015 by Mike Petty

Browsing through a bookshop in Stamford the other week I spotted a little volume on the Fenland Waterways produced back in 1974 by Alan and Michael Roulstone. It was not the words that attracted me but its watercolour illustrations.

One shows the great Denver Sluice where a new interpretation centre is shortly to be launched to explain something of the complexities of the fenland drainage system. Another depicts motor boats passing through the Hermitage locks at Earith to enter the Old West River which joins the Cam at Pope's Corner, where the Fish and Duck offered both food and moorings. That has now passed into history.

To the south is Bridge Hotel at Clayhithe which before the Great War was famous for its menagerie that attracted Cambridge folk to admire the variety of exotic animals, including kangaroos, monkeys, lemurs and snakes. The last, a bear, was killed, cooked and eaten during the height of first-war rationing.

There is however another location where motor boaters can dine well and enjoy the most convivial of company. It is the clubhouse of the Cambridge Motor Boat Club where I recently shared a table with the President, Commodore and the Rear Commodore who had spent his lifetime on the river, much of it at Bucken Marina (another of Roulstone's paintings). The history of the club was ably researched by Bob Foote to commemorate its centenary in 2011.

By then word 'Boatoring' was a serious rival to sailing on the river Cam with about 80 of this type of craft of various sizes and power. In 1923 speaking at the Club's annual dinner the Mayor, G.P. Hawkins, said he had often looked at the "motorists of the Cam" with envying eyes. He had thought what a lazy lot of chaps they were. But he had also thought what a jolly good time they were having.

But there can be problems: In August 1909 a petrol-driven motor boat carrying a party of five undergraduates caught fire on the river at the back of King's College and was burnt down to the water's edge. The students had experienced difficulties with the engine and called on John Scudamore, the boat-builder of Mill Lane, for help. Scudamore built several of the earliest motor launches seen on the Cam and was one of the earliest officers of the Cambridge Motor Boat Club together with other Cambridge luminaries such as William G. Pye, later founder of the Pye radio company, Sidney Smith a University tailor and Frank Pryor, the owner of a fish shop.

Another of the early members of the club was H.C. Banham who in 1906 launched a motor boat service on the Cam with 'The Enterprise' which had been specially built to carry 50 people. It was powered by a twelve horse power engine giving speeds of 7½ mph without any of the 'blacks' given off by a steam launch and an entire absence of smell. It glided through the water so smoothly one can forget there is any motive power on board, the News reported. Banham went on to establish a marina and hire out motor cruisers for exploring the fenland waterways. One of his descendants is still a member of the Club.

But in Ely there was another boatbuilding firm. It was founded in the early 1800s by Thomas Appleyard as a barge yard, principally concerned with making fen lighters of oak. Successive generations expanded the operation and in 1907 they introduced their first passenger launch, Pattie, carrying private parties of up to 45 people on trips to Denver or Cambridge. Two wars later, in 1945, their buildings on the Babylon side of the river were almost derelict with no equipment, plant or machinery. It was then that T.C. Appleyard and H.J. Lincoln combined to form a new company. They built craft ranging from children's paddle boats to 35-foot cruisers, some for export, then diversified into fibre glass boats that launched the firm into a new age.

Amongst their range was the Elysian 34, a six-berth cabin cruiser featuring nearly every possible amenity in the standard specification which cost £5,200 with a petrol engine.

Amongst the happy customers was a 'pop' singer whose 'hits' included "Living Doll" and "The Young Ones". Crowds gathered to watch Cliff Richard as he took delivery of his boat and he left the firm a souvenir autograph on a copy of the brochure.

That autographed brochure was kept and treasured by Harry Lincoln together with scores of photographs of the construction of the boats and the scene around Ely's riverside. These have been preserved by Alan Scarrow, who spent his career with the firm. Once they have been scanned and annotated they will be passed for safe keeping to the Cambridgeshire Collection at Lion Yard Library.

Pictures

A 'Boatorist' from the 1920s

Banham's Marina 1960s

Alan Roulstone's painting of boats at Earith Lock

Appleyard Lincoln's 'Elysian 34' similar to one bought by Cliff Richard

Cliff expressed his thanks

The river scene at Ely 1950s

Crowds gather to watch a boat launched at Ely

Memories 31 March 2015 by Mike Petty

Memories are about looking back and now it is my time to reflect on some of my writings in the News over the years.

It was more than 30 years ago that I was asked to stand in for Rodney Tibbs' 'History Revisited' feature. Having already spent 20 years exploring the material held in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge's central library I knew there was much that could be shared. My first article appeared on 30th June 1984. It was the story of witchcraft at Horseheath in 1916, the next was about the living conditions in Swavesey as recorded by James Bowd in September 1889.

By then the *News* had launched a series of Weekly titles and from February 1985 my 'Looking Back' articles started to appear regularly. One in July 1986 featured the memories of an Irish labourer building the runways at Witchford airfield in 1943.

But the Cambridgeshire Collection was more than just books: from August 1986 to October 1988 I featured the various engravers who had depicted the area since the 1660s. These were followed later by nearly two years of similar articles about the region's photographers, once more drawing on its extensive holdings.

In between there were 100 'Stories from a Year' based on topics that the News had reported in what was then its 100th year. A centenary book, "Cambridge in Pictures 1888-1988", combined images from the Collection with some of the News' photographs from the 1960s. "Memory Lane Cambridge", "Memory Lane Ely" and "Vanishing Cambridgeshire" followed.

Meanwhile I recycled some of the articles in weekly broadcasts on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire which, with regular talks to groups, resulted in the 'Librarian of the Year' award. Strangely, I've just rediscovered the report of the Westminster presentation when researching my 'Looking Back' column for 25 years ago!

By then it was getting difficult to think of things to write about. But the answer was obvious. Old and new items arrived daily at the Collection, why not reflect on the recent accessions and the people who'd given them? Thus the weeks from November 1992 to May 1996 were filled.

But by then my professional involvement with the Cambridgeshire Collection was coming to an end. I'd started a new series inspired by one of its thousands of playbills for performances at the Theatre Royal on Newmarket Road. This was headed "Mr Pickwick's first visit to Cambridge'. So I took the view that if he had really visited – and he must have done because it said so on a piece of paper (and everything written on paper must be true) - then he would have kept a scrapbook about the people he'd met. For the next 750 weeks (can that really be over 14 years) I turned the pages of "Pickwick's Cambridge Scrapbook, 1838".

At first I could draw on that remarkable collection of material amassed since before Charles Dickens himself lectured in the Guildhall. But then Lion Yard Library closed for refurbishment, a process that should have taken weeks and instead took years. Unable to access its resources I needed to discover another source of first-hand accounts of local life in the 1830s. I found it on the Internet. The myriad of websites, some of which are freely available, do indeed allow one to read a vast amount of Cambridgeshire publications. But I know that there are many, many more that are not online.

By then I had a daily 'Looking Back' column which involved going through the original files of the News' papers (deposited you know where), seeking and copying information I had not remembered seeing elsewhere.

And then there was this weekly 'Memories' page. This has relied on the letters you've written and the folk I've met at talks. I am privileged to have been able to share your recollections through the pages of our local newspaper. To find some of the old articles filed away in scrapbooks is always rewarding. But most moving of all has been to attend funerals where some of the last words said about a former correspondent have mentioned something from my columns.

You may not have cut and kept all, or any, of those thousands of article and snippets. But you can still read, search and download them. For as my thanks for all your assistance over the last 50 years I have placed them all on the world-wide-web. Google 'Internet Archive' and search 'Mike Petty Cambridge'.

However I know so many of us do not use the Internet. But there is still the telephone, the post and the voice. Please still drop me a line or give me a ring. I'll help if I can

And of course the paper edition of the Cambridge News will continue to reflect Memories of our area. I will continue to read them with great interest, safe in the knowledge that any little errors are not now of my making!

Pictures

Pickwick Cambridge Scrapbook heading – it ran for 750 weeks

The Illustrators feature ran from 1986 to 1988

News articles promoted the use of the Cambridgeshire Collection and helped Mike win a national award in 1990

Mike in 1998 with Roy Burgess of Cottenham who preserved old films taken by 'Uncle David'

Reflections

Old and new items arrive daily at the Cambridgeshire Collection in Cambridge Central Library

Mike Petty reflects on some of the recent discoveries

A series of articles appearing in the Cambridge Weekly News 1992-1996

Reflections: Old and new items arrive daily at the Cambridgeshire Collection; Mike Petty reflects on some of the recent discoveries

These are the text of a number of the Reflections articles I wrote in the Cambridge Weekly News.

Reflections 1992 11 18 by Mike Petty

If there is one thing more interesting than old newspapers it is a scrapbook: containing cuttings from them, Two such have been donated recently which were compiled by the late Herbert Johnson whose photographic exploits I featured in the Cambridge Weekly, News a few months ago,

One volume contains items pasted into a writing book compiled by Hilda Ethel Wright in 1891, her neat hand-written notes on mountains, domestic economy or English grammar peeping out from beneath yellowing and tattered cuttings. These cover a variety of dates and topics with a preponderance of them relating to the Baptist church and Gt Gransden parish.

Amongst them the eye alights on an obituary of William Eaden Lilley dated May '15th 1913 one section of, which recalls his generosity for "he was one of the few of whom it might truly be said that his left hand knew not what His right hand gave. On principle he would not give a cabman more than His legal fare, but if he discovered that that cabman had a wife and family at home who, were in want of food and clothing, he would part with a Sovereign as readily as most men would give their sixpenny tip"

Perhaps it was the unusual name which prompted him to take the legal notice regarding Tryhena Scruby of Park Terrace in 1906 whilst the death of "Blind James" Hayward who could find his way around Cambridge without even a stick and except on rare occasions without having to ask guidance from a passer by also found its place in his scrapbook

Blind James' passage might have been obstructed by William Brown and his bride Doris, depicted setting off on their honeymoon on a tandem in 1934 whilst the proceedings of the town council some 30 years earlier also feature. The Watch Committee had proposed a bye-law with respect to driving cattle through the streets ensuring that there be two people to every 12 cows and that bulls should be controlled by a strong pole or staff at least five feet in length, securely fixed to a ring through the nose of the bull and firmly held by some competent person - on pain of a fine of 40 shillings

From Gt Gransden comes memories of William Pedley, born 1807 who loved to talk of old times - the jubilee of George II, the village stocks to which he saw two boys fastened for robbing an orchard and then flogged on their bare backs till the blood came - and the "cage", or village lock up in which he had once been incarcerated, He was wont to relate that story in the following manner, "I was working for Old Samuel Flinders at the Tithe Farm, He and he's

..." The story ends abruptly, the crumbling cutting torn, But a little detective work: could find the story in the original files of the "Cambridge Independent Press" held in the Cambridgeshire Collection to which these precious scraps are a welcome addition,

Reflections 1992 11 25

Quite by chance a variety of items come in together which refer to a particular., topic or theme, This week that theme has been the fenland with a new book and a tape recording being acquired together with something quite different - a page from the magazine "Church Bells" of July 20th

Writing over 90 years ago Henry Moxon introduces his readers to the problems of ministering in a fenland parish, an area without roads whose long droves fringed by deep rush-covered ditches, lead to the isolated farmhouses or cottages.

He describes how parson needed to attire himself in and sou'wester before his visit his parishioners, one of whom lived in an old windmill whose sails had long ceased to move but who gladly welcomed the minister's little gift of tobacco, the old lady spending many an hour sitting in her windmill door, smoking her long churchwarden" pipe, Whilst tobacco might be a boon the dreadful custom the mothers had of dosing their poor babies with opium in order to send them off to sleep whilst their parents went out to work: in the fields was, he declared, "a cruel and vile practice"; yet every fen cottage had its little garden filled with white poppies, purposely grown to be administered to children.

The good folk of Chatteris whose memories have formed the basis of a fascinating book "We're the characters now" also recall childhood problems whooping cough, mumps and measles as well as scarlet fever and tuberculosis together with other memories from their younger years – "My mother was the first woman cyclist to enter Chatteris and she was booed because it was not a very ladylike thing to do", Those were the days when roads were dusty and dirty in summer, muddy in winter, and when crossing sweepers would be paid to sweep a way across, One recalls how the cinema owner would stop the film and put up the lights to eject people she heard cracking nuts or misbehaving - once an attractive young lady was combing her beautiful hair when the film got stuck., "These boys started to whistle and she turned round to look at them, The whole place went in an uproar - up went the lights and out two rows of boys had to go!".

As Sue Oosthuizen, who tape recorded the memories as part of a WEA oral history course, points out, it is difficult to convey on the printed page the warm Fenland accent of the contributors, Lester Milbank however has no problems at all in this regard. His newly-issued cassette combining his already successful Tiger Talk compilation with another entitled "Christmas Tiger Talk:" makes compulsive listening with its skilful blend of voices commenting on fenland life, Topics such as the fen blow", flooding, folk remedies and the joys and heartbreak of Christmas combine to capture the spirit and sounds of the fen, complementing the Chatteris book and making one wish that Henry Moxon could have done something similar in 1900!

Sue Oosthuizen's "We're the characters now: the oral history of Chatteris" is published by Cambridgeshire Libraries Publications at 4.50; "Tiger Talk: and Christmas Tiger Talk.." produced by Lester Milbank: retails at £4.95, Both may be ordered from bookshops or libraries or direct from Cambridge Central Library shop

Reflections by Mike Petty 1992 12 02

Now that the crowds have left the war memorials and the poppy wreaths become battered by wind and rain the memories of wartime are allowed to dim again. "We will remember them, most now never knew and nearly others have themselves faded away, just as the stone memorials have become weathered and stained,

Yet the story of the memorials themselves has become as forgotten as those they commemorate even by 1924 few Cambridge folk marked the opening of what had been intended as the counties' premier tribute to its dead, 'a new Nurses' Home at Addenbrooke's Hospital'. This half of the total money raised by the Lord Lieutenant's War Memorial Fund, collecting from town, frown and county to provide a fitting memorial,

But there were other projects as well, One the erection of inscribed at Ely Cathedral, commemorating parish by parish the names of those who served and fell. This would leave a farther sum of £3,500 for a celebration of "Victory" in the form of a statue by Canadian sculptor Tait McKenzie whose original proposal had envisaged something taller than the funds would actually stretch to and the memorial had to be reduced in height. Yet came the day of opening this was not ready and a plaster copy was created to be unveiled by the Duke of York who was in Cambridge attending the Royal Agricultural Show

Full details of the discussion and arguments, proposals and debates which raged over 70 years ago have just been published by Australian Prof K.S. Inglis contained in the latest issue of the "Journal of contemporary history", an article which deserves wider readership than it is likely to receive.

Yet this is not the only unexpected record of wartime activity for from Sawston has just come Abe Easey's account of the impact of units of the United States Army who descended on that village from 1943 to 1945, "A street full of sad sacks" outlines the problems of such an invasion - the overflowing of the sewerage system, the overloading of the telephone the overcrowding of the buses into Cambridge - and the overplaying of the village's first jukebox: in the saloon bar of the Black Bull. Many fascinating details of sentry duty in blackout, the war-time use of Sawston Hall where wire-fenced towers kept watch over the King and Queen when they paid a visit during the early days of war are contained in its pages, yet only a few dozen copies have been produced, of which the Cambridgeshire Collection has secured two.

Even more conventionally produced items are easy to miss and it has taken two years for us to obtain a copy of another fascinating book, "Spitfire squadron" published by Air Research Publications & available from Duxford Imperial War Museum reprints "one of the finest first-person accounts of air fighting during the Battle of Britain, a book first published in 1942. It is the record of Squadron Leader Brian Lane who flew from Fowlmere airfield. Though censorship blocked publication of names of places and people these are now explained in the second part of the new book.: which contains photographs and goes on to report the death of the author when shot down over the North Sea in December 1942. His body was never found but his name is inscribed on the Runnymede memorial., one of thousands, but this time remembered,

Reflections 1992 12 09

Members of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society will have less need of book tokens than usual this Christmas for recently they have received no less than three publications for their annual subscription of £10:

One is a cumulative index to the articles appearing in previous volumes of the Proceedings; identifying the myriad topics that have been covered since the Society was established in 1840. The others are the issues for 1990 and 1991

Detailed archaeological papers occupy much space including accounts of excavations at Barrington Anglo-Saxon cemetery, St Neots priory and fishponds at Linton together with pages of detailed drawings of flint scrapers, arrowheads and axes from the fens. When such items are properly recorded they can add greatly to the early history of an area, but what happens to them once removed from the soil. Today they are properly stored and accessible but this has not always been the case

This is demonstrated by Nigel Holman's account of Marshall Fisher and his Ely museum which opened in 1843, its collection boosted by many finds discovered during the construction of railways through the fenland. Open only Monday afternoons it attracted few visitors other than those gentlemen and their ladies who could afford the subscription fee, nor did Ely Councillors offer much support. On Marshall Fisher's death in 1899 there being no like-minded individual prepared to take his place and keep the museum open it was sold to Cole Ambrose at Stuntney Hall where it remained hidden from public view until purchased by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society in 1923. As this month sees the closure of the excellent Farmland Museum at Haddenham the article has particular relevance,

Graham Chainey has two contributions to the 1991 Proceedings. One chronicles Royal visits to Cambridge between 1441 and 1536, showing not even a King could visit whenever he wanted. Thus in September 1444 Henry VI cancelled a trip due to "the air and the pestilence that hath long reigned". The arrival of such important guests needed much preparation as at Queens' College in 1520 when Cardinal Wolsey stayed ; "the great chamber, hall, cloister and chapel were white-washed ... and the cobwebs swept from the hall roof",

In July 1446 Henry VI laid the foundation stone of King's College chapel and many subsequent visits revolved around that building. In his second paper Chainey lists the drawings, paintings, engravings and photographs that have shown the Chapel up to 1900. He devotes a page to the monumental work of Joshua Baldry who in 1809 produced a detailed engraving of the East Window, using a telescope placed in the organ loft. This was the most complete record of any of the windows for 130 years until Peter Brunney undertook a photographic record in 1939 as the glass was being removed in anticipation of German bombing. One of these photographs shows a panel of glass being carried from the chapel, another the scene inside as work progressed. They will doubtless feature in a future volume of "Proceedings" as the Cambridge Antiquarian Society continues to provide a vehicle for articles on the history and archaeology of the County

Cambridge Antiquarian Society "Proceedings" vol. 79 for 1990 is £7.50 for non-members, vol.80 £12.00; earlier volumes are also available from the Librarian, Dr John Pickles at the University Museum of Archaeology, Downing Street, Cambridge

Reflections 1992 12 16

Perusal of this week's list of accessions reveals a very mixed bag including various books of poetry and a number of pairs - reports on the Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire local plans, a couple of newsletters issued for the guidance of School Governors and a duo of archaeological reports on Brent ditch and the Dullingham—Swaffhams pipeline. The Countryside Commission has just produced two series of leaflets detailing walks and rides along the Icknield way and cycle routes through the fens

Two more items are on first glance a little confusing as "A taste of East Anglia" is in fact a cassette guide to places rather than produce - and "Rosemary for remembrance" is a recipe book issued by the Sue Ryder foundation and does not relate to plants.

This week however the dominant theme has been botanical, including the acquisition of something missed years ago - an issue of the Journal of the Linnean Society published in

1912 which includes a detailed study of the ecology of Gamlingay wood complete with weather records, soil analysis and study of vegetation all of which is essential, reading for botanists but incomprehensible to the rest of us,

Equally puzzling has been the abundance of fungi seen growing in local fields following the changes in farming practice, Some are probably edible others potentially poisonous. One lady who has recently devoted much time to their study has been Doris Watson who, now 91, has lodged with us two albums of her paintings of mushrooms, toadstools and the rest - some of which she has spotted growing in the gardens around Milton Road Library. These beautiful illustrations, now on display in the Collection, cannot fail to attract and we are delighted to house them pending their possible desposit in a place more appropriate to their specialist subject matter

Then on Saturday afternoon we found the answer to a mystery - the date of something we already had - when one of our readers spotted an advertisement in the "Cambridge Chronicle" for 26th July 1847 for a Victorian publication entitled "The land we live in". The ad only ran for one week - perhaps not surprisingly for this guide for visitors was less than complimentary about Cambridge - the town devoid of dignity or beauty, its buildings too mean to attract attention. The author was more scathing about the new architecture of Downing College - finding it devoid of everything that any one could possibly conceive to be either graceful or appropriate. He comments upon possible improvements - "It was proposed to purchase the property and convert it into the terminus of the railway, then the thing must have been pulled down; as it would have been impossible to tolerate such a structure for even such a purpose". Fortunately even he found some things he did like, including the tree lined walks - "a delicious place to loiter away a summer's afternoon" - and left a record of his visit in engravings depicting the botanical beauties of the countryside with the buildings as mere background details

Reflections 1992 12 24

This has been the week for photographs - clinched when on Saturday the post contained a parcel from Holland, Inside were copies of a new book entitled "Great & Little Shelford in old picture postcards"; compiled by Margaret Ward and featuring 76 views of the two parishes - many of which had been supplied from our Collection and featuring many photographs taken by local photographer Ted Mott in the 1920s.

In addition to the usual quiet and peaceful views when horses and bicycles outnumbered cars and steam locomotives brought goods to the village station there are others which reflect dramatic change - such as that of Shelford Old House, pictured in its grandeur on a postcard issued just months before the building was gutted by fire in February 1929, the blaze starting in the pantry and quickly spreading to the roof and the contents of the house destroyed.

Such dramatic events were of course reported by the local newspaper and the "Cambridge Chronicle" carried a number of photographs recording the tragedy. But even in those days here was an interest in pictures of the past as well as present with a regular weekly series reproducing old pictures sent in by readers. Enterprising businesses benefited by this interest in nostalgia to emphasise their own long traditions of service.

Thus when John Vail, ironmongers of Post Office Terrace, wanted to pay tribute to the long-service by five of its employees in 1921 it chose to feature not only a picture of its present staff but also a much older print, taken in 1872, and were able to identify the names of the men depicted - including Fred Lister, then aged 13, sitting to the right of the anvil. This week we have been given an original of that photograph together with another taken c1884 by a member of the Photographic Tourists Association. Quite why they took such a picture is unknown - equally obscure now is the Cambridge firm itself - though in 1921 they were

described as "well-known". Their advertisements show they were established in 1835 and describe their services as furnishing ironmongers, bell hangers, braziers, gas fitter and hot water engineers, installing electric bells as well as grinding razors and repairing lawnmowers. They disappear from Directories about 50 years ago and seem to have been largely forgotten and unrecorded.

Precisely the same fate seems to have befallen James Sendall & co of Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge, horticultural engineers and suppliers of conservatories, green houses and heating apparatus. Yet in March we acquired a copy of their 35th catalogue issued in 1896. Nearly 100 pages depict their range of products with illustrations of conservatories erected around the country - Guildford, Isle of Wight, Lancaster and Brighton - seeming very similar to some of those offered by companies today. Yet a search through trades directories will find only brief mention of the firm between 1891 and 1898 and its story is untold.

However such has been the response from readers of this column in recent weeks that perhaps more information will now come to light to enable some more of Cambridge's past to be recorded for the future,

"Great & Little Shelford in old picture postcards" by Margaret Ward is published by European Library and available in bookshops

Reflections 1992 12 31

Whilst it is relatively easy to locate actual books relating to Cambridge it is much less so to track down fiction with a local setting.

Who would expect for instance that one of Nigel Tranter's historical novels of life in Scotland' would contain a detailed account of an incident relating to Hereward the Wake.

"Margaret the Queen", set in the years following the Battle of Hastings, tells of how Malcolm, King of Scotland, endeavoured to inflict defeat on William the Conqueror by forcing him to full-scale battle in the tens. The plan involved inciting Saxon lords to march on Peterborough thus prompting a major confrontation in an area where the mounted Norman troops in their heavy armour would be at a disadvantage and from which Hereward and his band could inflict considerable slaughter. The strategy failed with remnants of the slaughtered Saxon army escaping through Pymore Fen. It was whilst this attack was taking place - according to Tranter - that William mounted his main assault on the Isle of Ely from the South and with his own men distracted by the affray in the North Hereward could do little but escape into other areas of the fenland. The book was published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1979 and has taken until now for its local connection to be discovered - and then by chance,

Novels can combine the author's imagination and knowledge of location with known facts to give a picture of events not otherwise recorded. Sometimes indeed it can be too real for comfort - thus Terence White felt induced to include a disclaimer in his book "Darkness at Pemberley". Whilst acknowledging that the "St Barnabas College" which forms the setting for part of the story could easily be taken for that of Queens' College in Cambridge he was quick to point out that no member of that college would indulge in any of the activities portrayed. The story then revolves around blackmail and murder occasioned by drug abuse amongst senior academics. Whilst such topics might be ready sources for detective fiction in the 1990s it is surprising to note that this book was first issued 60 years ago and must indeed have raised eyebrows then. Despite this we failed to acquire a copy for the Cambridgeshire Collection until the recent reprint by Gollancz Crime,

I equally failed to note a more contemporary crime story yet one which presents a most interesting picture of Cambridge life as it may well be seen by a numerous group of our visitors. "Death of a Daimyo" by James Melville (Martin Seeker & Warburg, 1984) follows the visit to England of Japanese Police Superintendent Utani during which one of his countrymen is murdered at the opening ceremony of an institute of Japanese Studies in Cambridge. The visitor's impression of St Cuthbert's college and its High Table lifestyle together with the comparison of English life with that of their native country makes most interesting reading.

We did however obtain a copy of "Naomi's Room" (HarperCollins 1931) immediately on publication for the central character visits the Collection when attempting to identify the former owner of his Cambridge house whose mutilated children join his own murdered daughter in haunting the premises. Described as a classic ghost story the book is not one to be read alone at night. The amount of research an author needs to undertake before writing is reflected in the acknowledgement to my colleague Chris Jakes who did indeed guide author Jonathan Aycliffe through the complexities of street directories and burgess lists, just as we do hundreds of enquirers each month, in fact as well as fiction.

Reflections 1993 01 06

During November George Anderson and his wife found their way into the Cambridgeshire Collection. They were in England on holiday from their home in Louisville, Kentucky and seeking not their family tree, but directions to the former family home, Olmsted Hall.

Having pored over the Ordnance Survey maps for the south-eastern corner of the county and located the house just outside Castle Camps we sent them on their way with directions and some photocopies of the Listed Buildings record from our computer link and photographs of what the property looked like in the 1930s. Early in December we received a letter from them telling us they found it easily and enclosing photographs they had taken to update our files. We sent a thank—you note and thought little more of it.

A couple of weeks later however the editor of "Have-hill Historian" brought in our copy of their November 1992 issue which includes an account of "A visit to Olmsted Hall" written nearly 90 years ago in the form of a letter to an American lady - Mrs John Whittlesea Olmsted. It would appear that her correspondent had somewhat more difficulty than did our American friends.

They had set off on 9th October 1904 taking a train from Liverpool Street station to Haverhill hoping to find lodgings for the night in a town "where rooms are not much in request". Although the "wrinkled old station-master" did not prove very helpful somebody recommended a Mrs Page in Mount Road - the one house with a door knocker. Once accommodated they set off on a six-mile walk through "Bumsted Helion", following a map drawn up by the postmistress and one of her nice customers. The country was "too glorious for description, unspoilt by factories, modern inventions and untouched by trippers" whilst every passing Hodge was obliging and affable, especially a "sweet shepherd with his flock of sheep and a beguiling little country boy of about thirteen, glowing with health and bursting with communicativeness". They passed half-timbered cottages and finally the Hall dawned on their view, partly surrounded by a moat – long, low, half-timbered with a discoloured reddish-brown roof, delightfully wobbly in outline and a leaning red chimney-stack

They found the occupants friendly and were given a tour of the property with its flag-floors and vast chimneys, although there was embarrassment when they discovered the housekeepers husband swigging away at a quart pot of ale in the dairy. Their return to Haverhill was in the farm wagonette whose driver was the first surly and monosyllabic person

they had met - through he was very ready with the information that the roads were bad and the journey a long one. On arrival they were greeted as "adventuresses" by their landlady - a description they thought they had earned by the time they got back to London next day following an unpleasant and tiring railway journey

A copy of the "Haverhill Historian" article will soon be en route to Louisville where it will doubtless revive memories — though perhaps not of sweet shepherds and beguiling country boys, for such are less obvious these days when people sweep past in automobiles. It may possibly add another piece to their jigsaw for the 1904 visitors had found that they too were following in another American's footsteps, that of a rich couple who had driven over in a brake and pair from Saffron Walden claiming that their ancestors had lived in the house 200 years earlier - but not getting their name. Thus as one more piece is added another gap appears and the interest is sustained

Reflections 1993 01 13

Side by side on our New Books display at present are three items which seem miles apart. The newly-published and authoritative "History of the University of Cambridge volume 4. 1870-1990". a "Biographical history of Gonville & Caius College" volume 6 (newly received though published in 1958) and "The Bomb Photo" cassette by "Dennis of Grunty Fen" They are linked by one thing -- the second World War

With the present volume the Cambridge University Press are now halfway through the first substantial history of the University in modern times, This is a History of the University and its place in the world, though largely in isolation from the town in which it is situated. There is little reference to domestic town-gown issues which have been subject to considerable change in the period under review or the "rags" which soured relations in Edwardian times, though the more recent and somewhat more peaceful Garden House Riot does receive mention. One would rightly expect the author to devote a section of his scholarly 650-page book to the War though his six pages seem particularly concise. But as he points out he is handicapped in a shortage of scholarly histories of colleges and faculties on which to base his history and the lack of contemporary records available for the more modern period - though had the Cambridgeshire Collection been included amongst the acknowledged sources this omission may have been partially remedied.

Nevertheless there is a detailed bibliography and the author pays full credit to one source which we have only recently acquired. Judging from its title one would hardly expect Prof. Stratton's volume of the "Biographical History of Gonville & Caius College", issued in 1958, to be compulsive reading. Only when scanning it from cover to cover do the unexpected appendices come to light, including a most interesting account of the college between 1939-45 when part of its buildings were taken over by the Government for the use of the Master in Lunacy and his staff. Soon afterwards men of the Scottish Regiment, evacuated from Cherbourg, were based in the college for some days, the officers dining with Fellows at High Table. Those students who remained in Cambridge were pressed into service for Home Guard or Civil Defence duties - guarding the Post Office etc - activities which "did not pass off entirely without injury to the public". Air Raid precautions were put in hand with a fire engine installed in Trinity Hall by the river and a line of piping laid into St Michael's Court. But the only damage caused was when a cobble stone crashed through the Chapel roof. It had come from the devastated Union Society building during the same attack which has left the walls of Whewell's Court pitted with holes from the debris. This was but one of a number of raids which killed several townspeople but left University buildings and academic studies largely undisturbed.

And so to "Dennis". Living on the edge of the edge of Grunty Fen I was at first tempted to join Christopher South in his search for the railway carriage and associated outbuildings from

which a series of radio interviews have been broadcast, some of which are now also available on cassettes issued by "the Grunty Fen Gramophone Shed". The area is home to an abnormally high proportion of unconventional dwellings but people may ask whether his world of contentment amid squalor is real. Dennis's description of Fen Tigers with "dew-drops on their nose ... and webs between their toes" echoes that of a London visitor in 1862 who recorded "all the girls had yellow spotted bellies and webbed feet". In "The bomb photo" Dennis relates how his education was interrupted when it was realised that an unexploded bomb was being used as a doorstep. In fact newspapers report that bombs were dropped on Grunty Fen on 1st August 1940 and later a dummy airfield was constructed to distract enemy planes from Witchford airfield just to the north. But none of this is yet recorded in formal histories. As Chris South asks "Where does reality lie? In Dennis' life or yours?" It a question for the Professional Historian to answer for we lesser mortals cannot,

!A History of the University of Cambridge, vol,4, 1870-1990" by C.N.L.Brooke CUP. 1993 £50,00.

The Bomb Photo by Dennis – cassette issued by 'The Grunty Fen Gramophone Shed', available from BBC Radio Cambridgeshire

Reflections 1993 01 20

Saturday brought traction engines under the spotlight, A visit from one family of knowledgeable enthusiasts was echoed by the arrival in the post of an article from the Locomotive Society Journal of November 1992 relating to a rare ploughing engine built by Howard in 1877 and used in Burwell for over 50 years. In 1929 it was sold back to the makers for display purposes and travelled under its own steam back to its birthplace at Bedford. Before it departed from Burwell it was photographed by Dorothy Grainger and two of her pictures form the basis of the article,

Then when browsing through the just reprinted "Swavesey Chronicle" with its wealth of stories culled from Cambridgeshire newspapers between 1776 and 1899 my eye alighted on an article from September 1899 describing a fire at Manor farm which was caused by a spark from a threshing machine engine which was passing at the time. Despite valiant efforts by villagers over £100 worth of damage was caused and there was much criticism of the parish fire engine, an ancient locomotive built in 1827 which was out of order and it was of no use whatever

From March 1857 comes another story, headed 'Singular Occurrence' telling how Joseph Jellings had a brother Nathaniel who was fighting with the army in the Crimea. On the day the battle of Inkermann was fought Joseph saw a vision of his brother standing beside him and suddenly saw his head apparently cut off and fall one way and the trunk the other. Several months after this they received notification that Nathaniel had died of fever at Scutari. However a week ago the mother was travelling on the Haddenham carrier's cart when a woman whose son had been on leave related how he had been going into battle with his friend Jellings who had called out "Come along, Charley, and you'll be all right". As he spoke a cannon ball came and severed Jelling's head from his body. The mother fainted.

A similar shock faced Oliver Hopkin's family during the Great War. Oliver had left his Wilburton home to join the Suffolk regiment and wrote letters describing his lot ... "Dear Mother father and Brother and Sisters i now take the pleasure in riteing you a few lines hoping it will find you all well as it leaves me quite well at present and i think i shall keep so a time yet for we are along way off of the Germans now i am pleased to say for we have close to them this last 6 weeks 300 yards thats all but we had a rum job to get away ... Dad will you be so good for me as to look around some of our Wilburtons people for a Pack of Cards for

they are very handy to us out here to have a nice game with some of them would not refuse them i now it you tell them",

The arrival of the postman bringing such letters would have been very welcome in the quiet fenland village, even if Ol's messages were not always pleasant. They somehow survived and were published as "A Rendezvous with Death" in 1986, retaining the spelling of the originals,

Last week we received a cassette of a play based on the book. The story has a dramatic ending with the arrival of another letter. This time there was none of the usual preamble but it was stark and to the point, "Sir, These photos and pocket wallet was found by one of my men during the recent operation in a dug-out. The man thinks they belong to the dead Corporal who was in the dug-out ,,," it was the first time the family had any inkling their son would no longer be coming home

"The Swavesey Chronicle" compiled by H. Hephner is reissued by Swavesey & district history society at £4,00

"A rendezvous with death" by A.J. Peacock costs £1,85 from the author at 128 Holgate Road, York, Both are available at Cambridge Library shop

W.22.K26 2811

Y.Wilb.K09 1001

Y.Swav.J9 8731

Reflections 1993 01 27

In 1932 the Town and Country Planning Act set out to tackle the problems arising from rapid growth of industrialism and increased population yet at the same time protect the countryside from irresponsible development. Two years later a Cambridgeshire Regional planning report was issued which included a traffic survey concluding that the existing road system was generally sufficient for anticipated traffic growth, though a Cambridge ring road was needed together with some village by-passes. The main traffic artery was the A,10 road but no improvements were envisaged between Cambridge and Ely apart to the level crossing on the Milton Road where a new bridge would eventually be needed, a new stretch of road in Milton village & a link road at Waterbeach

Over the last 60 years things have changed somewhat and traffic forms a more substantial part of the current review of the County Structure Plan, copies of which are now in the Cambridgeshire Collection and on which people are invited to comment.

It has been agreed already that the A10 should be dualled and work has started to consider the various options involved - should the existing road be widened or a new route chosen. As part of this process the area on either side of the current road has been the subject of an archaeological desktop study, the results of which have now been published by Cambridgeshire Archaeology,

The A10 corridor has a long history of human settlement and use, but this occurs against a background of flooding and environmental instability. At one time the area was dry and covered with forest but -subsequent flooding resulted in sea water covering the low lying areas, with settlement established on the higher land or fen islands. During the Roman period the construction of Akeman Street and the Car Dyke, a canal linking the southern fens with Lincolnshire, opened up communications but these deteriorated and the rivers remained the main means of transport until the construction of a Turnpike Road in the 1760s.

In their report the archaeologists survey the history of the parishes along the route - Milton which was a significant industrial site in Roman times, Landbeach hit by the Black Death in

1349, Waterbeach which depended on its river link along the Cam, Stretham where a ferry used to cross the Old West River and Lt Thetford where a Bronze age causeway has been discovered.

They also include maps indicating the range of artefacts discovered within each settlement - Roman pottery, a medieval purse, a Neolithic flint axe - and describe the Scheduled Ancient Monuments such as the Old Pumping Engine at Stretham built in 1831 to drain the fens and now undergoing restoration prior to its reopening in the Spring. Once the improvements are completed this will become even more of a tourist attraction and will generate additional traffic along the approach roads - and although this is hardly likely to influence the routing of the new dualled A10 it is one of the factors which need to be considered by the Road Engineers when planning a route which will meet the needs of increasing traffic yet minimise its impact on both existing residents and the remains of those who previously inhabited the area,

As work continues so even more archaeological evidence will be unearthed and be recorded in the wide range of excellent reports being issued by Cambridgeshire Archaeology and deposited in the Cambridgeshire Collection

"Archaeology between Cambridge and Ely ; the 10 corridor - 1992" by Tim Reynolds & Stephanie Leith. published by Cambridgeshire Archaeology section. Shire Hall, Cambridge Y.Lan.K0 28976 Y.Str.K1 42737 B.Milt.K25 5424

Reflections 1993 02 03

Saturday morning was one of those times when it felt as if another tract of Rainforest must have been felled just to make the amount of paper that was awaiting me in my office.

In addition to the piles that had been there before my day off there was a whole boxful on the visitor's chair (though there is nowhere for the visitor to put their feet even if they sit down).

Investigation quickly revealed that it contained the deposit reports relating to the proposed Cambridge Southern Relief Road including numerous copies of a non-technical summary of the environmental reports for people to take away. The strength of the case for the road will doubtless be matched with strong arguments against and these will themselves be reflected within the Cambridgeshire Collection. It was ever such,

One of the most attractive examples of opposition to proposed roads must still be that produced by Quentin Nelson and Adrian Graham in 1927 when they were lamenting the proposed Coe Fen Road, Their poetic case is complemented with sketches of the wildlife to be disturbed whilst the words lament the tranquillity that would be lost by the heavily laden motor lorries they envisaged would trundle day and night across the previously quiet area.

Most of us cannot remember a world without the motor car. As John Crowe points out nowadays we sit bumper to bumper in cars or bounce along on buses but back in the last century most people had to walk, Those who didn't walk rode on horses or in carts or coaches pulled by horses. In those days it was the blacksmith, not the petrol attendant, who was relied upon to keep the traffic moving and John pays tribute to him in one of his songs featured on "Horses, housemaids and hard old times", a cassette and book illustrating Victorian life through song. The tape features traditional songs such as "The Lincolnshire Poacher", "Follow the Plough" and "Windy old weather" together with original compositions such as that describing the work of Jenny the housemaid between rising at 5 am and crawling back to bed at 9pm, serving not only master and mistress but also cook and butler for the princely wage of £6 a year.

Another recalls Washing Day when water had to be drawn from the pump or well and heated in an old copper over the kitchen fire before the hard work with washboard and bar of smelly green soap, The there was the rinsing, wringing by hand or mangle before hanging it out on washing lines criss-crossing the yard whilst everybody prayed it wouldn't rain - as the singer-laments "its thump, thump, scold, scold, scrub, scrub away, there's never a bit of comfort here upon a washing day".

Although aimed at schools the catchy songs - easy to follow with words in the accompanying book - would make a most useful addition to reminiscence work in old folks' home, This recording by the Tollhouse Company was just one of a series of cassettes deposited by Brewhouse Records of Wicken which feature the music of Cambridgeshire. This continues a tradition of song as John will know for more years ago than either of us care to remember he tracked down some of the original tunes for the Victorian ballads housed in the Collection featuring issues of that time - Corn Law repeal, rather than new motorway in those days

"Cambridgeshire Southern Relief Road environmental statement- non-technical summary" is available from the Cambridgeshire Collection or Shire Hall "Horses, housemaids & hard old times ; Victorian life through song" tape & booklet is published by Brewhouse, Breeds Farm, 57 High St. Wicken price

Y.Tru.J8 5103 Y.Land.K0 28977 Q.Ab.K00 14518 Y.Oxl.J9 21919

Reflections 1993 02 10 probably by Mike Petty 17 Jan 1993

Some weeks seem to disappear without any time to do anything except answer readers' enquiries and concentrate on specific projects which demand immediate attention.

The preparation of the Cambridgeshire Heritage Showcase has made this one of those weeks, Although material has come in -including some interesting photographs - most of it still awaits accessioning, making the next week's intake even more impressive.

One item which has found its way into the system is a copy of the sale particulars for the Lolworth Grange Estate when it came under the auctioneers hammer in July 1938. It comprised the "Grange", described as an old fashioned residence built in 1867 but with private lighting by a 35-volt Fetter plant with a series of 14 cells, a telephone (Madingley 147) and water supply from three wells pumped to a reservoir and thence by gravitation to the house. Many other village properties were also for sale including Lolworth post office which made £220 whilst a pair of brick and thatched cottages on the village green are recorded as fetching a similar price. There is no mention of electricity or telephone for these lesser properties though water was supplied by stand-pipe to the post office.

A survey of housing facilities in another part of the county is incorporated in the report of the Royal Commission on Labour for 1892, a copy of which we received 100 years later and which has this week been shelved. It surveys the Poor Law Union of North Witchford - the Chatteris, March, Manea area - and like many Government reports makes fascinating reading,

After surveying the agricultural employment -situation - wages of horsekeepers and cattlemen at 12/- (60p) a week with cottage or 2/- (10p) more without, with women earning between 1/- and 1/9 (5-8p) per day and children 3/6 to 7/- (18-35p) per week - the report goes on to describe a typical cottage for a labourer with nine children.

It had one sitting-room with roof sloping to four feet, doors about 4ft 5in high with two bedrooms, one bed in pantry, all on ground floor. The occupants often knocked their heads

against the beam in the sitting-room, only five feet from the ground whilst few people were small enough to be able to stand upright in the bedrooms. Outside a piggery and small farmyard adjoined the bedroom whilst on the other side a henhouse adjoined the pantry.

The water supply was fetched from the river or caught from the tiled roof in tubs - though this could be green and red and like drinking blood, It would overflow into ditches which surrounded the property - which would themselves overflow in winter and mix with the muck from the pigs. Privies were another source of complaint, with 4 or 5 cottages sharing one closet in Benwick and elsewhere whilst the cesspools were often far too close to the pump for drinking water (where they had such a luxury)

For such luxurious conditions prices were quoted as £5.4.0 (£5,20) for a two-bedroom cottage, and rents of 1/3 a week (6p) for a single bedroomed place, Yet people survived and were becoming fashion conscious with Corduroys being no longer worn by anybody, even on Sundays, and men dressing in check cotton material instead of woollen, increasing their liability to chills, But, adds the report, nearly everyone over the age of 20 carried a watch

Y.Pri.J9 10634 Y.Lol.K22 33657 Y.Will.J9 33113

Reflections 1993 02 17

"Side by side the MA & the Mechanic, the Undergraduate and the Schoolboy, old men in broad cloth and young boys in fustian¹", John Pink's description of those using his Cambridge Free Library, though written some 90 years ago, still applies today,

Thus in the Cambridgeshire Collection we try to help many readers of all ages and abilities each pursuing something of interest to themselves, either for necessity, for school project or just because they want to. Some will be content to browse for themselves rather than have their attention drawn to the book that will give them what they want. For many however time is of the essence with a project that needs to be completed quickly or something that has to be found before the traffic meter runs out.

All are welcome although inevitably some are more welcome than others and their visits are remembered with particular affection. Such was our first acquaintance with a gentleman enquiring about medieval deer parks who only on leaving revealed himself to be one of the country's leading Historical Geographers. The memories were rekindled this week when his widow came in for copies of a portrait taken by Ramsey & Muspratt some 20 years ago, Another whose visits were always a tonic was Glyn Daniel, former Emeritus Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge whose anthology "Writing for Antiquity" was presented to the Collection on Saturday, This selection from his Editorials written between 1957 and 1989 contains many fascinating stories including hints for lectures on how to cope should some prankster substitute a slide of a bearded but naked lady portrayed upside down on a large mushroom for the expected view of a Roman ruin. His description of Ley Hunters as "lunatic figures who dwell on the wilder shores of archaeology" might not be appreciated by another of our readers whose appearance Daniel so accurately summarised.

But all sorts of people are passionately interested in their locality. One such was the late Dr William Mortlock Palmer, who as a child was a regular reader in the Cambridge free library. He went on to become a Linton GP who devoted much time to the history and antiquity of the area, writing, lecturing, excavating and photographing. Early this week we were presented with some more of his photographs and negatives, including a series showing archaeological excavations in the 1920s with a picture of men, now dead, inspecting the bodies of others long dead.

Included with them were others taken by Percy Salmon a photographic prodigy, who started his hobby as a lad of 12 and in 1891 won the Cambridge Camera club cup for the best set of five photographs taken in and around the town. Later he studied in Paris and went on to travel the world with his camera, meeting Kings, Queens, Emperors and Statesmen and contributing to nearly all the English and American newspapers and magazines. In 1927 he retired to live in Melbourn where he worked with Palmer. The pictures just received are from his early period, taken between 1888 and 1890. The donor who had treasured them for so long had come to see the Cambridgeshire Heritage Showcase where - by pure good fortune - many of Salmon's pictures are featured on the continuous video presentation.

But such coincidences are everyday features in the Cambridgeshire Collection where past and present merge, time stands still but the hours speed away - as those who end up running for the bus testify

Reflections 1993 02 24

Returning from a short break in Kent I find the anticipated pile of new accessions, including one describing precisely the area that has been home during the week. Yet instead of calling it "Tonbridge" the author chose to call the location as "Sawston". I had been alerted to the novel following a talk at Sawston Hall some months ago but had only recently placed an order for "The longest journey" by E.H. Forster. The book itself was first published in 1907 and is described as his most difficult, most personal novel; rich in its complexity of symbolism ... relating to the philosophical ideals of turn-of-the-century Cambridge. The Penguin edition supplied contains nearly 30 pages of introduction and notes by Elizabeth Heine in which I find myself acknowledged - so why did I miss it when it came out in 1984?

The story describes undergraduate life, homosexuality and the Apostles which the Editor assures us is accurate and certainly the description of traffic chaos rings true - "Cambridge welcomed her sons with open drains, Petty Cury was up, so was Trinity Street, and navvies peered out of King's Parade, Here it was gas, there electric light, but everywhere something, and always a smell",

Without the introduction I should have been trying to reconcile the Sawston in the book with the village whose name Forster borrowed. When he was writing it was a settlement of some 400 houses providing homes for 855 people. By 1991 there were 2,661 dwellings housing 7,169 residents of whom 659 had changed houses within the previous year including 183 who were new to Cambridgeshire, The majority live in semi-detached houses, whilst 241 homes had no central heating and just 3 properties either lacked or shared a bath, shower or loo.

These detailed figures have just been compiled for all villages by the County Council Research Group from information collected at the 1931 census and are an example of the way information can be made available through the use of modern computer technology.

Litlington is another village that has changed - as is shown in a new booklet of photographs taken in 1944 and 1984, just published in aid of the church. Bill Dumas's pictures capture quiet village streets disfigured by air raid shelters and the occasional army jeep whilst those of Brian Maynard taken 40 years later show how many of the historic thatched cottages had been replaced with much less distinctive - though doubtless more comfortable - dwellings.

The Cambridgeshire Local History Society are also engaging in a village Photographic Survey, repeating the project carried out by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society some 60 years ago. For their registration fee of £10 participants are supplied with copies of the old

pictures and an Ordnance Survey map of 1927. They have to locate the site of the original photo and take a modern view from the same angle. This fascinating exercise provides hours of detective work and the resulting pictures are filed alongside the originals. Girton and Quoy are amongst the village already surveyed but many remain to be undertaken and volunteers can contact the co-ordinator, Gillian Rushworth, through the Cambridgeshire Collection where the Cambridge Antiquarian Society's pictures are currently housed alongside our own. One word of caution - sometimes the original photographer did not remember which village he was in when he took his picture and - as with Forster's "Sawston" - the unwary may be misled,

"The longest journey" by E. M Forster , Penguin, 1988 £5.39; "Littlington views 1944 and 1984" obtainable from Peter Griffiths,
CAS Girton ii.7 W.24.6.J9 30345 Y.Saw.K15 621 B.And.K01 2014

Reflections 1993 03 03

Just occasionally the items we add to the Cambridgeshire Collection are reprints we have ourselves commissioned from items in our stock. In this category are a number of views first published by Rudolph Ackermann in his "History of the university of Cambridge, its Colleges, Halls and Public Buildings" in 1815. Born in Saxony Ackermann practiced as a saddler and coachbuilder in various European cities before setting up a print shop in the Strand in 1795. Here he established a lithographic press which issued an astonishing series of illustrated works. He commissioned a talented team of illustrators and having achieved success with an Oxford volume then turned his attention to Cambridge with two volumes containing some 64 topographical views. They remain amongst the most attractive coloured illustrations of the town and its colleges & we have reproduced four scenes together with another depicting contemporary students.

Perhaps the most striking is the view of Trumpington Street and Pembroke College which has been adopted as the poster for the Heritage Showcase. This includes details of sheep being driven along the street whilst hens drink from the water in the channels beside the road — part of the scheme to provide running water in Cambridge which still bears the name of one of its benefactors, Thomas Hobson. The buildings beyond Pembroke college chapel were rebuilt in Victorian times whilst those on the opposite side of the street were swept away for the Fitzwilliam Museum,

This is complemented by a second view looking into town from Peterhouse, the oldest of the colleges, founded in 1284 by Hugh de Balsham. Bishop of Ely. Once more livestock are prominent whilst the background has been since changed by the erection of Emmanuel Congregational chapel & the Pitt Press.

Clare college forms the subject of a further two prints, one of which shows the most famous of all Cambridge prospects - the view from the Backs, though King's college chapel itself is largely obscured by trees the old bridge may be seen on the right of the view.

The other is a reminder of the commercial importance of the River with a line of barges being pulled towards the Mill Pool by a horse which is forced to be driven down the centre of the river, there being no towpath on either bank. The numerous bridges also provided a hindrance to navigation & the leading barge has had to lower its tall mast to allow the boat to pass beneath them. Watermen are shown pushing with their "spreads" to keep the barges in line,

If the buildings themselves are unchanging the character of the time is captured in the fifth print which depicts various classes of students. Two are Fellow-Commoners, privileged members of the University who could dine with the college Fellows and enjoy other distinctions. Those who were the younger sons of nobility — as here depicted — were entitled

to wear a hat instead of the university cap and collar. The two, from Emmanuel and Trinity are shown with a "Nobleman", the eldest son of a Peer whose money and influence ensured him an Honorary Degree after just two years

Reflections 1993 03 10

Through a recent conversation with a remarkable nonagenarian we have been able to add much to our knowledge of two men who played an important part in Cambridge's photographic history.

Frederick Sanderson was born in July 1856 and in his younger days worked as a cabinet maker and wood and stone carver in Bridge Street but later combined this with his developing interest in photography. He became especially interested in architectural pictures, building up a magnificent collection of negatives of college views. But when he realised that existing cameras were not adequate for the task he designed his own which he patented in January 1895. In May 1897 five photographic experts came to Cambridge to test the claims of the new camera and found them proved. The tests were fully reported in the Press and the camera - named Sanderson after its inventor - became famous,

In 1896 Sanderson met Charles E Goodrich, already well-known as a professional photographer working under Palmer Clarke in the old-established studios in Post Office Terrace. Together they managed the studio with Goodrich devoting his attention to the portrait side of the business.

Between them they enhanced the reputation of the firm and photographed many thousand folk including country vicars and university professors. Goodrich used to write to famous people to offer free sittings - including the Master of Trinity J.J. Thompson remembered as looking just like a tramp shuffling by but who would stop and look in window on the way. Other sitters were Lord Rutherford - Goodrich said he looked like a farmer - very nervous of the camera and difficult to photograph, Sir Arthur Quiller Couch, F.R. Leavis, Donald McClean - remembered as a very smart, handsome young man but later unmasked as a spy - and Arthur Hamilton, the Christ's college man who was chosen as the model for the Cambridgeshire war Memorial at the end of Station Road

All were shown into the studio where Goodrich used to pull strings and bring white net curtains over the roof to soften the natural light by which he worked. To ensure the sitters remained still for the long exposure their necks would be clamped in a half-moon shaped contraption. Once the negative was taken there would begin a process of developing and retouching - disguising any imperfection in photo or sitter such as spots or moles.

The negatives were filed - 50,000 are now catalogued and indexed in the Cambridgeshire Collection - but the firm cannibalised older glass negatives washing off the original image and then cutting them to a smaller size to fit their own cameras before recoating and reusing them

But Goodrich's real love was colour photography and since there was no colour film this involved painting over faint black-and-white prints - a technique which he devised himself and used with great effect in portrait and landscape works. His skill was much admired both then and now

The firm continued to trade successfully until the death of Mr Sanderson in 1929 but then went downhill. When ill health finally overtook him Goodrich sold up to two young women photographers, Lettice Ramsey & Helen Muspratt -and the rest is history

R.Tho.K1 42339 R.Rut.K3 31903

Reflections 1993 03 17

New things can be found in a variety of ways, It is now some years since we had a visit from a man researching a television programme about an Indian mathematician. As the Cambridgeshire Collection devotes little attention to the University and its studies I felt it unlikely that we could be of much assistance, but as he explained, much was known already about this side of Srinivasa Ramanujan, who had been persuaded to leave India to share his knowledge with the academics of Trinity College in 1914 and had gone on to revolutionise mathematics in the five years he had been here.

But it was the events of those five years that Christopher Sykes was wanting to elaborate – and which formed part of his documentary “Letters from an Indian clerk” in 1986. Now the story has again been researched and published in a fascinating book entitled “The man who knew infinity: the life of the genius Ramanujan” by Robert Kanigel

The Indian scholar had found Cambridge far different from his native Madras, For one thing the nights were much colder and he described how he slept with his overcoat on, wrapped in a shawl - yet his friend found the bed well-provided with blankets, but nobody had told the brilliant scholar how to pull them back and slip underneath them. Such alien customs were just part of the trauma of life at Trinity college during the Great War when the open cloisters in Neville's Court were turned into a hospital, with wooden boards laid on the stone floors to keep the beds level, whilst lights strung from the ceiling turned the south cloister into an operating theatre. Whilst the college echoed to the moans of the wounded other parts of the town echoed to the tramping of fit young feet as the colleges, now bereft of undergraduates, devoted their buildings not to teaching Latin and Greek but bombing and shelling, becoming training grounds for Officer Cadets.

The fear of air raids meant roads were blocked to prevent the approach of motors which might pinpoint the town to passing Zeppelins, whilst street lights were extinguished and meals taken by the light of candles. Yet the repartee of High Table, enhanced by visiting officers and scholars was not for Ramanujan whose religion prohibited the consumption of meat and various other items of food, including eggs, onions or tomatoes. So in his tiny alcove he would prepare a meal of rice, yogurt, fruits, rasam and sambhar, a thick spicy, potato-laced vegetable stew - when of course such ingredients were available in a Cambridge gripped in food rationing.

Much of the domestic suffering seems to be echoed in R, Douglas Brown's latest book, "East Anglia 1944" is the penultimate volume in a series charting the local impact of the Second World War. Based largely on newspaper accounts, which were censored during the war, it records many of the events - such as the planning for D-Day (though without mentioning the meetings in Cambridge) and although the Soham ammunition train explosion is accorded appropriate space and put into context amongst other such incidents which were occurring elsewhere there is no mention that the US servicemen sent to repair the track and restore the essential bomb supplies had to be diverted from the dedication of the Madingley Military Cemetery. Or that this was accorded such publicity on the day that the first landings were to have taken place — pure coincidence, or part of the programme of disinformation to keep enemy eyes on Cambridge whilst troops were in fact massing on the South Coast?

The man who knew infinity: a life of the genius Ramanujan by Robert Kanigel. Abacus 1992
East Anglia 1944 by R. Douglas Brown. Dalton, 1992

Y.Soh.K44 3029, 3033 H.Eas.K14 2033 Blunderbuss Apr 1918

Reflections 1993 03 24

IN AUGUST 1742, at Royston, workmen were erecting a bench in the Mercat House for the women who sold their wares in the cheese and butter market.

As they were putting up a post they discovered a hole in the ground about 16ft deep. Examination revealed what seemed to be steps leading down into the gloom, and a boy was sent into it. Then a thin man followed with lighted candle.

By now the word had spread and people flocked to what they were sure would be a hoard of hidden treasure. The chamber was filled with earth and rubbish which they set about removing, raising 200 loads of soil. Antiquarians were soon on the scene to witness not "som very Grate Trashur" but only a "Scull and some Hewman bones ... som think it was for a place of Worship in the Earliest times of Chrestyanaty . . . but all think it a Grate Curiosity".

A great curiosity it has remained, especially when it was found to be covered with religious figures and symbols. Sylvia Beamon, an archaeologist and chairman of the Cambridgeshire Local History Council, has become an established expert in underground structures, investigating tunnels, ice-houses and caves around the world.

For 25 years she has researched her home-town cavern and has now published the results in *The Royston Cave, used by Saints or Sinners?* In over 300 pages she explores similarities with other carving and graffiti in Britain and Europe, including the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem, and traces the background to the Knights' Templar and their connection with the area — including Duxford, Waterbeach and Wilbraham. Local families such as the De Veres and Mandevilles are also researched in her most comprehensive and well-illustrated history.

Sadly, the cave itself is suffering rapid deterioration and soon all that may be left is a man-made hole in the ground, with the carvings gone. Sylvia's book must ensure that this never happens and that the mystery will survive for centuries to come.

When Sarah Gordon chose Robinson Crusoe Island as the site for her painting expedition one foggy morning, the result was not a picture of Fen Causeway Bridge but the discovery of the body of a murdered undergraduate.

Elena Weaver had left her college that morning for her usual jog along King's Parade, down Mill Lane and across Coe Fen, but this time she was not to complete it. Who killed her and why are questions that involve Cambridge police in an investigation which takes them into the rarefied world of the university.

All is revealed in *For the sake of Elena* by Elizabeth George, which introduces St Stephen's College — situated between Trinity and Trinity Hall. St Stephen's may not actually exist but Matthews Hall, Lehman Hall and Radcliffe College certainly do — in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

We were pleased to acquire a photographic guide to our namesake, from the collection of a Cambridge alderman who was presented with it on a visit nearly 30 years ago.

The photographs reveal that the American Cambridge's architecture cannot match the splendour of ours, but several of its buildings might transfer to our side of the Atlantic with ease.

The Royston Cave, used by Saints or Sinners? by Sylvia P Beamon. CortNey Publications, Ashwell, 1993. £39.50.

For the sake of Elena by Elizabeth George. Bantam Books, 1992. £4.99.

Reflections 1993 03 31

A clutch of publications seem to glory in the surrounding open spaces - Walks in East Cambridgeshire or on the Harcamlow Way, Cycle routes round the fens. Random Ramblings by Richard Spendlove, "They led the way" by Michael Wadsworth and the Cambridge Green Belt Local Plan.

The Green Belt plan is the latest result of years of discussion and debate, going back to the 1950s when restrictions were imposed on manufacturing industries around Cambridge so as to protect what Prof Holford called the "only true University town" left in England. This new report defines the policies now in place to preserve the local environment - restrictions on development or on mineral extraction together with plans to allow historic buildings or large country houses now no longer required for their original purpose to find a new role. Some of the proposals give suggestions for the creation of new footpaths or bridleways, such as opening up a disused railway line from Fen Ditton to Anglesey Abbey to provide both walkers and cyclers with a new route into the countryside, away from congested roads.

The Ramblers Association have been doing precisely that for a number of years and numerous readers have come into the Cambridgeshire Collection to enquire about "The Harcamlow Way" that they find mentioned on maps. They believe this to be an ancient route but in fact it was created only in 1980 to link Cambridge and Harlow by a figure-of-eight walk, mainly using tracks and green lanes. In 1989 a second edition of the 53-page guide was issued but only spotted by us within the last week, though the original copy has been in stock some years.

We are however more up-to-date with "Walks in East Cambridgeshire", a descriptive and illustrated guide to 30 paths ranging from 1.5 to 17 miles just published by the Cambridge group of the Ramblers Association. Clear maps illustrate each route covering parishes from Mepal to Kirtling. Thus from the fens near Prick willow to the wooded countryside around Ashley walkers can wander without getting lost.

For those who prefer two wheels to two feet the County Council have issued a guide to cycle routes around the fens with suggestions based on Ely, March and Wisbech, opening up such delights as Wardy Hill, Black Bank, Prickwillow and Jew House Drove to intrepid explorers.

Richard Spendlove, the BBC Radio Cambridgeshire presenter is also given to Random Ramblings, - the title of one of two cassettes of his poems, largely suggested by listeners comments on his late-night programmes. His "Lady of the evening" features on "Further Ramblings" as does the policewoman who fined him for driving over St Ives bridge - and then phoned in to his programme. Other themes include Soap operas, the car in which he did his courting and his first home - so popular that it is included on both tapes. Not all the subjects are complimentary however - Judges are castigated for "foolishly misadministering the law", Cambridge planners for making motorists persona not grata in the town and the military authorities for sending 17-year olds to the Gulf War - "a disgrace to the point of obscenity".

The exploits of some of the young men who did go to war is told in "They led the way", the story of Pathfinder Squadron 156, who guided planes on raids to Berlin, the Rhur and Hamburg from various local bases. Its author is now Vicar of Haddenham and the publisher, Highgate, uses as its logo a representation of a farm gate - very similar at first sight to a postcard view of Linton we have recently been given. This shows a "clapper-stile" which is

cleverly hinged to allow walkers to pass relatively unhindered -just one of the many unexpected delights to be discovered in the Cambridgeshire countryside.

"Cambridge Green belt Local Plan", £20, & "Cycling in the fens", £1.50 produced by Cambridgeshire County Council

"Walks in East Cambridgeshire" by Cambridge Ramblers Association, £2,40

"The Harcamlow Way" written & published by Fred Matthews & Harry Britten, £2,50

"Random Ramblings" and "Further Ramblings" cassettes by Richard Spendlove, from BBC Radio Cambridgeshire

"They led the way" by Michael P. Wadsworth, Highgate publications, £9,00

CAS. Coveney iv.8 Y.Ive.K0 1175 Y.Mep.K0 31631 Y.Kir.J00 150 Y.Lin.K1 7770a

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Reflections 1993 04 07

Thousands of people have passed some of their time at Cambridge; many have gone on to great things and have written their memories - or friends have written memoirs of them. Only comparatively few find their way into the Cambridgeshire Collection but a few weeks ago we were given the opportunity to select items from the library of a late Cambridge Alderman and then yesterday a new volume arrived in the post.

Scanning the volumes prior to cataloguing the eye alights on one or two unexpected items - such as the compliments slip from the Editor of the Cambridge Daily News included in "Not only a Dean" — the reminiscences of D.H.S. Cranage published in 1951. Cranage could trace his ancestors back to the twelfth century and was to make his own reputation within the University Extension Lectures department, travelling the country - sometimes in appalling conditions — railways carriages being unheated except by the occasional foot warmers, whilst on one occasion at Grantham the lecture hall was a corrugated-iron hall, the temperature little above freezing and his students wore fur rugs to keep warm. His book covers the opening of Stuart House once the new Board of Extra-Mural Studies had been established in 1925. In 1927 he arrived home from an American tour to find his servant had sorted his letters into those requiring attention and a pile of circulars he didn't need to be troubled with. Idly glancing at the circulars before bedtime he spotted one had the word "Prime Minister" at the bottom - it was an invitation to accept nomination for the post of Dean of Norwich!,

It was in 1927 that a friend produced a memoir of George Leigh Mallory, the mountaineer who perished on Everest on his fifth attempt on the summit three years earlier. Mallory had spent his undergraduate days at Magdalene college where he developed a passion for rowing and swimming. One hot night he insisted on diving from a punt below Magdalene Bridge but then refused to climb back in. His friends punted off, anxious to be back at their college before the gates closed at 10 o'clock but Mallory elected to swim home and enter via the Fellow's Garden. Sadly the doors were already locked and in desperation, and stark naked, he swam to Quayside and sprinted, dripping, across the bridge to the main Gate. But before the Porter could open he was spotted by a Policeman. How Mallory soothed the constable's outraged sensibilities at such a show of nakedness and persuaded him to see the humour of the situation will never be known.

Both rowing and education form part of the most recent accession, "To independence and beyond" is the memoir of a Colonial and Commonwealth civil servant who studied at Trinity but then went to teach in Northern Rhodesia, progressing to the Ministry of Education in Lusaka and playing a major part in the integration of African and non-African educational systems. Later he joined the Commonwealth Secretariat and undertook several special assignments for the Secretary-General. All this makes the book most interesting reading but there is another, special side to the story. The author, Peter Snelson devotes a chapter to his

schooldays at the Cambridge & County High School for Boys under Headmaster Arthur Mayne - known to his pupils as "Tish". This was wartime with air-aid shelters dug across the playgrounds to which they would rush when the sirens sounded - though at home in Victoria Road they now largely disregarded the regular warnings. His father, Briscoe Snelson, was manager at Norman Bradley's pawnshop opposite St John's College where suits, worn on Sundays were pawned on Monday to be reclaimed once pay-day came. But Briscoe is better remembered for his involvement in the local rowing scene - as administrator, not rower, following a horrendous wound in the Great War and of course for his photography of fen and river scenes. Now Peter has completed his own memoirs of an active life there are plans to spend time selecting and sorting some of the photographs now in the Cambridgeshire Collection to produce a volume of pictures of the Cam & Ouse as a tribute to his father

"Not only a year ; bring the reminiscences of D.H.S; Cranage", was published by The Faith Press in 1952

"George Leigh Mallory ; a memoir" by David Pye, Oxford University Press, 1927

"To independence & beyond ; or the memoirs of a colonial & Commonwealth civil servant" by Peter Snelson, Radcliffe Press, April 1993 £19,95

B.Qua.K3 20634 B.Mag.K1 34629 I.N.K0 4985

Reflections 1993 04 14

Some weeks seem harder than others: sometimes we get a day when nothing goes straightforwardly & no matter how many books or pictures we have catalogued the reader will always need something that is either still going through the system, or is particularly difficult to answer.

Then there will be weeks which for some reason have gone mad - giving the same talk three times in five days - the 1947 fen floods at Newmarket on the Tuesday, Heritage Showcase on the Wednesday and Burwell on Friday. Or a mixture of events that come together - hence "Cambridge Photographers 1844-1900" at Netherhall Monday, the Cambridgeshire Local History Society in the Showcase on Tuesday followed next day, same venue by a talk on "Home Front 1939-45". Thank goodness it was the Stretham School Play on Thursday evening and a one-night break before Linton on Saturday on "Cambridgeshire during the Great War.

It was returning from this latter talk that I hit the roadworks at Fen Ditton. These were not especially troublesome but just at the moment there do seem a lot of them. Cherry Hinton High Street being traffic-calmed, Victoria Road one-day, Histon Road one way, Milton Road closed - not to mention the major road resurfacing on the road to Huntingdon & the M11.

Thus speculating on recent accessions it seems appropriate to record "The ride of Hereward the Wake and his mare Swallow, ridden by 'The Skipper' without 'The Boy'". This was a six-page illustrated article which was published in "The Graphic" for September 6th 1890 - something impossible to find except by pure chance. Written by C.T. Staniland it seeks to describe a circular journey from Ely riding on a Humber tricycle. He set off over decent roads via Stuntney to Soham with its "paintable thatched cottages" but then to Worlington the road became awful - mere loose gravel heaps - and on to Mildenhall and Weeting Castle, Newmarket and its cowboys (imitation) Deadwood coach (ditto). Red Indians (ditto).

No Humber could travel the Devils Ditch but the road to Cambridge was little better - bad muddy roads and then taking the wrong turn road through stony, rutted cross roads and heavy rain to Six Mile Bottom. As Staniland continued his journey he found road conditions little improved - the Roman Road with deep cart tracks making even walking irksome, the road

around Trumpington sticky after the rain - though the section around Coton was decent and dry - "no broken luggage carrier, no rain, dust- or wind, and a perfectly charming country",

Madingley was buried in trees but the road from Dry Drayton to Lolworth impassable so he diverted to the main Huntingdon road - which, unlike modern motorists, he found quite perfect

So on goes the journey, recording the road reports like some modern radio announcer, via Holywell - "the back of the world, dilapidated cottages, yellow-grey mud-walls were dropping in flakes from their framing, the thatches were rotting and peeling away from the rafters, mud and mildew, damp and dreariness, rust and rottenness seem to have got the upper hand", To St Ives and Earith and then the final stretch along the Causeway to the Isle of Ely at Haddenham over good surface, stones and brickbats, "passing one or two lonely farmhouses in a dreary level waste of fen",

Staniland reminisced about the attempt by William the Conqueror to attack Hereward across such desolate landscapes in the pre-drainage days but even he could not have imagined that route in 1947 when the land was under water to the depth of several feet - but for the moment I've had enough of the floods - if you want any more you must read it yourself and fortunately there are two excellent booklets that will enable you to do just that

"The Battle of the Banks ; the story of the 1947 fen floods", reprinted by Cambridgeshire Libraries for £1,50

"Harvest Home ; the official story of the floods & gales of 1947" reprinted by Providence Press, £4,50

Y.Soh.K1 40751 Y.Mad.K1 15774 Y.Tru.K0 33286 Y.Cot.K1 14734 H33/3

Reflections 1993 04 21

It's something I'd always meant to do, but somehow never got around to. Then our Parish Council decided to take up the offer to have the village rephotographed and the pack arrived on my desk. Photocopies of nearly 40 views of the village taken or collected by members of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society some 60 years ago, together with a copy of the Ordnance Survey for 1926 and a modern colour print film. Of course I could have delegated it to another member of the Council - there would have been no shortage of volunteers - but there has to be some perks as Chairman.

All I have to do is identify where the original picture was taken and then take a modern equivalent from the same spot. It helps having my own copies of the pictures already but even the most novice newcomer would surely identify Top Street. True the pub sign has now gone, as have the buildings in the background on the left-hand side - and we now have street lights - and pavements. Did I ought to wait until all the cars which now line the street have disappeared, or arrange for four young ladies to stand where their great-grandmothers did. What about the lighting - what time of day did the original postcard photographer visit - and when was it anyway?

Another picture is captioned "Cambridge Road" - but it's Wilburton Road, then we have "Main Street" - that's High Street, and "Ely Road" - that's High Street too, whilst "Hall Corner" - well that was of course the Mission Hall - the black building on the left - whilst the pond was filled in and is now the Jubilee Garden on the Newmarket Road - but which the map calls "Military Road" and the photographer "Dimmock's Cote Road" when he snapped the Malt and Hops Inn - no longer an inn, or thatched and the old barn next door has long since gone ...

Another picture was taken in 1928 in Chapel Lane. The old thatched houses have now disappeared, though a bit of the wall remains, as does the corrugated sheeting and the posts which block the lane to traffic -although they have now moved further East. But its sneaky of him to have taken pictures of the back of the cottages ... What of picture 14 - the cottages in Reads Street that had running water - everytime it rained the water ran through the roof. They were burned down when a spark from a bonfire in the garden of the big house across the street caught the thatch and the bungalow was built to replace it ...

And so we progress the village, locating angles, dodging showers, waiting for the sun to come from behind the cloud, and noticing how far the old churchyard wall used to jut out into the street, how the cottage at Plantation Gate has lost one of its dormer windows but kept the self-same telegraph pole outside it, how the windmill used to be visible from one side of the village to the other and how the farmer has replaced the old walnut tree that used to stand outside the farmhouse which has itself now gone.

Across the county other villagers are undertaking similar surveys on behalf of the Cambridgeshire Local History Society. They have paid their £10 registration fee and received their starter pack of pictures and map. They too are walking streets and seeing sights with a new eye, are talking to house owners amazed to see their property was once so different - and to learn that they can obtain copies of the old pictures. It really is a piece of Detective work with notes to be written up so that both old and new pictures, lodged in the Cambridgeshire Collection, can be recorded for benefit, of future historians. It is fiendishly difficult, frustrating and fascinating - and if anybody can identify picture 9 1 should be most grateful!

Contact Gillian Rushworth of the Cambridgeshire Local History Society Photographic Group care of the Cambridgeshire Collection. The registration fee includes a years membership of the Society which organises lectures and excursions and publishes a Journal, The Cambridge Antiquarian Society's photographic survey is deposited in the Cambridgeshire Collection alongside our other 400,000 pictures

CAS Stretham v11 v12 iii.1 iii.5

Reflections 1993 04 28

Local government is once more undergoing reorganisation with the various Councils formulating their own proposals as to the best means of progression into the twenty-first century, One area of responsibility they are unlikely to find devolved upon them is that of Education, since current thoughts seem to revolve around the removal of this high-spending area of service from local to national government

Yet just 40 years ago the Isle of Ely County Council was undertaking a dramatic programme of school building and expansion, an indication of which has become particularly apparent through the recent accessioning of a series of programmes of official openings. These also underline the work of Councillors and Aldermen such as J.W. Payne who as Chairman of the Education Committee found himself presiding at a series of such events.

Thus in May 1953 he was introducing the local M.P., Major (later Sir Harry) Legge-Bourke at St Audrey's county primary infant school, Ely, Newly constructed under the Isle's Development Plan for primary and secondary education following the 1944 Education Act, the building had been planned to be airy, well designed and spacious, a place of which the children could be proud and where they would find beauty, dignity and order. Pre-stressed concrete beams saved 94% of the steel normally used - responding to Government pressure for the greatest economy in the use of steel in buildings. There was central heating, artificial

lighting by electricity, a plug and socket in every classroom as well as that most important and modern innovation, a socket for a wireless loudspeaker. Each class was designed to accommodate 40 children.

The formula for both school and opening ceremony was repeated the following month at Burnsfield School, Chatteris with another Infants School at Wisbech following in October 1954 - this boasting the country's first electric control unit in the kitchen - whilst one year later Payne was again officiating at an official opening, this time at Westwood county junior school March, catering for children from seven to eleven years.

But the Isle was conscious of the new need for every child over 11 to have education without cost to the parents with the opening just two weeks earlier of the Sir Harry Smith secondary school at Whittlesey. In this brickmaking area of the county boys and girls were to be trained for employment in industry and commerce with a special book-keeping room as well as provision for needlework, although a school garden and ample provision for instruction in animal husbandry was incorporated. By now technology had developed and the omnipresent loudspeaker point now had an individual volume control with a central radio in the secretary's office incorporating a microphone.

Children with especial learning difficulties claimed Alderman Payne's particular attention a year later with the conversion of the Manor House at Wilburton - originally designed in 1851 by Pugin, the architect responsible for the interior redecoration of the House of Commons, Few places could offer a more delightful, healthy and unspoilt environment for either day or boarding pupils with particular care given to safety - with fire fighting apparatus supplemented by a deep well and large pond, and each member of staff supplied with a high-powered hand lamp in case of emergency,

Then in October 1957 Payne was back in Ely, once more introducing a VIP -The Duchess of Gloucester - performing the ceremony at the new High School for Girls on Downham Road. Originally established in 1905 in Bedford House it provided Grammar School education not only for the Isle but also for northern parts of Cambridgeshire - an example of local councillors working together for the benefit of their residents,

pics

Ely High school class

Wilburton exterior from Avenue

Whittlesey needlework room

Chatteris classroom

c.36.6

Reflections 1993 05 05

After a number of years absence the Cambridgeshire Local History Society has revived its annual publication. The new "Review" covers a variety of diverse topics, as well as news and notes about the Group and its activities .

Tom Doig, formerly Curator of the Cambridge Folk Museum, has contributed a most interesting study of a largely untold aspect of local life - bare-knuckle boxing. He examines a contest between Owen Smith and "Brighton Bill" (William Phelps) which took place on Melbourn Heath in March 1838. The site had been carefully chosen to be near the junction of three counties for such contests were illegal and should the event be raided by magistrates from Cambridgeshire it would be a matter of moments for the protagonists and onlookers to step across into Hertfordshire or Essex.

AS at some modern-day "Rave" some three thousand spectators assembled at Noon's Folly to await the pugilists in what was expected to be a bloody contest - for Brighton Bill had already been involved in two previously fatal fights, whilst Swift had killed three of his opponents. Yet both were educated and well-mannered, one had written books and the other had a reputation as an elegant dresser.

In due course the contest commenced and was well matched - at least for the first 60 rounds. Both were knocked down several times and revived by their Seconds, But by round 80 Brighton Bill's face had been severely lacerated, his body and legs terribly mutilated. Nevertheless he fought on for another five rounds, before finally falling senseless after over an hour and a half of fighting. He was picked up and carried off to The Wheatsheaf at Barkway, whilst the crowds dispersed, the pickpockets totalled their takings & the tradesmen counted their profits and planned a rematch

This was not to be for "Brighton Bill" was failing to make a recovery and died three days after the fight. The inquest found his opponent guilty of manslaughter and warrants were issued for the arrest of both boxer and seconds. Doig relates the subsequent search and trial - and tells how still on dark Spring nights the Barkway churchyard and upper rooms of the Wheatsheaf Inn can be heard the ghostly groaning of a beaten boxer

Other articles cover the Land Settlement Association at Fen Drayton where land was made available to unemployed miners and steelworkers during the hardship of the 1930s - and tells the story of musical boxes based on Alan Wyatt's excellent private collection at Landbeach. Also related are the problems of schooldays at Swavesey in 1906 where the lack of such basic facilities as drinking water was not considered too serious since there were two pumps just 250 yards away. Nor were lessons too disrupted by the loud "Tick ...Tock" from the school bell in the belfry outside, interspersed by the rumble and clanking which preceded the clanging strokes on each hour ... just one reminder of past times contained in this most interesting "Review"

Cambridgeshire Local History Society Review for 1992 is free to member

Y.Mel.K05 18290 Y.Swav.K0 35718 Y.Dra.K39 40123 # c.38 : boxing

Reflections 1993 05 12

Roger Law was born within sight of Ely Cathedral, a member of a Littleport building family who, he claims, did everything at breakneck speed and if there was a corner to be cut they cut it. Working hours were extended as necessary and nothing must be allowed to affect construction. Thus when Uncle Bill, had a heart attack whilst working on a roof he was lowered to ground on a "dodgy" pulley since the good one was being used to bring bricks up.

His childhood days in the fenland town include memories of being forced to watch a snowstorm called "The Coronation" on his grandfather's television set - one of the first in the area - only glimpsing occasionally the features of his new Queen, whose face he was later to know so well.

Law's schooldays were distinguished by his misbehaviour - he was caned regularly until the form master got bored with hitting him - and then at 15 transferred to the Cambridge School of Art where he met the son of a Park Street grocer who had learned lettering though the frequency with which he had to repaint the "L" in the sign over his father's shop. Peter Fluck and Law quickly learned they could earn money by waiting on table for the undergraduates at Trinity College and that University magazines would provide an outlet for their artistic talent - designing the cover for the 1961 May Week issue of "The Cambridge Review". They also

staged their own "Anti-Ball" at a house in the "demure village" of Shelford - "the greatest party in Shelford's entire history" - but the police broke it up. It had been intended as a fundraiser for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, a cause which they had embraced - for with so many US bomber bases in the area what chance would Littleport have of survival in any attack,

The partnership has flourished and developed and the book relates the trials and tribulations leading to the creation of the "Spitting Image" characters, a concept developed in a former Methodist Temperance chapel just around the corner from Law's Cambridge home.

"He could turn politics ... into a kaleidoscope of fun ; pomposity is punctured, lunacy is made sane, sanity lunatic" - not an epitaph for Law but for Christopher Cornford, whose death was announced recently. The son of a Cambridge professor he was a life-long supporter of Left-wing politics, joined the Communist Party and was beaten up by Moseley's Blackshirts. His brother, John, was killed fighting for the republican side in the Spanish Civil war. On his retirement as Professor at the Royal College of Art in 1979 Cornford turned his artistic skills to the support of the Cambridge anti-nuclear and environmental movements. Now a selection of his caricatures and protest drawings have been issued by the Cambridge CND in a booklet which records the development of the peace movement since its revival in the early 1980s, including an account of the anti-cruise missile protest at Molesworth,

So by coincidence we have two books devoted to the work of caricaturists, each with strong Cambridge connections, both involved in the anti-nuclear movement - and both featuring Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher

"A nasty piece of work ; the art and graft of Spitting image" by Roger Law is published by Booth-Clibborn Editions whilst "Drawn to Protest - drawings by Christopher Cornford" is published by Cambridge Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament at £2.95

Reflections 1993 05 19

Two recent accessions have Provided an insight into the role of women at different times, and in different ways, Sue Slack has compiled a selection of stories from the Cambridge Chronicle of 1896 which make a fascinating snapshot of attitudes and activities at that time when the movement to allow women to be awarded degrees was reaching its height - various other Universities having already opened their doors without restrictions - though the Provost of Kings was opposed and Bishop Selwyn expressed his concern "How were they to prevent women being pulled down by contact with the rougher and coarser nature of men. There was a fear women would be degraded, therefore they must be kept on a pedestal", The proposals were rejected

Meanwhile the paper carried advertisements for kitchen maid, governess or as cook at Ely workhouse – wages £24 per year plus rations but no beer. Others were driven to crime - Eliza Watts who stole 2 rabbits worth 2/- from Albert Langford, a fishmonger of East Road claimed her husband had been out of work and she had been unable to procure food, whilst another murdered her illegitimate child with a pair of folding nail scissors, Amongst the deaths recorded was that of Elizabeth Quinn - unable to untie the knot in the laces of her corset she had applied a lighted taper to burn the lace but set fire to her clothes and died of burns.

Lady Cromwell, grandmother of Oliver, however died after being bewitched by Alice Samuel - the same old lady whose very presence caused the children of Robert Throckmorton to fall into fits - which ailments became more pronounced whenever there was an audience to watch

the girls behaviour. The Primitive medicine of the 1590s could detect no other cause for the girls actions and surely Alice did look just like a witch was supposed to look like with her wrinkled face, hairy lip and squeaking voice. Scholars came from Cambridge to question the Warboys woman who was brought from her house to live with the Throckmortons, for only then would the fits subside. The agony of the elderly lady and of her husband and daughter can be glimpsed in the pages of Moira Tatem's account of "The witches of Warboys" as one by one the family were accused and forced to describe the imps the children said they could see. After years of such accusations even Alice could find no other explanation and saw no reason to defend the husband who had maltreated her, though steadfastly denying that her own daughter had any involvement with the Throckmorton girls' rantings. All three were hanged at Huntingdon in April 1563 and an account of the trial published shortly afterwards by the Judge who sentenced them to death and who also took pains to ensure that no alternative pamphlets were issued.

The story of the Warboys witches is now presented with extracts from the 1593 account and with a reasoned commentary on what one author described in 1795 as "The insanity and mischief of vulgar superstitions", Moira Tatem also draws comparisons with the recent Orkney child abuse case and the readiness of normally decent people to pronounce guilt without a shred of evidence.

REFLECTIONS 1993 05 26 TO FIND

Reflections 1993 06 02

THE ANNIVERSARY of the 1953 Coronation will have many people seeking out their souvenirs, and copies of programmes are regular additions to the Collection.

The Cambridge Coronation Committee, under the chairmanship of Alderman Capt A C Taylor, and representatives of the WVS, Rotary Club and Chamber of Commerce put together a fun-packed time.

Sub-committees were appointed to discuss sports, variety entertainment, teas for elderly and blind people, fireworks and decorated vehicles, and the Cambridge Daily News offered a prize of £100 for the best decorated private house.

Sunday, May 31 saw a United Services and British Legion service on Parker's Piece, where the bands of RAF Oakington and Upwood were joined by the Cambridge Sea Cadets, Cambridgeshire Regiment, British Legion and Salvation Army and Chatteris Town Silver Prize bands.

Over 2,500 people assembled, standards flying, in front of Hobbs Pavilion.

Monday saw the opening of a cricket match between Cambridge University and Cambridgeshire county clubs but it was Coronation Day itself, June 2, that was to be the main day on which the sun needed to shine.

At 9 am disabled people in the Guildhall and Corn Exchange were able to watch the televised ceremony on sets supplied by University Cameras or Messrs J Ward of East Road, the former installing a giant 4ft screen using specialised receivers working much like a cinema. On Jesus Green from 11 am there would be a demonstration of flying by the Cambridge Model Aircraft Club, followed in the afternoon by children's sports, fancy dress, six-a-side football and trick riding by the Cambridge Centaur Motor Cycle club.

Elsewhere Joan Metcalfe would stage a grand variety concert, the parade of decorated vehicles would be judged on Midsummer Common and the Astrals All Star Dance Band would perform on Christ's Pieces.

Plans must, however, be subject to the whims of the weather and cold blustery winds and heavy showers of almost wintry ferocity did their best to disrupt proceedings. They flapped the flags that flew in every main road and back street, including an American Stars and Stripes

Later in the afternoon conditions moderated somewhat and people began to venture from indoors, celebrating briefly and then dashing for shelter under trees.

The decorated vehicle parade comprised just two people and one vehicle. The fire brigade demonstration was cancelled, and dancing transferred to the Guildhall. Pubs, with licences extended to midnight, and the various cinemas did good trade.

Despite the weather people made it a day to remember and even the fireworks display managed to fizz among the drizzle.

Perhaps it was the weather that seems to have resulted in a surprising shortage of photographs.

Any other pictures, or memories, of Coronation Day would be welcome to add to the Collection

Reflections 1993 06 09

Items arrive in the Collection in various ways. Many we seek out by reading newspaper reviews, checking bibliographies, browsing through bookshops or just keeping an eye open. Readers will often bring in an odd pamphlet, perhaps some postcards they have found whilst clearing out, or a number of negatives discovered in an attic.

Occasionally we will be invited to cast an eye over a collection of material prior to it being sold through the book trade, when we both select items to buy for ourselves and also point out things which have an especial value or rarity.

Thus at 8pm one evening last week, having completed my part of a radio programme on the 1953 Coronation a little earlier than anticipated, I made my way to a flat in the East of the city to see the result of one man's enthusiasm over the last few years. To my amazement I was shown into a room overflowing with books and for the next one and a quarter hours pile after pile was placed in front of me,

Almost all of the titles I recognised, but did we have this particular edition and is the volume in better condition than the one we have filed - and which has been used - for so many years. By the time I left I had selected several dozen items to be checked against our own stock. It gives an opportunity to look again at familiar titles unread for years

"Cambridge from within" by Charles Tennyson was issued in 1913 and is an undergraduate's musings with little to commend it apart from the illustrations and his description of the streets "compact of shops and lodgings; tailors, hosiers, tobacconists, bootmakers, set their flagrant snares for youth in every alley" whilst through them clank "the two tiny creeping horse trams ... incongruous as reindeer sledges"

An alternative view is that contained in "Overture to Cambridge", a novel issued in 1936 by Joseph Gordon MacLeod which starts by publishing a formal declaration that the characters depicted have no connection with any living people and then goes on to satirise both traders and councillors. It is based around a Cambridge Mayor, don of St Peter's college, whose wife is killed in a car smash in Sidney Street. Newspaper sellers prospered, people stopped talking and even policemen on point duty asked for details.

Another record of police work is contained in a slim volume that I know we do not have. "Cam Courier" was produced for members of the borough force in 1945 to provide news for & of men then serving abroad. It is full of humour and in-jokes, poems and puzzles. One such appeared in the July issue and is well be worth repeating. It takes the form of an extract from a statement; "... and there was I standing in the middle of the road facing towards the town. that, is towards Market Hill. There was a Church on my right and a College on my left. I have beers staying in Cambridge for only a few days and don't know my way about , , ,", Where was he? Answer next week

Q.A1.K24 24201 T.H.K3 37338 Q.Ae.K1 34624 Tennyson Market Hill p.28

Reflections 1993 06 16

Whereas I can probably still remember most of the books we hold in the Collection other items provide more of a challenge. Thus amongst the material borrowed last week were a number of maps.

"Crutchley's county map of Cambridge for cyclists and tourists" folds into an attractive cover and once sold for 6d., Although undated it is distinctive and will be easy to check against our holdings, Ordnance Survey sheets I would hope we have complete but have borrowed a copy of the popular edition one-inch map of 1920 which covers the Ely area and a 1913 Quarter-inch to the mile sheet covering East Anglia from coast to Huntingdon just to make sure.

One that will cause some complications is a ½ -inch to the mile map which stretches from London to Nottingham and from Rugby to Stowmarket., On this there is no indication of date so I reproduce a section to seek clues from the information contained. Cambridge stops at Victoria Road, ferries ply at Chesterton and Fen Ditton, the bridge at Clayhithe is a toll, Cherry Hinton a village. Long Road undeveloped and there is a rifle range on Coldham's Common, The scale is so small there is little detail and although Homerton College is marked on the left of Hills Road, St John's church opposite is not named - the answer to the police poser of last week,

Bus timetables are already housed in the Collection but I was excited to acquire a set of fare tables from May 1964 which records the cost of travelling nearly 30 years ago. Prices quoted are of course in shillings and pence which may still be remembered by many but will be incomprehensible to others, Those in the former category might like to pit their wits against the half-penny ready reckoner - well what was 34 half-pennies in shillings ?

Other snippets include Smiths "Light Blue" boat race card for Easter 1906 with its list of crews and advertisements for Matthew's of Trinity street who would supply Vintage champagne at 71/- ((£3,55) per dozen bottles; twelve permanent photographic views of Cambridge - including Trumpington Street; and the Papworth Victory Annual for 1945-6.

Such items are typical of those we hold in the Cambridgeshire Collection, and indeed may already be there, but we are always grateful for the opportunity to add to our files so that researchers both now and in the future can make use of them

Reflections 1993 06 23

Last week two footnotes were added to the history of a major Cambridgeshire industry, almost completely forgotten. Coprolite — fossilised "Dinosaur dung" was extracted by the Victorians on a massive scale for use as fertiliser and again during the Great War to be made into explosives. Firstly photographs of the giant machinery installed when a quarry at Trumpington was developed on behalf of the Ministry of Munitions in 1918 were discovered by a researcher and then, by coincidence, technical details of the locomotives used on the site and the date on which the plant was auctioned are featured in a book received days later.

"Industrial locomotives of East Anglia" is full of information on a variety of sites including Ely sugar beet factory, Burwell brickworks and cement works at Barrington, Cherry Hinton & Shepreth. Although not a book for general reading it gives details not available elsewhere such as the narrow gauge tramways installed for agriculture in Burnt Fen and for drainage near Littleport.

Such facts appeal to enthusiasts and experts but may leave others unmoved. When the Institution of Mechanical Engineers held a meeting in Cambridge in 1913 they turned their attention to the local area, visiting the Saxon & Norman cement works and the Cambridge Scientific Instrument Company. The most up-to-date methods of draining the fens were also on their agenda with papers reviewing the background to the problems and suggesting technical solutions. Eighty years ago there were still a few windmills driving scoop-wheels, the largest of which was at Harrimere near Ely with its 41 feet sails driving a scoop-wheel 30 feet in diameter. Most of the mechanism was made of wood including the gears which wore themselves into the proper shape. The building, on its brick base, was then about 180 years old, framed in timber and boarded. It had been lived in up to 10 years before by the great-great-grandson of the first occupant. By 1913 it had been superseded by a steam pumping station at Prickwillow. The papers go on to give further technical details of the pumping machinery, its reciprocating beams, high-pressure crossheads and jet-condensers which during the floods of August 1912 had run for 372 hours non-stop, consuming three-and-a-half tons of coal every twelve hours of normal working,

"But what is coal" is one of the questions being asked by the children who visit the last of the mighty steam pumping engines which played such an important part in the drainage of the fens. The Stretham Engine Trust, who have just reopened the beam engine after extensive restoration, have produced two guides which explain something of the complexity of the machinery. One is aimed specifically at children, telling how coal was brought to the engine by river and then barrowed up long planks, over the newly-restored weighbridge and into the yard. From there it was shovelled into the boilers by the stoker who lived in the little cottage beside the engine. Steam provided the power which raised the piston which worked the beam which turned the scoopwheel which lifted 30 tons of water every time it went round. Armed with such a guide even I can understand something of the mechanism and seek out all the oiling points which needed constant lubrication. But there is nothing quite like seeing it in action and this may be possible later in the year if the necessary money can be raised to install an electric drive,

If this happens perhaps the Mechanical Engineers will visit, along with the Industrial Enthusiasts - and of course the children doing their Technology and History projects

Q.Ar.J8 21029 Y.Barw.J9 15837 W.29.K79 27476 W.29.K0 30139 PC.Cem.K0 7599

Reflections 1993 06 30

Within a week three eminent Cambridge men have been recorded in print - a giant, a giant in the mathematical field and a giant amongst builders.

The giant, is Thomas Hickathrift reputed to have been born in Tilney All Saints in about 1066 who by age 10 had grown 6ft tall and ended up two feet higher than that and weighing 22 stone. In the course of an exciting life he killed the Wisbech ogre - "a naked beast covered in slimy green mud with large bloodshot eyes, twisted brown-stained teeth and a cavernous frothing mouth" who habitually slaughtered passers-by and nailed their skulls to tree trunks alongside the carcasses of their horses, sheep or cattle. Tom also put down a riot at Ely for which he was knighted by King William for whom he later disposed of a monster and its pet dragon. The tale is illustrated by its author, Peter Jeevar and issued by Ketton Publishing as the first in a projected East Anglian Folklore series,

George Green was not honoured during his lifetime but will be commemorated in July when in a bicentennial celebration of his birth a memorial plaque will be unveiled in Westminster Abbey, Now recognised as a mathematician and physicist whose function technique influences modern nuclear physics, quantum electrodynamics and superconductivity he undertook much of his work whilst a miller in Nottinghamshire before coming to Cambridge as an undergraduate in 1833 at the age of 40, Doris Cannell's biography includes details of University life - including examination procedure in the Senate House where before 1801 there were no question papers so as soon as one candidate had answered the first problem he raised his hand and everybody had to break off to write down the next question as it was dictated by the moderator, Green became a Fellow of Caius College - and thus subject, to its rules of celibacy - but returned to Nottinghamshire within two months where he died (possibly of alcoholism) mourned by Jane Smith, his childhood sweetheart, and their seven illegitimate children,

George Kett fathered five children but is best remembered for the building firm that still carries his name. In a truly fascinating account of Kett of Cambridge Anna de Salvo traces a remarkable story full of insights into Victorian life, In 1891 there was uproar when Kett's nomination as Mayor was opposed by the Liberal party demanding the honour be rotated amongst parties (shades of Cambridge 1993) - though there was no opposition in 1898 or 1901. Disputes over the University's jurisdiction over townsfolk and town activities were amongst the contentious issues Kett had to face. Perhaps the most difficult decisions were in connection with the Coronation of King Edward VII who was taken seriously ill just before the Great Day in June 1902. With flags and bunting already up, huge quantities of cakes and other provisions on their way and with the cattle already slaughtered for the proposed dinner to 2,500 old people it was up to Kett to decide whether to proceed or cancel. He chose the latter ordered the bunting taken down and gave the food away. Then when the King recovered the process had to be repeated in September, Well illustrated with photographs and posters this is a fine record of an eminent Victorian and his family,

"Thomas Hickathrift (Giant)" by Peter Jeevar , published by Ketton Publishing

"George Green, mathematician & physicist" by D.M, Cannell, published by the Athlone Press at £35,00

"Kett of Cambridge ; an eminent Victorian & his family" by Anna de Salvo, published by the National Extension College price

R.Ket.J90 44368

c.02 : 1902

Reflections 1993 07 06

At first glance it was just an ordinary map, The roads are coloured red, the rivers blue, woods are green. There are the usual details one might expect -the obelisk at Lt Shelford, the old windmill at Stapleford, Pampisford station and Duxford aerodrome. I marked it on the accessions sheet as an Ordnance Survey 1" sheet but now when looking at it in detail for the first time I awake to the fact that the scale is wrong and the map too large - covering the area from Newmarket right across to Wellingborough and from Royston to the outskirts of March.

Even in my initial dozy state I had quickly realised that although the quiet English village names are correct and the map was headed "Cambridge" there was something unusual about it. For the sheet number is shown as "Sonderausgabel 111.41" and underneath is printed "Nur fur den Diestgebrauch!". Had this been written in the Library rather than at home I should have had to check the Reference Library dictionaries. There is less trouble with the symbols for they are printed in two languages - cemeteries are "kirchhof" and battlefields "schlachtfeld".

So here we have a map of England printed in German and dated 1940.. It was sent to the Mayor by Monsieur Denis Martin of Villeneuve les Avignon in France together with a covering letter, sections of which I reprint below

"At the end of the war, in 1944, I was 17 years old. My parents were living in a manor, a few miles east of the town of Le Mars, in west of France. At the beginning of the year the manor was occupied by German troops and my family was authorized to live in an outbuilding of the farm, 3 others manors of the neighbourhood were also occupied. Each morning the German soldiers take a truck and were working all the day in one of these manors. The work was "cartography" ... but I suppose they don't print, at that time, maps of Great Britain but they probably used the other side to print more useful maps, for example of Normandy!

At the beginning of July 1944, because all the allied troops, on the way to Paris, were approaching after victory in Normandy, all these German soldiers withdraw rapidly ... before the arrival of American troops.

The Germans had no time to take all their materials and we found in the manor thousands of maps of different countrys of Great Britain"

M. Martin goes on to relate how the family have used the maps to cover shelves in all the cupboards in the house, with just a few copies kept as souvenirs.

"But, half a century after our liberation by allied troops, and with my sincere gratitude, always deeply and really living, I ask you to accept that small gift"

And so another map finds its way into the Collection - one of hundreds, but few with such an interesting history

Y.Dux.K43 28895 Y.Sta.K15 179 map H06.1702a

c.49.9 # c.45.7

c.04

Reflections 1993 07 13

Maps remain one of the areas of our stock that are least used, Not the Ordnance Survey sheets, they are consulted regularly, not least a few weeks ago by the farmers completing their

set-aside claims, But of the others which date back for over 400 years only a few ever see the light of day,

The exceptions are those of Cambridge itself - the Richard Lyne map of 1574 with its wealth of detail such as the castle on Castle Hill, the line of boats near the Great Bridge, the fisherman near Kings college chapel with the fish he's caught on the bank beside him. This and the Loggan of 1688 and the Custance of 1798 are easy to be expert about, for there is an excellent detailed study by J.W. Clark and Arthur Gray which explains all the details, a few minutes reading and one can really show off,

The county maps however present more difficulties, The Collection hold most of the printed maps produced since 1576 as far as we can judge by consulting the notes compiled by H.6. Fordham which were published in the Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society or the list of fen land maps compiled by Clifford Darby and published in the Huntingdonshire Victoria County History volume. "This is a Blaeu, it shows the fens before drainage with the white areas representing the islands sticking up out of the marsh" but ask me to show you something about the cartographer and I will need to refer you to the books in the Reference Library,

Now at least one of the famous names of fenland mapping has received the detailed coverage that his science deserves. Jonas Moore was born in Lancashire of humble origins in 1617 and rose to Knighthood. He established his career as a leading practical mathematician, a making a substantial fortune as cartographer, surveyor, author, teacher, courtier to King Charles II and Surveyor-General of the Ordnance which enabled him in later life to become a patron of the new Royal Observatory at Greenwich.

Amongst his major projects he participated in the great scheme to drain the fens under the Dutch engineer Sir Cornelius Vermuyden. His involvement began in 1649 when he undertook to draw a map of the Bedford Level for £10, which later rose to an annual salary of £200. It was a monumental undertaking which is well detailed in Frances Willmoth's book. There was much opposition from local fenmen, disputes between the drainers - ordering him to be in three places at once - the Civil War, and an inhospitable landscape. Moore took a house at March so that he could be near the work, later moving to Southery where he stayed until the job was completed in 1657.

His final map measured six feet by four and a half and was published in sixteen sheets about 1658. Its scale of two inches to the mile was not to be bettered for 200 years. It served to demonstrate the dramatic changes in the fenland landscape that had been wrought by the drainers and the technical skills of the cartographer. There is a copy in the County Record Office at Shire Hall and we have reprinted our smaller version issued in 1720 which still includes much of the detail of the original - a map hailed by Darby as the finest of the Bedford Level every published,

Frances Willmoth. "Sir Jonas Moore, practical mathematics and restoration science", Boydell press, 1393 £35,00

MOORE # c.49.9

Reflections 1993 07 20

Pride of place this week has undoubtedly gone to newspapers with the acquisition of a file of the student paper "Varsity" dating back to the 1930s, and an extra set of the "Cambridge Independent Press" between 18 ...). Fortunately this has not involved the wholesale erection

of additional shelving since the issues were on microfilm, with whole years papers being compressed into a single 35 mm film,

Libraries throughout the country are currently co-operating with the British Library to ensure that files of local newspapers are preserved on film. Cambridgeshire and adjacent counties were surveyed some years ago and a comprehensive report drawn up which details the location of the various titles and gives recommendations for filming. Since then, in common with our neighbours, we have each year set aside a sum of money for this project, supplementing the work that has been under way for over 20 years. Already many hundreds of volumes have been covered including the complete set of the "Cambridge Chronicle" from 1762 to 1934, many years of the "Cambridge Daily-News" since 1888 and - now - most of the "Cambridge Independent Press" from 1815. A couple of days ago another 25 volumes were sent for microfilming, including Cambridge issues from 1933 to 1939 together with a range of titles from other areas of the county.

Once filmed the original newspapers need to be handled much less often, thus reducing the wear and tear though they will continue to self-destruct because of the acidity of the paper on which they are printed. This could be remedied by treating each page or encapsulating it in a thin film, but this would be expensive and with each sheet of paper at least doubling in thickness would increase the storage problems tremendously. Doubtless the future will bring a remedy but for the moment we film, reducing each page to the size of a postage stamp. When placed on a microfilm reader the pages are projected to full size, and extracts can be copied by merely pressing a button on the machine,

Extensive indexing has been undertaken by the Cambridgeshire Collection to try and unlock some of the stories tucked away amongst the thousands of pages issued since the 1770s. Thus, this week, one of our readers was interested in the story behind the names on Little Thetford village war memorial and able to discover quickly how Gunner John Wright had been killed by a shell whilst carrying wounded back to the dressing station, Signaller William Crick wounded by a sniper, Lance-Corporal Charles Newman taken prisoner of war and Sergeant George Dewsbury awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Another researcher from America has been equally interested in Haddenham stories from the nineteenth century.

Yet newspapers contain far more than can ever be indexed in conventional ways. Already many papers such as "The Times" and "The Guardian" are available on compact disc, each capable of storing more than a year's issues which can be searched for specific topics. The future will probably bring methods of scanning old papers onto computers which will then allow any name or subject to be located immediately. Whether or not this will be a good thing is debateable but provided the historic files are available in places such as the Cambridgeshire Collection, it will allow the future researcher the opportunity to appreciate more of our present and past.

Reflections 1993 07 27

John Brown published his autobiography "Sixty years gleanings from life's harvest." in 1858, It is an account of a shoemakers working life in Cambridge, but Brown had also been a soldier, sailor, leather salesman, publican, actor, livery-stable keeper, coal-dealer and billiard-room proprietor as well as a member of the Town Council.

He was born in Barnwell in 1796 and brought up by his grandmother. He learned his shoemaking in London and later, penniless in Kent, enlisted in the army. In 1822 he returned to Cambridge to work as a shoemaker and operate various money-spinning sidelines.

Brown has recently been the subject of a study by Nick Mansfield, curator of the National Museum of Labour History in Manchester, who has put the working-class aspect of Cambridge into context. Shoemaking was one of the many trades which existed to serve the University and which effectively shut down when term finished - or a few days before since tradesmen had to queue to present their accounts to the students for payment. It was a precarious situation as the University had powers to boycott its undergraduates from trading with anybody who offended against their Statutes or their sensibilities - so at election time tradesmen would need to be sure that they declared their vote for the Tory-candidates whilst any who joined a Trade Union or employed such people could find their livelihood ruined.

The economic power of the University was enormous. It owned most of the town and many inhabitants were indirectly employed in service industries or in running the lodging houses where many students lived. Female bedmakers had to be married women - one described as "a charred and wrinkled old piece of womanhood" with a voice "like the grating of a blunt saw". College servants could compensate for their low wages from commissions obtained for introducing their charges to tradespeople and - allegedly - from the removal of any food or drink left after the undergraduates had dined. Such employees were provided by the University with low-rent housing and pensions.

Other women - especially those attracted by the prospect of rich young gentlemen - were treated less well and the University had its own police force with powers to imprison those suspected of prostitution in their private gaol. On the other-hand Undergraduates would frequently accost local women and John Brown had to fight off two students who propositioned his own girlfriend.

Concern for moral welfare led the University to crack down on theatres, circuses or billiard halls like that owned by Brown. He had learned the sport in London and set up his own billiards room using home-made slate tables. He attracted students but also the attention of the Proctors against whom he set up an early warning system with whistles and bells to give the alert and allow the players to escape. By 1850 the University authorities decided their attempts to stop students playing billiards were fruitless and agreed to licence the establishments.

Nick Mansfield's article "Grad and Snobs (the name given to townspeople by-students in the nineteenth century) ; John Brown. Town & Gown in early nineteenth-century Cambridge" just published in "History Workshop Journal" makes most interesting reading, as does the Autobiography itself, the manuscript of which was donated to the Collection by the author

Reflections 1993 08 03

The last week or so have seen the arrival a number of new booklets published about local villages including Haslingfield, Impington, Quy and Thriplow.

Of these "The March of Time" by John W. Flack published by Haslingfield Village Society is the most attractively produced with a series of drawings illustrating many of the memories recounted. John Flack was born in 1316 and shares his memories of naughtiness - how, when pumping the bellows for the church organ he retaliated after one boy had given him a clip around the ears until the sound of the organ descending in a downward drone brought him back to his senses - and back to pumping it up to the correct pressure just as the vicar emerged to see what was causing the disruption to the service. Jack remembers the coming of electricity when Len Huddleston had his own generator and the night of the Kite. About six feet tall and three feet wide it would lift a four pound weight, so they had the idea of fitting a light to it and flying it from the top of Chapel Hill. It took twenty minutes to reach the ideal site, in the middle of a currant field and from there they launched it. The white kite soared away, illuminated by the battery and bulb that they'd tied to it. Suddenly a very bright beam of

light of enormous intensity appeared in the night sky, weaving about up and down until it eventually struck the kite, then descended along the binder twine towards the lads on the ground - who panicked and ran home, dumping the damaged kite in a ditch. Next morning it had gone and they never saw it again ...

Fred Gamble's memories of Thriplow in Edwardian Times have been published before but are now reissued by the Thriplow Society. He remembers writing on a slate at school - and getting the cane, smoking Woodbines at five for a penny and keeping track of time by listening for the factory hooters at Shepreth or Whittlesford at morning, midday and when it was time to stop work for the night.

The "Good old days" were not as pleasant as people like to remember, as Peggy Watts shows in her booklet "Peasants to labourers, Quy 1714 to 1830" issued by the Stains Hundred Local History Society. This is a researched account of the community from Squire and Vicar to Widows who eked out a living by spinning, a trade they taught to orphans and fatherless children who could expect little assistance from Parish officials. Meanwhile John Martin who became an MP in 1741 decided that Quy Hall had no sufficiently imposing apartments in which he could receive his constituents so he added two turrets, built a castellated parapet and raised the ceilings of the principal rooms - leaving the ones above only-four feet high!

The principal building in Impington was the Hall, constructed by John Pepys around 1580 and visited by the diarist Samuel. The house had been gutted and redecorated by the time William Cole described it in 1773 as "the best of the sort I ever saw" but when the Pepys family died out it was remodelled again, this time along the lines of Sandringham House. Later it passed to the Chivers Family, and was commandeered by the army during the war when Italian prisoners were housed in Nissen huts in the grounds. It was demolished in 1953. All this is charted in considerable detail by Eleanor Whitehead as part her "Ramble around Impington old village" published by the Histon & Impington village society history group in the latest of their local history booklets

Y.Quy.K15 618 Y.Yhr.K2 24628 WC.Imp.K1 38132 Y.Has.K15 155

Reflections 1993 08 10

A bundle of newspaper cuttings and a pile of photographs have revealed something of the debate on the provision of nurseries for the pre-school children evacuated from London at the beginning of the war.

Women war workers were urgently needed, women who "would bravely lose their children for a while - if only adequate provision is arranged". The question was what to do with their children. Government hopes that emergency nursery centres would be established in reception areas by the host authorities proved unrealistic and in February 1940 the Nursery Schools Association launched a campaign to train teams of skilled organisers to assist in establishing centres. In 1942 the Government decided to bear the full cost for such provision allowing their establishment in any area - evacuation, neutral or reception. There would be part-time nurseries for children between two and five years to meet the needs of part-time women workers and whole-time nurseries for the care of children of all ages up to five which would be open 12-15 hours a day. This angered the Association who urged that it was the mothers duty to breast-feed their babies for as long as possible rather than dump them in nurseries from as young as three months. They also showed that to cater for children below the age of two would add considerably to the costs of buildings and care.

By 1941 six part-time centres had been established in Cambridge including Homerton college, the Methodist church hall in Norwich Street and St Andrews church hall, Chesterton. Between them they could cater for 167 children and they were already full. In October a group of 35 London firemen visited the Victoria Road nursery - sadly for the children without their fire engine - bringing with them toys made from timber salvaged from bombed houses.

In July 1942 Cambridge's first full-time nursery was established in the grounds of the Sedley school with another at the Shirley school opening in August. Each could accommodate 40 children with qualified matrons and teachers and the costs, apart from meals, was covered by the Government. Despite initial scepticism they were soon full and the Council planned another in Ditton Fields where six mothers were already doing war-work with another twenty-nine willing provided the children could be taken off their hands. This finally opened in July 1943, constructed by Brignells. It was stressed that war work did not just mean munitions and that any mother contributing to the war effort by relieving another woman who was capable of active service could take advantage of the facility.

The importance of such centres was widely recognised & in opening the Ditton Fields nursery Dr C.G.L. Wolf emphasised that "a healthy and happy child is the greatest guarantee we have for the future of any nation".

But at the first meeting of the Cambridge branch of the Nursery School Association in July 1943 Lady Allen of Hurtwood, the movement's leading figure, pointed out that in certain resident nurseries possibly half the children through various reasons had no hope of returning to normal home life. It was the duty of a nursery school prevent the children becoming ill-adjusted, and if they did to cure them. Good nursery schools would teach the children to live harmoniously with their neighbour & were a practical example of how to bring children up wisely and sensibly - & not just in war-time

c.37.9

Reflections 1993 08 17

West Cambridge, West Wrating and Whittlesey come together on our new books shelves, each featuring an in-depth study of a building,

The Schlumberger Research Centre, the tent-like affair on the Madingley Road. is a masterpiece of modern architecture designed by Michael Hopkins & partners and now featured in a large fully-illustrated study published by Phaidon for nearly £20.

It houses one of the world's greatest technological companies which leads the world in the provision of oilfield technical services with a programme of investigation into drilling and fluid mechanics, rock & wellbore physics. The monograph goes into equally technical description of the exoskeletal steel, cable-tensioned, pin-jointed structure with its triangulating tie-rods. It is illustrated with plans, sections & beautiful colour photographs. Positioned on high ground it offers its occupants long views, and doubtless also exposes them to high winds - making the technical achievement all the more remarkable

Windmills however less technically advanced still attract more than their share of attention and Philippa Burrell bought one in 1932. She came upon it by chance having boarded a bus to the highest point in East Anglia - which she decided was West Wrating. Taking lodgings in the village she soon bought the nearby windmill for £600 - including cottage, granary and 20 acres of good farming land

High & isolated she found it a little paradise – and promptly left to study in Paris. She returned to help the Labour candidate in the 1934 Cambridge by-election but the excitement

of the campaign over Burrell found herself once more in an undecided state. She visited the Public Library and read the literature shelves from end to end. She wrote plays and tore them up. She learned about planting and pruning – and all the while the windmill was watching her with its broken sails, cap all out, windows rotten and rain going in - an unwelcoming part of the property, and one she used to hide in when the bailiffs called. A millwright gave her an estimate of £100 for repair and to raise the money she studied cookery books and made date cakes which she sold from an old pram on Cambridge market, a picture of the mill fixed to the side. It was an immediate sensation and soon she was selling teas to the hundreds of people who journeyed to see the mill, sitting contentedly on rustic tables in the orchard. After two seasons however she closed the business – the mill was restored. It was not the end of the story for she wrote a play "The wind and the mill" which was performed by the Festival Theatre Company in the fields around – England's first Theatre Camp.

These few pages in Burrell's autobiography fill another gap in the history of one of the county's buildings but Samantha Broughton has embarked on a totally different sort of study – tracing the story of a 350 year old cottage in Whittlesey. By ploughing through Manorial Court Books, parish registers and census material at the County Record Office she has compiled a detailed record of one building and its occupants, and at the same time shown the way for other researchers. There are various sidelights including a 1635 ban on smoking in the streets - not for any medical reason but for fear of fire amongst the thatched buildings and straw-strewn yards, a bye-law imposing a 10/- fine "for every pipe or parte of a pipe she or they shall soe smoake or take"

"Schlumberger Cambridge research centre" by David Jenkins, Phaidon 1993

"The horses & the charioteer" by Philippa Burrell, Charles Skilton, 1998

A history of the cottage at 3 East Delph, Whittlesey by Samantha Broughton, 1993

Reflections 1993 08 24

Anthony Day sees the fens through his artist's eye and writes about them with his historian's expertise. Both these attributes come together admirably in his latest book "Fen & Marshland villages". This mixture of old photographs and picture postcards is culled from a number of sources, from the author's own files of Wicken material, from the Lilian Ream Collection at Wisbech, from Wisbech Museum and Kings Lynn library and our own Cambridgeshire Collection files.

Unlike many similar books the author has researched the story behind each picture and often has discovered the actual names of the people depicted, as at Mrs Walling's classroom at Wicken school in 1932 with members of the Bird, Canham, Bailey, Clements and Griggs families amongst them. Next page brings us the famous "Five Miles from Anywhere" inn at Upware at the time that Day's grandparents, Ben & Kate Read kept the inn and supplemented their bar takings by running the ferry which plied across the Cam, charging a penny for a pedestrian, twopence for a cyclist, fourpence for pony & trap, sixpence for horse & cart & twopence a head for cattle. It was not unusual to carry a dozen at a time, nor was it unknown for such a load to sink the ferry, leaving the cattle stranded in mid-stream. Elsewhere ferries were replaced by bridges, which were themselves renewed, as at Stretham, when the strength of the new structure was tested by placing traction engines on it - if it survived that weight, it would surely survive anything!

Though bridges survive and village streets still retain some of the buildings glimpsed through the photographs, there is a side of fenland life that has disappeared. In the rich agricultural acres it is agriculture that has changed, As the author points out gone are the hoeing and harvesting gangs, the women and boys crawling along the land singling sugar beet or heads-down sowing or gathering potatoes. Now they are replaced with a lone tractor equipped with

spraying equipment, combines moving like giant snails, the sugar beet harvester tumbling its roots into the empty trailer alongside and the potato lifter-sheltering its crew of sorters behind heavy cloths. Tony Day reflects the bygone practices through some of his pictures - fruit growers at Cottenham, osier-stripping at Willingham making the baskets needed for harvesting potatoes & fruit, turf-digging at Burwell which employed as many as 300 men women at boys at the turn of the century, He depicts too the trainloads from London who arrived in the fens to pick fruit from the vast orchards around Wisbech, women and children working alongside men, and the important- role of the young girl leading the horse and cart piled high with straw to a farm at Newton, knowing how to avoid the ruts and ditches and steer accurately through gateways,

Day's combination of picture and caption captures an area and way of life now past. It is a book that will stimulate memories even for people who do not know the fens, for schools and reminiscence work with the elderly it will prove invaluable and for those who personal connections with the places have featured it will make fascinating reading

Anthony Day "Fen & marshland villages ; a portrait in old photographs.", S.B, Publications 6,95

Y.Upw.K2 11721 Y.Str.K29 36655 PC.Tur.K1 23326

Reflections 1993 09 01

Recent press reports on the way certain colleges are seeking to raise revenue for additional building through the Business Expansion Scheme have been echoed this week by the acquisition of a microfilm copy of a report we already held. Microfilm is likely to survive longer than paper, especially if the item is used extensively, though these particular items are not in everyday use, nor on first glance do they seem especially interesting.

Published in 1874 the Report of the University Commission looks in detail at the property and income of the Universities of Oxford & Cambridge and their colleges. It was compiled by sending detailed questionnaires, preceded by a letter from Prime Minister Gladstone seeking the fullest co-operation of all concerned. In this the Commissioners were to be disappointed for Corpus Christi College answered "imperfectly" whilst the Master of Sidney Sussex - who was also the Bursar, responsible for the day-to-day accounting - declined to co-operate, , instead sending a pamphlet which the Commissioners had to plod through and sort out details for themselves.

The full returns called for a note of the property owned by each college, its income and expenditure for 1871 - revealing that the Master of Christ's received just over £1,142, whilst Trinity had paid £2,670 to its head. They were quizzed on their property holdings, showing St Johns to own a number of houses, shops and pubs in Bridge Street, including Cox's Yard, Sussum's Yard, Globe Passage and the Old Red Lion Yard where Alfred Wisbey was pub tenant paying a rent of £30. They also owned much of Sussex Street, of which the cheapest was a shop and dwelling house at number 13 rented to Arthur Looker at £10. Then there was Charles Lestourgeon's surgery in Trinity Street, George Benfield's house in Castle Street and the Rev Luckock's dwelling in Newnham for which he paid. £100.

Then they pried into the colleges' repairs fund, fire insurance fund, coal account - from which St John's made an annual profit of £921 which they spent on articles for the use of its undergraduates - though the Commissioner's felt they should pay for the rent of the coal-shed out of the profit. They were equally keen to probe the bakehouse account - the college baking bread which it sold to its members (another £61 profit) and the beer account which brought in

over £1,760 - though surely the rent of the cellars, part of the salary of the steward & the two butlers ought to be met from this money.

Caution money - a payment of £10 or £15 taken from Undergraduates at the beginning of their studies from which any unpaid bills could be settled - was often overseen by individual tutors, as were other payments for tuition, maintenance, fees and room rents, and some argued that these were a private matter, not for Commissioner's eyes - perhaps because this was a potentially-lucrative source of revenue to supplement a college stipend.

The details go on and on, listing mining land - coal in Derbyshire, coprolites at Steeple Morden, profits from forestry, expenditure on repairs - nearly £9,000 for a new Master's Lodge and £1,233 for an enlargement to the organ in the new Chapel at St John's which itself had cost over £50,000 - not counting the painted windows. All in all a most rewarding source for those with the financial skill to understand and the time to study

c.35.8

Reflections 1993 09 08

THE PARISH council didn't want it and wrote and told the county council so. They protested to the Government but to no avail.

Three hundred acres of agricultural land were to be requisitioned for a new airfield, without waiting for the crops to be harvested — giant machines moved into the fields and crushed the corn flat. It was a daft place to build an aerodrome anyway, on a sloping site with a hump in the middle and woods nearby . . . but the imminent danger of war overrode everything.

Constructors moved in — Indians, Pakistanis, Irishmen; not everyone welcomed them, though the request for an armoured car to protect against attack was to deter Germans, not Steeple Morden residents.

Searchlights were established — doubtless upsetting the locals even more, especially when their beams so dazzled the pilot of a Hurricane that he feared he might collide with planes on either side of him and baled out, his plane crashing into an orchard next to the church.

Such a wealth of information is contained in a most detailed account of "A village airfield at war" that it will interest people who could not find Steeple Morden on a map. It recalls the arriving airmen, some of whom were billeted at the village telephone exchange but whose over-loud gramophone meant that the operator couldn't hear the phone ring. Women joined the scene with the arrival of the Land Army but their pay of £1.8s (£1.40) for a 50-hour week was not destined to go far at the bar of the Crown pub.

Ken Wells's study records the training and the missions, the bombing raids and the unexpected arrival of a German Ju88, whose crash-landing on the airfield was witnessed by one of the village constables, John Savage. Thinking it was a Wellington bomber he ran towards it, but seeing the swastika on the tail beat an equally hasty retreat.

A chapter on the village home front gives much welcome information about the activities of the local volunteers. The air raid wardens toured the area blowing a whistle to warn of raids and ringing a bell for the all-clear. Later Charles Rigg decided to buy an air raid siren for the village. Although the county council established shelters, some people preferred to sit on the bench on the recreation ground and take their chances there.

Litlington villagers, however, packed their shelter when a land mine fell in the garden next to Leache's Garage and failed to explode. Fire watchers and fire fighters were prepared for emergencies with a pump towed by an ageing Hillman car.

Charlie Potten was in charge of first aid, the Ladies Home Knitting Fund made socks and gloves, gardeners "dug for victory" and the Home Guard learned useful German words such as "Hande Hoch" for when they captured Hitler's storm-troopers. What words they used when Ernie Willmott's sten gun got stuck on continuous fire and sent them all diving for cover is one of the few details omitted from this fascinating book.

The Americans succeeded to the airfield — a satellite base for Bassingbourn. Their activities have no place in this volume apart from the story of the lady whose black limousine pulled up alongside men repairing the road. She asked for directions to Steeple Morden airfield, where her son was Commander, but was told that such information was secret.

When she asked: "Do you know who I am? I'm the wife of the President of the United States" the workman replied: "Well, I'm Winston Churchill." He wasn't, but Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt was.

A village airfield at war: RAF Steeple Morden 1939-1943 by Ken Wells. Egon Publishers, £14.50.

Reflections 1993 09 15

Two new village histories have come in within days of each other. Each are major studies, one of 122 pages, the other over 250. One was largely researched in the Cambridgeshire Collection, the other compiled without our assistance. They are very different but equally interesting, especially for those with connection in either Teversham or Fowlmere

Pat White, Mary Symonds and Catherine Mason started their researches by transcribing the Teversham items indexed in the files of the Cambridge Chronicle newspaper between 1770 and 1893. These record the typical events that attracted attention - as when Mr Grain's horse suddenly panicked in Petty Cury in 1844, galloping off towards Christ's college gateway where it began to plunge and kick in a very frightful manner, smashing the chaise to atom before bolting off down St Andrew's Street. Mr Grain and family were unhurt - though several of them were thrown into the waterways along the road - a branch of Hobson's Conduit now filled in. Poor Mr Grain suffered again in 1848 when hailstones as large as pigeon's eggs fell in the Papermills (Newmarket Road) area that July, damaging his crops.

This gentleman seems to have had a sense of humour for he named his son Richard Corney Grain - which occasioned much comment and did no harm at all for the lad became a famous entertainer whose comic songs and sketches were fashionable in the 1880s. He later wrote his memories "Corney Grain, by himself" in which he recalled life in his home village including the music which accompanied hymns in church, Perhaps accompaniment might not be the proper word for the church orchestra consisted of two clarinets and a cello, an unusual trio, though not as unusual as the sound they produced, There was no attempt at harmony, or even melody, Each individual went his own way, producing alarms and excursions at the most unexpected moments,

Part of these memoirs are included in the Teversham history which also features a wide range of extracts from all manner of sources, including the 1851 census with its list of residents, Altogether it forms a compendium of information from which many a history can be compiled.

Dennis Hitch by contrast has produced a comprehensive chronology of "A mere village" - Fowlmere, tracing its story to pre-Roman times, detailing the campaigns that brought the area under Roman rule and carrying the story through the Civil War to the 1914-18 conflict when a field was commandeered for the construction of an airfield for the Royal Flying Corps. Soon up to 300 Scottish and Irish workmen were based in the village, labouring during the day and winning the hearts of local lasses in the evening - to the consternation of the Rector who refused to allow marriages between the Roman Catholic Irish and Fowlmere girls in his church. The airfield was abandoned in 1913, only to be reinstated during the Second War. The Mere which gives the village its name and the book its title was an open sheet of water until 1846, teeming with wildlife providing fish and fowl for the poor labourer's pot, sport for the gentry and income from those who took University gentlemen out in their punts for a day's shooting - while other locals would be happy to sell a few wild duck to those whose ability to aim did not match their academic prowess. After drainage part was used for growing watercress and has subsequently become a bird sanctuary and nature reserve

B.Pet.J38 683a B.And.J27 15799 Y.Fow.K10 4080 Y.Fow.K1 33126 W.22.J8 8751

Reflections 1993 09 22

Modern surveys and reports are regular additions to our New Books shelves and recent weeks have seen the arrival of an analysis of Cambridge based on the 1991 census compiled by the County Council's Research Group. The figures show that of the 91,933 residents nearly 20% are pensioners - with men outnumbered nearly 2-1. Over half the houses are owner-occupied; a quarter are rented from the council and over a third occupied by a single person. The figures go on and on - over 15,000 people changed house within the past year - over one third of the households have no car, though this rises to nearly half of those living in the centre of town.

Figures can be manipulated or interpreted in various ways. The popular view is that Cambridge is a wealthy city is rebutted by another survey of just issued. "Poverty in Cambridge 1993" shows that over 18,500 citizens are living on the margins of poverty - somewhat higher than the number of poor people entertained to tea on Parker's Piece on the occasion of Queen Victoria's coronation in 1838.

It is interesting to compare some of the findings of the 1993 Poverty report with a similar study produced in 1906, "Cambridge; a brief study in social questions" was compiled by Eglantyne Jebb and in over 270 pages considers many of the topics more recently surveyed,

In 1993 unemployment inflicts some 4,462 people but 90 years ago Jebb found no evidence to support that claim that there were 1-2,000 people out of work - indeed she found that in the St Matthews's area only 10 people had registered, so social workers made a survey of 373 men and found 73 out of work. However further analysis showed that nearly half of these were either ill or too old with a 73 year old Cabinet-maker complaining that all the work went to the younger men. Although the building trade was in depression there was plenty of work to be had on the new sewer system - then, as now, under construction in the Chesterton area.

Many of the unemployed were, she claimed, beggars and loafers, refusing hard work or complaining it was too low paid to be worth doing. Other work was irregular with the University laying off staff for months each summer and several weeks in winter when the college students went down. On the other hand women found work as college servants or in the 620 licensed University lodging houses, whilst 600 were employed in laundries and between 200 and 400 at Chivers jam factory.

On housing Jebb found in the Barnwell district 12 households sleeping six and over to a bedroom, 15 houses sharing one tap and another 24 who shared a water-closet with two neighbouring houses. These conditions might appal even the 298 homeless people recorded in the 1993 survey or the estimated 150 who sleep rough

Today the survey shows over 5,000 people seeking assistance for debt with the average sum being £5,000 with over half of households in receipt of Housing Benefit, In 1906 Jebb claimed that life was now too easy and that the fear of starvation, which prompted a man to make great efforts to save, had been removed, "The harsh and extreme penalties for failure to provide for the family, for sickness, for old age, have one by one been removed ; the children are educated free, in sickness there is the hospital, in old age the workhouse", and at every step there was charity to soften the problems, Her answer was for the employed to save penny by penny at the Post Office Savings Bank so they had a nest-egg to draw on when times were hard.

After nearly 90 years it seems the problems remain, though perhaps the remedies have changed

c.32.9 # c.30 # S.1838 26 T.D.K46 34604 P.Chi.J9 31264 T.A.K3 32076

Reflections 1993 09 29

There is a temptation to think that history is dead - but much more is constantly coming to light. Only recently a prehistoric fort has been discovered at Sawston. dominating the surrounding countryside and covering an area of some 8 hectares, making it the second largest in the county. It was spotted by a local archaeologist and has been surveyed by a team of field recorders based at the Royal Commission for Historical Monuments at Gt Shelford. This is just one of the 800 new sites and finds added to the Archaeologists' records each year- including a spectacular burial of a child complete with copper bangles and pottery figurines unique in Britain unearthed at Godmanchester.

Meanwhile another researcher from the Institute of Historical Research, London University has been deciphering the complicated history of the small parish of Ashley cum Silverley near Newmarket which once had two churches, both now gone apart from a ruined stump of the church tower at Silverley. The results of his work will be known in some years' time when the final volume of the Victoria History of the County of Cambridge is produced. It will join the many books on Cambridgeshire over 60 of which have been produced in recent months.

These various developments are featured in the latest issue of "Conduit", a six-monthly bulletin published by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, now produced by a team of County Council Heritage Officers and edited by County Archaeologist, Alison Taylor. Much of the journal is devoted to the activities of many local history societies whose programmes promise a fascinating mixture of meetings – on 350 years of Royal Mail at Royston, Grandma's kitchen at Sawtry, the new Cambridge sewer project will attract the Industrial archaeologists who will also enjoy a talk on the history of Marshall's airport (Cambridgeshire Local History-Society 6th November), Ely archaeologists will flock to Mike Young's account of his trip to Sri Lanka - perhaps as entertaining as the reconstruction of Cambridgeshire life during the 1000s whose fighting skills are practiced on Midsummer Common by members of Raefield (the Early medieval re-enactment society) - but probably not to be compared with John Humphreys' evocation of life in Hunter's Fen which he will present at Swavesey in December. From the four corners of the county come dates and details, whilst any other secretaries looking for speakers would do well to peruse those listed here.

For those wishing to learn rather than just listen there are details of courses such as "History through objects" at the Cambridge Folk Museum - or a new Certificate in Historic Building Conservation being run by the University of Cambridge Board of Continuing Education whose students will visit buildings under repair to watch craftsmen at work before researching a dissertation.

The archivists at Cambridge and Huntingdon report some of their recent accessions - such as the school log books from Soham where in 1871 only 6 of 71 pupils could put down numbers but where a report just eight years later was praising the arithmetic and recommending that the boys be taught knitting. Meanwhile at Kimbolton Castle in November 1865 some 470lbs of meat, 12 rabbits, 10 chickens and 300 eggs were consumed in one week during the visit of the Price of Teck who arrived weighing 12 stone 10 and perhaps departed somewhat heavier. On a lighter note the report from the Norris Museum, St Ives, charts the love life of Dinner the Museum duck whose courtship of a pretty Muscovy duck named Little Lunch resulted in a clutch of eggs, some of which they ate, the rest they deserted. A rival male was chased away by a lady museum assistant, since when true love seems to have been re-established and a new brood awaited. Further details of the saga, together with the next round of meetings avid discoveries will be carried in the next issue of "Conduit", copies of which cost £1.00 from museums, societies, Cambridge Library shop or direct from Alison Taylor at Shire Hall

Reflections 1993 10 06

Two more War books arrived on my desk within days of each other. One is mainly pictures, the other un-readable.

It was 30 November 1943 that Bottisham began to become used to being an American air base and the streets started to resound with the southern drawl of Virginian fighter pilots, aircrew, support staff & the rest of the paraphernalia, marshalled by Thomas J.J. Christian junior, Officer Commanding. Some 1,700 personnel were expected, enlisted men accommodated in village homes, the officers quartered at Bottisham Hall. By Christmas eve they had won over local children, welcoming them - and their mothers - to a party in the NAAFI buildings, American rations making a welcome treat from standard British wartime fare.

Already steel matting had been planted over farmers fields to form runways and early in 1944 the arrival of over 50 Thunderbolts destroyed the tranquillity of rural life and heralded the start of a new chapter in the fight against the foe. There were difficulties to be ironed out nearer home with an Anglo-American brains trust called in Bottisham Village College to discuss differences between the new Allies. Very soon villagers got used to the sight of the aircraft taking off, banking, landing and crashing, whilst farmers elsewhere found the occasional addition to their cropping rotation with the unexpected arrival of a pranged plane in their fields.

All this is recorded in a pictorial history of the 361st Fighter Group which utilises dozens of photographs taken at the time, many by American servicemen, including snapshots showing excursions to Burwell by bicycle, to Cambridge by bus or to the Red Lion at Swaffham Prior by any means possible. Most of the photos show fighting men in action or at rest. One who posed for a professional portrait at Ramsey & Muspratt was Lt Rogers. Sadly by the time the picture reached home the sitter was dead, lost 35 miles east of Great Yarmouth when his flak-damaged P-47 came down in the sea. His negative is filed in the Cambridgeshire Collection, his story now told.

The fight in which he was engaged carried on with his colleagues flying from Bottisham over the D-Day beaches - a picture of the briefing in the Nissen hut appearing in the book. But before the war was ended the fighters had themselves moved on for in September 1944 they

transferred to Little Walden in Essex where the cameras capture similar scenes, with the scenery different - the Fox at Ashdon now finding itself the subject of attention for off-duty pilots.

In their tours of duty the "Little Friends" had provided escort for their big brothers, the bombers who had carried the battle to Berlin, weakening the enemy's fighting capacity, devastating his cities and smashing the morale of his population. But just as British children had been scrambled from London during the blitz so American and British bombs caused untold casualties amongst German children. Victory in Europe secured, the American pilots were awaiting transfer to the Pacific when news came through of the bombing of Hiroshima and the Cambridge papers were quick to stress the local connection with the Atom bomb. Now some Japanese ladies who as children had their lives devastated by the action of adults have pieced together an account of what each country inflicted on the other's babies. It has no pictures but is a work of art to eyes unused to the Japanese script. For page after page just the odd words like "Cambridge" and "Berlin" are recognisable, but if one ever needed a reason to learn another's language it must surely be to read this account by a group of Tokyo housewives of the impact of war on the innocent and their mothers.

"Little friends ; a pictorial history of the 361st fighter group in World War II" by Steve Gotts, available from author or Cambridge Library shop for £26,00 The Group Isis book is in - Japanese script; they can be contacted at
c.45.7

Reflections 1993 10 13

Some weeks ago I featured two of Cambridge's lesser known photographers-. this week much more of their work: has been given to the Collection

William Ewart Liles was born in April 1886, the youngest child of a family of eight. Their home was ill Fitzroy Street & not surprisingly some of the photographs he took feature that area, including a unique view .of Gold Street, now disappeared under the Kite redevelopment, a milk lady in Corona Road and the water pump at the junction of Barton and Coton Road. My favourite however remains a picture of his father, shoemaker Benjamin Liles working away in his Fitzroy Street shop which captures the atmosphere of a craftsman at work, the tools of his trade around him. William developed and printed his own photographs, propping the printing up in the windows and carefully watching until they were just right. His were cared for by his daughter who has now lodged them with us so they may be shared with others.

Herbert Samuel Johnson (1881-1971), founder of Johnson & Bailey the builders was an enthusiastic photographer who, I wrote, was said to have amassed a copious library of Cambridge scenes which had changed during his life-time. At that time we had just a few which he had contributed to the Cambridge Antiquarian Society's photographic record in 1930, was there any hope that the rest might have survived.

This week came the answer: a box which included an envelope of loose pictures taken or collected by Johnson, now donated by his family. I opened it up and sifted through them to reveal a wonderful mixture – views of Midsummer Fair c1929, a party in Norfolk Street for King George VI's coronation, Post Office Terrace – a snapshot c 1950. There's a postcard of the great flood on Midsummer Common in 1879 - not one that Johnson took himself, a picture of the Garrick public house at the junction of Jesus Lane and King Street taken in 1885. Next comes Heffer's shop in Sidney Street c1930, the Three Tuns, Castle Hill, the

Cross Keys opposite Magdalene College, views of Peas Hill and Market Hill in the mid 1930s ... and so on. To select a favourite view is difficult. Several of the nicest ones we have seen before, or they will show an area also recorded by somebody else. Some are hand-coloured, others soft-focus. I like views of the official proclamation on Market Hill of George V's silver jubilee in 1935, a snap of Mrs Roosevelt during her war-time visit to the Friends Meeting House in Jesus Lane and a view of the hot pea stall at Midsummer Fair – surely an unusual subject. In the end I will tease you with two views of scenes which have changed somewhat in the 60 years since Johnson photographed them, but which still contain enough clues to enable recognition.

It will take several months before this week's accessions are properly catalogued – but it will certainly be a most interesting way to spend the time between enquiries! Meanwhile more are promised and who knows what tomorrow may bring?

Reflections 1993 10 20

Two fenland communities come under the spotlight in the latest volume of Proceedings published by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. However despite all the research there are still mysteries associated with both 6th-century Haddenham and 20th-century Isleham which have yet to be resolved.

The garden of the Three Kings public house in Haddenham used to be famous for its early potatoes. Then in 1989 it was decided to extend the car park and the JCB was booked. Before it started work however the landlord allowed a friend to run over the site with a metal detector. What he found brought the County Archaeologist hot-foot to the scene and her team quickly identified a grave.

Fragments of pottery were dated to the Anglo-Saxon period from which the name of the village "Haeda's Ham (or homestead) itself dates.

It also reawakened memories of another great discovery, that of St. Ovin's cross which the antiquarian James Bentham discovered being used as a mounting block in the village street in the 1750s and caused to be removed to Ely Cathedral. Ovin had been steward to St Etheldreda and had founded a church at Haddenham in 673, the same year that she had founded the Cathedral. Yet now it appeared from the iron spearhead detected might be even earlier.

Further excavations unearthed more burials. Some were a mixture of bodies and bones - obviously disturbed by previous ditch-cutting and quietly dumped back - but one revealed a man and woman laying together, resting on a bed of pebbles, her hand beneath his back. He had been almost six foot tall, heavily built and about 50 years old, she some eight inches shorter, thirty years younger and probably his wife. She wore amber beads and a brooch, he had carried a shield, spear and knife. All this could be deduced from the skeletons.

The question remains as to where they had actually lived. The surrounding fen would have been waterlogged and uninhabitable so their homes would have been close by, probably in a hollow shielded from the wind but near to the fen which would have given them their living. Probably under somebody's garden the answer still lies waiting to be unearthed - perhaps when digging potatoes.

In "Who were the fen people" Polly Hill has been agonising over a much more recent time. She has turned extensive experience in researching communities in West Africa to consider the group of people who made their homes alongside the river bank at Isleham in the nineteenth-century. Were they really the hard-breeding, opium-eating, incestuous folk that tradition would maintain inhabited such isolated areas. There is little record of the humdrum

day-to-day working life of the ordinary fenlander but she pieces together details from the census returns between 1841 and 1891 identifying the occupation of the men and speculating on the role of their womenfolk who in the 1860s could earn wages of just 8d or 9d (4p) a day to supplement their husbands 10/- (50p) a week. No wonder they sent young children out to work in labour gangs, picking twitch, planting potatoes, pulling carrots and mangold wurzels for the princely sum of 6d (2p) a day. The living conditions were as hard as their work in damp cold homes whose water was fetched from across the high river bank on to which the dwellings abutted. Many families quit the Cambridgeshire fens for the promise of wealth in the New World, 21 leaving Isleham itself in 1852. But of the large families she finds little evidence with over half having less than four children, incest no higher than recent research suggests is common throughout the Kingdom and the opium claims overstated. She believes the perceived image is merely a myth originally put out by the University when fighting the drainage of the seventeenth century which would destroy the river trade on which Cambridge relied in the interests of certain wild men who inhabited the fen

Like the other papers in the Proceedings Polly Hill has certainly stimulated new thinking!
Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, volume 81 ; 1992, ISSN 0309-3606, £12 for non-members

Reflections 1993 10 27

If "Heritage" reflects the past so the video camera epitomises the present. The product of the one is permanent, that of the other ephemeral. This week they have combined.

The visit to the Central Library of the Secretary of State for National Heritage on Monday prompted some tidying of corners, some relabelling of notices and some dramatic resiting of the Cambridgeshire Heritage Showcase which for the past-several months has been housed in the Mezzanine Gallery off the Lending Library.

The combination of displays from archaeologist, archivist, museums officer, building conservation and libraries was already destined to move back to the third floor, adjacent to the Cambridgeshire Collection and the Library Shop, but the visit gave us the impetus to drop everything else and mobilise resources. Frantic activity resulted in all being ready on the night. Then amongst the flashes from attendant press photographers and the more constant probing of the television cameras He was in, looking at the pictures, maps, documents, artefacts before the presentation - a map of the road from Oxford to Cambridge in the days before Milton Keynes, for the Ministerial opening of an exhibition already 10 months old, and then off into a Lion Yard for once lacking its more normal nocturnal occupants, and now replaced with besuited gentlemen whom not even the drunkest would accost. Within minutes it was on the telly - and those who blinked would have missed it. but, those who videoed it could watch again and again,

Wednesday night and it was video again - but this time planning of a drama-documentary of the almost-disastrous floods of 1897, averted only through the skilful engineers who worked the great steam pump at Stretham and the dozens of men who responded to the late-night ringing of the town-criers bell and left hearth and family to trudge into the fen to labour for hours on river banks which were cracking and leaking under the weight of water which threatened to engulf the surrounding fertile land. Because their labours were successful their story was never told - who now remembers anything of it, whose family has tales of that-night, can they be tracked down, can a forgotten episode be rescued from obscurity and their heroic efforts at last recognised? In a few minutes of television millions could learn of the activities of one night in the fen, but it will be hours in the planning, hours in the making and hours in the discussions with accountants and executives before it ever reaches the screen.

Thursday night was video again - a video that had been hours in the planning ... but which was now formally launched. It follows a group of Homerton students who trace the story of their college through its architecture, its artefacts, the mementoes and memories of those who had once studied there, and who then went on to learn more in "the archives" - but in fact found themselves in the local studies library - showing that even teachers can become confused about which resources are where and the essential interrelationship between archivist, archaeologist, curator and librarian. Which is why of course the Showcase was created.

The video has been produced by the Education Service of English Heritage, launched days after the National Heritage Minister had visited the Cambridgeshire Heritage Showcase ,, "Heritage" is the current buzz word, sadly none of the "Heritage Officers" can stand it!

"Doorstep Discovery ; working on a local history study", produced by English Heritage Education Service, Keysign House, 429 Oxford St. London W1R 2HD price £10.35

W.12.J82 18018 W.29.J9 16365 W.29.K1 8777 E.Hom.K4 40445 E.Hom.J79 26165 & Brooke in Heritage showcase

Reflections 1993 11 03

Returning from a few days break on the South Coast I find myself scanning advertisements for Bournemouth - the "perpetual holiday resort : no dull moments, the season never ends" where terms for a hotel on the West Cliff start at 3 guineas - somewhat different from those now current on the East Cliff! - but when were they so charged? The answer to that question would provide a clue as to the date of one particular edition of the old Ward Lock Guide book to Cambridge now being catalogued. The actual volume provides some assistance for there is mention of the Folk Museum – "fast becoming one of the most fascinating in Cambridge" - housed in the former White Horse Inn, converted to this use in 1936, a picture of the new Guildhall, completed in 1933 but not formally opened due to the imminence of war. But a later date comes from the advert for the British Sailors' Society, reminding us of the hazards of a seafarer's life with the note that it spent one and a half million pounds during the years 1944-45.

Much of the text in the guidebook itself does not however change - "narrow roadways with narrower pavements where ruthless perambulators and trick-cyclists on push-bikes conspire to thrust one under motors" - now partially remedied. Modern visitors might however puzzle over reference to streets "haunted after-dusk by malignant demons with attendant satellites whose sole business is to molest the innocent student on his unlawful occasions". This relates to the University Proctors and their "bull-dogs" who were charged with maintaining discipline and preventing the infringement by undergraduates of regulations such as that of wearing cap and gown.

Such practices are still recalled in more modern guidebooks, such as that now issued by Pitkin in a variety of languages. Thus alongside colour photographs of formal gowned grads en route to the Senate House there is an 1887 illustration, from the Cambridgeshire Collection, of a student, properly attired, but with a forbidden cigarette concealed behind his back - an offence which was later to cost the future King George VI a fine during his own student days.

With such a mixture of historic buildings and quaint traditions it is no wonder that the streets of Cambridge are frequently packed with tourists. Yet today there is talk of seeking resort status to enable shops to trade on Sundays. Inevitably this is no new idea. In 1912 the railway companies were suggesting advertising Cambridge like a seaside town to encourage visitors

during the Long Vacation - and so provide trade for shops which tended to close when the students had gone.

The railways have played a great part in the development of tourism, despite University attempts to relegate the station to the outskirts of town and prevent trains stopping on Sundays.

By 1853 "The Pictorial guide to Cambridge" was claiming that the majority of visitors reached the town by means of the Eastern Counties Railway. They arrived at "one of the best stations I have seen for many a day", where some chose to visit the "handsome refreshment room" before indulging themselves with a cheap ride in the luxury of a remarkably clean and well-padded omnibus along Hills Road where they would join those who had arrived by other, "semi-barbarous modes of transit" for a tour of the sights - many of which remain today as described then.

But what of the more human side of academic life - the students, "half of whom have been tugging away on the Cam, and the other half at Greek and mathematics" now returning back to their college - and "look what joyous faces they all have". In college kitchens with their long arrays of roaring fires and twirling joints a score of cooks and scullery maids are grilling and boiling and chopping and pounding to prepare a meal fit for such paragons of academic excellence - and far too good for the tourist who must resort to the only slightly more meagre fare of the station buffet!

I.N.K1 37153 I.N.K14 4913 I.A.K37 29859 V.W.J87 19090 E.T.J30 4349 # c.46.45

Reflections 1993 11 10

It is all too easy to get behind with the papers. Part of my job is to select cuttings from the contemporary local press and I am content if I am only one month behind - but even so it represents a massive pile to get through. One advantage in being so far behind is that it is then easier to assess the significance of the story, and many new ideas will have been discussed and rejected before the cutting is finally filed.

After a while newspapers get more interesting in retrospect than they were on publication and people will bring us issues of the Cambridge News from the 1960s, or the Cambridge Independent Press from a decade or so earlier. Then there will be the even older fragments which are often found lining drawers or under floorboards, each one fascinating to the finder.

One day recently a reader brought in a copy of the "Cambridge Chronicle and Journal and Huntingdonshire Gazette" for 1812. Not just one page, or one issue, but a complete year. True the cover is off and the first page of the first issue is missing but still a remarkable find considering just how long this had been around. Let us examine just one issue - the four pages published on Friday November 13 1812

For a start there is the price - it cost six-pence halfpenny (2½ p), half of which was a "tax on knowledge" imposed by the government, which also taxed the income from the advertisements which made up much of the newspapers pages. Such charges made production financially challenging, to say nothing of printing difficulties and distribution costs and may have contributed to the absence of any rival paper at this time. News had to be gathered from various sources - much garnered from London papers - set up in type and printed in a weekly edition of about 700 copies. International affairs, and especially wars, were big news but little space devoted to local issues.

Page one reports the "Corsican Monster", Napoleon, seeking peace with the "magnanimous" Russian Czar in the depths of a Russian winter, whilst other despatches from Cadiz report the activities of the army under Lord Wellington, though news from France has been delayed through adverse winds and tempestuous weather. Elsewhere are reports on the health of King George III - "his disorder-has again subsided" and a new discovery by Sir Humphrey Davy. Alongside come public notices and auctions, cures for baldness and adverts for a new coffee.

Battles continue to dominate the second page, with news of the capture of Moscow by the Russian army, but of more local interest is a report on the proposed canal from Cambridge to Bishop's Stortford, activities of the Ely turnpike road trustees and sale of a gang of lighters at Earith. Opposite comes an announcement of a new stagecoach from Cambridge to Birmingham and sales of things as diverse as the late Waterbeach vicar's books & furniture, the Bull pub at Toft or Edward Lunn's post chariot and two coach horses, now on view at the Falcon Yard stables. A poem. Old Bailey court cases, the robbery of the Leeds Mail coach when money bags containing £15,000 disappeared from the locked seat on which the coachman and guard sat and the story of a girl who poisoned her brother with opium and was broken alive on the wheel all cram themselves on the last page,

So where is the local news? A single column on page three. Professor Christian will start his lectures, some appointments, marriages and deaths - including the wife of the butler at St Catharine's college; militia movements, a meeting of foxhounds, a robbery at Woolpit, a horse race at Peterborough and an account of Stamford market - but nothing of Cambridgeshire ,, perhaps next week.

Such few Cambridgeshire stories, advertisements and court cases that were published in the Cambridge Chronicle between 1770 and 1813 have been indexed together with village news up to 1900. Though often brief they do make a most interesting contribution to the life and times of local folk and emphasise the importance of local newspapers to the local researcher.

Handbill 1821 Q.Ac.J39 36016 Q.B.J10 4250 # c.04

Reflections 1993 11 17

Evil and murder emanate from various new books this week, some in fact, some in fiction and some engraved in stone.

Few may have encountered St Agatha's college on the junction of Chesterton Lane and Castle Hill nor know of its ancient Wyndham library whose books must never be removed nor added to. Yet it was in the locked library that the body of Philip Skellow was discovered together with a book which did not belong there - a book stolen from the house of college nurse Imogen Quay who lived in Newnham. As local police try to unravel the mystery they encounter a marked reluctance from the students to discuss the days immediately preceding the murder and nurse Quay, amongst all her other medical duties, is increasingly drawn into the investigation. In "The Wyndham Case" Jill Paton Walsh, the distinguished children's writer, introduces her readers to something of the inner workings of a Cambridge college with its jealousies and intrigue.

David Thurlow has written several murder mysteries set in the local area but in "Evil in East Anglia" turns his attention to various true-life cases which he covered whilst a journalist. The story of the Cambridge rapist is still fresh in people's minds, but what of gypsy Jack Smith who swung from trees to murder and rape in Oakington in July 1960. One recalls the case of the football supporter killed by rioting Cambridge fans in 1977 but who recalls the murder some ten years earlier of an eleven year old boy who'd upset a sixteen-year old girl during the half-time interval and was later drowned by her in a brook on Coldham's Common. On a

lighter note comes the case of the eccentric landlord of the Whittlesford pub named after his family, Kim de la Taste Tickell, who wore a monocle and knee breeches and had very decided views about just who should or should not be served in his establishment. It was one thing to be harangued by the landlord - in fact it was part of the fun of an evening out - but when a customer was wounded with a knife and chased out by an enraged publican waving a medieval mace the matter ended up in court.

The victim's bodies are eventually laid to rest amidst grief which is heightened by the horror of their deaths and two examples of such crime are featured in a new booklet by Eileen Clifford. In Isleham church lies the body of Roger Peachey, vicar for more than 37 years whose 1683 tombstone records also his "eldest sonn of Grades Inn . . . barbarously murdered by Mr Hatton of ye same society". Nearby lay 14 other sons and daughters, testament to the hardship of life at, that time.

The case of Mary Ann Weems is perhaps best remembered for the broadsheet issued after her murder in May 1813 but is more permanently recorded in Godmanchester graveyard. Her shotgun wedding to Thomas Weems soon fell apart and, wishing to be married to another woman, Thomas barbarously murdered her at Wendy. He was soon arrested and hanged at Cambridge castle, his body later being cut down and subjected to electric shock experiments in the University Anatomy School. The inscription on the gravestone includes the cautionary lines

"Ere Crime you perpetrate survey this Stone
Learn hence that God of Justice sleeps not on his Throne
But Marks the Sinner with unerring Eye
The suffering Victim hears and make the Guilty die"

The Wyngham case" by Jill Paton Walsh, Hodder & Stoughton 14.99

"Evil in East Anglia" by David Thurlow. Robert Hale £6.99

"Cambridgeshire epitaphs" collected by Eileen Clifford, Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust, £4.95

Y.Isl.K1 13859 B.Cas.J40 1327 Y.Whit.K77 38469

Reflections 1993 11 24

In the 1950s you had to be a mechanic to understand the garage bill. Thus when Dr Pritchard took his Triumph 1800, registration number GER 500, to King & Harper in February 1955 his account included draining, flushing and refilling sump, greasing chassis, fitting new spring to gear lever, removing self starter, skimming and undercutting commutator, repositioning solenoid switch and retaping battery leads - as well as more mundane matters such as fitting a new exhaust mounting, adjusting brakes and freeing door locks. The bill amounted to £5,13,4 (£5.67). He also had to fork out an extra 76p for 11 pints of Castrolite as well as all the other odds and ends required.

But then in April he was back - this time for a new clutch and a reconditioned gearbox, brake cables and repairs to his indicators. Labour £8.20. parts £45,50 - and back again in December for more refilling of the sump, new plugs, repairing the arm rest, checking for water leaks and new core plugs to the cylinder block - another bill, this time nearly £9.00. This seems to have been the end for the garage loaned him a Standard Vanguard before on January 1st 1956 he took delivery of a brand new Rover Seventy Five saloon for the grand sum of £915.00 plus all the extras - purchase tax of £458.85, delivery charges of £5.25, ACE silver peak number plates at £3.50, road fund tax at £12.50 together with antifreeze, underseal, front seat, covers and 11½ gallons of petrol at £2.66.

All this is revealed in a few billheads recently received in the Collection, just part of an assortments of bits of paper from various sources within the last week. Others include a Certificate of Character for Miss Edith Browning who worked as temporary postwoman for some 18 months and performed her duties quite satisfactorily - or so Mr Bell the postmaster recorded in August 1917, & ration books from the same period - with the Imperial War Museum appealing already for mementoes of the war to add to their collection.

From West Molesey in Surrey have come bills dating from the 1940s together with a programme of the New Theatre for week commencing 12th July 1948 when the performance included Paddie O'Neil (the comedy girl from "Navy Mixture"). Marquis the Chimpanzee, Hughie Diamond ("Radio's greatest voice") and the famous BBC Comedy Bank from the Radio Show, The Nitwits. After the performance you could take coffee at Snax in Regent Street, whilst the Embassy Ballroom in Mill Road had dancing nightly - and King & Harper would supply electric cleaners, wireless sets as well as cars.

The Theatre had been founded by William Beales Redfern in the 1880s but although situated in St Andrew's street - "in the leading thoroughfare from the four railway stations to the Market Place" the building was inconvenient. It could hold some 700 people, the majority of whom came from the University, but there was no room to segregate smokers and the various classes were all mixed together. So in 1895 a new Company was established - "The New Theatre, Cambridge Ltd" intending to raise sufficient money to allow for rebuilding with the most modern requirements and with three separate areas so that a town audience could be encouraged to attend. This and more is revealed in copies of the Prospectus and share application forms which have also arrived this week.

But my favourite item must be a piece of paper issued to Dr Pritchard in 1936. It is entitled "Licence for armorial bearings, male servants, and dogs" and records payments required - coat of arms on a carriage £2.10, male servants 75p, dogs 36p

New Theatre programme K&H Roundabout c.26.48 Adverts I.K.K48 36009 dog licence

Reflections 1993 12 01

There seems at the moment to be a rush of new publications but for sheer quantity as well as quality it is the Shelfords who must take the prize. Two new booklets and the reprint of a third - with a fourth I understand in the pipeline - means that anybody who has any connections with either village can have no shortage of things to spend his book tokens on

Marjorie Westbrook has been associated with the Church of England Primary School for over thirty years, twenty of them as a Governor. She has drawn upon local knowledge as well as school log books, recollections, photographs and newspaper extracts to compile a history of the school from 1843 to the present day. In over 116 pages she records a wealth of detail making the book as interesting to students of education as to students of the school itself. There was considerable debate in 1904 as to whether the infants, boys and girls schools should be kept separate or amalgamated into one mixed school - there were fears of the opportunities of immorality if the master and mistresses and older girls were brought into proximity - and in 1907 the County Council was campaigning against the steady growth of cigarette smoking amongst pupils, The opening of Sawston village college in 1930 almost halved the number of Shelford pupils as all those over 11 years had to attend the new College whilst a teacher was also forcibly transferred and even the woodworking tools were removed

Almost inevitably a group of schoolchildren feature amongst the 76 photographs selected by Margaret Ward for her book of postcards of the two villages. Many of the pictures were taken by Ted Mott and have probably not been developed before they were selected from the many dozen negatives he took of the Cambridge hinterland in the 1920s and 1930s. They have been chosen to reflect Shelford life when pleasures were simple, village entertainment revolved around the feast, flower show or gala and its residents found employment as higgler; milliner, stocking knitter or on the land, But the arrival of the motor car in otherwise deserted streets give a hint that Shelford was not to be a self-contained community for long.

A hint of village life in earlier times may be gleaned from "The Great Shelford Chronicle", a selection of stories appearing in Cambridge newspapers between 1774 and 1868. Like the other "Chronicles" this is full of interest – not least the story of John Stallan, hanged at Cambridge castle in 1833 for a series of incendiary fires he had started so that he would receive the payment of 6/6 (32p) he received as one of the fire-fighters. Reports that the victim had struggled whilst on the gallows were discounted by eyewitnesses - the body had merely been buffeted by the wind as it hung suspended. Another young man hanged himself after being arrested for stealing a chicken whilst such was the hardship of the time that families were forced to leave the village and seek a new life in the New World. This latest "Chronicle" has been well illustrated with pen and ink sketches which capture the spirit of the age and published with the assistance of the Parish Council,

The making of a village school, 1844-1933 by Marjorie Westbrook, published by the author, "Great & Little Shelford in old picture postcards" by Margaret Ward, reissued by European Library

The Great & Little Shelford Chronicle edited by Alan Bullwinkle is published by the Great Shelford Parish Council

Reflections 1993 12 08

Rupert. Brooke wrote his famous poem on Grantchester whilst sitting in a German cafe in May 1912 where "sweating, sick and hot" he watched "German Jews drink beer around" and reminisced about life in an idyllic corner of England where one could "lie day-long ... flower lulled in sleepy grass". Yet his knowledge of the "lovely hamlet Grantchester" was limited to the few months he'd spent there in lodgings whilst a student, first at The Orchard where his landlord ran a tea garden during the Summer months and then at the Old Vicarage where Harry Neeve kept bees, supplying honey to the Tea Garden.

Generations of Grantchester residents with their "straight eyes", white skin and "lithe children lovelier than a dream" have basked in the glory of his description though neighbouring villages - "Ditton girls are mean and dirty", Shelford folk "have" twisted lips and twisted hearts" and Coton "full of nameless crimes" have less occasion to quote his lines

Despite the "rotten unforgettable unforgotten river smell" hordes of visitors to Grantchester still seek the honey for tea and the legendary "peace and holy quiet there". Yet the village today is different from that known by Brooke in the period 1911-1913 and now The Orchard Tea Garden have produced a new edition of the poem containing illustrations by Prof. E.N. Willmer which capture "What the poet saw" - the mill, the meadows, bosky wood and picturesque thatched cottages – though of course the other side of village life – that of the ordinary villagers who forsook their village homes and hardships to fight and die in some foreign field without ever seeing Berlin or its cafes.

The little hamlet of Grantchester stands alongside the little city of Cambridge whose story has now been told by Queens' college don, and townsman. John Holloway. It traces the

development from the prehistoric times when dinosaurs tramped the land and mammoths roamed at Grantchester, Monks from Ely found a white empty coffin in marble on the edge of a ruined city - "quite near the place where in more recent time Presidents of Magdalene college used to bury their family pets - you can still see the carved stones somewhat neglected in the wild garden". The story continues - thirty houses pulled down to build a Castle, the development of Stourbridge Fair, the coming of the clerks with their learning and the struggles betwixt town and gown. His history is full of detail - a blind woman carried out of town, set down at the boundary and told to smell her way to Newmarket, Caius library floor littered with manuscripts whilst at Peterhouse in 1710 the reader "gets a towel to put around his middle as he looks at the filthy volumes".

The booklet contains illustrations – of surrounding fenland, of the castle in 1574, the barges moored at Mill Pool in 1798 or Victoria's coronation feast on Parker's Piece in 1838, but the pictures are unnecessary, for Holloway's history is a poem and his words paint the picture - of the blind child at the feast enjoying the "beef today, plum pudding, even kindness", Using a variety of verse forms he mingles geology, history, imaginative reconstruction, description and personal reflection to distil the essence of Cambridge, its history and spirit, taking the story beyond 1979 when "The Lion Yard lion is dusty red ... glares at the pop-booming boutiques they rent through the heart of our City. Across the garish arcade, in the Library ... a textile stegosaurus the children made for Christmas shrugs his rug shoulders and hilariously averts his jaunty if extinct gaze from the contemptible reminder of the dark, dignified, long-demolished inn : the Lion"

Schools and colleges will study it for both history and English but all will enjoy what A.L. Rowse has described as "the finest and most remarkable long poem since T.S. Eliot's 'Four Quartets' ... a unique tribute to Cambridge in the history and landscape of England ... there is nothing else like it"

"What the poet saw ; an illustrated version of 'The old vicarage, Grantchester'", by E.N. Willmer, Orchard publishing, £7.95 "Civitatula ; the little city" by John Holloway, Cambridgeshire Libraries, £4.95

Reflections 1993 12 15

Various booklets on various villages have recently examined various aspects of rural life. From Bourn has come an account of the footpaths in the vicinity describing six circular walks, some starting from the village pubs, crossing fields and bridges, past kingfishers, barns and the Infertility Clinic and including historical notes on some of the sights. Those repeating the exercise in Histon might spot the various lumps and bumps which mark the site of one of the village's two churches, St Etheldreda's demolished about 1600 so that its lead, timber, stones and bell could be used for the building of Madingley Hall It seems that certain of the material was subsequently brought back to Histon to be used during the rebuilding of its other church, St Andrew's, in 1874, The church's builder was also working at Madingley where he discovered a large section of clunch which including the remains of various church windows, The parish bought them back and used them to line the chancel walls.

One interesting sideline to the episode is a section of stained glass in the Library at Madingley which depicts a youth on the run carrying a church with lettering around the edge asking "Who stole Histon church" - the answer is revealed in the new guide to Histon parish church just published by the Village Society, This is the 14th in a series of booklets covering many aspects of local history, others of which look at the villages houses and their stories

Roger Rudderham's latest publication "Tales of old Littleport" also describes various intriguing aspects of local life - like the story of the old miser of Red Cow Drive, Tabitha

Camm was reported to the Guardians of the Poor as being in a distressed state. The roof of her cottage had partially collapsed, the walls were crumbling and the windows falling out - surely she would be more comfortable in the parish workhouse! They send out the Medical Officer who ordered her to undertake repairs - but she refused. So they got authority to remove her to the poorhouse - but Tabitha was having none of it and refused to budge - the only way she would leave her cottage was in a wooden box! When that time came, in March 1898, it was found that she had a small fortune of £400 sewn into her stays, but had been too mean to spend it.

Such insights are also contained in "Forbidden path" - Bottisham reminiscences, 1900-1933 with its sections on the Great War - when Amy Muncy saw "an ugly moving black thing against the sky" - a Zeppelin, on village pubs, including the aptly named "Wait for the Bus" which lost its licence in 1905, and social life such as the village feast whose roundabout used to frighten Violet Whiting.

We meet the village policeman who was run over by a traction engine in 1905. the donkey-drawn village fire engine which featured in the "Daily Mirror", the cinema which used to operate at the British Legion Hall and the lads who discovered they could fire small stones at the church clock using a catapult which came free with liquorice sweets sold at the local shop. Another section tours the village streets, telling the story of the cottages and their former occupants.

One of the best known characters was William Hine, a shoemaker who taught draughts and dominoes and organised treasure hunts by hiding OXO tins with coins in around the village. When he went on holiday he would wrap a three-penny piece and hide it in one of the ditches so that the children could look for it whilst he was away. At other times they were welcomed into his hut where each child who was well behaved was given a half-penny a week sweet money, though the naughty ones were "suspended from the shop from one to six weeks, according to the crime" - presumably not by their ears - though such is the quirkiness of village life this is not impossible!

"Walking in Bourn" by Margaret Greenwood £2,50

"Histon parish church", Histon & Impington village society

"Tales of old Littleport" by Roger Rudderham: Littleport village

"Forbidden path ; Bottisham reminiscences 1900-1933" by Hugh Rogers, Staine Hundred local history society 4.50

Reflections 1993 12 22

There are some people it is always a pleasure to meet and some books which have a charm all of their own. From one we have had the opportunity to acquire the other.

Dr Jack Ravensdale has been the inspiration for generations OF local historians; from his appearances in the "History on our doorstep" television series he achieved the recognition that his many years of teaching and researching, both in this country and Australia deserved. His 1974 study of the village landscape on the edge of the fens, "Liable to floods", reflected his love for the area around Cottenham, Waterbeach and his adopted village of Landbeach whilst his restoration of a home there features extensively in "The Domesday Inheritance". Sadly Jack will teach no more but his local materials are to be made available to others - and amongst them that most interesting volume "The reminiscences of Albert Pell", published in 1908 :

Pell recalls various aspects of life some 160 years ago in and around Wilburton. where his father was Lord of the Manor. The lad was impressed by the village pound, home for

wandering cows, cunning donkeys and loose colts which had been rounded up by the Pindar. But whereas the donkeys stood stock still in the sunshine, and the cows chewed the cud placidly until kicked by the cart colt, it was the pigs that were the villains, causing their captor the most difficulty, especially at "shacking" time.

Human animals also needed restraining and for this there was the village cage, a square brick building with a narrow door adorned by auctioneers posters into which disruptive elements were imprisoned. One such was the village pest - some said he was an idiot, some that he was insane, some that he was devilish cunning. Short in stature, his tangled hair and deeply pitted pock-marked face was as dirty as his fingers whilst his eyes perpetually twinkled, except when they blazed with rage.

Dressed in home-made clothes - a kilt made from a corn sack and a jerkin fashioned from a calf-skin with the two joined together with a butcher's skewer - he was a hard drinker and when not brawling in the street would be engaged in some other mischief in the fields. From time to time patience snapped and burly residents dragged him back to the village and called out the constable. Without further ado - and without bothering the magistrates - he would be forced into the cage and locked up, a few children loitering around the door acting as warders.

On one occasion they came running with the message "He's been a-thumping the door and a-swearing and says he's not a-going to be kept in any longer - you can hear him 'scratting' like a rabbit". A crowd gathered to watch the jail break and were rewarded by the sight of two hands emerging from under the foundations; after a while a head, then bare shoulders followed and when the hips followed the onlookers ran off, only then sending for the constable. But he had gone off to milk his cow in some distant field and the village was left to the mercy of the "pest", who threatened vengeance if somebody did not bring him his jerkin - which was of course still securely locked up.

Few pounds or lock-ups survive today as reminders of the time when villagers had their own way of dealing with rogue elements, be they man or beast. But thanks to Jack Ravensdale thousands of us have much more appreciation of the history on our doorsteps.

Reflections 1993 12 29

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Reflections 1994 01 05

Two views of winter now sit side by side on our new books shelves though published 100 years apart.

One is from "The Atlantic Monthly" which in 1893 carried an article entitled "The English Cambridge in winter" written by Albert Gillette Hyde who was obviously impressed with his memories of the winter of 1890-91 for he waxes lyrical about colleges under snow and "the stout but rather dissipated and rowdy-looking figure of bluff King Hall, over the fine old gateway of Trinity, wearing a most reverend and snowy beard", He continues in like vein describing the modern undergraduate on holidays "draped in the flowing white surplice redolent of sanctity", of clean asphalt streets and "shops lighted up brilliantly".

The blizzard - though of course a much milder version than the genuine American visitation - began on November 15, the cold snap lasted two months being the severest known for 70 years and making Cambridge the coldest place in the Kingdom. Despite it all the University did not suspend its functions, until the general exodus of Christmas when the town relapsed into a state of somnolence until the middle of January when the grads returned. Padded out with accounts of May week, quotes from poets and references to famous personages it gave his American readers some impression of a Cambridge that local people might have recognised,

Edward Storey, himself a poet, has perhaps achieved something similar in his latest hook "The winter fens", starting and ending with the arrival of the wild swans at Welney. In between he reprints sections from various books and recounts conversations with local people which are much more interesting. Jack Kerridge at Littleport, once a renowned local skater at a time when this might mean prizes of beef or mutton that would keep the family alive when there was no possibility of work on the land, recalled how men worked on the farm until four o'clock on Christmas Eve when they'd come to the farmhouse for a glass of whisky before going home to rooms decorated with paper chains and holly.

On Boxing Day most went off to compete in ploughing matches. Hugh Cave of Thorney recalls the winter of 1906—7 when the Wisbech Road was so blocked with snow that council men had to dig trenches for people to cross from one side of the village to the other, whilst gipsy Charlie Ashton recalled waking many a time with two inches of snow on his head.

This last memory is recounted on a series of tape recordings made by the Delanoy family of Haddenham which also features the late George Amory talking about the 1947 fen floods. "When the bank blowed at Over Fen it drowned all the Fen ... I went along that night, me and my wife, and we met Perse Allen. There was already a hole nearly thirty-foot long in the bank ... you could hear it roaring miles away, it filled up all the fen from Sutton to Stretham ... it were like a sea. We had more than ten feet of water on the land then. No, more than that, it must have been near fourteen feet with waves washing over tackle, out-buildings and the tops of bungalows."

The flood followed heavy February snow and devastated over 100 square miles of fen land but once the water had been pumped away the fenmen went back on the land

To me the best account of a fenman's winter comes from an unidentified 82 year old, "Years a-working on wet land, years of stooping over rows of taters in a biting wind, of getting wet through day after day until you thought you'd never bloody stand up straight again ... I used to go 'um some nights when my hands were that bloody cracked and swollen that I couldn't unlace my boots, The missus had to do that for me. Fifty-six years I worked on the land and a fat lot of thanks I got for it too. That's what I think about winter

E.T.K0 2188 W.22.K4 14841 W.22.K5 22871 Y.Lit.J90 26810 Floods H34/1 ES3, # c.12

Reflections 1994 01 12

Workwise Christmas comes in two stages. First there is the run up to the holiday itself, a time when most people have other things to do than undertake research or worry about their school or college project. Even the closure of the County Record Office for their annual stocktaking did not bring the additional enquiries we would otherwise expect. Once the break is over however then the rush begins, People who have vegetated over the turkey now want to get their minds in gear again, The Cambridge Evening News end-of-year quiz meant that our files of that newspaper were being perused day after day, there was little point in putting the bundles of papers away between enquirers,

Other people have taken the opportunity to have a sort-out at home and various items are brought in for addition to our files. From one envelope from Thetford in Norfolk came a bundle of sales particulars with the note "Thanks for your help". One was for a variety of properties in Burwell which had been offered for sale in 1892. No sooner did I bring this into the Collection than another reader gave me a copy of a similar item for the same place, this one dated 1866 and relating to the sale of the present Burwell House with its merchants yard opposite along with wharfs, warehouses and granaries.

From Worcester Library has come a scrapbook of cuttings and photos, including a snippet from the Daily Mail of July 1919 headlined "A modern gibbet" showing an effigy of Kaiser Bill swinging from the gallows at Caxton, whilst from a postcard album we have the opportunity to acquire several cards not previously in our stock, including a view of Sidney Street c1920, Another most welcome addition is a fine colour painting of the old cottages in Silver Street demolished by Queens' college in the 1930s.

If we can get so excited about a single picture think how the University must have felt when in 1834 they were presented with more than 280 oils, drawings and prints by various Dutch and Flemish painters. They arrived in twenty cases, brought by waggon during the summer of 1834 and were initially housed in a room in the Pitt Press in Trumpington Street, and named the Mesman Museum after the donor. Daniel Mesman was a member of a well-known Huguenot family of silk weavers but why he chose to leave his collection to Cambridge is far from clear. Although Viscount Fitzwilliam had bequeathed money in 1816 the museum named after him had not even been started and for the first few years Mesman's Museum was looked after by a former part-time butler at Queens' college. Then in 1848 it moved to its present home in the Fitzwilliam. Dr Basil Herbertson has recorded the story in a recent issue of the "Journal of the History of Collections", another of our Christmas donations.

But the most exciting thing brought in was one we could not keep. Nevertheless we drooled over it, we tried to read the spidery handwriting and decipher the abbreviated Latin script which recorded the activities of the Manor Court in Littleport many years ago. We tried to work out the date. We failed to make any sense of it, The fascinating bundle of documents had been rescued from destruction in a solicitors office some 50 years ago and was now offered for preservation in the County Record Office. Although closed for stocktaking the Archivists were delighted to be dragged away from their work to be told of this most exciting find and soon came down from Shire Hall to take it into their custody. We told them of our side-bet on the date and the answer came back -between between 13 and 13 . A truly wonderful Christmas gift to local researchers that we enjoyed helping ensure it found its permanent last resting place

Reflections 1994 01 19

Twice a month, on average, a new book will be published whose author acknowledges the assistance of the Cambridgeshire Collection in some way. Recently two of our local lady historians have chosen to feature a similar picture in their latest books, both depicting rod peeling for the basket making industry,

Sallie Purkis has selected a view of Joe Munsey's workers at Cottenham, formidable ladies each wearing hats, one of whom has a child with her, whilst their employer is shown at the back of the group. We are told that their job was to strip the bark off twigs which were then woven into baskets. Mary Abbott however in depicting the rod yard at Sutton Gault goes into much more detail. She records one woman's testimony that rod peeling was carried out in the springtime when the sap began to rise & the job lasted a month. When cut they were tied into bunches for transport to the yard, put in a big clamp and watered at night. To peel the rods they were drawn through a clave which bruised the rod to make it easier for peeling - but it was hard work and made the ladies' hands sore. The rods were separated at that time into large and small, dried & bunched up again for the basket maker. There was a big demand for skips for the fruit and potato trade. The fruit basket held 21 pound and the potato skip one hundredweight Harold Painter has recorded that pay varied between 2d and 2½ d per bundle and a good worker could prepare three bunches a day.

Mary Abbot, principal lecturer in history at Anglia Polytechnic University, comments further on the poses and clothing of the people depicted, the boss (probably Tom Norris) in the chair,

his wife, who has no need of an apron to protect her clothes unlike the women workers, part of the largely invisible army of mature women who combined housekeeping with earning. Her book "Family Ties", examines the different ways of life of various classes of people between 1540 and 1920. Chapters on the families of landowners, farmers, the middle-class, and the labouring poor are each divided into sections such as infancy, childhood, the choice of wife, parenthood or marital breakdown so that one can compare and contrast attitudes to such topics. There are many fascinating details - whilst in 1888 the advertisers of Sunlight Soap emphasised that it allowed washing to be done with so little rubbing "that a girl of 12 or 13 could do a large wash without being tired", another contributor records how in their family soap was so precious that few boys and girls under twelve ventured to touch it even for the most lawful purposes without express permission, whilst to 'borrow a rub' of it to make bubbles was a piece of daring that few children would dare to commit.

Sallie Purkis, writing for a much younger readership, also uses local examples such as a photograph of the servants at Melbourn Bury, posed alongside the members of the Fordham family who were present on Census night, 1891. Elizabeth Turtlebury was at 13 the youngest housemaid and domestic in the household having come into service from her home at Thriplow, whilst a picture of an old-fashioned mangle encourages the young historians to speculate on her way of life, as compared to that of her mistress, Catherine Fordham, who aged 52 was a widow living on her own income – precisely the questions answered by Mary Abbot

PC.Was.K0 37882 PC.Osi.J9 18253

'Your Victorian locality' by Sallie Purkis, Longman. 'Family ties: English families 1540-1920' by Mary Abbot. Routledge

Reflections 1994 01 26

Although most enquirers in the Cambridgeshire Collection have their own specific area of interest - the date of the tress at the bottom of their garden, a selection of photographs of Pembroke college, details of a local company with whom they have a job interview there are also a range of local projects being undertaken by various schools and colleges.

Recently we have started to compile selected lists of books, newspaper cuttings files and even illustrations on topics such as Cambridge railway station, Sturton Street and Park and Ride. Now it seems that old faithful project, the redevelopment of the Lion Yard, is once more on somebody's teaching schedules. The proposals seems to date back to the Holford report of 1949 which sparked considerable debate and disagreement between town and county authorities, Cambridge had lost its planning powers to the county under the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act and the County had appointed Holford as its consultant. When after two years the report was presented to the Borough for consideration there were complaints that they had not been consulted during its preparation and certainly disagreed with various of the proposals. It was perhaps typical that the Cambridge Daily News report managed to miss the single word "out" from one suggestion "it is possible to sort the traffic problems with(out) widening the ancient streets throughout". Holford felt that the historical centre should be pedestrianised but would be unable to meet increasing shopping needs, so he proposed a new shopping area in Fitzroy street.

The whole debate was aired at the County Development Plan inquiry in 1952. Although the need for a central car park was agreed, new proposals for two large shopping streets in the Lion Yard were rejected and another plan in 1959 met a similar fate. However that year the City voted to go ahead with a giant redevelopment scheme described as "the biggest yet in England if we omit the blitzed cities". The University objected and in 1960 the Minister rejected the idea.

Two years later an inquiry found the University favouring a cultural Lion Yard to include a new library, art gallery and concert hall with the commercial development in the Kite area. The County opposed the concert hall and the city wanted principally shops. By 1966 the city's plans were agreed but then the Government blocked funding and it was not until 1970 that work on the car park finally started. The demolition of the south side of Petty Cury followed in 1972 to create a massive building site on which the new Lion Yard shopping centre arose, finally opened in 1975.

Now there are proposals for a second stage with additional shops and development over the Heidelberg Garden - the roof-garden which is one of Cambridge's best-kept secrets

It is complicated enough to try and sort out the tangle of development proposals but what of the streets that disappeared under the bulldozer. Was it Alexandra Street or Falcon Yard that housed the YMCA, and which one had the gallery over it, where was St Tibbs Row & what shops used to stand where. By one of those strange co-incidences that seem to happen regularly, this week we have been given two separate sets of transparencies. Whether Messrs Pittock and Durkering actual knew each other is doubtful but they seemed to follow each other round to record scenes which will revive memories for some but are ancient history to others

c.49.67

Reflections 1994 02 03

Sir Cornelius Vermuyden, the Dutch engineer whose name is inevitably linked to the drainage of the fenlands, was also responsible for work elsewhere, including Hatfield Chace and the Isle of Axholme. Although it ultimately bought him fame it also brought controversy with other engineers disputing the solutions he proposed, various misjudgements, failures and the expensive mistakes leading him into debt and into prison. The troubled sage of his life was told in a book by J. Korthals-Altes first published in 1925 which has been unobtainable for many years and now reissued in a very limited facsimile edition of 100 copies, one of which we have acquired.

It includes some of the verses were penned at the time by fenmen opposed to the changes

"Why should we stay here and perish with thirst;
To th' new world in the moon away let us goe,
For if the Dutch colony get thither first,
Tis a thousand to one but they'll drain that too"

One of Vermuyden's supporters was Samuel Fortrey of Mepal who is thought to be the author of a tract on the History of the Great Level published in 1685 - another new acquisition - which includes verses supporting the drainers activities

"Go on, Brave Undertakers, and Succeed,
In spite of Brutish clamours, take no heed
To those that curse your Generous labours

He envisaged the new banks standing like the immoral pyramids and the critics confounded.

But the real fen poet was William Harrison born in 1794 at Pymore, educated at Lt Downham, who in 1831 was encouraged to apply for the post of drainage Superintendent at

Burnt Fen. Although he admitted he knew nothing of what was required he got the job and went on to serve loyally for 40 years during the period when drainage technology was undergoing tremendous change with the old windmills, which could only operate when the wind blew, being replaced by the might of steam.

But it was the fame of Harrison the poet which brought over 400 people to the Ely reading room in February 1873, the year after his death. The speaker William Marshall told the audience of the vast amount of poetry Harrison had penned and for two hours read a selection of his verses. They covered many topics - from the tale of Tom Young who had a beer house at Welches Dam and came to grief following the death of his first wife –

"And if she was as good a mate
As husband ever had,
His next to make the world go straight,
Perhaps was just as bad".

When threatened with eviction Tom turned his cottage into a castle and defied the bailiffs, who in turn starved him from his home;

"His dying frame was cast
On damp and rugged fishing nets,
And there he breathed his last".

After Marshall's talk people were determined that Harrison's poems should be brought together and published, rather than leave them scattered in newspaper columns or Magazines. Sadly their enthusiasm came to nothing and his name is largely forgotten, Now however a Scottish lady is seeking to bring it together and has sent us a copy of one of his earliest poems, written in 1814.

"Clod's Complaint" laments the end of the Napoleonic Wars which would allow cheap imports of corn and ruin local farmers.

"When war throughout all Europe reigned, we farmers lived in clover,
But now the friendly fiend is chained, our golden age is over",

The poem calls for another tyrant to arise –
"Grant, o Fate, 'ere 'tis too late, when men have had a blowing,
War may revive, that we may thrive, and corn may pay for growing".

His concerns were real for two years later the men of Littleport rioted against just such conditions and were hanged for their trouble,

"Sir Cornelius Vermuyden" by J. Korthals-Altes reissued by Mr Pye (Books),
Goole
HARRISON, William # c.73

Reflections 1994 02 09

A donation of postcards has this week reawakened memories of forgotten traditions. One such was Empire Day which on 24th May 1907 the County Boys School in Hills Road celebrated in traditional manner: all of the scholars assembled to salute the Union Jack and the Cadet Corps fired a salute. In the afternoon the pupils gathered for a thanksgiving service opened with the singing of the National Anthem. The President of Queens' college then gave an address urging the boys to honour all men and love the brotherhood. They must do their part

for the Empire Day movement and see that everything honourable true & pure should abound there and flourish, and whatever was mean, low and cursed they should stamp out. All this drew applause from the young audience. Then came the award of prizes for the best essay on the subject "The British Empire; its foundation, development and maintenance" which were won by Herbert and Robert Mayo. Elsewhere other schools marked the occasion in a similar patriotic manner,

In the evening a fancy dress procession took place with children on gaily decorated cycles and thousands of people thronged the streets to witness the spectacle. Amongst the participants was Gwennie Strange of the George Hotel who represented "India" in a costume of rich orange with a gold-braided turban and won the first prize of a gold necklet. Jessie Strange, attired as a courtier of the reign of Charles II, came second receiving a silver-plated preserve dish which had been presented by Matthews & company whilst other girls were dressed in Japanese.. Italian and Irish style,. First amongst the gentlemen was Archie Ellis of City Road representing the Post Office with coat and trousers covered with postage stamp whilst Charles Bennett of Oxford Road, dressed as a sailor, came second.

The proceedings were snapped by Joseph Henry Priest who issued a postcard view, one of those brought in. By good fortune we had some years earlier been given some 300 of Priest's glass negatives and were able to now match negative to postcard and take the opportunity of looking up the details in the Cambridge Chronicle newspaper of that year.

Another of the cards was also dated 1909 but shows another side of Cambridge life, as forgotten now as Empire Day - the Wooden spoon, This was traditionally awarded to the undergraduate who came lowest in the Mathematical tripos and although it probably started as an ordinary kitchen spoon it grew into a much more glorious object four or five feet long which was lowered from the Senate House galleries by undergraduates as the recipient approached the Vice Chancellor to be admitted to his degree. It was ornately painted with the arms of the winner's college, his name and the date - rather like an oar won in the May Races. In fact, the handle of the last, spoon awarded to C.L Holthouse of St John's college in 1909 was actually made of an oar-blade. It is now preserved in St John's college. The ceremony stopped when the class-lists stopped being printed in order of merit.

Less attractive Cambridge traditions included the Guy Fawkes night disturbances when students built bonfires of whatever would burn, ransacking garden fences for the purpose, Frank Keene issued a cartoon card in 1905 depicting the resistance of one Cambridge lady to the mob seeking to take her fence to fuel their blaze - "I'll give yer more wood" she cries, swinging her broomstick in the direction of undergraduate heads.

Reflections 1994 02 16

From Queensland Australia has come an account of the Cross family who emigrated from the Ely area in the 1950s. Pam McClymont traces her ancestry back to John and Elizabeth Cross who had ten children between 1761 and 1789 and includes many details of subsequent members of the family and their descendents - very-interesting to those involved, less riveting for others. However in 1855 George, his wife Julia and six children decided to leave their home at Prickwillow to make the long journey to Australia. Extracts from Julia's letters indicate something of the hardship of the journey,

They set sail from Southampton in November 1855, cheering as they left dockside but soon suffering as the "James Fernie" heaved and rolled upon the ocean; then after three days of seasickness "a violent storm came on the water and flew over the ship and we were rocked about, up went our heels and down went our heads as we lay in the bed we quite thought it

was all up for us". But this they were assured was nothing special. It continued very rough until they got to the Bay of Biscay, but by then they were acclimatised.

But there were other problems - the noise of the other 440 passengers half of them Irish - was like the inside of a railway carriage, making eating an endurance "for if I don't have peace and quietness my food never does me any good" - so when possible she took her boiled rice, boiled beef, potatoes and onion on deck.

On and on and on and on the voyage took. On 5th December they passed the Cape of Good Hope - "hope that is more than halfway", but they were making good progress "and we have not, had one die yet - and the last voyage this ship made to the same place they lost 37 ... but the Doctor is so particular else we should be as bad now for the Irish are so dirty ... but the Doctor will not let them have any dinner till their places are all clean". Christmas Day brought plum pudding and the alarm of fire - some thought caused by the Irish who were always smoking, even in their beds - but in fact through a baker's stove overheating - "the screams of some of them was beyond what you can conceive".

At last they sighted land - and two rocks, one called Sugar Loaf and the other the shape of Castle Hill, Cambridge but much larger. They docked at Moreton Bay, North Brisbane on 24th January 1856. There was to be a second voyage of fourteen days but now there was no shortage of food - "we have fresh beef and mutton and bread brought from Brisbane - as good Beef and mutton as ever I eat in England - I wish you now had the meat that we and many more are obliged to fling overboard for we really cannot eat it all." They also enjoyed delicacies - pineapples, lemons and pumpkins of all sorts, apples, walnuts and crabs. This must have prompted the families back home in the fens to consider their own position.

But- when the Crosses reached their new home it was not everything they could wish with temperatures of 35 degrees and millions upon millions of gants - "they bite you dreadful, all the parts of your flesh that is uncovered, of a night in the morning it will be exactly like small pox ... we got cow dung and smoked them out of the tent. I sleep in gloves and the children's hands in their nightgowns and I sew a handkerchief about their heads of a night".

Nevertheless, they were hardy folk, Julia then 36, her husband 42. and two years later they had another daughter. Having lived near Queen Adelaide, Ely they settled near Brisbane and, as Pamela McClymont records, they thrived,

'The Cross family book from Ely to ... Australia' from Mrs Pam McClymont PO Box 539, Cooroy, Queensland, Australia 4563

Reflections 1994 02 23

One recent enquiry was from somebody who was trying to locate the grave of her uncle. He had been one of those men of Cambridgeshire whose war-time exploits had resulted in the arrival of their ship at Singapore on 19th January 1942. They had come to support the troops fighting the Japanese in Malaya, troops who had already been pressed back further and further by the might of the enemy army and air-force, The Royal Navy battleships "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" had already been sunk as the seemingly unstoppable Japanese forces made their way down the length of the country smashing their way through Indian and Australian forces as they did so,

The island of Singapore was to be the final showdown. As more and more stragglers arrived the numbers of troops swelled, but their position was desperate. Just after 8 o'clock on the morning of 31st January 1942 the last men marched across the causeway which linked it to the mainland and engineers detonated charges to produce a four foot gap separating

themselves from some 130,000 Japanese infantry with some 200 planes, 150 tanks and artillery.

Amongst those facing them were the Cambridgeshire's who had disembarked from their troop ship just days earlier, unacclimatised to the heat and deprivations of an island just 20 miles long whose water supply had been destroyed along with the causeway. Ammunition was quickly expended, food and petrol ran out whilst bombers attacked hour by hour spilling bombs like confetti, amongst the demoralised defenders. Despite defiant messages from Commanders safely ensconced in Ceylon the outcome was without doubt, Of the 65,000 Allied service men and women who were capture some 30,000 were British, 20,000 of them untrained, unarmed or non-combatants.

For the survivors the nightmare was just beginning. Arthur Lane was one of these and he recounts what happened next - the forced marches, inhuman treatment, slave labour and starvation diet which allied to the unrelenting climate and lack of basic medical supplies left thousands of bodies alongside the railway that was constructed into Thailand and across the River Kwai. By the end of the war less than half of those who had surrendered at Singapore were alive and 23,000 of those who died have no known grave.

Fifty years later Lane went back to visit again places such as Three Pagoda Pass, Niki-Niki, Chungkai and other sites whose names conjure up in the mind some form of tropical paradise but which were in fact stopping places to Hell. The second part of his book recounts his adventures and includes 200 colour photographs including hidden railway locomotives, ruined bridges and tropical scenery where local men laboured and died. He recounts his attempts to track down missing cemeteries and of a visit to one such site where there was evidence of recent excavations and a nearby souvenir shop had for sale a soldier's cap badge, gold ring and Swan pen - but whose owner would not allow him to inspect the contents of some black bags at the rear of her shop - bags it was suspected contained British prisoners' bones.

The third part of the book is perhaps the most harrowing - over 240 pages of lists of names of those British killed in action or subsequently worked to death. Yet this is incomplete - to have included the Australians, Canadian, Dutch. Indian and Chinese forces would have demanded a further 150 pages

'When you go home' by Arthur Lane is published by A. Lane publications of 61 Charles Street, Stockport at £35. All receipts are donated to the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen Family Association in the name of former colleagues

c.45.7

Reflections 1994 03 02

Reflections on the past are nothing new. In 1912 Edward Conybeare, one-time vicar of Barrington, contributed an article to the magazine "Arena" in which he reflected on "Cambridge fifty years ago". In it he drew attention to various changes that somebody who - like him - had been at Trinity College in 1862 who notice were he to return to his old Alma Mater,

The sight of women in the University Library (still of course beside the Senate House in 1912) would have shocked him - in 1862 never a petticoat invaded those sacred precincts - although they were only allowed to sit in the Ladies Room. Perhaps the visitor might have noticed the newness of one of the balls on Clare college bridge - a replacement for one stolen by St John's undergraduates and dropped into the river, sinking too deeply into the ooze to be

recovered. This would not have been a viable proposition in 1862 since the Colleges along that section of the river discharged their sewage directly into the water, Conybeare claimed however that the University was not the only culprit for the Town's waste entered the Cam at Barnwell pool causing "an expanse of pestiferous bubbling slime" which was stirred up by the oars of the college boats making rowing "an unspeakably nauseating experience"

Other changes were the window boxes at Trinity, the electric light in college rooms, replacing the old "moderator" lamps which had burned colza oil which had needed to be pumped into the wick with infinite trouble.

To illustrate his article Conybeare included a number of "then and now" pictures, two of which have recently been issued as postcards by the Cambridgeshire Collection. They include the famous view of Market Hill from the entrance to Petty Cury with the patient male onlookers marvelling at the sight of the photographer well recorded but the bustling woman making a blurred image on the negative. Then there is Sidney Street, also in about 1862 looking virtually unchanged except for the cobblestones and of course the costume.

Conybeare would also have recognised some of the other scenes - the bustle of Market Day about 1905, the flags flying in Petty Cury for the 1911 Coronation - though the sight of the Lion Hotel and the shops demolished for the present Lion Yard will cause considerable puzzlement to people whose memories of Cambridge do not extend back beyond the 1970s.

Somewhat more up to date is a view of Bridge Street showing Allin's garage on the right with queues of cars and the traffic lights which controlled the junction with St. John's street, Taken in 1937 the card also shows the shops demolished by St John's college for its Music school, making the street seem considerably narrower than today,

For those with an interest in photography it is a fascinating exercise to locate the spot where the original photographer stood and take a modern view. One will however completely defeat them, for to get an exact match of the view of Central Cambridge in 1905, one would need to shin up the spire of Holy Trinity church and sit on the weathercock, That done the scene would seem to have changed very-little - the fountain has been removed from the centre of the Market (though it may come back as part of the present plans to revamp the area), the hansom cabs have disappeared, as have the tramlines in St Mary's street. Otherwise the area is as familiar today as it was to Conybeare in 1912 and to his 1862 companion. We wait and see what the future will hold,

Reflections 1994 03 09

Why give talks? There are certainly times when I wonder whether it is worth driving far along some country road in heavy rain searching for a village hall where perhaps a dozen people might fill the time between the business meeting and coffee to hear about the work of the Cambridgeshire Collection (dressed up as "Old Cambridgeshire past and present").

Heading towards the Welney wildfowl refuge recently it was not rain but fog which confronted us but at least there was the prospect of witnessing the floodlit feeding of thousands of swans from the comfort of their hide and listening to the commentary given over his radio microphone by the man wheeling the barrow and scattering the corn. Then returning to the well-equipped Visitor Centre we find the car park full and, as if from nowhere, over 60 people have braved the elements to learn how others battled far worse conditions to fight the fen floods of 1947

Every talk brings some benefit to the Collection. Thus after speaking on "Sherlock Holmes in Cambridge" one of the audience showed me some newly-discovered drawings of Cambridge

scenes made over 150 years ago and now come to light in a Worcester Museum. We have since been in contact and with luck might have something else to report soon:

Just occasionally the results are even more immediate. It had been a particularly fraught day and the prospect of running through the "Webbed feet to green wellies" slides yet again was less than appealing. But to be greeted with a packed church hall and a warm welcome gave the boost one needs to keep going - together with the prospect of examining the postcards that the congregation had collected to donate to the library.

They were a mixed bag, some immediately recognisable, others that need puzzling over and still more than we need help in identifying. Amongst the first category is a view of the last of the horse-trams in 1914. Were the crowds on the upper-deck actually typical of the numbers that used the tram then this would account for the proverbial slowness of this mode of transport - and bring accusations of cruelty from the horse lobby. The problems that finally signalled its demise was the expense of maintaining roads which had tram-lines down the middle

More adventurous travel is represented by the Beta II airship seen leaving Jesus Green during the army manoeuvres of 1912. The exercises were designed to test the country's ability to repel invasion by enemy forces and took place over a wide area. They were masterminded by Sir John French, who had earlier spent time at Trinity college planning a paper war involving thousands of troops and featured the leading Generals of the day, including Sir Douglas Haig who commanded the invading army with its airship.

It was a case of fact following fiction for in 1909 there had been rumours that a flag found on Midsummer Common had been dropped from a German airship and that a landing on Parker's Piece might be attempted. If so they might have been arrested for illegal parking by Cambridge police, a contingent of whom is pictured complete with medals, presumably just post-war. Also liable to arrest might be some of the male bathers whose costumes emphasise why the sexes were segregated in their bathing sheds on the Cam whilst another snap records lady swimmers posing alongside the Mayor - research should at least reveal his name and thus give some clue to the date. We will put the pictures on display in the Heritage Showcase and somebody will identify them - just as others assist by turning out to listen to our talks and reward us with their donations and - most-importantly - support,

"Reflections 1994 03 16

Each month over 300 local magazines, periodicals and journals arrive in the Collection; they come from a variety of societies - Scouts and Guides, churches and chapels, villages and political parties and reflect the modern county as seen from the perspective of that particular group. They thus complement and supplement the views published in local newspapers.

Some are duplicated, others printed & carry a mixture of news, feature articles, pictures and advertisements. One such is "Cambridge", the magazine of the Cambridge Society whose Winter 1993-1994 issue has just arrived in my pile, The Society is open to all members of the University and has branches around the country and across the globe, its magazine aims to keep them informed of developments and carries a wide range of articles

Many of these are serious and authoritative - the Vice Chancellor's address to the Regent House, the formation of a Historic Buildings Group or suggestions of a new role for education in the Economic Community - but there are also a good number of eminently readable "historical" articles; several of which feature food

The role of the University Library in a time of change is the subject of a most thoughtful paper by Dr Ratcliffe, its Librarian who will retire this year. One of the Copyright Deposit Libraries the building on West Road houses millions of books and is planning various expansions to provide space for them. But changes in modern technology means that more and more information is being produced, not in book form, but on computer disc. The University Library has embraced the technology to assist it in keeping up with accessions but - as with the Cambridgeshire Collection - no machine can completely assist in meeting the demands of increasing users for increasing numbers of items. However there is another side to the job of University Librarian, as is indicated in the next article. This is the attendance at various College Feasts and dinners & Dr Ratcliffe has collected the menu cards to add to the treasures in his Library. Few meals however can have attracted more attention than that at Sidney Sussex college in March 1869 when dons decided they would like to experiment with a new delicacy - donkey. Accordingly a six-year old animal called Edward was fattened with oil cake on Mr Langton's farm at Trumpington & visited daily by senior academics who watched his weight-growth with satisfaction. Joints were sent to Corpus and Trinity colleges and the opinions recorded: "liver superior to that of calf" ,, "it was delicious ... like venison" ... "vastly superior to horse but also above beef", Why, one wonders, did the Editor choose to follow this article with an advertisement from one of Cambridge's top restaurants?

Food features elsewhere throughout the magazine. In an account of early Victorian ladies in Cambridge there is an account of a garden party at Trinity in 1842, with a band hidden under the trees and guests enjoying a handsome cold dinner with profusion of champagne, then came quadrilles, waives and country-dances followed by 4 separate tea-parties in different parts of the grounds, Tchaikovsky ("rather fat and getting bald") was entertained to richer fare when he visited Cambridge to receive his Honorary Degree in 1893, For him it was a seven-course banquet at King's college including salmon and whitebait, saddle of lamb with artichoke hearts Italian style, duckling, vanilla soufflé & champagne ice cream with fruit. Elsewhere a Girton girl reminisces about the college feast organised to celebrate VE day 1945. They ate soup not made from Symington's Soup Powder, almost-forgotten chicken followed by, astonishingly, ice cream and washed it down with half a glass of cider (though the High Table had wine they noticed)

If all this leaves members hungry they can always avail themselves of hand-made luxury chocolates with fresh cream centres available by mail order for just £12.75 per lb box - one of the benefits of membership along with an interesting Magazine # c.28

Reflections 1994 03 23

I am no engineer and have no firm grasp on technology. Thus when somebody tells me that photographs can be scanned on to a computer, that faults can be magicked away, images enhanced and that it can all then be printed out as good as a proper photograph but in a fraction of the time I can appreciate the benefits and realise the potential for a Collection such as ours which has over 400,000 images, most in the form of negatives, but have no idea how it's possible.

But then being realistic about it we have very little chance of acquiring such technology before the next developments come along and make it out of date, though our village primary school could do it on the machinery they have now. Impending obsolescence make a good excuse not to do anything anyway.

I am equally baffled by the expertise of the engineers who can understand the intricacies of Victorian machinery, When they talk of installing an Electric Drive at Stretham Old Engine so that the mighty scoop wheel might move once more I can only marvel. Talk of condensers and reciprocating wots-its send me reaching for the children's guide to steam engines. How

then am I to appreciate some of the photographs we have just received via the University of East Anglia. They include interior views of the steam pumping engine erected in 1855 by the Duke of Bedford for water supply and sewage disposal on his Thorney Estate and of a new oil engine installed somewhere in the fen in 1936 .

I am more at home with the concept of windpumps to drain the fen, one of which is featured in another photograph. By then it had been turned into a house and from a completely different source we have recently received a photograph of the interior of one such converted mill

Some of the photographs are so strong they tell the story without words. Thus a lady tries to sweep water away from her house during the floods of Spring 1937 whilst rivermen patrol the banks near Denver Sluice - which could not be opened to let the pent-up river water out because of high tides in the Wash. Maintaining communication between river bank and drainage HQ was only possible by the use of the army signallers and their wireless transmitters, one of whom is pictured at Welches Dam, whilst nearer home water floods across the A10 at Stretham bridge. Students from Girton College were taken out to Earith in 1937 to watch what was believed to have been a unique sight, now it has been overshadowed by the greater- flooding of ten years later.

Reflections 1994 03 30

One of the things that gives us most satisfaction is to see the excitement experienced by somebody who has researched a topic for a considerable time when he discovers something new. Thus recently a couple from Markyate in Bedfordshire popped into the Cambridgeshire Collection whilst visiting a Book Fair at the Guildhall, They had done so after spotting a book of photographs by Ted Mott - and Mott had once lived in their village. Was there any chance there might be Markyate negatives amongst his collection. Indeed there are, they returned on a special visit and had a most enjoyable time.

Just occasionally one can experience the excitement personally. I started this year by doing something I had never done before - visiting the weathercock on the top of our church spire and seeing the village in a whole new way. This was possible only because the steeple was swathed in scaffolding whilst extensive renovation work was taking place. Now the work is complete and the weathercock lonely once more. A week or so later I visited the village school to show the photographs I'd taken and was shown a picture of somebody else talking to the cockerel, though this time the wooden planking on which they were standing was far less-extensive and the picture was obviously several decades old. So when had it been taken? A village resident recalled men repairing the steeple when she was a girl, but there was no definite information to go on and a new mystery had been created.

About a month later a reader donated a copy of a small history of Stretham written by the Rector in 1922, and well-known within the village, indeed it has been reissued and is currently on sale to raise money for repairs. A second glance however revealed something different for the back cover carries a photograph very similar to the school discovery and inside a whole page has been added recording the need for repairs which came to light whilst Mr Pope was attending the flowers in the churchyard and heard a mighty crash of falling masonry within the tower, £350 needed to be found to pay the steeplejacks and the pamphlet was reissued in 1928 to help meet the costs. Presumably most village people had already got a copy of the earlier edition for I had never-seen this reprint.

The rest of the text is as before including the account of the village cross which formerly had a flight of stone steps which were removed to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee, though whether of 1887 or 1897 is not mentioned. Then came the next discovery.

We had learned that a museum in Worcester had a collection of sketches of Cambridgeshire which had not been previously issued and written accordingly. The reply arrived one Saturday afternoon and I glanced inside the envelope. Amongst the photocopies was a view of Stretham church and cross instantly recognisable though on second glance very different. The spire and tower are the same: but the rest of the church shows the structure "restored" by the Victorians in the 1870s. A local leans on the farmgate leading into the churchyard, two others rest against the base of the cross - the same circular base that still stands. Yet the sketch is dated 1837 - before Victoria's coronation, let alone her Jubilee. Thus village history needs to be rewritten as a result of one man's sketch,

The Worcester collection includes 124 other sketches and prints of local churches some well-known others unique and they have send photocopies of many. There are busy times ahead for them as researchers arrange visits to view this most exciting collection

Reflections 1994 04 06

Tuesday was the evening I got lost driving from Cambridge to Comberton. It was particularly annoying as earlier that day I had managed to locate Queen Edith's Junior School without a map - and by only having to ask one passer-by. But later - even with the Ordnance Survey sheet - the village vanished. The journey had started with a diversion to Harston to collect a scrapbook from an address in Button End. The street was found but what I'd forgotten was how many lampposts needed to be counted before the right house came into view, once more local assistance was needed to track it down,

Local people will always know more about their locality than any outsider, Some village histories are written by Professional Historians who know Latin and can decipher documents but cannot find their way down the High Street without a map, Others are compiled by people who may have no academic training but a lifetime of knowledge

The sources that researchers can use will similarly vary, thus one donation has been pamphlets from the collection of one of the country's finest historical geographers. Amongst the items contained in the four boxes are a number of articles published in a most diverse range of periodicals. Who would expect to find material on the fen land in such titles as "Countryman" Autumn 1954 - (claying the fens), "Geographical Journal" January 1934 (extinct waterways), "Journal of the History of Medicine" July 1979 (Opium eating), or track down the 1937 volume of the "Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England" for something on farm organisation on the black fens of the Isle of Ely. In fact we had these in the Collection already, but then we have been seeking and collecting for nearly 140 years. Nevertheless there were other items we had missed completely, including some early pamphlets,

The Harston scrapbook also has a range of material including programmes of performances of Gilbert & Sullivan by the village Musical society in 1934 - a Society whose reputation was such that it was mentioned on the wireless. Harston's local history productions - represented by the programme of a Pageant in 1924 - were so good that Cambridge police begged the village to keep them up as they drew so many young people from the streets and gave Cambridge a bit of peace.

The cuttings and photographs are enlivened by little details that only village folk would know. Thus one local lad became postillion to Queen Victoria and King Edward VII, another sang in front of King Edward VII who, when up at University, had visited the village shop for a packet of cigarettes, whilst one Harston resident kept reindeers as pets. It even includes the text of Canon Baldwin's farewell address in 1924 in which he laments the poor congregations

attending his church and the excuses given by parishioners. He accuses them of indulging in wicked and unclean talk and delighting in picking holes in the characters of the good, There is a photograph of the Canon and his wife who we are told was irreverently called the "Fish Mare" and a note of how village maidens were commanded to curtsy to her in the street, though one brave girl refused having been told by her father to curtsy to nobody but the Queen, The vicar condemns parents for allowing their children to grow up in dread of them and for failing to impart religious teaching, However when Reuben Segrave drove his hoop into the Vicarage Gardens and accidentally knocked down one of the Canon's children he was hauled before the courts and, at Canon Baldwin's instigation, given the birch

Reflections 1994 04 13

Booklets of reflections continue to be published, each one offering a unique glimpse of the past through the eyes of the people who witnessed it at first hand.

From Steeple Morden comes the reminiscences of Herbert Ilett. Born in 1914 in a cottage that still stands and living in the village to this day he provides a fascinating account of the people and trades that went to make up the community during the first half of the century. In those days it seemed the sky always seemed to be blue and the grass brown in the heat of the sun - but in those days of hardship men trapped birds with a net to send to London markets, trapped moles for their fur and rabbits and hares for their meat. Children would crowd into the cobblers shop on Winter nights to watch the craftsman at work whilst some of the older boys would catch a sparrow from the thatch of one of the village houses and release it indoors whence it flew into the oil lamp hanging from the ceiling and caused great confusion - and doubtless much unpleasant - and fortunately unrecorded - language

Herbert earned money after school by minding the cows which grazed grass verges, and in the mornings on a milk round where he earned 5/- (25p) for a seven day week, After leaving school aged 14 he became a butchers boy working a twelve or fourteen hour day since customers had no refrigerators and no one wanted their meat delivered until Saturday, Then he started lorry driving until called-up for the War and returned to his trade afterwards, He married in 1934 living in a railway carriage at Ashwell station before moving to Steeple Morden to a house with cold running water, a bucket toilet but a large garden in which to empty it.

"Old Frank" lived in a village on the edge of the fen; now aged 88, he had moved his double bed down to the front room - rarely used now the family had grown up and left home. The wind would send cold draughts under the badly fitting front door and necessitate a walk down the yard past the coal shed to find a suitable sack. No-one used the front door in any case, only for funerals - and his would be the next. The only time they had a fire in the open grate was at the Village Feast Sunday tea or Christmas so mildew was always present and could be seen at the base of the walls. The cottage itself was at the bottom of the road which sloped down to the church and in heavy rain the water seeped over the low front step and into the room, leaving the edge of the carpet slightly stained and partly rotten,

It is a privilege to read Ernie Papworth's tribute to his father for every page invokes memories and brings the everyday life of a past generation vividly into focus. Stiff white collars, lumbago eased with embrocation and having his bark ironed with brown paper ... the dockey-bag ... flock mattresses which had to be juggled and arranged until each bump fitted an appropriate part of the body ... Old Frank loved his old village and had no wish to live elsewhere - you could take him out of his village, but you could never take the village out of him

Old Frank was an ordinary man. Pat an ordinary woman, living an ordinary life, working part-time as a cashier at Sainsbury's, singing in the choir at Cherry Hinton church and taking part in the 1933 Spring Concert given by Chesterton Choral Society. She died of breast cancer in July 1993 and her husband. Charles Hamilton, has now published "Crescent Moon" a tribute to her in a volume of poetry which charts the progress of the disease and the bereavement that followed, "You never write a poem for me", You said it sadly, wistfully ... but now he has in the hope that it might comfort others suffering the same feelings of loss and despair at a time when memories seem all there is to live for - and the memories are painful.

"A villager's life" by Herbery Godfrey Ilett, published by Mervyn Thompson creative enterprises - 26 Bogs Gap Lane, Steeple Morden "Old Frank" by E,S, Papworth 25 Station Rd. Over, "Crescent Moon" by Charles F. Hamilton co Sheila Watson, Arthur Rank House.

Reflections 1994 04 20

Somewhere about 25 years ago we started to index the volumes of the "Cambridge Chronicle" newspaper, beginning in 1770. By 1975 much of the Cambridgeshire news advertisements and court cases had been listed on catalogue cards covering events up to 1820, Since then teams of volunteers have turned their attention to the later years ; concentrating just on the village news columns which are now indexed up to 1900

Whilst indexing continues other enthusiasts have turned their attention to transcribing the stories discovered, several of which have now been published. This month it is the turn of Elsworth to have their own record of life in "the good old days" between 1770 and 1900 when the Swavesey and District Local History Society issue the fourth in a series covering their area.

Browsing through its pages makes fascinating reading, especially for anybody with any connection with either village. Yet the stories recorded give an awful impression of the hardships of the period and the struggles of ordinary people against the problems of their world which will interest everybody.

They will encounter the expected mix of tragedy and trivia - a baby thrown down a well to drown; a baker absconding in 1808 - he has a peculiar way of winking with his eye, readers are told, a missing earring is found in the crop of a hen which tried to fly over a well and failed, and the pub burns down in 1880,

The 1840s and 50s were a particular period of hardship and horror with incendiarism striking the farms of Mr Francis at Knapwell in 1848 and Mr Webbe of Elsworth in 1851; five families gave up the struggle and emigrated to America whilst two more left for Australia in 1853. Meanwhile people stole to survive, a sheep is found slaughtered and the Elsworth baker having suffered from a number of thefts hides a man in his cart under some sack s - the young would-be thief getting a surprise and a threshing for his pains. Papworth's mill burnt down in February 1884 and the harvest proves disappointing, especially for potatoes on which the poor man depended. Cholera struck in October causing violent sickness and cramp from which the victim died whilst Mary Holben, a widow, begged opium from a neighbour to help her cope with a pain in the chest which the usual remedy of ginger and water had failed to shift and met the same fate.

On the lighter side there is the story of the balloon which drifted over Elsworth in August 1879. Old and young made off to the fields, some of the old ones going almost as though training for a six days contest. The balloon came to rest in a hedge having travelled from Bedford in about an hour. The correspondent was tempted to recall a previous visit of one of

these monster s when an old woman who had used crutches for a long time, ran some distance across the fields towards Hilton before she found out she had left them behind!

There are battles to maintain the church fabric - with the congregation continuing to meet for worship despite the rain falling through the roofless building and between church and chapel, the paper taking great delight in retailing a scandal regarding the nonconformist minister, the dissenters trying to block a parish rate to repair the church and baptising by immersion in the village brook in which a child was later drowned - the Coroner urging that it be fenced to prevent similar incidents .

One story at least is destined to repeat itself for in December 1900 the schoolroom was filled with an attentive & and appreciative audience for an entertainment using lantern slides - and the book will be launched in such manner at Ellsworth on April 26th with readings and slides
c.04

Reflections 1994 04 27

People research a wide range of topics some of which are reflected in four new publications to arrive in the Cambridgeshire Collection.

Casual observation of the birds in our garden seems to show a significant fall in the number of Song Thrushes, though for the first time this morning we noticed a Pied wagtail strutting around on the lawn. The new Atlas of the Breeding Birds in Cambridgeshire confirms that thrushes are in decline with the numbers ringed at Wicken Fen dropping from 80-100 to around 50 and as low as 16 in 1991. Overall it would appear to be breeding in 72% of the county, compared to 92% in Huntingdonshire and 96% of Norfolk, although their surveys were made some years ago. This may reflect a nationwide decrease or might be accounted for by the fact that some 30% of our county is open fenland farms which is inhospitable territory for birds, The Atlas identifies breeding areas and illustrates and comments on the various species. My Pied-Wagtail is widely distributed, breeding near farms or alongside fenland droves, although it is less common around Ely than the Yellow Wagtail - which has not seemed to discover our garden yet!

Others are more concerned with breeding people, with hundreds actively pursuing the search for their ancestors. For them the new guide to Genealogical Sources in Cambridgeshire compiled by Michael Farrar who has recently retired as County Archivist will prove an invaluable aid. For every parish it records the files of Church Registers available, together with notes on Monumental Inscriptions and transcripts of gravestones which have been compiled, the location of census records or Land tax assessments and directs the researcher to locations outside the County Record Office in Shire Hall, There are also helpful notes on Probate Records, Methodist & Quaker registers all of which will assist the family historian.

Francis Barrett has recently been researching the background to the men of Cottenham who are named on the village war memorial. Sergeant Albert Beaumont died of wounds at Warminster in December 1915, aged 39. He had served with the Colours for over 20 years, including the South African war, His was the first military funeral ever remembered at Cottenham, the gun-carriage with six horses accompanied by 25 soldiers with officers, proceeding from his home in Garibaldi Terrace along Rooks Street to the cemetery in Lambs Lane.

Also commemorated is Henry Cundell, the first serviceman to be buried with full Salvation Army honours in France in 1917 and Florence Cox, commandant of the Cottenham Red Cross Hospital between 1915 and 1918. This was established in the school room of the Old Baptist Chapel where they treated wounded soldiers conveyed by motor ambulance from Cambridge,

The Hospital moved to the rectory in October 1917 and closed in 1919. From the Second War comes the story of Able Seaman Frederick Hopkins, badly wounded when his ship was hit by a mine in 1940 he was invalided from the navy and was working as a civilian at Bourn aerodrome when he was killed there in an air raid in August 1941. The 16 page booklet is a welcome reminder of those who did not grow old.

Stephen Hawking is the subject of a biography published in America in the "Lives of the physically challenged" series by Chelsea House Publishers. Considered by many to be the most brilliant theoretical physicist since Albert Einstein, Hawking is a familiar figure in Cambridge in his motorised wheelchair whilst his best-selling "A brief history of time" expounds the theories of Black Holes which is far beyond my comprehension, This latest biography however is concerned less with the physics than the man himself and the strength and courage he has needed to cope with the crippling disease which has left him paralysed,

"An atlas of the breeding birds of Cambridgeshire", published by Cambridge Bird Club; "Genealogical sources in Cambridgeshire" by Michael Farrar, price £2,50 from County Record Office, Shire Hall, 'Cottenham, Cambridgeshire ; the war memorial" by Francis Garrett published by Cottenham village society at £2 "Stephen Hawking, revolutionary physicist" by Melissa McDaniel, published by Chelsea House, New York

Reflections 1994 05 04

We try in the Cambridgeshire Collection to keep up to date with modern developments, yet often the latest accessions echoes something filed away in past

Thus we have just received newsletters from the Friendship Link which was formed in response to the terrible hardships being suffered .by those caught up in the fighting in the former Yugoslavia. The Relief Aid Bulletin reports some of the activities to bring aid and support to refugees with appeals for old coats to be sent to Bosnia and accounts of lorry loads of aid making the journey to Croatia, Yet "The War Budget" carries a similar story - large numbers of Serbian boy refugees being cared for in Cambridgeshire and helping out by picking fruit in local orchards - though it is dated August 1916

Other youngsters were also being cared for at that time, including Belgian refugees, some of whom had fled the German advance and found shelter amongst the people of Soham, Alois Allaert and his family were greeted by a large crowd on their arrival at Soham station and cheered to Messrs Taylor Bros' covered carriage which conveyed them to their new home in High Street, with one of the family sitting outside with the driver carrying three Allied flags. Elsewhere throughout the county similar scenes were enacted

Lorry loads of aid had left Cambridge too during the Spanish Civil War when various local men had joined the International Brigade, Once more the suffering was brought home to local people through the arrival of child evacuees, black-eyed, black-haired boys and girls from the Basque Region, They were orphans of militiamen who had been killed early in the war and brought up as "children of heroes". They were greeted at Cambridge station in June 1937 by a crowd of several hundred and conveyed in a small fleet of cars to the Y.M.C.A, Hall for a large tea before being taken to their new home in the Vicarage at Pampisford which had been renovated for their reception. One problem facing the organisers was the children's schooling and the loft over the stables was pressed into use, but in June it was like an oven and in December it froze.

The story of the organisation that went into their care was recorded in a booklet entitled "Recuerdos" which was printed and sold by the Cambridge Daily News at the time. Just two years later a much larger evacuation was under way as thousands of children once more

descended on Cambridgeshire. But this time they were English children, driven from their London homes by the threat of air-raids. They too had to be welcomed - though some recall standing-in a line on Parkers Piece to be picked over by reluctant-foster-parents who had to be severely cajoled into welcoming an additional child into their homes. Then there were the parents - it was one thing taking a child, but who would want another woman in her kitchen. What of the extra blankets that would be needed, how were they to be educated when schools were already full of local children. And what did the visitors think of the ways of the country without skating rinks, fish and chip shops and the other necessities of life.

Similar problems were being faced in other countries, each of whose children suffered from the effects of war. Now a journalist with the Ashai Newspaper, the biggest national paper in Japan, is visiting Cambridge on June 2nd and would like to hear at first hand from anybody who was involved in the Evacuation process, as child, organiser, foster-parent or teacher.

Might I ask anybody who feels they could spare the time to talk to Mrs Susie Konda to write to me at the Cambridgeshire Collection, Lion Yard Library. It would be wonderful if people could jot down their memories so that this side of war-time life can be more fully recorded in our files

S.1937 32790 S.1939 20144 S.1919 37984 # c.45.5 # c.45.7

Reflections 1994 05 11

"Why do you wander the streets with your eyes in the gutter?" "Because you told me to." Such an interchange between a Headmaster and a sprog half his age seems unremarkable even if the answer might not have been the one expected. The difference was that it was the Headmaster doing the wandering and he was well into his 90s

Sandford Woods first came to Cambridge in the 1920s as an undergraduate at St Catharine's college. He participated in the "Toot and come in" rag of 1924, mimicking the excavations of Tutankhamen's Tomb, except that this discovery was made not in Egypt but in the Market Square toilets from which a variety of curious objects was excavated. Perhaps this is evidence of an early fascination for the low life since in recent years he has been pointing his camera at the gratings covering drains and manhole covers identifying many different styles and designs, some made by local ironfounders. Sometimes such gratings are alongside one of his other passions, road and street signs, as on King's Parade where the sign for an underground restaurant seems to point straight down the drain.

Other items of street furniture have also caught his eye, feet scrapers or war-time ARP notices together with a pair of lions alongside steps on Chesterton Road, quite near the dogs drinking trough erected by Prince Chular of Siam in 1934 in memory of his pet Tony who gave him happiness and" friendship during his Cambridge years

One of Wood's other memories relates to the day he was part of the crowd who invaded Newnham college and smashed down its gates in the aftermath of the vote which once again rejected women's claims for equal rights with their male academic colleagues. That too may have influenced his decision to include ironwork in his pictorial survey. Thus railings around gardens or surrounding steps down to basement kitchens are depicted.

Straightening his back he discovers various types of pillar boxes, one with spikes on the top - perhaps to stop people jumping on top and climbing over the adjacent wall whilst others suggest they were placed to frighten away a troublesome swan that would insist on perching on top of it. In his earlier life Wood had his eyes on higher things too, becoming a schoolteacher in Dublin just after the troubles of the 1920s and moving on eventually to

become Headmaster of Gotham Grammar School, Bristol. A copy of his portrait in full academic dress hangs alongside a photograph of his home town of Macclesfield with smoke pouring from numerous factory chimneys.

There are few factories here but lots of colleges with lamps and sundials to record, together with fanlights and - looking to higher things still - churches - a remarkable mixture of Christiadephian, Seventh-Day Adventist, Christian Bretheren, or Spiritualist - not to mention Mosque and Synagogue which fascinated him as he discovered and explored, often walking miles along streets and alleyways, always alert for some new sight to photograph,

Those who spotted and questioned why he should find their particular property of such interest would be rewarded with the opportunity to converse for a few minutes with a most enthusiastic and youthful ninety-year-old, Now as he moves from his De Freville address he has donated his collection to us - and if I was really instrumental on starting him on his quest then it was one of the best things I could have done.

Woods 7.1 – Anderson shelter, 4.1 – balcony, 2.2 – Kings Pantry, 4.3 – railings & awnings # c.65.5 # 62

Reflections 1994 05 25

Why do our Parish Council meetings take so long? It may be parish-pump politics but we no longer have any parish pumps to worry about. Not like at Comberton in 1894 where they made regulations after farmers and machine owners had literally pumped them dry, or at Manea when in 1902 parishioners had to be warned not to use water from the town pump except for domestic purposes, whilst Reach residents' protests that they had to carry water from the far end of the village since the wells at their end did not produce an adequate supply were met with short shift from Swaffham Prior council. When in 1928 Reach well was condemned it prompted a battle with Newmarket Rural District Council over who was to pay for a new one.

At Ashley most of the concern over water centred on the ponds with a complaint in 1895 that the water was in such a bad state that it was unfit to brew beer with! It was a disgrace to the village, being polluted with soap suds. However when they were offered the opportunity to acquire a good supply of piped water the residents soon objected - as they did in many villages, none of us minded piped water, we all objected to the cost of providing it and packed meetings went on long into the evening.

What of sanitation. Most labourers' cottages were served with dry lavatories and disposal of the contents was the responsibility of the residents. Many parish councils agreed to purchase night soil carts, but then the question arose as to where to dispose of it - whilst others reported that the cart, once used, was being washed clean in the village pond.

Parish councils often have to chivvy others. Balsham wrote to the R.D.C. in 1946 asking to be given priority when new sewage systems were being planned. They reminded them in 1949, protested in 1952, agitated in 1959 and finally got their wishes in 1961

Street lighting is another topic which can take time. Cottenham had its own gas supply when in 1925 it decided to take responsibility for lighting, buying 62 lamps for a cost of £145 from The new Cottenham Gas and Water Company. However things seem not to have been fully satisfactory for within a few years they were seeking quotes from the Beds. Cambs. and Hunts Electricity company. Histon were pursuing the same line of enquiry and were quoted £10 a

standard which they considered excessive, Chivers tendered at £5 a standard but they finally accepted the Electricity Power Company's price of £12.4.0 (£12.20) including erection.

Traffic problems can also be debated at length; in 1903 Parish Councils were asked to mark on a 6" map all the dangerous roads and turnings so that could be signposted - we still urge for action on blind bends. Cottenham agitated for a light railway from their village to Shepreth, but then changed their minds and tried for one to Milton, and then to Oakington (councillors can still change their minds from meeting to meeting). Histon complained in 1903 that the rail fare to Cambridge was too high - at 4½d each way it was 50% higher than the 6d (2.5p) return bus ticket. However they objected when the line was axed under the Beeching proposals and are doubtless even now commenting about the proposed reopening.

These issues and many more are recorded in a new history produced to mark the centenary of parish councils in Cambridgeshire which has been compiled by the Secretary of the Association of Local Councils. The book will be launched shortly and part of the proceeds of each sale will go to the Association to aid its work in meeting the needs of the hundreds of councillors who every month devote time and effort to ensuring that their community is as perfect as practical. Such dedication deserves recognition and they can apply for a cut-price book as their reward!

"A century of Cambridgeshire parish councils, 1894-1994" by Kenneth C Batchelor.

Cambridgeshire Libraries Publications £4.95

c.35.6 Y.Rea.K20 2856 Y.Mad.J8 26987 Y.Will.J9 33112 Y.Wat.J6 14858a

Reflections 1994 06 01

Two neighbouring communities have recently commemorated the heroism of their fighting men, albeit that the fighters were civilians and the enemy many miles away

The cannon on the green at Ely is testimony to many battles. Was this not the cannon that Oliver Cromwell used to fire long-range shots from his manor house on Stuntney Hill, demolishing the Cathedral's north-west transept - or the cannon that accomplished the same feat by firing from the other direction along Cannon Street, or indeed the cannon that the Cathedral authorities used to defend themselves against Cromwell's men who were drilling on St Mary's Green outside the home of their Lord Protector,

Indeed it was not, for the cannon itself carries a Russian inscription and dates from the early 1800s. It had been captured following bloody fighting at Sebastopol in the Crimean war and came to Ely in 1860 to commemorate the patriotic fervour of the formation of their Rifle Volunteers. Arrangements were made for the trophy to be delivered by train to Ely station and the Ely Rifle Volunteers ordered new uniforms so they might provide a fitting escort. Sadly London tailors failed to finish the task in time and so they could not take part. Instead a contingent of Coldstream Guards were engaged - only they could not attend either and a group of Grenadiers came in their place,

Things went from bad to worse with the cannon sinking into the water-soaked grass surrounding the stone base on which it was to have stood - to the amusement of a contingent of little boys who - like their grown-up companions - were quickly ready with advice. The story is well told in a recently-reissued history by the late Reg Holmes, commemorating an event now long forgotten.

When the peace of an early June morning was shattered by an explosion many Ely folk were startled from their beds. Many Soham folk were somewhat more shaken as the glass in their

windows shattered and the houses shook, Somewhere out in the darkness four railwayman had combined to save the town from complete disaster, An ammunition train laden with bombs had been approaching the station when it was hit by a V-rocket - or so the German newspapers in the Channel Islands were to claim,

Quite what did happen to cause the lead wagon to catch fire was never established but driver, fireman, guard and signalman each played their part in disconnecting the blazing truck and steaming it as far away from the rest of the load as possible before the inevitable explosion demolished the station, killed signalman and fireman and flung the driver through the air to crash down two hundred yards away, Their heroism has long been recognised.

But there were many other involved in the aftermath - the butcher-fireman who crawled down into the rubble strewn crater next to the wreck of the hissing locomotive, the men who confronted the possibility that the rest of the trucks might yet explode, the ARP and medical volunteers needing to put training into practice and the hundreds of ordinary folk whose lives would never be the same, but who still had their lives thanks to the action of the railwayman.

This story has now been told by Anthony Day, "But for such men as these" covers also the background to the event and its aftermath, with biographies of the principal players and photographs, including several taken by Walter Martin Lane of Ely who hired a taxi to take him and his camera to Soham to record his first great scoop, The second was to follow three years later during the 1947 floods,

'The cannon on the green' by Reg Holmes, Ely Society £0.65

"But for such men as these" by Anthony Day S.B. Publications £5.95

Reflections 1994 06 08

Taking a few days break in Rutland is like travelling back into the past; peaceful countryside, tranquil villages and an unhurried atmosphere of some generations ago. In fact we scarcely noticed that the guidebook we were using was over 40 years old!

So near Cambridgeshire that perhaps something might be acquired from antique emporium or antiquarian bookshop. But just a glimpse of a token by which a Leverington farmer paid his men, a postcard of Queens' and a copy of the interesting collection of engravings "Bygone King's" - probably not overpriced at £75.00 but not worth acquiring as a duplicate. Then pottering into St Andrew's church at Whissendine we discover what became of the screen from St John's College which was no longer needed following its restoration - yet the guidebook says the church acquired it in 1892 whilst the chapel was rebuilt between 1863-69. It appears that the cousin of the then Vicar was a Fellow of St John's and the Architect was common to both jobs so the deal was done,

One wonders whether we could spot any differences should we follow an equally-old guidebook to Cambridgeshire - say the Arthur Mee book of 1939, "The factory chimneys give place to orchards and elms as we draw near this cherry village" he says of Cherry Hinton, whilst Histon has the great Chivers factory with 2000 people who turn out a hundred tons of jam every day. Stuntney Hall is sadly no longer a "gabled house in a cluster of farm buildings", Stretham centenarian windmill has lost the white sails which were visible from afar and although Milton may still have its "thatched cottages leading to a church in a lovely bower of trees" this might not be the main impression to strike the visitor in 1994.

Even in Rutland there are differences. No longer are there "decent enjoyable wines at less than 8/- (40p) a bottle", and although at Normanton the "little white church seems to float alone" it is no longer "in a large denuded park" but in a reservoir. For in the 1970s over 3,000 acres of Rutland was turned into Rutland Water, a vast lake that seems almost natural to the

blinker tourist with their eyes fixed on the detail of the guidebook but which to many residents must have marked the dramatic spoliation of their landscape. There is of course nothing to be done about it, the man-made lake is now permanent, the fields gone for good

Yet in Cambridgeshire in 1947 thousands of acres also disappeared under water and an impression of the disaster has come into the Collection recently courtesy of the children of class 3/4 K of Littleport v.c.p. school. They never saw the floods themselves - and with good luck they might never do so. All they saw were some slides taken by W. Martin Lane and heard me chattering on about them. So what impression did they gain - "I saw a house got bashed down" ,, "I saw trees, I saw Ely Cathedral in the pictures" - and they drew wrecked bungalows, with saucepans in the garden, "the house what is broke down in the fen", people rowing back to their devastated properties, Nicola recalled "some man decided to drain Littleport and the river bank burst and they used tetnks",

But one thing puzzles me: Danielle remembers the pictures - "and then he clicked it and another picture came up", But then "in the middle he was drinking coffee, So he stopped while he drank his coffee" - I don't remember this at all – but that was before we left with the 40-year-old guidebook to seek wine at 8/- a bottle!

E.SJ.J40 30, Stuntney I.3, Y.Mil.K2 8894, Y.His.K28 4522

Reflections 1994 06 15

I have recently had the privilege of seeing Cambridgeshire through Japanese eyes. Escorting a journalist and her translator intent on discovering something of the impact of war-time evacuation on children and foster-parents alike I discovered instead how hospitable local folk are, how helpful landladies and publicans, how pleasant to buy shrubs from a garden centre and then watch the antics of the proprietor trying to wrap them in brown paper without any sellotape and finally resorting to asparagus string. The English climate is changeable but rain always stops just before it is time to go outdoors and cyclists in the narrowness of Trinity street - is this really the main street of Cambridge - always anticipate every move and never collide with visitors

It is of course a picture only partially true, just as London evacuees were always scruffy, Cambridgeshire cottages warm and welcoming and everybody smiled through despite blackout, rationing, bombing and lack of basic sanitation. But in their careful questioning of those who remembered the 1940s many first-hand facts and impressions were elucidated and many notes made on the reporters pad, carefully, neatly and totally illegible to Western eyes.

Similar cryptic observations were being made in Cambridge in the 1840s by someone who knew Trinity Street well and his old College hosted a launch for the latest volume of Joseph Romilly's diary, covering the period 1842-1847, Romilly was a senior academic, one of those who masterminded the election of Prince Albert as Chancellor in 1847 and then was present at the reception which degenerated into confusion and crowding as the procession moved off - an event when occupies several pages of diary and book alike.

Romilly was also an acute observer of the detail of contemporary life. Thus from his entries for 1844 we follow his sister Lucy on her visits to the poorer side of Hills Road, visiting Mrs Penson in Newtown, where - a footnote informs us -sanitation did not exist and "conditions were so wretched as to be a disgrace to civilisation". Transportation was erratic; on 4th March the Wisbech stagecoach was cancelled so he had to walk home from Audley End on a miserable wet day (and to make things worse that night he lost his money at Whist). On a journey to Ely on 24th May he noted the devastation in Stretham following the fire of three weeks earlier, 25 houses and barns destroyed by accident - though the diary also records incidents of incendiarism elsewhere.

Sometimes his luck turns as on 13th July when he is reminded by the College Porter that he was due to dine with the Judges at Trinity that evening - having already eaten at home at 3pm. He just had time to change and tuck in to a meal of Turtle and venison and was then offered coffee by the Master, This, Romilly notes, saved him 2/- (10p) - the usual tip to the Judge's servants - for they were not at the door when he left. Meanwhile the Judges themselves were waiting for the rain to abate before driving off in their carriage.

The diarist witnesses the opening of the Railway Station which was adorned with flags - as one might expect, but so was the new Hills Road railway bridge - and records the controversy over a prize-fight at Newmarket which the Proctors did everything to deter students from attending, even threatening to suspend the licence of any stable who let a horse to carry an undergraduate in that direction. The diaries are detailed and contain many tantalising allusions to contemporary events which the editors have expanded and explained with detailed indexes, It is a delightful addition to the literature of Cambridgeshire,

Romilly's Cambridge diary 1842-1847, edited by M.E. Bury & J.D. Pickles. Cambs Records Society.

S.1839 45893 I/N/J45 5729 Q.Ac/J4 36430 E.T.J3 19945

Reflections 1994 06 22

Wildfowl were once an important part of Cambridgeshire's rural economy. One acknowledged expert was "Old Merry", a full-time wildfowler who in 1772 was reported to have shot a large eagle at Stretham ferry.

An extraordinary marksman he favoured a gun with a barrel over six feet in length which was so heavy that only the most powerful arm could extend and elevate, yet with this he could kill a snipe on the wing. Like other shooters he would glide across flooded areas of fenland on his punt, the monster gun pointing out at the front ready to down dozens of duck at one shot. Yet Merry had another string to his bow and supplemented his income by guiding parties in search of sport.

Today the fens are drained yet some areas of the county still attract shooters. One is an old gravel pit at Hauxton where parties of friends gather from time to time to shoot pheasants and pigeons, rabbit and duck, some of which have increased greatly in number due to careful game management and others despite it. Elsewhere anglers pay for the privilege of fishing well-stocked lakes. The habitat they enjoy may appear natural but is the result of heavy machinery & many hours of hard work by Will Garfit who has recently published an account of his endeavours which in 1988 won him a prestigious prize for game and wildlife management.

The gravel pits had been dug for nearly thirty years by Wisbey Brothers, being excavated as and when there was demand. By 1970 they had come to the end of their commercial viability and were put up for sale together with various other parcels of land, Garfit had known the area since childhood and attended the auction out of curiosity. When the bidding ground to a halt at just £7,500 for the 69 acres he was prompted to raise his own hand. A few moments later the 25 year-old art student was facing the prospect of firstly raising the money he had just spent, and secondly how to explain it all to his wife! Somehow he survived and has prospered as is told in "Will's shoot"

If a student can establish a game shoot then schoolchildren can found a nature reserve. When the RSPB paid £8,000 in 1977 for 66 acres of disused cressbeds it was money raised by sponsored bird watching by members of the Young Ornithologists Club. Now an area bought

by children has become a very special place for young people. George Hallworth established the watercress beds just outside Fowlmere in the early 1900s and at one time some seventeen men were employed with women being taken on at busy times to bunch up the cress being paid about 6d (2.5p) for 144 bunches.

The history of the site has been traced back to the Ice Age, Romans camped there and criminals were beheaded and left to rot. In the nineteenth-century the Foul Mire attracted visitors who came to shoot wildfowl and were assisted by villagers one of whom would hire out his punt to University students for 10/-(50p) the afternoon. Then, if the outing was unsuccessful (and somehow he always contrived to make sure that it was) he would sell them two or three duck that he happened just to have by him, so they could go back to their college with their sporting prowess assured. Others found another source of food there - edible frogs which had a loud croak and were known locally as Fowlmere nightingales.

Now it is a much more peaceful area, except when school parties descend by the coachload to tour the reserve, spot kingfishers, pond dip, visit the hide, eat their sandwiches and enjoy learning part of their National Curriculum under the supervision of experienced naturalists. The story has been told in a new book by Les Price which reveals a fascinating yet largely unknown area available to all

“Will’s Shoot” by Will Garfitt (Sportsman’s Press £14.95)

“Foulmire moor and Fowlmere RSPB nature reserve” by L.W. Price, 2 St Mary’s Walk, Fowlmere, £4.95

CAS Ful I.3, U.Wil.K1 12507 Y.Hau.K6 12169

Reflections 1994 06 29

Public Libraries were originally set up in opposition to Public Houses -providing a place where the working man could spend his evenings in study rather than in drinking. It is surprising therefore to find the Cambridgeshire Collection featured in the latest pub guide, though it is our "treasure house of books, magazines, newspapers and photographs" which have attracted the reviewer rather than any cellar of dusty barrels.

Amongst some of the books are earlier attempts at surveying local drinking places and it is interesting to compare some of the entries in "Pints worth finding" with those in the little guide produced by the Cambridgeshire Public House Trust Association in 1909. There are of course differences, CAMRA exists to encourage traditional beers and traditional pubs whereas the Public House Trust was more concerned with the supply of non-alcoholic beverages and food, encouraging its Managers to serve tea, coffee and cocoa wherever possible.

In some cases there have been few changes - the George and Dragon at Snailwell provided stabling and cycling accommodation in 1909 and had a tea room - but not now, according to CAMRA, any real ale, so they give it short shift. The George at Babraham - where teas were a special feature - receives similar treatment, though the Three Tuns at Gt Abington, where in 1909 luncheons and teas were quickly served, is reported as retaining its old fashioned lounge bar but not apparently a welcome for the CAMRA surveyors.

Other landlords must have welcomed the compilers of the 1907 returns of Licenced Houses with even less grace since their reports pried into the number of rooms available for lodgers, what stabling was available and the state of the sanitary conveniences - "filthy and dilapidated" at the Hare and Hounds, Haddenham, though in fine condition at the Globe in the same village where Mary Nightingale had been landlord for 48 years.

In those days most every village had dozens of pubs, now there are only one or two. For the traveller seeking a half-pint of beer or a plate of chips distinguishing between them can prove a problem and this is why the new guide is an essential addition to the clutter in the glove pocket of our car, though no guide can ever explain quite why a "Ploughman's" varies so greatly from pub to pub. The more active - such as devotees of bar billiards, crib, shove ha'penny, dominoes, darts or boule (all offered by the Carpenter's Arms at Gt Wilbraham) - can also track down their ideal combination of sport and brew

For those who prefer spirits there is a section on haunted pubs - watch out for the little grey man at the Rose and Crown in Histon whose visits coincide with doors opening themselves and objects moving or even disappearing for a while. There are unexplained footsteps at the Carpenters Arms, Gt Wilbraham which scares the pub cats, a friendly ghost at the Anchor Little Downham perhaps connected with Jack the Ripper but more likely as one of the pub's rooms used to act as the village mortuary. A more troublesome spirit causes problems in Willingham where glasses fall off the shelves in unusual directions, sideways or even upwards, while even china dogs have been seen to travel horizontally from the shelf in the King William IV at Burwell.

The stories do of course have to be taken with a pinch of salt, or a pint of Boddingtons, Old Speckled Hen, Merrie Monk or SOD (Shefford Old Dark brewed in Bedfordshire) any of which can be located through careful perusal in "Pints worth finding"

"Pints worth finding ; a CAMRA guide to pubs in southern Cambridgeshire" £2,75

Y.Har.K15 624 Y.Bar.K6 134 Y.Ches.K15 1695, Y.Har.K15

Reflections 1994 07 06

It was inevitably going to happen. On the same day that the proofs of my new book "Images of Cambridge" arrive from the publisher we receive another batch of photographs taken by H.S. Johnson

There are at least six that would have fitted in very well, One that would have been absolutely essential is a view of Peas Hill looking towards Bene't Street and showing the line of shops which were demolished in the middle 1930s for the Arts Theatre, But as well as showing the now forgotten architecture it also has two of the other characteristics I have been looking for, One is the pair of girls strolling across the street - in "Images" I have tried to get pictures which show people in their setting and period and my favourite is a group of children picking flowers outside Sedley School in Malta Road in about 1933. But Johnson also showed something of the traffic of the time - in this case very few cars, but then Shrive's and Fletcher's shops are shut so perhaps it is a Sunday (or Thursday afternoon when shops used to have half-day closing)

I had already selected one of his views of Sidney Street and Petty Cury but think the new one is even better, As well as showing the new Boots development nestling behind the shops on the corner of the Cury it also depicts the telephone box with its ornate top and a policeman on point duty as one of Millers' vans approaches. I do have something of both of course with the Millers supplying instruments which undergraduates are playing on a 1928 rag float (one of Dale's Brewery lorries, and if you're in to beer just wait till you see the barrels being loaded from the Albion Brewery in 1963 - making a good contrast to a picture of the Stable Bar at the Turk's Head). As for the police well they're represented on both happy and tragic

occasions involving students ~ a 1950s rag scene and the horrendous headlines after an undergraduate shot his tutor and Detective Willis at King's College in June 1930, How ironic this should have occurred in the same year that the Gallows at the County Gaol were sold off and hundreds of law-abiding folk.: took: the opportunity to tour the old prison before it was demolished

Nevertheless it is now too late to change the selection, Nor can I substitute a newly-borrowed view of the Cattle Market in the 1950s for the one already processed, This is a pity since the new one shows the bustle of the market and is better than anything I discovered when going through the thousands of photographs filed at the Cambridge Evening News, There were however some wonderful discoveries, including a view of students queuing for their May-Ball breakfast outside Waffles in Fitzroy Street June 1974 in the days when the Kite was either a magical oasis of individuality at a time of conformity or a run-down and decaying backwater, depending on your viewpoint,

The 1950s were probably the most difficult decade to depict, once into the 1960's - the era of the Beatles and parking meters & the 70's when Jerry Bol was arrested for busking there are no shortage of pictures, As for the penultimate chapter on the 1980's and 1990's - Green Bikes, rebuilding Magdalene Bridge and the visit of Princess Di to Cherry Hinton - they are all chosen.

The problem is the last bit, If we are really telling the story of Cambridge in the 20th century, and using over 200 pages and 350 pictures to do it, then we must also look forward to the end of the Millennium, What changes will we see in the next six years - more building, a new football stadium, underground car parks? It would be nice to wait a bit longer but the book is due out in September and is already being advertised so that people who wish to subscribe may have their name - or that of a friend of business - printed in the back, of course you may already be in it

Reflections 1994 07 13

It is that time of year again where just as one group of University students go down another group come up. Colleges which have recently rung with concerns over examinations, the preparations for the May Ball or the progress of the Rowing Eight now echo with even more strange accents as students from around the globe come to Cambridge as part of the International Summer School programmes organised by the University Board of Continuing Education.

They will attend classes on subjects such as the English legal system, British politics or The Celts in Antiquity and choose from a range of lectures such as "Cambridge and the computer", "Espionage in Cambridge" or even "Dickensian Cambridge", most given by scholars of some repute, though I make no such claims for the latter. They will write essays, enjoy meals in College dining halls taking their turn on Top Table when their student colleagues stand for them as the Top Table party process to their seats and the Latin Grace is said. They will have a tremendous time and - according to at least one American judge - spend the rest of the year endeavouring to introduce into every conversation something of what they did when they studied at Cambridge University.

One can never know just what foreign visitors think of us, although perhaps Malin Wedin was not completely enamoured for he committed some thoughts in a poem entitled "Cursed be all Englishmen" ... "May your kettles always boil over ,, May your royalty always be adulterous ... and may atmospherics always occur during Coronation Street and Eastenders. But he leaves his worst till last ... "may Mrs Thatcher continue her reign of terror to rule your country forever" His words are included in "Waiting Loudly" an anthology of writing

produced by students at the EF International School and published in aid of the Save the Children Fund.

Meanwhile some local people leave Cambridge to take something of the British way of life to other parts of the world. One such was Marianne Goadby, daughter of a Baptist minister in Isleham who spent her early life travelling round the country distributing religious tracts, visiting the sick and dying and engaging in "acts of piety and mercy proper for an active and devoted female" (this was the 1820s!) She married a Baptist minister in May 1833 and two months later left England for foreign shores. The journey to Calcutta took four months and within the year she was dead. Her work in promoting "the glory of God and the eternal welfare of the deluded heathen" was of short duration, but her memory has been kept alive in a new book tracing the Cambridgeshire connections with the Baptist Missionary Society between 1792 and 1992, portraying something of the excitement, challenge, dangers and sacrifice of local men and women.

Several of the missionaries have connections with Histon whose Parish Council minute books have provided the source for a new village history between 1894 and 1984. All village life is there – no tents on the village green except at Feast time (1895) - though it was necessary to remind traction engine drivers again in 1903. Residents in Pages Close were reprimanded for putting soap suds in the ditch in front of their homes (1915), Impington school conditions were contributing to the measles epidemic of 1932 and the council certainly did not want a small pox hospital proposed by the County council in 1938, though they did accept next year that in the event of air raids up to 200 people could be found accommodation in the village school. Parish councils generate considerable amounts of correspondence, much of it to the County Council, and in the days before the Citizens Charter it could take some time to deal with - in 1977 the County Surveyor was reporting that suggestions or complaints about road repairs might take 30 months to answer!

"Waiting Loudly: an anthology from EF International School, Cambridge
The Cambridgeshire Connections with the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992 by Stephen Bull; form author at Gibraltar Lane, Swavesey, \$5
A history of Histon 1894-1994, compiled by Eleanor Whitehead – Histon & Impington Village Society

V.R.K29 2819, Y.His.K0 28435, Y.His.K2 7639, E.E.K46 34609

Reflections 1994 07 20

I'm eagerly waiting the next issue of "Mercia Bioscope", the journal of the Mercia cinema society. There are so many publications of this type catering for special interest groups, that it is impossible to keep track of all of them - or to be truthful of hardly any - so I am grateful to the editor for bringing to my attention a series of four articles by Martin Tapsell on the cinemas of rural Cambridgeshire. The November 1993 covered villages from Burwell where the Parish Council's Gardiner Memorial Hall was licensed for film shows from May 1919, though cinema-goers packed into the gallery as well as the body of the hall, which was actually in breach of the conditions, Cottenham had some films in Lordship Hall apparently - though there is no other detail whilst the church hall in Haddenham could pack in some 300 people when used between 1921 and 1930. The series continues in the February 1994 issue covering the Shepherd's Hall, Linton and the enemas at Littleport, though he omits to record how one of them was hit by incendiary bombs during the second world war just after it had finished showing the film entitled "On the night of the fire"! A travelling cinema even reached Manea whilst Sawston of course had its own proper cinema - though not without a fuss. Henry Spicer, owner of Sawston paper mills was persuaded to provide money and land for the new Village College on the understanding that he could show films in the college hall.

However once it was opened the County Council reneged on the deal so Henry built "Spicer's Cinema" adjacent to the college and showed films from 1932 to 1963. Hopefully the next issue will cover Stretham where I remember as a lad attending picture shows in the village school, principally memorable not for the films but for the singing of the favourite signature tune of the time "Over the mountains over the seas"

Royston too had cinema as is recalled in Frederic Sillence's "Twentieth century Royston, volume 1". The first building opened in Priory Lane on July 1st 1913. Charges varied between 4d and 1/- (2p-5p) with those in the cheaper seats enduring straight forms with wooden backs. The excitement on the screen could not match the excitement in the hall when the policeman's son was attacked and stabbed during a film show. Following the development of various topics involves scanning chapter after chapter of the book which covers the period from 1900 to the middle 1950s and is well illustrated with photographs including one of two Ortona bus-loads of football supporters en route to watch Royston football club lose a cup final at Histon, thus interesting both bus and soccer supporters,

Another subject to attract enthusiasts is windmills and those around Wisbech are the subject of a newly-published history based on the work of Arthur Oldham about 50 years ago. His original notes exist only in typescript form but have been updated and added to together with personal reminiscences. From the eight sail mill on Lynn Road Wisbech to Muckle Mill, White Engine Mill and Luton Gowts near Long Sutton, Lincolnshire, the booklet is full of interest. White Engine Mill was a wooden drainage mill which caught fire on 19th March 1826 causing the Drainage Commissioners to discuss a replacement. They rebuilt it at a cost of £1,634.19.7, having received £1,000 in insurance payment but within 9 years it was obsolete owing to improved drainage technology. The mill sold for £300 and was converted into a corn mill, a function it served until March 1895 when all the sails were blown off in a gale. Even this was not the end for the mill was repaired and continued to operate into the 1920s. Oldham's notes have been supplemented by Robert Bell of the excellent Wisbech and Fenland Museum who hopes to make this just the first of a series of booklets giving in-depth studies of individual mills

"Mercia Bioscope" is edited by B. Hornsey of 122 Northumberland Ave, Stamford
"20th century Royston, vol.1" by Frederic Sillence, published by Courtney Publications, Ashwell at £13.50
"Windmills in and around Wisbech" by Arthur Oldham, Sprindrift, Second Marsh Road, Walsoken, £4.95

Reflections 1994 07 27

The other morning I had a journey to work which started as entertaining and ended up as frightening - and it was all due to the blond in the blue car.

As the rush-hour traffic began to bunch on the A10 I wondered why the car in front was veering first to one side then to the other - to the edge of the verge, to the centre of the road and back again. Then I noticed the movement of the car coincided with the movement of the driver's arm - comb hair one side, move that way, comb hair the other side move back again. For some three miles she combed her hair, glancing in the mirror from time to time to check the result. Then, hair done for the moment she started on the makeup, the driver's mirror tilted a little further as first one layer than another was applied.

By this time I felt it safer to be in front rather than behind - and ensured another vehicle was between us too. Sadly he turned off into Milton village - and now the makeup had reached even more crucial stage. By the time we were driving down Milton Road - in the hurly-burly of rush-hour - she had reached the mascara and eye-lash stage, and now the mirror was well

and truly turned and her attention truly fixed on it. At every hold-up I left space behind the vehicle in front in case her inbuilt, sense of radar failed to detect what her eyes were not looking at, When she finally veered off the journey suddenly became more tranquil - despite the battalions of bicycling foreign students!

It would not have happened years ago, when cars did not drive themselves to the extent they do today. Drivers of the Bassingbourn-built "Rational" motors in 1904 were exposed to the elements - the hair-do would have taken all day! They were high-backed four seater cars with solid tyres and carbide lamps. With their aluminium and copper tube radiators they were the latest thing on the road, capable of a top speed of 25 mph and powerful enough to climb Arrington Hill. They had two forward gears which made them ideal for use as London taxis and for a while the Heatly & Gresham foundry and engineering works in High Street ensured that Bassingbourn was one of the country's leading motor centres. Then in 1905 the company transferred its works nearer to London and no more vehicles were manufactured. Their activities are summarised in "A chronicle of two villages" charting change in Kneesworth and its sister village between 1894 and the present day,

If the Rational taxis are remembered what of Percival's Motors of King Street Cambridge who could supply saloon and touring cars to drive yourself or with chauffeur and had motor coaches for hire; meanwhile L.A. Rich of Fitzroy Lane supplied second-hand car spares from any of the hundreds of cars they dismantled whilst Bryant and Howlett, coach and motor body builders could construct new vehicles of every description - sadly their story seems not yet to have been told. Frank Legge of Victoria Street garage offered smart up-to-date private saloons at reasonable rates for tours or day trips, Q. Love, furniture removal contractors (& piano removal experts) had two modern motor removal vans which feature amongst the advertisements on a newly-received "Multiple mileage chart of Cambridge and district" issued with the compliments of Somerlite - importers of Pentella petrol, vaporising oils and greases - about 1935.

These were the days when the Milton road "merry-go-round" - Mitcham's roundabout was opened (1932) to be followed next year by another at Four Lamps, when parking controls were being urged "sometimes cars and bikes are parked so closely in line in Petty Cury that pedestrians cannot find space between them" (1934) and when the speed limit was abolished, only to be brought back in 1935 after four years due to the number of accidents,

Oh yes, in 1904 a blindfolded motorist drove through Cambridge in the rush hour – but in those days it was newsworthy!

"A chronicle of two villages: Bassingbourn and Kneesworth, 1894-1994", published by Bassingbourn Local History Group at £4.50

Reflections 1994 08 03

Returning to work from just one week away I discover that no fewer than twenty-five new books or booklets relating to Cambridgeshire have accumulated in my "In" box. It used to be a tray once upon a time which I could keep clear, now its a succession of boxes which I do try very hard to redistribute to one pile or another - inevitably I fail,

It is not the weather for working, its not even the weather for wandering in college gardens but for those who enjoy such delights even in a heatwave a new guide by Richard Bird is essential. One of the amazing things about Cambridge is that you can nip through a narrow doorway on a busy street and instantly find yourself in quiet solitude in a garden that would do credit to any country house - indeed the 17 acres of Newnham College would probably outdo most of them with its sunken rose garden, herbaceous borders and the curious mound

that was once the College observatory. All this in a college which was only founded in 1871 and some have been around for 300 years longer. Yet the tradition of gardening continues today at the new Robinson College making use of the winding stream of the Bin Brook that runs through its grounds.

Newnham College also features in Geoff Yeates' contribution to literature this one concentrating not on gardens but ghosts. Its founder, Henry Sidgwick was also founder of the Society for Psychical Research and had an interest in spiritualism. His work was assisted by his wife who also combined the post of assistant to Lord Rayleigh in his scientific research at the Cavendish Laboratory with that of Vice Principal, and later Principal at Newnham. She was responsible for sifting through the reports and claims of ghostly happenings and rejecting many of them.

One such concerns an apparition at Emmanuel College - a figure in bridal veil who appeared to various occupants of a particular room. But Mrs Sidgwick could find insufficient evidence, with one witness described as excitable, imaginative and nervous. Nevertheless it appears in the new book. There is also the tale of the Everlasting Club at Jesus - which makes a good story, especially to an after-dinner group in one of the rooms there - although once more any evidence seems to have been mislaid. Witnesses are quoted for an appearance of an ear-less head in rooms at Sidney Sussex which was accompanied by a strange smell resembling rotten raw meat, Spam and Oxo. Mind you this was noticed by an undergraduate at 1 o'clock in the morning on Halloween in 1967 and attempts to conjure up the spirit next night by conducting a séance were ruined by an invasion of members of the Psychical Research Society.

On the other hand the Master of Corpus Christi college did hang himself in the Lodge, though speculation has it that the ghost which is said to haunt the area belongs to a later era. Another Master had a daughter and she took a lover; when disturbed in the midst of a clandestine meeting she is said to have hidden him in a cupboard, only to find him dead of suffocation when she reopened it.

Open any door in Cambridge and you can find an expert behind it. Yet look up Garden or Ghost in a new Guide to Expertise and you will find nothing. But try plants and you can take your pick of crop biodiversity, organic synthesis of plant metabolites, plant physiology, ultrastructure and microscopy or really odd things about plants. Part of the problem of Cambridge is that it is so complex and finding an easy explanation of it all is a problem.

This has now been overcome by a series of booklets produced by the University's press and information office which explain simply about its history and give all those facts and figures - it costs over £220 million a year to run, employs about 7,000 members of staff (with more in the 31 individual colleges). There are about 14,500 students of whom 10% come from overseas, studying anything from Akkadian to medieval Welsh - and apparently the odd one or two see things not on the formal curriculum

"The gardens of Cambridge" by Richard Bird & Dona Haycraft, Covent Garden Press £5.95

"Cambridge college ghosts" by Geoff Yeates. Jarrold £4.95

"About Cambridge" - various guides from the University Press and Information Office

E.Co.J14 219, E.Q.J27 694, E.Pet.J90 40557, E.N.K1 33646

Reflections 1994 08 10

'Sluice' Parker, 'Lightning' and 'Qakey' were three of the characters of Cambridge collectively known as the Three Graces. Sluice's nickname derived from his lisp which recalled the sound of water rushing through a sluice gate. He wandered around the town selling flowers from a little basket slung over his arm and was as cunning as a fox. One of his tricks was to remove a

pot plant from a front garden, take it to the back door and sell it to the lady of the house as an exact match for the one she had! 'Lighting' - real name Siggers - was a newspaper seller who sported an old Etonian tie, the gift of one of the undergraduates with who he was always popular and quite ready to engage in banter, whilst 'Oakey' specialised in conducting Americans around the colleges and was well versed in pointing out sights unknown to the modern generation of Blue Badge Guides - such as the spot in Trinity College where, he claimed, Queen Elizabeth I was beheaded.

They are just three of the people encountered in the pages of a new volume of memoirs from Raymond Lister and featured alongside recollections of the High School for Boys at the time that "Tishy" Mayne was its Head in the 1930s, of the family firm of George Lister & sons, Geoffrey Keynes, the Ballet Jooss which was based in Cambridge during the Second War and Philip Gosse who bought their home at West Wratting which featured no electricity but relied on oil lamps and candles for illumination when they moved there in 1947. Once more there were characters - Billy Rash (who married a Miss Itch) and Joe Roope who, when modern flush lavatories were installed, bought the old bucket from the privy to clean up and sell in the village - hopefully not for carrying water from the village pump.

Village life was not all pleasant in the past as Margaret Greenwood records in "Chronicles of Bourn" which illustrates the extremes of wealth and poverty that existed in the nineteenth century. It charts the village's struggles to erect a new bridge over Bourn brook following the drowning of William Clark, grocer and draper in November 1852, after his horse had blundered off the road and into the river during flooding, and also tells the tale of the suicide in 1873 of the Earl De la Warr who drowned himself at Sheeps Green bathing place having paid the full funeral expenses of a young lady, one-time barmaid but latterly living in a house for which the Earl paid the rent. Then it was a tragedy which "cast a shadow of deepest gloom over the whole community" but one wonders how modern papers would have viewed the affair

More village activities are recorded in a booklet of extracts from Stapleford parish council minutes which start in 1894 and come right up to date with Councillors once more opposing any plans which could make the village a mere suburb of Cambridge - as they did before in 1913 and 1931. This enterprising history is well illustrated with photographs both old and new but cannot however compare in production with what must be the most attractive village booklet yet issued. Grantchester parochial church council has tapped local talent to produce most excellent colour photographs to accompany Christine Jennings' text covering the expected topics of church, Old Vicarage and Rupert Brooke as well as the less well-known areas. The whole has been put together by Pitkin Pictorials to make the sort of souvenir guide that will appeal to anybody who knows or visits the village. In order to maximise the income for the church it is only sold in the Grantchester shops and at Cambridge Tourist information centre but is well worth seeking out,

"With my own wings ; the memoirs of Raymond Lister". Oleander press
"Stapleford matters 1894-1994" published by Stapleford Parish Council
"Chronicles of Bourn" compiled and published by Margaret Greenwood
"Grantchester" published by Pitkin Pictorials.

Y.Gra.K1 47749, E.T.K0 34171, Y.She.K2 22970, Y.Bou.K0 23603

Reflections 1994 08 17

The library world is still in a state of shock following the tragedy at Norwich. The fire which started apparently quite accidentally raged through their Central Library and left the once-proud symbol of Norfolk's principal public service a smoking shell. It would appear that

amongst the heaps of ashes must be included some 95% of the county's equivalent of our Cambridgeshire Collection. Norwich's local collection was amongst the finest in the country; its existence and the enthusiasm with which it was amassed and used proved the inspiration for generations of librarians as well as countless researchers. Now all the work, all the collecting and all the care that was lavished on its creation has gone up in smoke.

It leads me to reflect just what to save from amongst our own stock, given that just a minute proportion could be preserved from destruction - which books would be slid down the sloping glass roof into the Heidelberg garden. Cambridge is full of books and bookshops and most of what we hold is available in the University Library or could be replaced through the assistance of the book trade. So the expensive Ackermann's and Le Keux and the rest could be left to burn. The mass of recently-produced histories and memoirs are also likely to be have been picked up by the great copyright libraries as lists are published in "East Anglian Bibliography", "Conduit" and elsewhere - and a few reviewed in the Cambridge Weekly News! It is the pamphlets such as "The waterman of the River Cam" by Womba Smythe, a religious tract which tells how a drunken bargee was converted to Christianity by reading a leaflet sold him by a one-legged sailor which may not have survived elsewhere (although we did cause it to be reprinted some 20-odd years ago in an edition which is probably now scarcer than the original).

The newspaper files - some 500 volumes dating back to the 1770s including some 35 different titles - could be left to perish. For the most part they are also held in the British Library in London and have largely been microfilmed pending the day when the newsprint crumbles away. Our cuttings files which date back for some 30 years and cover 750 local topics are duplicated in part by the private files and indexes in the Cambridge Evening News' office library. The maps collection dating back to 1574 and including virtually every printed map issued over the last 400 years, together with files of larger Ordnance Survey sheets from 1886, are also in the Cambridge University Library map room, as are most of the engravings of local scenes issued during the nineteenth-century.

Many of our 400,000 pictures have been published in books or newspapers - including more than 6 years of weekly columns like this - and most of any significance have been copied for readers' projects. So our negative files would be a priority and whilst it is impractical to throw original glass negatives out the window most of them have now been copied as transparencies which would survive the drop. Handbills would also be a priority - the circus posters, advertisements for balloon ascents and the like together with our tape recordings which although undeveloped still remain the major oral history record in the county

No collection can be replaced unless you know what is lost but our main catalogues and indexes have been published on microfilm & the supplements on computer disk deposited elsewhere. Given time, money and the support and encouragement of the people of Cambridgeshire most of it could be replaced, but not by me. It has taken 150 years to get to what we have now, somebody else could have the challenge of rebuilding it

But where would the 1,200 readers who use the Collection every month turn for their information in the meantime? They could never find such a combination of material together in one place.

The loss would be devastating and unimaginable. Sadly our colleagues in Norfolk are having to face it for real

In preparation for my talk on Dickensian Cambridge recently I have been reading "Sketches by Boz" in which Charles Dickens describes various institutions and aspects of Victorian life. Thus gin shops, pawnbrokers shop, the criminal courts and ever Newgate prison feature. This attracted Dickens' especial interest as he toured the building describing the passages, the condemned cells and the chapel with the pew in which those due to hang were placed on the Sunday preceding their execution, their coffin by their side. The more fortunate spent their days in wards whose walls were lined with rows of large hooks on which hung the mats on which they slept and dined off a kind of stewed beef and brown bread. Although the women had some employment the men and boys had nothing to do but saunter moodily about, lounge in the window or lean against the wall. Reformers tried to segregate the hardened criminals from the first offenders and improve conditions but the gaol built to house 500 prisoners regularly contained 800.

Cambridge had a relatively new prison, opening in 1790 just behind the old Spinning House and quite separate from the County Gaol on Castle Hill. But by 1819 criticisms were being voiced over its cleanliness, lack of wholesome air and the poor state of repair - one building containing two cells fell down. By 1823 there was great agitation for a replacement and after much debate an Act of Parliament was obtained and a new gaol opened across Parker's Piece in 1828.

Men, women and children were confined together be they debtors, awaiting trial, already sentenced to up to two years imprisonment or hardened criminals awaiting transportation or transfer to prisons elsewhere. They were put on various tasks, some grinding corn on a treadmill, others picking loose fibres from old hemp ropes, constructing new cells or working in the kitchen - although in 1850 one prisoner went on strike since he was not paid for cooking Food was a source of complaint but the rule by 1865 was for "Hard Labour, Hard Fare and Hard Bed". Those who transgressed were flogged or placed in solitary confinement on bread and water for three days

In Cambridge the prison closed in 1878, 110 years later a new prison was announced for March and the first report on its conditions has recently been issued by the Home Office. Its findings in some ways repeat the problems of the Victorian gaols. At Whitemoor there are vulnerable prisoners and hardened old lags transferred from other prisons, with other Governors taking the opportunity to offload their most difficult inmates on the fledgling prison. Although they try to keep the two groups separate this proves difficult and whenever one wing takes its turn in the kitchen the other groups feels its food is under threat of contamination. Some complained of mouldy fish fingers and all recognised that the grub was inconsistent in quality and poorly presented. Just as in Victorian times some prisoners refuse to work: in the kitchen - but in this case it was up to half of the hardened criminals who know the ropes all too well and with no flogging as a deterrent there seems little that can be done

Conditions however are far superior to that endured in Cambridge where in 1823 nine men were kept in cells containing just three beds, though the Inspectors did find some of the March cells overcrowded as some inmates had pinched the soft chairs from the television room for their private use

Home Office. Report of a short inspection of H.M. Prison, Whitemoor. 1993

Reflections 1994 08 31

Bear-baiting and banking make an unlikely combination of subjects to find together on our new books shelves, and indeed one would hardly expect to find an account of the former in a scholarly book devoted to Cambridge theatres between 1464 and 1720.

Alan Nelson's volume seeks to recreate details of as many theatres as possible with over 20 pages to a description of the stage at Queens' college in 1640. Another was erected inside King's college chapel for the visit of Queen Elizabeth I nearly 100 years earlier but there is some doubt about reports that she may have watched performances by Christopher Marlowe in the yard of the Falcon Inn, Petty Cury, one of the places where plays were performed within the town. The Guildhall was another although the University claimed the right to ban such performances within five miles of the town centre.

Bear—baiting was another prohibited activity, though on a Sunday morning in 1581 large crowds including Thomas Parris, the high constable gathered at Chesterton to witness a bear chained to a post which was set upon by dogs. Into the raucous noise stormed the Senior Proctor and an accompaniment of officials who promptly arrested the bear and its owner to the anger of the crowd who surged forward trapping one of the officials beside the bear - and thus in mortal danger. However reason prevailed and the crowd moved back in time though days later Thomas Parris and others were imprisoned in a Westminster jail.

The annals of banking also contain dramatic incidents worthy of record. One such must be the story of John Frederick Mortlock who staged an increasing bizarre series of attacks on his uncle who he felt had robbed him of his inheritance - even setting up a tent outside the bank in Peas Hill where, clad in a magnificent velvet lined coat, he invited donations to aid his cause - and from which he could keep up a barrage of abuse whenever the banker appeared. Sadly there is no space for such detail in Harold Preston's new book but it remains a first attempt to list some 112 early-East Anglian banks and is amply illustrated by some of the banknotes that each issued.

In the 1700s almost anybody could set up as a banker provided he could gain the trust of local people and demonstrate that he possessed the necessary hard cash to be able to honour the paper money that carried his name. From time to time there were problems as in 1825 when panic swept the banking world and investors rushed to convert the paper to sovereigns. Both partners in the Cambridge bank of Barker and Eaden journeyed to London on 12th December for cash - but were unsuccessful. Three days later the anticipated rush began and Barker had to try again, coming back with £5,000 which kept them going for two days, although they took the precaution of calling in constables to keep the rabble who packed the streets from rushing the bank. Once more they needed to journey for cash but by then the main rush had slackened and by 28th December things were back to normal. It was temporary reprieve for the bank failed in 1840. A similar run on Peckover's bank Wisbech was forestalled after they visited wealthy friends and were able to display a large number of farm sacks brimming over with gold coins under a banner which read "and a Peck-over" - just part of the story of the Quaker banking family told in Madeline Reynold's new pamphlet.

"Early Cambridge theatres" by Alan H. Nelson. CUP £35

"Early East Anglian banks and bankers" by Harold Preston, £8.95

"The Peckovers of Wisbech" by Madeline G.H. McReynolds. Wisbech Society, £2.50

Reflections 1994 09 07

Croydon is one of those small south Cambridgeshire parishes that one needs a good map to locate. Situated next to Arrington between Wendy and Hatley St George (more mapwork!) it is just off the B road which leads to Potton. So small is the settlement - just 80 houses and a population of 194 at the last census and perhaps best known as the site of the lost village of Clopton - it was described in 1960 as being only a dormitory whose school, average attendance just ten children, was due to close though it did contrive to support a village store owned by the Law Brothers, a post office managed by Mr S. Lee and a public house, the Queen Adelaide.

The villagers could worship at either or both of the Congregational church erected in 1889 & capable of seating about half of its then 210 residents and a thirteenth-century church seating 300 whose tower was then crumbling and cracking with schemes afoot either to fortify the foundations or have it pulled down altogether.

Yet this secluded spot has come under the spotlight recently through the donation to the Collection of a series of excellent negatives depicting the village and its inhabitants at the beginning of the century. Quite who the people are taking tea in their garden, relaxing with a glass of beer from the exertion of rethatching or posing outside the white-washed and thatched "Axe and Compasses" is something that we need help to establish.

Two of the most interesting pictures reflect something of religious life with views of a mission tent, ministers outside complete with bibles and a mission van. Was this perhaps one of those operated by the Church Army who by 1902 operated four such vehicles in the Ely diocese one of which under Missioner Capt Berry visited Wendy and neighbouring villages or was the message that "The wages of sin is death" being promulgated by some other denomination.

Certainly Croydon had its share of nonconformists in the 1840s for the then Rector, Francis Fulford, compiled a list of inhabitants recording their ages, occupations, church attendance and off-the-cuff comments. This was transcribed by pupils at Bassingbourn village college and published in 1980 as "the Rector and his flock" (now out-of-print). Each house was visited and commented on and all human life is there - "I was obliged to turn Isaac out of the Sunday school, he was so unruly and turbulent", "Emma had a child by a Wendy man, expected to marry him but he deceived her" although the Rector found her a good servant and took her to London with him when he left the Village.

The Law family were "much inclined to dissent and neither of them attend often at Croydon church ... prevented partly by distance and bad roads", their children were baptised at the Bassingbourn meeting, all but the youngest, an infant born September 1842, and perhaps the Rector held out some hope of a convert there. Even regular church goers could not hide from the Rector's comments, Joseph played the clarinet at church and was a very civil man "but, I fear, drinks still, They are always in want, though they earn very high wages amongst them. She (the wife) is a woman not to be trusted".

So we have a detailed account of the residents 150 years ago and pictures of people of whom we know little taken about 1900, perhaps with help we can add something more to the record before time overtakes us all.

Y.Clo.K0 47598, 47596, 47603 WM.Mis.K0 47646

Reflections 1994 09 14

The Cambridgeshire Collection is in the middle of our busiest period of the year, As soon as the schools close for the Summer holidays the bright and keen students come in with their projects, then as the return to college comes nearer so the rest arrive, usually with their-mums,

Some topics are old-faithfuls, repeated year after year by students who are well-prepared and even have a check-list of sources - listed buildings registers, newspaper cuttings, pictures and directories - from which they will build up some account of the cottages in their village.

Except that often they will come up against a brick wall in their search for information on their timber-framed cottage as there are many topics for which there is no magic book, Some will continue up to the County Record Office and discover another wealth of sources enabling further pieces to be added to the jigsaw but all will score marks because they have visited the Library and experienced the fun and frustration of research.

Many other projects will be set by teachers who have not taken the opportunity to assess the resources beforehand and then we need to agonise with the student as to just what was required This is one reason we ask students to log in with their college and teacher's name so that we can have a quiet word and save everybody needless agony.

Generally "History" projects are relatively easy, it is the Geography or Business Studies courses which cause most problems. Fortunately two reports have just come out which will be particularly useful. A detailed Cambridge sub-regional shopping study by London consultants Hillier Parker indicates that whilst Peterborough has more retail floorspace it is Cambridge which is the premier shopping centre with a greater number of national multiples. It examines the two principal shopping areas, the historic centre and the Graf ton area concluding that the former has the wider range of retailers and more specialist and upmarket multiples.

However no major shop is entirely happy with its existing premises, none are trading at full capacity and the principal problems are the lack of quality parking or access for shoppers by bus and the absence of additional space for new shops - although the proposed relocation of Robert Sayle and redevelopment of Lion Yard and Bradwell's Court are seen as worth consideration. The possible impending demise of the Guildhall should local government reorganisation sweep away the City's powers might also be one way of bringing yet more specialist shopping to meet what is recognised to be the principal target area of growth - tourists and visitors as opposed to residents, All in all there are ample opportunities there for essays and projects.

A wider view comes from the County Council major study on the local Environment, The people who flock in with projects on pollution will find information in abundance in the sections on air, transport and water whilst those considering the possibility of new forms of energy generated from wind turbines or burning methane from landfill sites (though no mention of a straw-burning power station at Sutton) will find statistics to hand, Its 183 pages are packed with information, printed both sides of the page as one would expect from a document which analyses the problems of waste disposal, My problem is how to exploit its potential and how to find space to house them all – why is it that planning reports are always the thickest books we add to stock! Thank goodness they are probably the most used.

PC.Th.a.K28 2849, B.Qua.K3 20634, B.And.K11 25633

Reflections 1994 09 21

There is little doubt but that the theme this week must be milk. First there was a knock on the door just as we were finishing dinner one night and as a result the Collection is now the proud possessor of a copy of Chesterton R.D.C.'s "Regulations with respect to dairies, cowsheds and milkshops' issued in 1899. Then when browsing around a Cambridge bookshop I discovered an analysis of the art of C.E. Brock issued by The Press Art School about 1920.

The link between Brock and milk is obscure but revolves around a visit to what looked like & barn in a South Cambridgeshire village several years ago now. It was not a barn converted to a house but rather a house that looked just like a barn, made of concrete blocks and quite

dissimilar from the neat properties around it. Inside we were made welcome and took a seat on a sofa in a room which might have been large but which was absolutely piled high with a jumble of tables, chairs and oddments resembling nothing less than a furniture scrapheap.

Then was paraded one by one several massive canvasses painted by Brock - panoramas, country scenes, a shepherd with his sheep and an interior of a cowshed with the animal being milked. The owners have now moved away and the pictures perhaps dispersed, all we have is the memory and a series of colour slides we took at the time. Now in the new accession there is a picture of Brock at work in his studio built in the garden of his Cambridge home and the large canvas at the back looks very similar to one of those we photographed that Sunday afternoon.

Brock's milkman, skilled though he undoubtedly was, might not have matched the excellence of Bert Wolfe and Jack Murfitt who in 1928 were judged the best milkmen in the Isle of Ely, helping to secure the Silver Challenge Cup for Bertram Parish of Front Street, Stretham for having the best and cleanest dairy in the county and although he slipped to second next year - behind F. Hephher of Aldreth - he was back on top in 1930, though chased hard by the dairy of F.C. Palmer of Haddenham, who still deliver milk around that village. The competition had been promoted by the Education committee to promote friendly competition, encourage greater consumption of milk and educate the farmers about the need for care and hygiene. But there were many variables to be taken into consideration as a don's wife discovered to her cost in 1924.

Agnes Sills and her husband, a Classical tutor of King's College, moved from their home on West Road to a newly built house on the Gog Magog Hills near Shelford, a quarter mile from the road down a private drive. For a while ail went well but with the outbreak of the Great War milk became scarce and the local dairy decided it was not worth them traipsing all the way up the hill when they could easily sell all their produce in the village. So, undaunted Agnes, started her own herd in the adjacent fields and soon found herself supplying local mothers and continued after the War-ended as milk was still in very short supply. All went well until a spot check revealed her milk to contain insufficient fat and she was summoned at Cambridge court. Allegations that she had watered the milk or was selling skimmed for the price of full-cream were rejected - the hillside was just too cold for the cows to thrive. Acquitted on the first occasion she was convicted a few months later on a similar charge and fined £5. Determined to prove the unfairness of the case she lobbied the Prime Minister and anybody she could find, and, feeling she had still got a rough ride published a book about it in 1931. Entitled 'There is John Bull to answer yet' it remains a rarity and we have only a photocopy - but who knows what tomorrow might bring in

Reflections 1994 09 28

Trying to reflect on the highlights of the week at the start of lunch on Saturday there were various contenders. Was it to be the Cambridge United programmes collected on our behalf by their supporters and presented to my colleague on Thursday, the PhD dissertation on the Bassingbourn mystery plays produced by a student in Pittsburgh, USA, or the project on the Schlumberger centre compiled by a student from the Perse which earned an "A" grade in his GCSE, Then I passed a bookshop and the answer was obvious.

The highlight of the week, and probably the year, must be Sir Arthur Marshall's autobiography which charts the development of the firm which bears his family name. Marshall of Cambridge have been involved in virtually every British-built aircraft over the last 50 years. They designed and built the droop nose for Concorde, converted Hercules and TriStar aircraft and were prime movers in the early stages of the Bacon fuel cell which resulted in the American Apollo moon landings. All this is of course told in the book. But

more than that they built the airport which is at the centre of the company's activities, produced buses and military vehicles and of course built up the chain of garages all of which has brought significant employment and prosperity to the area.

But as well as being the story of a firm this is also the tale of a man and his involvement with Cambridge. In fact it goes back even further for his father, David Marshall had been born in Cambridge in 1873, starting work as a porter in the kitchens of Trinity college and becoming Steward of the Pitt Club in Jesus Lane, one of the University's aristocratic and exclusive dining establishment. He soon expanded into chauffeur-driven hire cars with at one time no less than 14 millionaire undergraduate customers.

The firm moved to Jesus Lane in 1912 and it was here that the young Arthur made his first acquaintance with flying machines when the army airship "Beta II" taking part in army manoeuvres developed engine trouble and drifted over Cambridge out of control. Soldiers encamped on Midsummer Common helped bring the machine to ground and when repairs proved difficult the Captain ordered sufficient ballast to allow the airship to rise slightly when it was walked to a position immediately behind the Marshall garage where technicians repaired the engine whilst Arthur carried petrol and oil to refuel it. Later airman Rhodes Moorhouse landed his machine on Midsummer Common on a number of occasions and the nine-year old lad got permission to visit the old stable at Huntingdon where the aircraft was based. With such a background it is little wonder that Arthur himself learned to fly at an early age.

But the book is full of much more than aircraft and cars. Having left school Arthur Marshall attended university - Jesus college - in between the garage and the family home in Newmarket Road, effectively bridging the gap between Town and Gown. The story of Harold Abrahams and his triumphs at the Olympic Games in Paris has been recounted in "Chariots of Fire", Arthur Marshall was part of the British team and provides his own insights into the events. He was also involved in a railway accident when during the General Strike of 1926 he worked as a stoker to ensure the trains continued running. Steaming rapidly at 45 mph from Cambridge to Bishop Stortford they ran into the back of a passenger train which had left Cambridge three quarters of an hour before them, Testimony perhaps to the energy of the man and the remarkable nature of the tales he has recorded in this most interesting book

‘The Marshall story ...’ Patrick Stephens £19.99

B.Jes.J94 35646, Q.C.K12 1085a, Q.C.K38 33162

Reflections 1994 10 05

This has been a week when local historians have received their annual free gifts - except that they are of course not free but just part of the facilities they enjoy for their subscriptions to the Cambridge Antiquarian or Local History Societies. However with the modest fees already paid the arrival of the various journals are a distinct bonus,

The more senior is the Cambridge Antiquarian Society whose 1993 Proceedings - always somewhat behind the calendar - contain a variety of papers on pre-historic enclosures at Sawston, cropmarks at Harston and wapentake meeting-places around Cambridge for those fascinated by early forms of local government. The early development of Whaddon, Kanpwell and Wilburton comes under scrutiny in Sue Qosthuizen's study of Saxon commons in which she concludes that the initial settlement at Wilburton was in the area around the Burystead and that cottages grew up to the west of this with the church coming comparatively lately into the settlement, being constructed on less valuable and productive land. The development of Croxton is studied in some detail with a detailed plan of the settlement and

garden remains and an analysis of the evidence concerning the establishment of a separate area called Westbury where the bulk of the old village properties were constructed and which spread north towards the main Cambridge to St Neots Road after the foundation of the latter as a new town between 1113 and 1122.

New large constructions needed bricks and Robin Lucas has investigated the foundation of an important brick and roof-tile manufacturing industry at Ely which flourished from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries with bricks being sent along the fenland rivers to Kings Lynn and even Hunstanton. This obviously important industry has been little recorded previously and shows just what unexpected information might be located in local sources.

Meanwhile the Cambridgeshire Local History Society's "Review" includes a study of another local industry, the Cement works at Shepreth and in particular the strike which took place there between March 1925 and March 1926 during which a certain Col Tebbutt told his men that "starvation is what you need - starvation is a great incentive to work", only to be told that the time was soon coming when the workers would rule and that he should look to his own position, Co-incidentally another article concentrates on the development of almshouses for the poor and a third studies the effects of the Land Settlement Association on Fen Drayton between 1935 and 1988

An indication of the wide range of topics being researched and lectured upon is contained in the Autumn 1934 issue of "The Conduit", distributed (free) to members of both Societies and sold to others for £1.00 - the history of magic, early monastic libraries or evacuation to Warboys amongst them, along with the odd presentation on "Images of Cambridge" in connection with a book I will not mention further - except to say that the Library Shop has now received its consignment of - absolutely free - copies - which we will hopefully be able to sell and use the income to improve the facilities offered to our readers in the Cambridgeshire Collection,

An unexpected free perk for students of a Cambridge fee-paying school is revealed in their Prospectus, recently added to stock. The section on school meals explains that there are no facilities for providing a hot lunch for children but 'Most children in the infant or junior departments enjoy 1/3 pint of milk at break time'

Reflections 1994 10 12

An apparently unexciting source sometimes proves to have a particular interest.

One such is an article appearing in the journal "Medieval studies" as far back as 1971 which we have only recently tracked down. In it M.M. Sheehan examines dusty church registers which date back to the 1300s and from then unearths a mass of detail about the institution of marriage in those days. The process was established that the local priest would make a public announcement of a proposed marriage sufficiently in advance that anybody who saw reason to object could do so. Thus on three Sundays or major feasts the banns were read allowing friends or neighbours to report any impediments and also ensuring that there could be no claim of a clandestine marriage. Should no objections be raised then the couple solemnized their marriage by an exchange of consent at the church door, the giving of a ring, and then a nuptial mass in church,

However it was not always so straightforward. Betrothal which was followed by intercourse constituted a marriage even before the official service - which gave rise to many a claim and counter-claim as when William de Potton tried to avoid his responsibilities to Agnes Knotte by entering a monastery, only to have his sudden conversion to the faith rendered invalid by the court. John Draper of Cambridge found himself in difficulties in 1375 when both Agnes

Durant and Alice Cakebred claimed him as her husband, both asserting that intercourse had taken place. John denied Agnes' claims but agreed to those of Alice and they went off to London where they were married without mentioning the spurned Miss Durant: After a while the newly-weds returned to Cambridge living as husband and wife only to find themselves arrested. Following an examination their marriage was annulled and five days later the court brought in a verdict in favour of the marriage of John to Agnes. One wonders what became of that union!

Bigamy was a significant problem, William Chitterne and Amicia Nene were married before the church and had lived together for two years when William seems to have got fed up. He worked out a tale with Joan Squire and then they went to court claiming they had been married previously and had children. The court believed the story and annulled the marriage to Amicia, declaring William and Joan to be husband and wife. It was not to have a happy ending for Joan soon went off and married another man leading the court to reopen the case and reinstate Amicia.

Zealous Bishops did all they could to see their flock married properly and investigate any claims of impropriety whether they came from gossiping neighbours or from one of the parties. If wrongdoing was revealed the couple could either choose to be legally married in church or accept a ruling that any further sexual union would ipso facto constitute marriage. One such case involved Thomas Barbo and Joan Seustere who had been his long-time mistress. Joan claimed they had been married at Stourbridge Fair and asked the court to declare Thomas her husband. Thomas however claimed he had not actually promised to marry her but merely intended to continue their earlier relationship. So the court ruled that one more act of intercourse would constitute formal marriage and twenty-five months later Joan was able to finally get her man,

‘The formation and stability of marriage in fourteenth-century England: evidence of an Ely register’ by Michael M. Sheehan. From: ‘Medieval Studies’ vol.33, 1971

V.H.J32 4314 V.R.J9 36692

Reflections 1994 10 19

Two of the most recent publications from Cambridge University Press might seem destined never to become popular best sellers, but are in fact very entertaining.

One is principally devoted to fifty speeches in Latin, proclaiming the qualities of various distinguished people on the occasion of their receiving Honorary Degrees. I gave up Latin as far as I recollect in class 2S at Soham Grammar School and would have profound difficulty in understanding "uel nutum, cum quassaueris, pultis coagulatae" especially when applied to the work of a distinguished mathematician - about which subject I know even less.

Fortunately however there is a translation which shows it to refer to Sir Michael Atiyah's achievements in propounding a new theory which would allow him to map "the mesmerizing wobble of a jelly undulating". All this is contained in "Cambridge Orations 1982-1993" which includes an introduction sketching the development of the important post of University Orator, first established about 1521 to ensure that there was somebody properly able to beg, beseech or implore the Monarch or other important people to bestow or confirm University privileges.

The position was not always one to be coveted even though it granted the holder various perks and a small salary, but on other occasions the election was fully contested with hundreds of Members of the Senate journeying to Cambridge especially to register their vote

for either their own or their college's preferred candidate. However in 1673 one election returned 121 votes for one candidate against 98 for his opponent who was, nonetheless, declared elected.

Similar vagaries of University politics are explored in the second book which explains the background and significance of another work whose relevance had long eluded me, In 1908 Francis Cornford had published "Microcosmographia Academica", supposedly the most amusing piece of Cambridge satire published that decade. However to appreciate the satire one must understand something of the thing being mocked and this present book examines the issues confronting the University establishment at the turn of the century.

In those days all candidates seeking to take a degree needed a proficiency in three core subjects, mathematics, Latin and Greek, They also needed to satisfy a tutor of their good moral character and had a parent or guardian who was able to afford the payment of the college accounts. An undergraduate would need in 1902 anything between £40 and £75 to cover settling-in costs and then an income of between £107 and £225 to meet recurrent annual expenditure - something around £7,850 at today's prices - and this at a time when a good professional salary was around £500 a year with many families earning less than a tenth of that.

However as the century wore on and fewer schools actually taught Greek to their pupils it reduced the numbers who could meet basic entrance requirements. Thus the University debated whether to abandon this condition of entry, especially as it developed its own science-based studies. Would this not make the University a "glorified technical college" and would the Corporation of Cambridge give them funding to establish courses in brewing and metallurgy as other benefactors had done for provincial Universities,

The debate was long and hard and is chronicled in "University politics" along with other contentious subjects including the admission of women and the role of the established church, to provide an entertaining account of something which might otherwise be all Greek to majority of us,

"Cambridge orations 1982-1933" by James Diggle & "University politics" by Gordon Jackson both published by CUP

S1897 29036, V.W.K0 13112, V.W.J87 1909

Reflections 1994 10 26

The project was well structured and the questions clear; it would be undertaken by dozens of students. The only problem was how to provide the necessary material to enable it to be answered.

First one has to choose a site - our enquirer had elected to study the area of Lion Yard.

Question one ; look at all the changes which have taken place to the site over the years - new buildings, demolition, growth of an area, changes to use or redevelopment ... use photos, maps etc to emphasise or show what you mean.

Maps present few problems - the area has been surveyed quite well in 1574, 1688, 1798, 1886, 1901, 1926, 1952, 1967 and by the Goad shopping survey in 1993. Together they present a picture of the development and decline over the centuries. However if lots of students are likely to choose the same site then it would be quicker for them and us if we

photocopy the relevant sections of the maps so that they do not have to be got out and put away dozens of times.

Pictures however are more of a problem for one would need to check not only for views of Petty Cury but also of Alexandra Street, Falcon Yard, St Tibbs Row and anything else which had stood there, Fortunately by scanning the pages of "Cambridge in pictures 1888-1988" and the newly-published "Images of Cambridge" we can find enough to cover the last century or so - and again it will save everybody's time if we photocopy them and put them in a folder.

Question two; what has caused the changes to happen - there are usually reasons behind any change, they may be economic social or political or a combination of them; whatever the reason you will need to explain it

So why did the open spaces of 1574 become the slum areas of 1850 - and where can one find proof that they were indeed slums. The latter is easy for the Cambridge Chronicle reported in 1850 just how bad the Falcon Yard area was - its just a case of finding the article - more photocopying will save extensive use of newspapers or microfilm. Then the Victorians rebuilt it creating new shopping and office areas, their buildings became old and following the failure of the German airforce to devastate central Cambridge in 1940s the planners had their turn a decade or two later - it was after all planned to be the biggest redevelopment in England if one omitted the blitzed cities. Tracking all this down however means lots of plodding through lots of planning reports - the least we can do is to suggest a reading list.

So far so good, thinking it through with the student who obviously knew what he was supposed to do only took an hour or so, but the production of the guides and the photocopying took about two days. All this for one question that might contribute up to 15 marks for one student in one GCSE project in one class of one school.

The project had been well thought through by the person planning it – but why had it not been talked through with the people who have to try and assist those who are answering it. At least we have the material but colleagues throughout the country are being inundated by this type of project for which there are no published sources. It adds up to frustration for librarian and student alike, but at least one lad has the chance of getting his marks

B.Pet.K70 47429, B.Ale.K69 3719, B.Pet.K0 30901

Reflections 1994 11 02

The latest addition to the run of "Chronicles" - transcripts of stories from the Cambridge paper of that name between 1770 and 1899 - covers the village of Hinxton. It contains the usual mixture of sales, news, court, cases and fascinating facts and is made even more interesting by the addition of other information culled from a variety of other sources and documents by its compiler, Mary Symonds,

So often when researching local history every story recorded prompts a dozen other questions and they are several here, involving riots, highway robbery and burglary - why was Richard Poulter acquitted when he was placed at the scene of the crime and the stolen items found in his chicken shed, especially when he had been heard confessing to his father?

There is one case in particular where Miss Symonds has turned Miss Marples in order to seek out the background of a question of child neglect. It involves three principal characters - a mother, a nurse and her sister, On 18th June 1876 spinster Annie Maria Redding of Church Street Chesterton was delivered of a son. Soon after it was born it was taken by the nurse, Esther Larkins, to be reared by her sister Mrs Sarah Tabor of Hinxton in return for payment of

£1 a week. But when Annie saw her child in October it looked very ill and died on 17th November. Esther was charged with manslaughter. At the court case evidence was given that the baby had not been healthy, had a bad cough and used to throw up its food. Sarah had fed it with milk and water, baked flour and boiled bread, a diet agreed by the doctor she called in when the baby showed signs of weakness. However the surgeon who had delivered the child claimed it had been healthy at birth and in his opinion had died through lack of food. At death it had weighed less than six pounds, about a third of what should have been expected, its body was emaciated and the skin just hung in folds, The jury's verdict was not guilty and Esther was discharged,

Miss Symonds turned to church registers, census returns and directories to piece together other facts. She found that the mother Annie had previously had another illegitimate child - and that this child had died of atrophy -defined as a wasting disease (or starvation). Its death had been witnessed by the same Esther Larkins into whose care the new baby had been entrusted. Why then had the mother used the same nurse again. Annie was a music teacher and would have had little income, could Annie not keep up the necessary payments or was there perhaps an understanding between mother and nurse that she should do the right thing at the right time?

Esther Larkins had lost her mother when 12, & had to wash, cook and clean for her widowed father and sisters. In 1853 she had married a widower with two children but had none of her own, Perhaps, Miss Symonds speculates, Esther lacked maternal feelings which would have accounted for the ignorance and indifference with which she had mishandled Annie Redding's infants. Her sister Sarah also married - a widower old enough to be her father - but still able to produce three children, two of whom seem to have died in infancy.

So what of the mother? Just a few months after all the gossip and speculation attending the trial she married a bootmaker at Hills Road Wesleyan Chapel and they had a daughter. By 1891 Annie was on her own but then disappears from local records – perhaps the husband had moved away to find work and they'd started a new life of happiness in a place where her misfortune would be unknown – perhaps there is another mystery to be unravelled.

Hinxton Chronicle by Mary Symonds. £10

PC.Was.K0 42995, B.Chu.K2 24338, B.Hil.K2 33421, Y.Hun.K1 19931

Reflections 1994 11 09

In a week or so we will be invaded; the village college minibus will deposit students in central Cambridge and 40 of them will ascend to the Cambridgeshire Collection. Fortunately they will be in parties of ten and their teachers will have assisted us to be ready for them. Laid out in our Teaching Area will be items selected by their staff which summarise some of the issues on which they have to base their assessment of an topic of some concern to minibus drivers and others - the traffic situation in Cambridge.

This year as well as the newspaper cuttings and the planning reports there will be additional items for the teachers to consider. One is the new book "Images of Cambridge" which includes details of the development of the northern and western bypasses, the dualling of East Road, pedestrianisation and park'n'ride and the other - more planning reports.

Recently three more have been received in the Cambridgeshire Collection, one from the Guildhall, one from the Shire Hall and the other from the Oxfam shop.

From the city council has come the latest stage in the formulation of the Cambridge local plan, nearly 200 pages on the environment, housing, employment, shopping and traffic management stating council objectives & the way it will try to achieve them. Thus they seek to make greater use of existing railway lines, introduce bus lanes, investigate road pricing, traffic calming and the encouragement of cycle lanes and park and ride. This latter is the subject of the latest County reports which examine in great detail a proposal for a new park and ride site at Madingley road, in accordance with the County structure plan policies and including details of the environment impact as well as the amount of traffic currently using that road.

The Oxfam shop report however takes the traffic problem backwards, not forwards, to September 1954 when the Minister of Housing and Local Government had just decided his policy on the 1947 County Development Plan. One of the most important issues was a "spine relief road" which would be built from Histon Road into the town centre, crossing Midsummer Common, Jesus Lane and Christ's Pieces. This had been proposed by the County as a way of relieving the congestion of local traffic. It had been opposed by the University, some colleges and by the City council who preferred to widen existing central streets. The Minister noted that the City was planning to build a multi-storey garage in the proposed Guildhall street area and hoped that this proceed as speedily as possible (in fact Lion Yard car park did not open till the 1970s). He also considered that traffic was likely to increase and a new road would be an unavoidable necessity.

However the politician recognised that the scheme was controversial and that there was no prospect of it being built in the foreseeable future - indeed it would need Government approval which was unlikely to be granted! Perhaps the student traffic studiers can understand the thinking behind the decision and the reaction it caused.

With the report are a few typewritten notes outlining somebody's ideas - ring roads, a new bridge (Elizabeth Way opened 1971) and a final thought which reads 'Helicopter Station: a portion of Midsummer Common might be scheduled for use. Some provision will be necessary' - something both city and county planners seem to have overlooked since 1954!

Q.A1.K5 19334, Q.Af.K07 4932a. B.Pet.K50 19392, B.Pet.K20 837

Reflections 1994 11 16

In June 1932 a small band of academics gathered in the Upper Parlour of Peterhouse and, like all good university scholars, formed themselves in to a committee. Unlike many committees however they actually did things and for eight years were active in Researching the fenland investigating early life in such an inhospitable landscape, the extinct forests which had one covered large tracts of the area or the history of the formation of the North Sea.

Amongst its members were people destined to become Professors of Archaeology and Botany and the water transport manager of the Ely sugar beet factory, Major Gordon Fowler. Once a site had been located members of the committee would be informed by telephone and next day with gum-boots, spades and peat-indifferent clothing a small party would rendezvous at some agreed point before venturing out to investigate, measure and photograph. It was an exciting period and many important discoveries were made but then came the Second World War and the group never reformed.

In 1976 a Fenland Field Officer was appointed to undertake a preliminary archaeological survey of the Cambridgeshire fenland. By now much of the peat soil which had formerly covered the fens had eroded or been ploughed away and so there was a possibility that something of the earliest settlements might be revealed. The results however surpassed their

wildest expectations, It lead to a comprehensive programme of fieldwalking -ideally on overcast but bright days when the ground was unfrozen but ploughed and weathered and without crops, Up and down field after field they walked noticing pottery from Roman, Bronze Age or Neolithic periods, flints, arrowheads, axes, plotting them on maps as they walked and then at the end of every day writing it all up. For seven years they walked and searched, few other areas have been so extensively surveyed, and none so large, The record will survive as the physical remains of the fenland perish year by year.

Now some results and interpretation of the finds has been published by English Heritage. Flint axes from Fordham, pottery from Isleham, burial mounds from Haddenham or earthworks from Wardy Hill all contribute their paragraph to a comprehensive survey of Fenland in the centuries before the drainage of the seventeenth centuries.

The banks of the Fenland rivers and drains which had to be raised up as the adjacent fen land shrank provided important roadways more easily passable than the muddy droves whilst barges plied along the rivers delivered goods and crops to the area. However once the bitter weather turned water to ice and the river traffic ceased so fenmen found themselves with a new highway which would enable them to travel many miles far more easily than at other times. By strapping skates to their feet they could race railway trains and certainly beat the challenge of any foreigner who ventured into their home territory during the speed skating championships which were held on patches of ice specially frozen for the sport.

The story of the skaters of Welney area in Victorian times has now been told by Hilary Winter, a descendent of Turkey, Fish and James Smart and includes an account of a near tragedy in 1881 when a saboteur struck at the race course at Bury fen. Turkey agreed to work through the night to prepare another, all he needed was ten helpers and a barrel of beer, All night they laboured and worked up a terrible thirst, only to discover that, the beer had frozen hard in the barrel. But by cuddling the frozen barrel to their sweating bodies the beer thawed and, once flowing, was never again given the chance of freezing!

"Fenland survey ; an essay in landscape and persistence" by David Hall & John Coles, published by Fenland Heritage

"The Welney division ; a history of the Smart family, speed skating champions" by Hilary A Winter, Spindrift publishing 4.50

Reflections 1994 11 23

Recently we've been indulging in what old fen folk might call "devil-dodging" with a talk in Lt Thetford church being followed by another in Haddenham Baptist Chapel and a third in Sutton Methodists. In each case one might say it was a full house - most pews were taken and between them three congregations had benefited to the tune of something over £700. It is a particularly satisfying way of using material from the Cambridgeshire Collection for the benefit of the local community, whose members assist us to collect and preserve items on their locality,

For many people the past comes most immediately to life when they can see how it impacted on families who formerly lived and worked in their village or town. Thus the 1947 flood photographs that are most moving are those which show people returning by boat the wreckage of their homes - not that such disasters are confined to present times as a letter written in 1809 gives testimony when high water allied to a strong gale produced "a spectacle to be contriv'd but not properly described; the waters rolled over the banks in a truly terrible state and the distress of the inhabitants of the Fens was pitable to a great degree"

But life could be hard even in the best of times as is recounted by the correspondent to the "Morning Chronicle" of 1850 whose words feature in the "Webbed feet to green wellies" talk, Writing of Witchford "which in point of filth would bear comparison with the worst place in any part of the Kingdom" the writer described one of the dwellings in which six of the occupants had been struck with disease. Upstairs four beds were crammed in one room about 14 feet by 10. The sides of the room were sloping and the width of the ceiling no more than six feet. In one bed lay the father who had been confined with the fever for six weeks and in an adjoining bed lay his 12 year old daughter. The remaining beds together with the unoccupied portion of those in which the victims of the fever lay were occupied at night by the wife and the remaining five children, the eldest boy being 14 and his sister two years older.

Should such hovels remain today they will probably have been renovated and knocked together with adjacent properties to provide home for one or two people who would perhaps not care to know something of the history of their home!

Others are happy not to have the encumbrance of firm foundations and the benefits of a travelling life have been described by youngsters in "Common Ground", published by the County Team for Traveller Education. Donna describes how her family of eight live in a caravan, "There are only two beds, Mum and Dad have the bedroom, Alex and Adam have the other bed, Bridie and me have to sleep on a bunk, Joe and Sean are up in Leeds, They come down for holidays", But one of the benefits of a trailer - as expressed by Debbie is "We can travel All around the world, We're free to go places and have fun on the way", There are disadvantages however "In winter we freeze up, the door gets stuck freezing up like ice, Its scary when the wind blows, the trailer rocks backwards and forwards, the rain keeps tapping on the roof, the rain drips in", At the other extreme "When its hot, sweating, Hot as an oven, We open all the windows, Lots more showers or cold cold baths in the shed, Where it's nice and clean" – and they can up and run when the floods come!

Reflections 1994 11 30

For hundreds of years wars have been raging in Cambridge which have gone unknown by mere mortals; whilst academics disputed amongst themselves over scientific discoveries, mayors and chancellors petitioned parliaments for their respective rights and undergraduates battled townies for control of the streets much more important issues have been decided by tooth and claw.

Now for the first time the story of the most important of Cambridge institutions has been told, a story that has taken not one volume but two, each author unearthing something missed by the other and sometimes disagreeing over fundamentals - can for example the phrase "growing old gracefully" properly be applied to one with a reputation for promiscuity whose fifty offspring are scattered around the globe, who shrieks furiously as she beats the living daylights out of her neighbour and is remembered for drinking bathwater ?

But such behaviour can perhaps be appreciated when one considers the background. How would you react if your offspring was run over by a car then buried by a stranger in the mistaken belief that it was one of his own family, the error only becoming apparent after he had left for Italy.

Such are some of the traumas of being a college cat. There are of course compensations. Sprocket of Fitzwilliam has been nominated for Junior-President and has his own column in the college magazine whilst Benson of Jesus is formally acknowledged to be the official college cat and able to benefit from a feline felicity fund set up to satisfy her alimentary

requirements. Others such as Bossuet from Caius prefers stale water and bacon whilst Caiaphas of St John's has been known to consume the cold beef reserved for High Table and Sprocket of Fitzwilliam dines on pork or chicken.

But the principal impression is one of inter-college and internal college rivalry, Thus in Pembroke Thomasina, Socks and Puss maintain an uneasy relationship, perhaps united to a degree in their opposition to the college ducks whilst Caiaphas of St John's has no compunction about invading other's territory and has not only had to be retrieved from Caius, Churchill and Kings but also disrupted chapel services by running around and making the choristers giggle.

The biggest, college, Trinity, has the largest concentration of cats, Burnage, Armin and Muffet are a turbulent trio who live together in Cloister court, although not entirely amicably. Just along the court Darius and Jedburgh were found cowering in the bathtub following an attack by yet another cat, Stevenson, who had to be beaten off with a broom handle and whose owner supplied an hydraulic water pistol as a deterrent to future incidents. Jedburgh has lost her sight in an accident but can still find her way around college and is pictured by Richard Surman in "College cats of Oxford & Cambridge". But another Trinity moggy, Titan, totally eluded him. However Tony Jedrej, press photographer that he is, has included five exclusive snaps in his survey of "Cambridge cats" as well as tracking down others which find themselves omitted from "College cats". Both cost the same, both cover the same subject, both are essential additions to any cat-lovers library though the argument about which is the best picture of which puss will doubtless fuel many decades between cat-naps over Christmas

"Cambridge cats" by Tony Jedrej. Duckworth, 9.99

"College cats of Oxford & Cambridge" by Richard Surman. HarperCollins 9.99

Reflections 1994 12 07

In 1849 Edward Smith found himself obliged to make an apology to the people of Fen Ditton for some injudicious remark he had made about the young wife of the old Rector two years earlier. The aggrieved lady had taken her complaint to the Ecclesiastical Court and their judgement was that Smith should make public penance in the parish church at morning service. Never-had the church been fuller - in fact it was estimated that 3,000 thronged to witness the sight, ranging from the most respectable of the county to the lowest, scum of Barnwell. By the time it came to open the doors there was an almighty crush and every available space in the church was soon taken, people sitting on the chancel screen and standing in the pews, whilst others shinned up the outside and smashed their way in through the windows,

Any attempt to conduct a proper service was soon abandoned as the preacher found his voice drowned by cat-calls, whistles and laughter. Loud shouts announced the arrival of the penitent Smith who had to be carried to the spot where he was to deliver his apology to the Rector's wife, now terror-stricken. No sooner had he started his recantation than hassocks started to fly as thick as hail and several people seized the bell ropes causing a violent jangling which was, however, completely drowned by the din raging below. Eventually, duty done, Smith was carried from the church on men's shoulders amidst hearty cheers and paraded in triumphant procession through the village to the Plough Inn where his admirers spent the rest of the afternoon drinking and smoking whilst Smith sneaked off home. Meanwhile the Rector and his wife made their way to the Rector followed by a howling mob who stoned and smashed every window in the house.

All Smith had done was to speak some words he should not have done - what more apology should one give not to have spoken any words at all when the good people of Chesterton Local History Society had gathered expecting them? It was a foggy night, it had been a busy day, but just why the date had not found its way into my work diary is a mystery and the little black book which usually accompanies me everywhere had gone missing in July, only to reappear yesterday.

Locking up in the local gaol might seem a due penalty, but fortunately the Gaol on Castle Hill - once within Chesterton parish - has now closed, Something of its past has however been revealed in a series of tales of Cambridgeshire crimes just published. They include Thomas Weems of Godmanchester who murdered his wife and was hanged in August 1819, his body-taken down and subjected to electric shocks in the University labs in Corn Exchange Street. Nobody hanged for the murder of Policeman Richard Peak of Wicken in 1855 - but then nobody has found the body and the crime is still unsolved (I was told that police are still seeking a 200 year-old man to assist them in their enquiries) but the murderer of Emma Rolfe on Midsummer Common in 1876 confessed readily. Brought together by a former Police Inspector they make gory reading and may well make an interesting evening for Chesterton local historians.

For the moment however they can look forward to the story of Cambridge water and the Riverside Tunnel project, the exploits of a blue-badge guide and Bye-gones evening with Dan Jackson. Meetings are held at St Andrew's School, Chesterton on the third Monday of each month and everybody is welcome, a claim I will test on the 12th December when I will make my apology in person

"Cambridgeshire Crimes" by John Bell. Popular publications

J.Mid.J79 17944, B.Cas.J14 240a

Reflections 1994 12 14

A new Library exhibition featuring the combined resources of the County's Heritage officers brings together a variety of materials reflecting one common theme - Fighting over Cambridgeshire - a particularly apt topic in this period of debate over the future of Local Government, But this time the conflicts depicted are much wider with the Archaeologists concentrating on warfare between the Iron Age and late medieval period, the Archivists on the period between the Armada and the Great War, which is featured by our own displays whilst the Conservation department includes Nuclear War buildings. The Folk Museum panels concentrate on the Second World War with stories of land girls, home guard and Civil Defence.

Every war has its heroes and its villains, which is which depends on your standpoint as is reflected in three recent- books.

Michael Bentinck has no doubt in which category his father belongs, "My Dad, my Hero" tells the story of a Cambridge lad, born on St George's Day 1921 who joined the Territorials when aged 18 and soon found himself shipped out to Singapore alongside his mates in the Cambridgeshire regiment. They arrived in time for the final battle and captivity in Changi gaol. Soon like thousands of others he was sent to work on the "Death Railway" and to endure the hardships and horrors of hard labour in a harsh climate with brutal guards. Somehow he survived and returned safely home only to have to recommence the battle for survival, this time fighting not the Japanese but the tropical worms which had entered his bloodstream, He

forgave his captors and returned to the scene of his experiences before dying in 1990 - a hero indeed.

Others too travelled thousands of miles to fight. Amongst them were the young Americans of the 355th Fighter Group who arrived in the small Cambridgeshire parish of Steeple Morden in 1943 and were billeted in local homes. They found English ways strange and villagers viewed them with suspicion but soon they formed friendships and romances on the ground whilst, in the air they flew Thunderbolts and Mustangs to escort the Flying Fortress and Liberator Bombers who were carrying the war deep into Germany. Their names and their stories of that frightening time has been told in "Steeple Morden strafers" which goes beyond the fighting to paint a picture of the impact of the arrival of such a strange though friendly invasion on a small group of Cambridgeshire villages, Many of them too were heroes,

Other villages were also being disrupted by the arrival of strangers, In the Isle of Ely the evacuees scrambled from places felt to be at threat of enemy bombing were largely Jewish, in a scheme promoted by James de Rothschild, the Isle's Liberal MP. Meanwhile the MP's cousin, Victor, was playing his part in the war effort. Throughout the 1930s many had watched the rise of Fascism with distain with members of the Jewish community particularly concerned for the fate of their brethren in Germany.

To stop Hitler would need the support of the Soviet Union and Victor Rothschild, a member of the wealthy banking family, was uniquely placed to assist that cause. His arrival as an undergraduate at Trinity in 1930 brought him into contact with Anthony Blunt who introduced him to members of the Apostles club, including Guy Burgess and Kim Philby. Together they rose to senior positions in the war-time British intelligence service, able with their scientific training to understand latest developments and able also to keep their Russian allies appraised of them. Once the war ended and allies became enemies the intelligence gathering continued - or so it is claimed by Roland Perry in "The fifth man". Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher attended a memorial service for Victor Rothschild in May 1990 - but was she honouring a hero or villain?

"My dad, my hero" written and published by Michael Bentinck "Steeple Morden strafers 1943-45" by Ken Wells. Egon publishing "The fifth man" by Roland Perry, Sidgwick & Jackson

Roland Perry, The Fifth Man, Pan Books London 1994. Selections by Peter Myers, September 12, 2001; update May 4, 2006. My comments within the text are shown {thus}. This book alleges that the "Fifth Man" in the Cambridge spy-ring was Lord Victor Rothschild.

Write to me at contact.html.

You are at <http://mailstar.net/perry.html>.

{p. xi} Some of the key information. in this book came from interviewees - scientists, politicians, diplomats, businessmen and intelligence agents - who did not wish to be acknowledged, for understandable reasons. ...

I am grateful particularly to my contacts in British Intelligence ... they were responsible for leading me to a key revelation in 1978, which finally fitted the Fifth Man jigsaw in the 1990s. Thanks also to my CIA contacts ...

Acknowledgement must also go to the seven main KGB respondents ...

Documentary film-maker, Jack Grossman, who fought with both the

{p. xii} RAF in the Second World war, and the Haganah after it, was of assistance with background and Israeli Intelligence. ... Appreciation for explanations of some of the more esoteric bomb and radar technology goes to Sir Mark Oliphant ...

{p. xx} The Fifth provided Stalin almost on a daily basis with what Churchill and Roosevelt were saying about the USSR. The spy also had particular links to the US military and intelligence during and after the war.

His work and that of the others in the ring went on for longer than originally believed by investigators. They were all involved in spying for the Russians before, during and after the war. Their espionage was wide-ranging and included the 1943 Anglo-American discussions on the opening of a second front in the west; information on major war projects such as the atomic bomb and biological weapons; data on Eastern European nations in exile in London (who were anti-Stalin); background to discussions on the post-war Marshall Plan to redevelop Western Europe. Furthermore, while calling the Five a 'ring' implies they worked

{p. xxi} together, they mainly operated independently of each other. However, at times two or more would combine. Often their linking revolved around Blunt, who was the middleman most closely in contact with Soviet Controls in London from 1942 to 1963, the year Philby defected and Blunt was exposed to MI5 investigators.

Another important clue, on which those who knew the Fifth Man's identity all agreed, was that after his main spying days for the KGB finished in the UK in 1963, he went on to have a 'successful career' in both business and public life.

This again cut down the list.

Apart from fitting the many facts and dues to the Fifth Man jigsaw, intangibles such as motivation were vital. This had to go beyond the altruistic obligations of those who felt it their duty to defend Western civilization against Hitler's barbarity. The spy in question had to be inspired on a higher level than his belief, shared with the others in the Ring of Five, that Soviet Marxist ideology was superior and would eventually dominate Western capitalist democracies.

The Fifth Man's original motive was survival, for himself, family, race, and country. He was compelled to supply the Soviet Union with information that would smash Hitler, for over the duration of the war its people were prepared to sacrifice and suffer more than any other to defeat him. But after the war, the Fifth Man's ideological commitment caused him to go on spying for the KGB. In so doing, he became caught in a web of betrayal and tragedy, which lasted half a century.

The Fifth Man was Nathaniel Mayer Victor Rothschild (1910 to 1990), better known as the third Lord Rothschild. He was the British head of the famous banking dynasty, which apart from prolific achievements in art, science, wine and charity, had shaped recent history by such acts as the financing of the British army at the Battle of Waterloo and the purchasing of the Suez Canal for Great Britain and Prime Minister Disraeli.

Victor Rothschild's purpose was to go a step further and change the course of history ...

{p. xxxiv} ... Rothschild had been on the inside through the war until 1945, and since then on the outside as an intelligence man who had a unique relationship with his wartime employer. He had left them officially, yet unofficially still ran agents after the war in Israel, Iran, China and other nations from 1945 to at least 1969. He was the classic outsider-insider. His special place in the Establishment as a power-broker, with unsurpassed connections in every major institution in Britain, allowed him to bypass the usual restrictions on lesser-born citizens. He couldn't actually pull the files in M15 or M16, but he could always find someone who would do it for him, if he needed access. Rothschild was a regular visitor to British Intelligence offices. He lunched and dined constantly with its directors at his favourite pubs, Pratt's and White's, and always made it a pleasure when he picked up the tab for expense account-conscious spy chiefs.

Rothschild had been on intimate terms with most of them: Guy Liddell, Roger Hollis, Dick White, Maurice Oldfield. He became a sort of father confessor, someone who understood the machinations of intelligence and was compassionate about the chiefs' problems in defending the realm. Rothschild was always there to give sound advice, or pick up the phone to help with a contact. In dealing with directors-general, he transformed from an aloof, even sullen character to an effusively charming, extremely helpful and trusted friend. The demure, introverted lord vaporized and was replaced by the communicative fixer.

Rothschild provided relief for intelligence chiefs from the pressures of the office. He was the confidant with whom they could share the intrigues of the espionage game. In their time, every one of them in varying degrees had divulged the key intelligence secrets to him, the ones which the Russians were after.

In 1958, Rothschild's fostering of Peter Wright turned quickly to patronage on the basis that they were scientists who got on awfully well. Wright was an easy prey for the sophisticated peer. Although talented, Wright was not Oxbridge educated and therefore an outsider in a service which was run by the old-school ties. He felt snubbed by those too ignorant to comprehend his great value in the intelligence war. Wright was also ambitious, prepared to put in many hours of overtime to achieve his goals, whether it was developing a new device, or gaining an expanded budget. His

{p. xxxv} diligence and intelligence may have been unsettling to those used to the antiquated methods of defending HM, the realm and the masses.

Not so with ebullient Victor, who took him under his golden wing. For the first time in his professional life, Wright felt wanted, understood and appreciated. In this atmosphere, Wright spilled everything that was happening inside MI5. Rothschild offered help. He was in the oil group Shell, overseeing scientific development. He seconded staff to MI5. Wright told him about every piece of espionage technology under development. Rothschild offered ideas of his own and actually devised some new technology himself. He made introductions to heads of major British organizations like the AWRE (Atomic Weapons Research Establishment), which led to further expansion of MI5's R & D.

This new, powerful chum, who impressed Wright more than anyone else in his life, was in effect responsible for expanding British Intelligence budgets. This was an individual to be almost worshipped, especially in the niggardly world of Whitehall departments. It was damned hard to convince the bean-counters that Intelligence needed more funds. Why should we give you more money? the Government accountants would ask. The war is over. We're not under threat, are we?

Here was a noble obliged, apparently by his breeding, conscience and generosity, to dispense largesse and influence for the good of the services, and the nation. This way, Rothschild developed enormous goodwill within and without the services. No one was respected more, not just amongst the worker bees such as Wright and Arthur Martin, or the chiefs. Captains of industry, mandarins of Whitehall, ministers of the crown and successive prime ministers knew of his help and activity. Many wanted his services, but until 1970 - apart from the occasional Government committee - Rothschild preferred to keep the mystique of the outsider-insider and a little distance from those with whom he worked and consulted in Intelligence. His job at Shell, particularly from 1958 to 1969, allowed him all the freedom of activity and travel he desired.

It's accepted among MI5 agents that during the 1945 to 1963 period, the Russians were receiving vital information which enabled them to thwart British operations run against the Soviet Embassy and the KGB. All Russian interviewees said that the Moscow Centre received the data. Ex-KGB Colonels 'F' and 'B' and Modin admitted

{p. xxxvi} that the Fifth Man was at least prominent in gathering the data and informing the Russians about MI5 missions.

All through the post-war years to 1963, the Fifth Man was active in passing on vital information about MI5's plans and projects concerning the Russians and the KGB. Because of the failures, breakdown, conflict and fear this caused within British Intelligence everyone on the inside believed that MI5 had been penetrated by someone. The inference was always that it had to be an insider. But as this book will show it wasn't Hollis or Mitchell. Even one of the leading Russian double agents working for MI6, Oleg Gordievsky, who defected to Britain in 1985, denied that the Russians had anyone of importance on the inside of MI5 in the contentious years from 1945 to 1963.

Wright, Martin and the various committees over the decades that chased around the British Intelligence maze searching for a mole, did not consider that he or she never existed. If that was correct, and all the evidence overwhelmingly suggested it was, then there was never penetration. In that case, the Fifth Man had to be an outsider who looked in often enough and

listened with an expert technical ear hard enough to be more effective in compromising British Intelligence than any insider, including Philby, and for far longer.

Modin and ex-KGB Colonels 'F' and 'B' confirmed that the Fifth Man worked in tandem with the Fourth Man, Blunt, who after 1945 was the key middleman, the main receiver of espionage data from the Fifth Man and others to be passed on to the KGB Controls. That is why, under interrogation in 1964, Blunt made much of the definition of the word spying. No, he confessed, he had not spied for Russia, lately.

'Lately' implied after 1945. He, Burgess and Philby and several others interrogated, sang the same refrain. They had all done the right thing by the Allies, who included the Russians, in the Second World War by passing on information to the Moscow Centre in the drive to defeat Hitler. But they claimed they had not continued after 1945.

This was inaccurate. According to Modin and several other KGB agents, all of the Ring of Five went on operating after the war, in increasingly dangerous circumstances, as did many of the second-rank spies such as Cairncross (which Cairncross denies). Modin has become an unofficial spokesperson for Russian Intelligence in recent

{p. xxxvii} years. His status in KGB ranks and fame in the West is based on running the Ring of Five after 1945. He did not take up residence in Britain until 1947.

THE FUELS OF WAR

In the late 1950s, the Cold War was in deep freeze as the clandestine techno-battle expanded between the USSR and the West. The US was using Britain as a floating aircraft carrier in its preparation for an expected conflict with the Communists, which the Americans wished to confine, if that were possible, to Europe. US bomb, defence, military and communications bases linked with British bases and formed a mosaic across the length and breadth of the country.

The Moscow Centre knew about every extension to the Anglo-American network, and planned to counter it. At first it didn't know how this could be done without detection. Many Anglo-American military installations were placed in obscure locations in the country.

An ingenious suggestion to the KGB Controls from one of their British agents was that a petrol retail outlet chain should be set up. Pump stations could be built on back roads near the installations and could be used to spy on the network by, for instance, intercepting the microwave communications between bases. In preparation for war, the pump outlets could be taken over by special Soviet military forces in order to destroy the bases.

The idea seemed outstanding in principle, but any Russian-controlled company selling petrol would have to appear legitimate to fool the CIA and British Intelligence. The Russians had never set up such a capitalist enterprise before. It would have to compete with major Western retail corporations in Britain. Specialist products would have to be developed by scientists. Marketing and distribution know-how would be needed.

By coincidence or otherwise, Rothschild joined Shell in 1958 in a relatively lowly job as a part-time adviser to its research section. He immediately made his presence felt and his role was quickly expanded.

A year later, Nafta Great Britain, a Soviet retail outlet chain began operations in the UK. By the early 1960s, it was competing

{p. xxxviii} with the bigger Western companies. Its marketing strategy was unique in the business. Nafta set up pump stations on out-of-the-way B roads, far from the population centres and competitive outfits such as Shell and Mobil. The Russian company's managers claimed that it would compete where the big boys would not bother to go. Scores of these Nafta stations never made money in the thirty years they were open for business. They were suspiciously close to the most important defence installations in Britain.

Was Rothschild the mastermind behind Nafta? The timing for his move to Shell and the creation of the Russian company would suggest he was a prime suspect. So would his background. He had investigated commercial espionage early in his career at MI5. As its security officer during the war, he learned all there was to know about how to steal equipment and documents. Rothschild's scientific expertise also made him a candidate as Nafta's founder. His early work at Shell covered research into gas, oil, petroleum, diesel engine fuel oil and several other products, all of which were found among Nafta's offerings to

the British market. But he didn't restrict his interest to science and research. Fellow executives at Shell were stunned by his inquisitiveness in all fields from production to packaging, distribution, marketing and advertising.

His great hunger for knowledge allowed him to absorb it all, and his skills did not go unnoticed at Shell. He gained quick promotion. By 1963, he was Shell's scientific research and development supremo worldwide, even though the company never quite sorted out whether their distinguished lord was a full-time employee or not. His power and position allowed him to be around when he liked, which gave him the chance to carry on his clandestine activities, such as running agents for Dick White in Israel, Iran and China. The Shell position was just right as a cover for his frequent travels to the Middle East, where the company produced its raw petroleum.

THE FOUR-DECADE SMOKE SCREEN

After Burgess and Maclean defected to Russia in 1951, Rothschild spent the next four decades - the rest of his life - covering trails which linked him to them as the Fifth Man.

Internal British

{p. xxxix} Intelligence investigations began in late 1951, and like every other person connected to the defectors, he was questioned. It was mild then, but when Philby defected in 1963, and Blunt 'confessed' in exchange for immunity from prosecution in 1964, the interrogations increased.

Many, including Rothschild, took Blunt's lead and opted for the immunity card. Some made the deal which prevented prosecution then made certain admissions, such as 'yes, I passed on data to people like Blunt during the war, but never to the Russians directly.' Others said 'thanks for the immunity' to avoid first, being falsely accused, and second, guilt by association. They then proceeded to give away precisely nothing. Rothschild was in the latter category. Yet no matter what he did after that, the issue dogged him. He protected himself legally against defamation by threatening to sue anyone who accused him of being the fifth Man. But Rothschild never sued an accuser. Nor did he ever act like an innocent person. Someone with his clout, who was innocent, could have calmly waited for an accusation or innuendo, then pounced. No one, unless it was an intelligence insider with specialist knowledge, could have presented evidence which would have indicted Rothschild. Only a confession was strong enough evidence to convict major spies. The trouble with a court action would be the skeletons it would reveal which would have increased the suspicion that the accused was in fact a Soviet agent. This was the danger that forced him to keep up his legal threats and bluff, but to avoid the courts.

In defending himself, Rothschild instead chose the indirect but effective media route to keep the lid on accusations and deflect them from him. He wrote books and articles, and made highly publicized speeches. These improved his image away from the secret world which preoccupied him for fifty years of his life. He spoke and wrote only rarely and evasively about his links to those in the ring of five. He could hardly dismiss his close friendships with Blunt and Burgess, but he tried to distance himself from them.

He used intelligence, press and publishing contacts to create books which deflected suspicion away from him and on to others, such as the long-suffering ghost of Roger Hollis.

{p. xl} The Third Lord Rothschild was camouflaged as the Fifth Man by virtue of his powerful position in the Establishment. The vast wealth of his banking dynasty embedded him in the power elite more than the other members of the Ring of Five. It was a perfect cover and served to shield him. He seemed the epitome of the ruling class of twentieth-century Britain, and therefore the least likely to be a traitor. Yet a closer scrutiny showed that he had other allegiances, which over time and on specific occasions ran contrary to British interests. Rothschild was more loyal to his Jewish heritage than anything English. He showed this in his long commitment to his race's problems. After his political awakening at Cambridge in 1930 he supported refugees from Soviet and German pogroms. In the war, he feverishly fought the Nazis. Once Hitler was defeated, Rothschild assisted in the creation of a homeland for the Jews who had been dispossessed. When the new nation was established he again helped in guiding Israeli leaders to the people, technology and weaponry which would defend it.

He was never so committed to his country of birth and its established order. In fact, more than once when confronted with a conflict between race and country, he chose race. For instance, when the British tried to thwart the birth of Israel, which would have upset its power base in the Middle East, Rothschild intrigued against British interests. It would not have been difficult for him to make another commitment, this time to another power - the Soviet Union - and what for decades he considered was a superior cause.

As a secret communist and professed socialist he would like to have seen the collapse of the old Establishment order in Britain. There was some irony in Rothschild's secret desire to destroy the House of Lords and capitalism. These sources of power developed his own privilege and prestige, which in turn allowed him to contemplate being in the vanguard of change.

His background again gave him an international view of the world, which paralleled the aspirations of the communist movement. Its emphasis between the wars on science as the vehicle for brave, new Marxist societies appealed to him and many of his colleagues at Cambridge. It was put to him as an experimental phase in the build {p. xli} towards a grand, classless society. Like all experiments there would be failures, but in the end the logic of it would lead to success.

Rothschild's deep involvement in Britain's power structure protected him and may partly explain why he lived longer than anyone else in the Ring of Five. All were under enormous strain while involved in espionage. Burgess, Maclean and Philby were from the upper class but none had the wealth, privilege and prestige of the lord who bestrode politics, business, science and society. Only Blunt, as the monarch's art curator, was guarded in a similar way. But he didn't have the money to buy further protection if required.

This extra protection provided security of mind and it's not surprising that the other four were afflicted by alcoholism in varying degrees. Burgess and Maclean were killed by it. Philby nearly was too, whereas Blunt could not stand pressure without being anaesthetized by gin or Scotch. Rothschild liked his wines and spirits but remained in control.

Another factor not to be ignored in Rothschild's survival was a successful second marriage to his understanding wife, Tess. She admitted in an interview with me that her husband carried too many secrets, and that she was not privy to all of them. (Tess was Rothschild's assistant at MI5 for five years and would have known some secrets within British Intelligence.) While she would not have been aware of his activity involving the KGB, Tess held similar political views to Rothschild and thus provided stability, comfort and communication over issues about which he was passionate. Rothschild was only troubled in his final years, when the pressures brought on by his decades of covering up the past caught up with him and depressed him.

By comparison, Burgess and Blunt were homosexuals in an era when it was illegal, which brought its own pressures. Both philandered most of their lives and had many relationships. Burgess's affairs were unstable and transitory, and it is unlikely that either man could have confided anything of their KGB activity with any partner. Instead, they were forced to bottle up tensions.

According to Modin, Maclean's wife Melinda knew he was a KGB agent (something she has denied), but their marriage was unstable and Maclean was tormented by his bisexuality, especially during times of strain in his double life. Philby only found fulfilment in his fourth marriage to a Russian in Moscow late in life. His brief first

{p. xlii} marriage of convenience was to a communist agent in the 1930s, but for the greater proportion of his spying days in the West it is unlikely that his female partners knew of his true masters.

Postscript: Modin published a book of his own on the Cambridge spies in 1994, first in French, *Mes Camarades de Cambridge*, and then in English, when its title changed to *My Five Cambridge Friends*. The French edition had Modin playing his game of not divulging the name of The Fifth. But the English edition included some subtle changes which implied Cairncross was number Five. Confused by this, Richard Norton-Taylor of the *Guardian* newspaper rang Modin in Moscow early in November 1994. He found the Russian angry that the English edition now seemed to be saying Cairncross was the Fifth Man. He categorically

stated that he had never said or written this. Daniel Korn, a researcher for the British documentary film company Touch Productions, investigated this contradiction and verified Norton-Taylor's findings. At least Molin remained consistent in his deception about number Five.

Reflections 1994 12 28

On 12th February 1696 William Coe stayed up till past midnight talking of idle and worldly business and moaning about Isaac Archer. Isaac was the 55 year-old minister at Mildenhall who stammered so badly that he had to have somebody to read the lesson for him and whose services usually send William to sleep, though he constantly promised to reform and be more attentive as befitted his position as a leading member of the community. His diary is interspersed with such resolutions as in October 1708 when after he had visited the Cock Inn with Sir Thomas Hanmer, speaker of the House of Commons, and Sir Henry Bunbury where he drank sever-all full glasses of ale and one glass of punch which made him ill and "almost fuddled, worse than I had been for many yeares before. But I repent, oh my God, I repent, I accurse and judge and condemn my self for it"

William's diary contains his religious thoughts on one page and his recognition of "Mercye's recived" on the other. These reveal dramatically the problems associated with travel in the days before the horseless carriage. Entry after entry records accidents as in 1635 ; "My grey horse fell downe with me coming from Royston, and I gott no hurt" (12th June), "He fell downe againe with me and did fling me over his head, and I gott no hurt" (July 2nd), "He fell downe againe with me and I escaped any hurt, I thank God" (July 3rd). Other members of the family also experienced problems with animals - in April 1705 "My great bitch Surly flew upon my daughter Sarah and bitt a hole under her right eye, but I thank God she had no further mischief" and in October 1706 "My wife went to Milden in the coach and as she came home the horses were frighted att a flock of sheep that came running by them, that they began to run away, and my wife jumpt out of the coach ... got a fall and hurt her breast, and gott a great cold with comeing home on foot in the evening and was very much out of order for 3 or 4 days , , ,"

Parson Isaac Archer also experienced the pairs of seeing his children suffer - of the nine that were born between 1670 and 1682 eight died including William (aged 3), Isaac (1), Frances (4 months), Anonymus "borne August 7th 675. died August 25 1675" and Anonyma "borne August 21 1681, Buried same day, Sunday", His diary records the graphic details "My wife was ill, and we thought she would have miscarried, but did not ... next morning about 4 of clock was delivered of a girle; after 3 houres sharpe paines, she came wrong, and was wasted; it lived halfe an hours and died, I buried it at Frecknam by Isaac, in hopes of resurrection!"

Isaac had attended Trinity college, survived an attack of smallpox in December 1657 which he had caught "from a girle who had newly had them" in Petty Cury and became a Minister of the Established Church, although his family were nonconformists and his father strongly opposed to his actions. Ha was appointed to Arrington - "good but ignorant people" but stayed only a short time before transferring to Chippenham in 1662 where he began an long and often troubled relationship with the parish and its manorial lords which lasted for over 25 years, but with a period at wickers based at Spinney Abbey where he caused local gossip over his friendship with a handsome widow. In 1667 he moved to Barton Mills where he married the daughter of the minister of Isleham church and finally to Mildenhall where, as William Coe notes "Mr Archer dyed April 24, 1700"

"Two East Anglia Diaries 1641-1728" have been edited by Matthew Storey and published by Suffolk Records Society at `9.50.

Reflections 1995 01 04

THE WILBRAHAMS have just produced a little booklet which, by using old and new photographs, brings the past into the present.

There are the cosy cottages with their attractive gardens, often seeming much as they stand today. Only a few decades ago they were as cosy as in these days of central heating, because of the number of bodies crammed into the dwellings which provided large families with a roof over their heads — cottages which now seem scarcely big enough, even when knocked together, for all the paraphernalia of modern life for two or three people.

If they lacked modern amenities such as toilets (mains sewerage did not come till 1973) or piped water (1939 in Little Wilbraham), many had their own source of drinking water in a soft-water butt by the back door which collected rain and numerous wriggling bugs, the bigger of which could be fished out before drinking.

In many cases, however, the rain which fell on the thatch went through it and into the rooms beneath, adding to the misery of those living there. A well in the garden would have saved the trek to the village's public pump, with all the hard work that filling a bucket demanded — it would not be quite so bad if the pump did not go stiff and need every ounce of effort to obtain the important last drop.

Being public, there would be less likelihood of contamination from domestic privy or outpourings from the pigsty, which often overflowed into the hole in the ground which passed for a well in some places. And it would be the parish council's problem when the well went dry — just one of the changing responsibilities that are charted in Desmond Hawkins's introduction.

Fetching water involved work and wait, but would be enlivened by the gossip and latest news exchanged - stories that might not find their way into the newspapers.

Yet a surprising amount of information did find its way on to their pages, as Linton Historical Society has just shown with the publication of extracts from the Cambridge Chronicle between 1775 and 1858, transcribed from the indexes in the Cambridgeshire Collection by Ruth Newbery.

Illness was something to be dreaded, and when in November 1845 a passing tramp brought smallpox into Linton people were urged to stay away from any sufferer — "it might appear cruel, but when the health and lives of the community are thereby endangered, the feelings of a few individuals ought not to be so minutely considered".

A few years earlier an old lady had endowed a "Post House" which was intended as a hospital for infectious patients but now this was being rented out to provide homes for a number of village poor women. They ought to be turned out and the building used for its original purpose, the reporter opined.

Fortunately, within a month the disease began to subside and there were no fatalities, though neighbouring villages had been less fortunate.

The book records a wealth of social history, including riots and fire, omnibus accidents and gossip in 1845 of the impending arrival of the railway, though it was to be 20 more years before it came to pass — a story that will hopefully be carried in a second volume.

The Wilbrahams 1894-1994, published by Dr T D Hawkins, Greyfriars, Little Wilbraham, £4.50. Linton as described in newspaper extracts, by Ruth Newbery, published by Linton and District Historical Society.

Reflections 1995 01 11

Francis Frith was born of a Quaker family in Chesterfield in 1822 and established a wholesale grocery business in Liverpool. By the time he was 34 he had sold it for a considerable fortune and was able to indulge his early passion for exploration and the new art of photography. In 1860 Francis married Mary Ann Rosling whose brother was a talented amateur photographer and established a photographic company in Reigate, Surrey. He then set himself the daunting task of photographing every city, town and village in the British Isles, He took with him his wife, two servants, four photographic assistants and a growing number of children - six of them eventually

The task was not one to be rushed for Frith saw himself as a chronicler of his time, an artist using the new medium of photography in the same way that other artists had used brushes and canvas. For the first few years he took all the pictures himself but later recruited a select group of artist-photographers to assist him, By the time of his death in 1898 some 40,000 views had been taken including a series of Cambridge college scenes dated 1890., with views of Ely 1891, St Neots 1897 & Huntingdon 1898.

His earliest, connection with Cambridge seems to be photographs, "printed by F, Frith" which are included in C,H, Cooper's "Memorials of Cambridge", first issued in 1858.

Francis Frith's business was continued by his sons after his death in 1898 and soon the company had become the biggest of its kind in the world with photographs purchased as souvenirs by visitors. When in 1900 the Post Office allowed postcards to be sent through the Royal Mail the increase was dramatic, A network of photographers were recruited and briefed on the Company's requirements for scenic views, street scenes and architectural subjects. By 1914 there were 52,000 pictures in the company's files, 20,000 more had been acquired by 1939 with another 200,000 during the 1940s, 50s & 60s.

Cambridge itself had been visited nine times by 1933 but sadly the majority of the cards published were college scenes lacking the detail of contemporary life that Francis himself sought to capture. When the company closed in 1970 the library of old prints and negatives were sold and the Cambridgeshire County Record Office took the opportunity of buying the earlier views of Cambridge and its county. Others remained with Frith and various initiatives have over the last 20 years been introduced in order to make them available to researchers, Now the remainder of the county collection (except for those college views) have been purchased by Cambridgeshire Libraries and Heritage Service and over 2,500 pictures will shortly be deposited in Huntingdon Record Office, Peterborough and Wisbech Libraries and the Cambridgeshire Collection.

The majority were taken in the 1950s and 1960s but many never issued as postcards, They show villages from Abbots Ripton to Wisbech St Mary including old thatched cottages and new housing estates such as Hales Close in Melbourn (why on earth should anybody produce a postcard of a housing estate!) - and yet how different to see the streets unlined by parked cars, Other topics include the Airmen's married quarters at Waterbeach, Willingham and the two Swaffham Prior windmills, the Bell Inn Bottisham and the Post Office at Fulbourn. More striking images include Grantchester with horses being led through the village in 1929 and the Green Man with a natty sports car parked neatly on the green in front, whilst on the Green at Histon a venerable old tree appears about to topple in to the water.

All in all it represents a considerable addition to the Collection's more recent photographs and will keep us busy cataloguing for some time

Reflections 1995 01 18

ALTHOUGH most readers visiting the Cambridgeshire Collection still consult the traditional material — books, newspapers, cuttings, maps or pictures — there is a small but increasing trend to other sources, such as tapes.

These include original recordings of people talking about their life and times — or in the case of the late Percy North recalling the street cries that used to echo through the area of Newmarket Road, Cambridge as watercress, rag-and-bone or fishmen advertised their wares. Then there are recordings of local musicians, such as the just-released sounds of some nine Cambridge church and chapel organs, which will be filed alongside renditions by the Toby Jug and Washboard Band from some years ago and the "Ways to Move" compilation of music by local groups.

The Ways to Move title has also been applied to a video, produced by Jay Taylor, which details the background of The Junction in Cherry Hinton Road. Interviews and television news features are intercut with music and specially-filmed Cambridge sequences.

Other local organisations have turned to video to promote or describe their work.

The St Columba Group therapy centre helps people who are anxious, guilty, confused or lonely. Groups meet regularly to explore their feelings or, through psychodrama, their past, present and future experiences.

All this is detailed in a short video just issued by the centre, a copy of which has been lodged in the Collection. The story of Waterbeach from the earliest times to the present day — from forest to fen to field to factory — has been told by Denis Cheason on a one-hour video. It traces the history of the Car Dyke (a Roman canal from the Cam to Lincoln), the draining of the Fens, the older village houses and the story of John Denson, a local farmer who published a commentary on the condition of the labourers in the 19th century which has become a most important record of their times and hardship.

The video tells of the impact of the two world wars, shows services in the Salvation Army citadel and local chapels, and joins the primary schoolchildren in their classrooms. With a combination of modern video film, original paintings and old photographs it provides a model which other villagers might well emulate.

Les Price of Fowlmere is one who has been producing such films for some time, and they have been much appreciated in his community. He has also assisted us in copying some of our material on to video, including the Burwell photographs of Dorothy Grainger.

One of his current projects has been to produce a video based on my book Images of Cambridge. The first section to be filmed covers the period from the 1960s and includes topics the Lion Yard and Kite area redevelopment, Elizabeth Bridge and other traffic changes and the scenes and fashions of the last 30 years.

Some videos have been supplied to old people's homes and hospitals so that the residents may have something to watch on their TV screens that might jog memories or encourage conversation, and we should be pleased to hear from other institutions who might be interested in acquiring one.

The organs of Cambridge, issued on two cassettes or CDs by OxRecs.

The work of the St Columba Group therapy centre, from 3 Downing Place, Cambridge. The story of Waterbeach, available from Denis Cheason, 4 Primrose Lane;

John Heathcote would sit in his castle near Peterborough and tell how one guest had left from the dining room window and paddled away in a boat to shoot coot in the fen, An unremarkable occurrence except that Connington castle did not actually have a moat!

Like the fenland around it did have a drainage problem and drainage windmills were an essential part of the local scene though by the time Heathcote sketched them they were generally falling into decay, having been superseded by steam machines that could operate even when the wind ceased to blow. But in 1826 the great Whittlesey mere disappeared, The season was dry and large cracks formed on the exposed bed, then 'when about one hundred acres of water remained a great hurricane of wind came and blew most of it into the cracks and fissures and it disappeared', Every fish perished, laying like heaps of snow on the shore, Fortunately for sportsmen the water returned in the winter.

It was to be a brief respite for in 1850 a giant pump, newly exhibited at the Crystal palace, was set to work pumping over 100 tons of water a minute from the mere to the river and as levels sank tons of fish were taken out, amongst them pike as big as 20lb. Eventually there was just one acre of water left covered with fish 1½ feet deep. The bream, roach and chub were not considered worth the trouble of removing and although a few were buried , thousands rotted on the surface. People flocked from miles around to take advantage of the vast numbers of eels. Walking over the soft mud with flat boards attached to their shoes, Then two years later the river banks gave way and the Mere again went under water until the engineers could perform their work once more.

Other parts of the area offered superb shooting, Heathcote and his friends usually started at seven, breaking through the thin ice of a November morning, jumping ditches with the aid of a pole - sometimes placing a piece of turf in the middle of the widest ones to make the leap more easy - and then bagging anything from six to fifteen couples of snipe in a day. When winter came it gave the fenman increased mobility for as the waterways froze they allowed skaters to travel more quickly, covering a mile in just under four minutes and allowing long journeys to be accomplished in a single day. Skating matches and competitions could be arranged for prizes of tea or meat, with spectators' needs catered for by a old woman roasting chestnuts in a Dutch oven on the ice whilst alongside a small oblong box on bones, drawn by two dogs, contained gin for those who were thirsty.

John Moyer Heathcote knew the area well and served it as High Sheriff, Guardian of the Poor and Member of Parliament. His obituary described him as "a model country gentleman of the old school, genial, amiable and cheerful". In 1876 he published his 'Reminiscences of fen and mere' which has been out of print for over 100 years but is now reissued with a new introduction by Edward Storey, Although no classic of literature it is a must for every fenman's library not least for Heathcote's sketches which capture the days when the fen landscape was radically different from the fertile acres seen today.

"Reminiscences of Fen & Mere" by J.M. Heathcote; reissued by Old Soke books

Reflections 1995 02 01

"THERE are at least two Cambridges. One the visitors do not see and the other that residents can only glimpse." On successive nights I was welcomed in both and in between we received a unique record of each.

Barnwell and Fen Ditton Local History Society meets in a community centre at the far end of Newmarket Road. Together we considered something of the changes in that area of

Cambridge over the last 100 years and over coffee and cake heard of much more that had never been set down.

Such as how the gardener who tended the flowers and bushes at the former Pye headquarters, just across the road from the venue, was dismissed when he was spotted parking his car there - it was a Jaguar, which overshadowed the humbler transport of his employer. What modes of transport brought together the members of the second group I can only speculate - probably the bicycle or Shanks's pony!

One gets used to talking about the Cambridgeshire Collection as part of a programme covering water supply, Fen floods or country bygones, but not usually following such luminaries as the Rouge Dragon Pursuivant or preceding the Garter Principal King of Arms.

It was probably the first time anybody had spoken about the work of the public library service to a meeting of Cambridge University Heraldic and Genealogical Society (although of course the Central Library in Lion Yard serves everybody - "MA and mechanic, the undergraduate and the schoolboy, old men in broad cloth and young boys in fustian", as our first librarian, John Pink wrote nearly a century ago).

One thing that unites the Backs and Barnwell is the river that runs past both, and one person who knows that river well is Prof Neville Willmer, Fellow of Clare and Emeritus Professor of Histology. In 1979 he published a sketchbook surveying the Cam from the springs at Ashwell to its junction with the Old West. The Collection was acknowledged in the preface and he has now deposited two albums of his original sketches, including views of the famous and beautiful stone bridge at Clare and the less beautiful gasworks at Stourbridge Common. They complement the similar views produced nearly 100 years earlier by Robert Farren and will be appreciated both now and in the future.

Another connection between the two Cambridges was discussed in a pamphlet issued in 1818, of which the third edition was catalogued just yesterday. It tells of the awful death of Lawrence Dundas, an undergraduate of Trinity College, who had sought the fabled warm and companionable welcome formerly traditionally associated with Barnwell (or at least with certain of the young ladies who made their homes there).

Poor rich Lawrence had dined with companions at a house in Bridge Street and remained drinking till near 11, when he set off with a friend to visit the prostitutes in the red-light district just across Parker's Piece. However, he was so drunk he could not get his gown on and then lost his way and tumbled into a muddy ditch, not much above knee-deep, out of which he struggled once or twice. But then, having stripped off everything but his pantaloons and stockings, he fell to rise no more, being found dead from exposure next day.

The Vicar of Chesterton published an address on the evils of drunkenness and fornication, laying some of the blame on the Fitzwilliam Museum for allowing unrestricted access to its pictures of naked ladies -and urging colleges to control the wine and dinner parties which form part of the tradition of hospitality that I was privileged to share with members of the University Heraldic Society

Reflections 1995 02 08

Anne Cock felt herself most badly treated, The 60-year old widow had done little enough in her eyes - she had only entered the chapel at Sidney Sussex college in the middle of a service and told then what she thought - that their praises and services were not acceptable to the Lord, but they were an abomination to Him. John Hudson, a glovemaker, had hauled her out, kicked her across the courtyard and banged her against the college gate in the process. Then

on her way home one of Hudson's daughters had thrown water over her head and Edmond Salter, a tailor, "did throw a piss-pot of urine upon her".

It was 1653 just 15 years since Cromwell's men had purged the University of those with Royalist sympathies, destroyed college altars and statues and enforced the Solemn League and Covenant against popery. But now the monarchy was soon to be reinstated, the clergy reappointed, and soon an Act of Uniformity compelling dons to conform to Anglican liturgy.

Anne was one of the group of people known as Quakers, refusing to take oaths or pay tithes and with strong adherence to pacifism. In Cambridge they were considered fair game by undergraduate priests. Another old lady, of their number was stopped by the rude multitude of scholars thrown on the ground, kicked and stoned and abused shamefully, Others could testify that they had been thrown into the river with the students mocking that they had baptised them.

Nor was it just the women who were targeted: John Peace was attacked by-snowballs "& one snow-ball hit him on the. eye, so as he thought it had dropt out into his hand ,,, and he was mocked, and scoffed, and abused, and kicked by the Schollars, and they thrust pinns into his leggs",

The Quakers hired a room in which they could meet but students threw stones and dirt against the windows, "and they shott bullets into the Chambers at us, and flung great stones".

Becoming even bolder they invaded the meeting room itself hollowing and hissing and calling for beer. They pulled off the Quaker's hats, took hold of them by the nose and when this failed to break up the meeting threw apple cores and tobacco-pipes, closed the blinds and put out the lights "and piss'd in the Entry among the People, and daub'd the lock of the Door and key with Dung, so that we could not tell how to touch it..."

The Quakers appealed for assistance to the Mayor but to no avail, they informed the University Proctors who refused to help. Student abuse grew - they lifted up the women's dresses as they walked in the street, made them stand in a cesspit whilst they tore the coats off their backs and kissed them during the Meetings. Eventually Thomas Nicholson, a former Mayor, took up their cause. He attended the meetings along with half a dozen Constables, standing on a form to observe all that was going on, and ensuring peace for a while.

In 1659 Edward Sammon published a pamphlet entitled "A discovery of the education of the schollars of Cambridge" describing the "unchristian breeding and the horrible Fruits of the University-Men; And how that Spirit of the Whore and false Prophet, and the remainder of the Dreggs of Popery boyles up in them, in Persecution, and Madness, and Ignorance", It was intended for sober people to read and consider but has been forgotten for over three hundred years. Now a copy has been discovered in the library of the Friends Meeting House in London and reprinted in a limited edition to give some insight into the sufferings and persecutions of the people called Quakers,

Reflections 1995 02 15

Two remarkable first-hand records of war have recently been received, both recorded by women.

Miss Dorothy Nicholls was the daughter of the Fulbourn doctor who decided to follow her father's profession. She became a State Registered Nurse and a qualified midwife before joining the Red Cross in 1914 to nurse wounded soldiers. She tended troops in converted sugar sheds at Boulogne docks and comforted Belgian civilians suffering from typhoid fever before volunteering to nurse in Russia, She journeyed via Archangel arriving by boat just

before the sea iced over and amongst her adventures converted a palace into a hospital and went to the Russian front with a field hospital. In November 1916 she was making an horrendous train journey to a place she described as the back of beyond, standing in mud up to her waist and living in a log hut sunk half below the level of the ground. Her party of nurses had left Kiev by car through snow and severe frost to join a train packed to capacity.

After days of travel they reached a place called Czernovitz where the roads were deep in mud, the hills terrible and with still another 50 miles to go, Eventually they reached Selatin where they slept overnight-on stretchers in an empty room before resuming their trek along mountain roads, having to abandon one of their carts stuck in mud before finally arriving at their hospital deep in a forest at midnight. It was here that she was to earn the St George Medal, given at that time to troops in the firing line, before being forced to leave the country following the Russian revolution of 1917. By April that year she was home in Fulbourn. Dorothy's exploits were recorded in letters sent home one of which was published in the Cambridge Chronicle at the time, and by a series of snapshots which we have now been allowed to copy, a testimony to a remarkable woman who died in 1980

Peggy Watts tells nothing of her own wartime exploits while she was in the Wrens in 1944 but the letters sent to her by her mother provide a unique record of everyday life in a Cambridgeshire village during the Second World War. With all the extra troops based around Quy - with another 1000. airmen arriving by train at Lode station on 28th May alone - the pubs soon sold out their allocation of beer, although locals could go around the back door for a pint. Rationing was tight but often there was nothing to spend the coupons on - no dried fruit or biscuits to be had anywhere in May. There were particular problems over replacing worn-out Wellingtons. The old ones had to be taken to a shop to be condemned, a form to that effect sent to the War Agriculture Office who sent a permit back. The permit had to be taken back to the shop who would order the Wellingtons with another visit to Cambridge to collect them when they finally arrived.

Bombing raids were an occupational nuisance. On 3rd April one farmer found a crater in his field but nobody knew how it got there as there had been no raids recently. 16 days later it was still there as nobody could decide whether it had exploded or not. On 1st May two men came to examine it, pronounced it live and promised to send the bomb disposal men, When they arrived next day they discovered it was an RAF 500lb bomb, so they left it to the RAF.

The RAF could only think it had been intended to be dropped over France but had got caught up somehow and only fell off when the plane was nearly back to the base. Next day it exploded cracking window panes in nearby houses.

But the book is also full of everyday problems - as when Billy got scarlet fever. The doctor allowed him to be kept at home if he was shut in the front room, but Betty had to go through the room to get upstairs to bed. The only solution was for a ladder to be put up from the street to her window, causing considerable comment, not least amongst visiting troops

'Letters from Home: Quy in 1944. £1.50

Reflections 1995 02 22

JANUARY was, I was told, a quiet month in the Collection, enquiries had dropped to just over 1,200, some 200 down on the previous year.

Doubtless many of those who visited us for information had gone away frustrated either because we did not hold or could not find what they sought or that there was so much material they did not have time to consult it all. People come and go and whatever they do with

whatever they find is often a mystery. Occasionally we may learn the result, accepting that it is the successes we are told about never the failures.

Thus one lad came in to say that the project he had undertaken was marked in three sections. In the first he had obtained 30 out of 30, in the second 20 out of 20 and in the third 30 out of 30. Then we had a letter which read: "Last summer I had the most enjoyable and rewarding experience of pursuing a research project in your library ... the facilities are so comprehensive and the time and space so conducive to research, that I feel my high grade for this work is largely due to you".

This had been an inter-disciplinary study of infant mortality in Cambridge 1876-1913 produced for an Open University course which concluded that the food available to the majority of women was deficient of essential nutrients for the welfare of the unborn baby and developing infants and that defective sewers allied to waterlogged soils had caused whole areas of the town to become saturated with sewage leading to diarrhoeal diseases which killed many young babies. Amongst sources consulted were the medical officer of health reports, Eglantyne Jebb's study of Cambridge social issues published 1906 together with articles indexed in the local newspapers and other unpublished dissertations.

At the end of the study Margaret Craig indicates ways in which the information might be reformatted to provide a basis for GCSE work and develop into other research projects.

By coincidence earlier that week we had received a visit from a Professor of the Open University concerned that work produced for such dissertations should be made available to other researchers. Students are encouraged to deposit copies but they were also investigating the practicalities of producing them on compact discs. Would libraries have the technology to access them?

I had just unpacked a new Acorn computer acquired not only to provide us with a compact disc drive but also to enable us to link in with work being undertaken by local schools. A fine example of this is a package on The Battle of the Somme produced by Netherhall School which features diaries and reminiscences, maps, pictures and even songs which together with worksheets and project notes provide students with a wide range of materials.

Our new machine might perhaps one day allow us to produce our own discs so that these can be supplied to schools and colleges to enable their students to search, identify and retrieve information — such as that on infant mortality — without needing to visit the Library.

This in turn may reduce our enquiry rate still further and give precious moments more for acquiring, evaluating and cataloguing new items.

The big snag however is that whilst our users might be computer-literate our staff are not and we too experience the frustrations of finding the way around an unfamiliar system that afflicts many of those who visit the Collection.

"Infant mortality in Cambridge 1876-1913: a multi-disciplinary approach" by Margaret Craig. Unpublished dissertation for Open University course DA301,1994.

Reflections 1995 03 01

AFTER some 30 years of travelling the A10 to Cambridge I have finally found a way to speed the journey. It still takes a long as ever but, now, I almost hope that the lights do turn red before I get to them. The magic ingredient is the talking book from the Lending Library playing on the car cassette.

Having borrowed Cyril Fletcher's account of establishing his pantomimes in Cambridge, I am now discovering something of country life around 1812 as recorded by Mary Mitford in *Our Village*, though the view as seen by a correspondent to *The Lady's Magazine* scarcely reflects the harsh realities of the time.

Few Cambridgeshire items are yet available on cassette and of these pride of place must go to *Tiger Talk*, a compilation of ordinary people talking about everyday things like Docky time, a break for "a great lump of fat pork perched on top of half a loaf of bread. "In the loaf of bread you used to make a little hole — we all did it. You put the butter in it, to keep the butter so it didn't run everywhere." The name reflected the time when farmers were hard on their employees. When they ate their food they would be docked that amount of time from their labours.

When the March winds blew the soil did too. "It gets all in your clothes, in your trousers and every-where... You couldn't see five yards. The people would have to go home. You couldn't work in them conditions. The winds come whipping across there and the little bits of clumps are whipped over and over and over and they just cut our beets off at the roots and by three, half past three, four o'clock in the afternoon we go home with our heads hanging down knowing full well that our total sugar beet crop has been absolutely destroyed by the wind and there is nothing else we can do but re-drill again."

We are told that birds were caught with a net on two old bamboo poles and then there was rat catching. "We used to go around the stacks and we used to get over a hundred rats out one one stack." Then there were the sick-ness benefits, the pub - wooden seats, little sawdust spittoons and everybody with their own seat, just like at church. And, of course, country cures. "If a child had the whooping cough you caught a mouse and fried it and made it eat the mouse. Roast onions were a cure for ear ache, a cut-throat razor for your corns.

Even the Christmas *Tiger Talk* tales on Side Two can be enjoyed at any time, recalling games such as "Tipit", one of my grand-father's favourites, in which people would pass a coin from hand to hand under the table. Then all put their fists on top and somebody had to guess in which hand the coin was hidden, eliminating them one by one until finally ordering somebody to "Tip-it." The cassette has been out for some time but within the last we we have received copies of a transcript. This enables the information contained to be more easily located, but cannot match the voices of real people talking about their life and times just to you whether in the car, in the kitchen or snuggled down in bed.

A more recent production is *The Fen Blows* by Justin Bernasconi. A collection of original songs based on Fenland history, the title track reflects the Littleport Riots of 1816 whilst the cover picture depicts the Warboys witches, hanged 1593 for the death of Lady Cromwell. Fen drainage is reflected in "Paupers Cut" telling how in 1832 the Wisbech poor were employed to dig a new dike to benefit rich farmers and in "Bishop's Fork" recounting how in the 1400s Bishop Morton devised a scheme for a taxing both rich and poor to finance his drainage work. The words of the songs are published with the cassette, though they should not be read while driving!

Tiger Talk and Christmas *Tiger Talk* by Lester Milbank, 112 York Street, Cambridge or from Library *The Fen blows* by Justin Bernasconi, Warboys

Reflections 1995 03 08

Recently I gave a talk to members of the St Ives Civic Society when some 56 people turned up to hear a presentation on "Images of Cambridge", but settled instead for "Dickensian Cambridge" with its investigation of the splendour and poverty, characters and scandals that characterised that period. The Society then went on to plan an excursion to one of the greatest

houses in the Land, Buckingham Palace, with its magnificent staircases, grand rooms and treasures.

"Buggingham Palace" by contrast had no such attractions to welcome visitors when it stood in Church Lane, Trumpington. It comprised an old tumbled-down cottage, occupied by Mother Sivill who was supposed to be a witch and fortune teller who prayed on superstitious people, One evening two men were passing by when one said to the other "I wonder if the old B---- is at home", "Yes the old B, is at home, Come in", But the men went along the Lane in record time.

To old Mother Sivill belongs the credit of being the last person to be placed in the pillory at Cambridge which stood near the old Market Cross which was near the end of St Mary's Passage. "Mother" was placed in the pillory for one hour, turned round every 15 minutes and pelted with eggs as a warning for future fortune tellers. For a piece of silver she guaranteed to give your enemy trouble by causing his chickens to have croup, his cattle the glanders, his pigs the fever and his wife the creeping palsy or any other trouble.

This frightful character was just one of the people featured by schoolmaster P.R. Robinson when he lectured in Trumpington Village Hall some 70 years ago, drawing on his own extensive knowledge and on the wealth of village anecdotes that had been passed down to him. He told of the Gibbet where Miss Bertha Moore's great grandmother could recollect seeing a man hanging, tarred and feathered some time around 1760, though there was still a gibbet to be viewed, as he showed in a slide depicting weasels, stoats, hawks, jays and magpies caught by the local gamekeeper and displayed for public view.

Less drastic punishments were meted out at the village stocks or whipping post whilst those villains confined to the lock-up were provided with a seat but kept in position by being chained in irons. This stood beside the pound where straying cattle were placed and not far from the smithy whose blacksmith made a bicycle on which he won almost the first big cycle race which was held between Trumpington mile stone and the stone bridge.

Then there was "Squandermania", the coprolite works started on 2nd January 1318 when millions of pounds were spent to extract the phosphoratic nodules for use in making high explosives for the war. It is said that one complete train load was mined and send to Norwich, only to be returned and emptied back into the pit. The works provided a source of high-waged income with one butcher boy throwing in his job delivering meat for 9/- (45p) a week to become an engine cleaner at £2.12,6 (£2.60) before ending up earning £7 a week as a fitter.

However the imported Irish labourers were always grumbling and went on strike! All this was imparted to a packed audience with the aid of lantern slides. These slides still exist, as do the notes which Robinson used for his lecture, and we have been given the opportunity of copying them for addition to the Collection. However now I understand there are plans to repeat the lecture, which if they come to pass will guarantee an even more fascinating evening that that enjoyed 70 years ago

Reflections 1995 03 15

A 150 year old mystery has now been solved thanks to the columns of the local newspaper. Although the story of University and college rowing is well documented the origins of town rowing have been unknown. In 1931 Briscoe Snelson contributed a series of articles to the "Cambridge Chronicle" which traced the history back to 1868 when ten town crews, including the Albert Institute, Young Mens Christian Association, two boats from the United College Servants and three representing the Cambridge Town Rowing Club competed in eight-oar bumping races.

But new research by J.R. Moy takes the story back many more years to a newspaper article appearing on 2nd September 1843 announcing an eight-oar cutter match between the Cambridge Town Boat Club and the Vulture Club between Baitsbite lock and the Pike and Eel, Chesterton - nearly double the distance rowed in the University races, There was to be another difference for instead of being a bumping race the boats would compete over an equal distance. It was about six o'clock when the start took place and soon it was apparent that the Town were gaining on their opponents and by the time the finishing post was reached the distance between the boats had narrowed from one hundred yards to thirty. The newcomers saluted a famous victory for this was their first season whilst their rivals had been operating for four years previous.

In May 1844 the first Town and University match took place with Caius College, who had been Head of the River, competing against a crew whose members included H, Newberry, B. Diver, H.S. Foster with A, Logan as their Captain and F, Logan as stroke. The Town's chances were improved by a new eight-oar boat, of extraordinary lightness and peculiar construction which had been build for them by Logan. The course between Baitsbite and Chesterton, about a mile and a half, was thronged with spectators until there was one dense line of human beings from Midsummer Common to Chesterton, whilst hundreds of men chose to run along the haling way to follow the boats up to the start.

Had misfortune not struck the Town crew, with the second oar breaking his foot-strap, the race might have been closer, but it was soon apparent that the University boat was gaining at every stroke. By the time the winning post was reached the gap of 100 yards which had separated the crews at the start had been reduced to just 25, and - so the reporter claims - had the Caius men not eased up they would even have bumped their opponents.

By now there were more teams - Endeavour, Eagle, Arethusa, Minerva and Albion and leaving aside the sport there was entertainment with a band to add to the attractions of a walk beside the river, made even more pleasant by the large number of young ladies who were present. Less welcome were the lines of barges one of which brushed a spectator's boat allowing the gentlemen an opportunity of having a bath without the trouble of undressing. Floating weeds caught on the oars and the terrible stench of various areas of the river in 1868 quite spoilt the enjoyment for both rowers and the immense crowds of fashionable onlookers who thronged the banks, prompting plans in 1869 for additional amusements such as swimming races.

The battles and squabbles, achievements and frustrations of the years between 1843 and 1868 are documented fully with summaries of other stories up to the end of the century in a publication whose 250 pages will make fascinating reading even for people who have never climbed into a racing boat, and add a new insight into Victorian life and sport.

‘Cambridge (non-University) and district rowing in the 19th century” by J.R. Mpy.

U.Row.K0 13071, W.29.J69 21574. U.Row.J54 4245, U.Row.J66 21338

Reflections 1995 03 22

SWAFFHAM Prior has two of various things — two churches, two wind-mills and now two films.

The second was premiered recently and concentrated on the windmills, both now in full sail, though only one actually grinding. The film-maker, Ron Prime, using skills devel-oped as a professional sound recordist, was also responsible for the previous production which followed

the restoration of the church bells, and incidentally traced the story of the churches and churchyard.

Film-making, even on an amateur level, is an expensive hobby and Ron received funding from the David Urwin arts award, which has itself recently been the subject of a video. The award commemorates the life and achievements of the former Cambridge city planning officer who died in 1988 and whose own musical and artistic skills is reflected in the film, together with performances from the musicians and others whose talents have been enhanced by a grant from the trust.

Together his friends and admirers in the villages around Bottisham have contributed to a scheme which has benefited several remarkable people in the six years it has been operating. The video will bring benefits to a wider audience. I was not present for Ron's film since I was sharing with members of March Museum Society something of the story of the 1947 floods. Wandering around their admirable and interesting collections I spotted on their bookstall a video devoted to the town's railway heritage which features archive film and personal memories to recount something of the story of the town.

The name Whitemoor evoked memories of what was once the largest railway marshalling yard in Europe and, through which in wartime, travelled the trains which carried freight and munitions to serve the war effort. When in 1944 an ammunition train exploded in Soham station it was the heroism and professionalism of March railwaymen which ensured the devastation was not far greater.

The medals earned that night by Ben Gimbert and James Nightall form part of the display in the museum and the story is commemorated on the video. Many of the lines that made March a significant railway town have now disappeared but the route to Wimblington, Chatteris, St Ives and all stations to Cambridge is featured on Rails to Cambridge.

Modern film of forgotten crossing gates and derelict stations is intermixed by amateur film footage and reminiscences by former employees. It includes two sequences of the route from Cambridge to St Ives which make interesting viewing for those proposing the reopening of that line and emphasises the enormity of the restoration work that would be required. There is even footage of the Milton Road crossing which now carries much more road traffic than when the line was in its heyday — and even that was sufficient in the 1930s for the construction of an underpass to keep vehicles moving while the gates were closed. The debate over the proposed reopening has ground on for years, doubtless even adding to the paper that used to pass over the desk of David Urwin, City Planning Officer.

If March was the railway capital of the Isle, then Ely cathedral is its spiritual centrepiece. Now the daily life and activities of this most complex organisation have been explored by a young pupil from Witchford Village College whose questioning of the Dean, the clock-winder, choristers and Bishop have been captured on a video which, with teachers' notes and worksheets, give primary school children — and the rest of us — some insight into the history and work of the Ship of the Fens.

Videos: The David Urwin Arts Award, the first six years, from The Hall, Abbey Close, Burwell; March: a railway town from the Museum, High Street, March; Rails to Cambridge from Nene Video, 32 Brewin Ave, March; Voyage of discovery in Ely cathedral from the cathedral.

Reflections 1995 03 29

"Never-to-be-forgotten years" is the phrase one ex-soldier uses to describe his experiences of wartime including two memories of Venice - one of a steam ship of that name boarded on a

Scottish loch at the start of his adventures, the other a Gondola ride along the famous canals a world away from the fenlands of Cambridgeshire. The place has less happy memories for the Clark family for their only son, Richard, having survived the war, was killed in a flying accident over that city just a week after hospitalities had ceased.

Others recollect unexpected meetings with village lads - Tommy Parish finding himself sharing a ferry boat across the river Ganges with Bert Sadler, having time for just a brief word with Ted Lock somewhere in Burma and meeting Frank Nicholls in India. He was too busy repairing aircraft to notice Billy Hobbs, the only survivor from the Stretham men who had been present at the fall of Singapore, his fate unknown to his family until January 1945.

Others got news such as the brief card from Tom Pearson which merely said "I am a Prisoner of War, I am well; I hope you are the same, All my love". It had been written on 20th June 1942 and took a year and a month to arrive. The family waited and waited for other news; finally in April 1946 came official confirmation that his grave was being maintained at Government expense and a less formal letter from Padre Noel Duckworth enclosing Tom's signet ring, proof to his mother that her son had one friend at the time of his death. The families of Albert Driver, Douglas Gibbs. John Howe, Alec Thompson and John Wesley experienced similar heartbreak,

Those left at home had all the problems of maintaining some semblance of village life. Cupboards which had been well-stocked at the beginning of the war were soon empty, though Bert Parish still supplied some fresh milk to supplement the dried version coming from America. The numbers to be fed increased with the arrival of 146 Jewish evacuees necessitating considerable improvisation, and not a little coercion. Schooling arrangements were one thing, the continuation of their Jewish faith another and although they might attend the Church Sunday Schools if their foster parents chose, every Saturday morning the school became the village Synagogue. One evacuee child was Leslie who remembers going to the recreation ground and "for the first time in my life, I stood on grass!" He recalls also the concerts and Empire Day parades and especially the people who fostered him - in fact he remained long after the war and became so much of the family he eventually took their surname.

Thomas came to the village less willingly as one of a batch of Romanian prisoners of war. They arrived in Stretham in 1947 and were based in a house which had the luxury of a bathroom but through whose roof snow drifted. They worked on the farms with brightly-coloured patches on their khaki-brown uniforms and to supplement their sugar supply boiled beet to make black treacle. They earned a little extra money by making slippers from the sacks in which corn was stored and found the locals friendly. Thomas married an English girl and has settled in the village.

Their personal stories have now been shared with the woman who, during the war, reported the news for the weekly newspaper, who taught in the school, organised the evacuees, rejoiced with the good news and gave sympathetic support to the bereaved. Since she started her book several of the men and women mentioned have passed away - including the village's hero. Bill Goad, who modestly omitted reference to his Albert Medal when asked for his experiences - an oversight remedied by Beatrice Stevens in her record of Stretham's wartime memories.

"Stretham wartime memories 1939-1945; home & abroad" by Beatrice C. Stevens.

Reflections 1995 04 12

BOOKS of local war-time reminiscences are appearing thick and fast with VE Day celebrations coming up.

At Little Thetford Bob Young, of Horseshoes, has spent time and considerable effort in researching that hamlet during the earlier conflict, 1914-1918, the result of which are published at £1.50. The interest was sparked when, during church services, he allowed his mind and eyes to wander to the war memorial, prompting him to speculate on the sacrifice that had been made.

Ten men who had fallen — nearly five per cent of the population — were named, but he discovered two others recorded on the memorial in the cemetery and another in Ely Cathedral. Who were they and what had happened to them?

One had fallen on 1st July 1916 at the Battle of the Somme, along with 21,391 others, and is buried in Serre Road cemetery near Calais. Others fell at Arras and Mons. Some died within months of joining up, others within weeks of the Armistice.

Seven of the Dewsberry family enlisted, four of them brothers, three were killed, another was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for firing his Lewis gun for 48 hours under continuous and heavy shell fire. He survived the war despite being gassed and wounded no less than four times.

But despite all the research, mystery surrounds the background of Clement Driver who, for the moment, remains just a name on a memorial.

If it is difficult researching one village, what about a whole battalion?

The three Huntingdonshire Cyclist Battalions were initially recruited between 1914 and 1919 from within the old county, though they later drew people from a wider area.

Martyn Smith has compiled an index of over 2,000 of these "Gaspipe Cavalry" many of whom subsequently transferred to other units so they could go on active service. Page after page of names and numbers, enlistment and service details are recorded.

Among them all is G.F. Dewberry from Woodwalton who enlisted in May 1915, his subsequent fate undocumented. The monumental work continues and Martyn, who would appreciate further assistance, can be contacted at 63 Mill Lane, Ramsey.

One person who is researching that family lives near Nuneaton in Warwickshire. She is one of over 1,800 who have recorded their interests in the latest issue of the Cambridgeshire Family History Society's Directory, whose members pool their expertise.

They record their findings in the Society's Journal whose February issue includes articles on the Nash family of Fowlmere, The Tunwells of Fulbourn and the Bichenos from Over — volume three of whose story has recently been produced.

There are also articles about family and community health in Cambridge between 1876 and 1913 and the windmillers of Great Gransden. The mill is thought to date back to the 1670s but was the John Butterfield, who was killed by the mill sail in 1708, actually a victim of this mill, or was it another which probably stood on the Caxton road?

Society members would welcome assistance and are pleased to offer advice; contact the secretary Barbara Ward of 1 Ascham Lane, Whittlesford.

Reflections by Mike Petty 19 Apr 1995

An insight into the early days of cycling has arrived with a few photographs and race cards. They relate to the Cambridge University Bicycle Club established to provide for their members a proper place to keep their bicycles, together with attendants to clean and look after the machines, maps and suggestions for excursions with instructions in riding and a supply of bikes to practice on. The bikes incidentally were of the Penny-farthing design with wheels up to 50" in diameter, thus making the tips on riding especially necessary,

In 1876 rules were laid down for those leading excursions since the sight of a mass of men on such machines might disturb other road users, especially horses, though if an animal showed signs of skittishness the advice was not to dismount, (even if the rider had learned how to do so) but to ride past slowly talking to the horse as they did so.

Pedestrians should also be passed with care and should not be shouted at needlessly for this - and the illegal practice of riding on the pavements - might create public prejudice against bicycling. Although much of the local landscape was flat there would inevitably be some hills to be negotiated and in these instances the party should maintain a distance of forty yards between each bicycle and be sure never to remove their feet from the treadles.

One undergraduate who became total master of his machine was Ion Keith-Falconer. On one day he biked all the way from Cambridge to Bournemouth, a distance of 150 miles while in 1882 he decided to cycle from Lands End to John o'Groats House, arriving at his destination, 994 miles away, in just under 13 days. His bike, a 58-incher built by Humber and Marriott of Nottingham survived well, though its rider was somewhat the worse for wear.

By then Keith-Falconer had decided on a life as a Missionary. He started in the disreputable area of Barnwell, just down Newmarket Road from the Colleges. A Sunday School had been established in 1825 but there were hundreds of poor and ignorant labourers, dirty, ragged and unkempt, behaving outrageously (at least to upper-crust Undergraduate eyes). Keith-Falconer and his companions hired the old Theatre Royal for a month-long evangelistic mission in 1875 and three years later 'were instrumental in buying and converting it into the Theatre Royal Barnwell Mission. It later became the Festival Theatre and its future is once more in course of discussion,

Keith-Falconer went on to become University Professor of Arabic but retained his love of cycling, and especially cycle-racing. In 1874 he won a ten-mile race in 34 minutes and celebrated by biking to Trumpington on a massive 86-inch machine which he needed a flight to steps to reach. He repeated his success over 42 and 50 mile distances and broke record after record.

Then in October 1875 he beat the professional champion of the world over five miles, though Falconer confessed that he had gone into training in the nine days before the race by waking and retiring early, eating a proper diet and giving up smoking. A rematch was held in May 1879 over eight laps of the University's quarter-mile circuit on which occasion he won by just three inches, once more beating the fastest man in the world.

One of the programmes for the race survives as does a photograph which may show the undergraduate prodigy with his machine. Three days later he was racing again. He had been studying hard all morning and forgotten he was due to compete. It was not until all the other competitors were at the starting post that he rushed into the dressing room, changed his clothes as quickly as possible and mounted for the race. He rode several miles before recovering his breath but still beat the field at the end of the twenty mile contest in a record time!

Reflections 1995 04 26

Being Collectors ourselves we appreciate when others pass on to us duplicates from their own files. Recently this has included thirty music programmes of concerts dating back to February of 1945 when Myra Hess and the New London Orchestra performed a wartime concert of works by Mozart, Rossini and Hayden.

Our donor also drew attention to an extract from the autobiography of the Rev H.R. Haweis which gives an insight into the musical scene of nearly a century earlier. The Master of Trinity College was then Dr Whewell who had a reputation as an ogre and contrived to say something rude to everybody he knew, sooner or later. This changed in 1856 when the Master found a wife and the rugged old lion became affable, gentle and eager to do what he could to make people feel at home. Whewell himself had no ear for music though he could talk learnedly on the subject, attend concerts and organise music at his house. Haweis admitted to playing the fiddle - in fact it was common knowledge for he practiced noisily gaining a reputation as an undesirable neighbour and despite a 10pm curfew sounds of quartet or quintet would often go on till past midnight.

The Undergraduate was approached to perform solo at a concert of the University Musical Society to be attended by Whewell, where he was to be conducted by the new Professor of Music, W, Sterndale Bennett. Overcome with the pressure of the occasion Haweis accepted a glass of wine to sooth his nerves. Instead it went to his head which started to swim, his fingers went, limp and unrestrained, he played with exaggerated expression, tore the passion to tatters, trampled on the time. The audience listened in dead silence but then burst into applause at such an unconventional and daring new style. A second piece was received with fever pitch enthusiasm, men standing up and waving their caps and the new lad's reputation as a solo violinist was established.

Some time later he was disturbed in his rooms by a repeated knocking on the sported oak - the outer door which when closed is meant to indicate that the occupant does not wish to be interrupted. Finally he opened it to discover a very old strange figure in a sort of wide plaid waistcoat, well-made frock coat: heavily dyed thin whiskers, dark wig, yellow gloves and patent boots, He introduced himself as Mons Venus, a most famous violinist and conductor of some fifty years earlier who had seen Hayden conduct his Surprise Symphony, telling how the composer had demanded so loud a crash for the "Surprise" that the performer had burst his drum,

In the 1840s Venua had decided to take a band and chorus to Huntingdon despite the hazards of such a journey for anxious performers with delicate throats and valuable instruments to be cared for. Stagecoaches were packed with passengers and drums, double bases and scores of small packages and the retinue embarked. Disaster struck when one coach load overturned and prima donnas in their crinolines and frock-coated violinists sat by the wayside and bewailed their cruel fate. Somehow everything was put back together, the coach up-righted and the concert performed. Perhaps it was this which prompted Haweis to attempt a variation on the theme by announcing the performance by a fictitious foreign company in a town some fifteen miles from Cambridge. He and his friends disguised themselves in false beards, dressed themselves in heavy great coats, (though it was the middle of summer) and set off, Once more disaster struck when one of the most prominent residents was run over on the railway casting a gloom over the entire town and decimating the audience. The undergraduates returned crestfallen and ended up playing sadly in Cambridge market square in the middle of the night. It was not an experiment they repeated!

Q.Ac.J27 5151, W.69.J42 15866

Reflections 1995 05 03

THERE can be few librarians charged with the collection of books and forgeries.

But for the librarian of the Cambridge Philatelic Society forgeries were most important. Club members regularly consulted them and were lectured on their qualities and failings.

Members were told that forgeries could be divided into two main classes, those counter-feited to deceive the Government and defraud the revenue (one example of this being the fake one shilling stamps used by the London Stock Exchange in 1938) while the larger fraud was aimed at genuine collectors.

In 1925 the Philatelic Congress of Great Britain met in Cambridge when one paper addressed the issue of "Thief Proof Stamps." In 1860 the population of Great Britain and Ireland was approximately 30 million and they posted more than 500 million letters, which averaged out to 100 letters per year to every inhabited house in the country. This provided a lucrative opportunity for the stamp thief.

It had long been the custom of the Post Office to buy back stamps which customers did not use, but there was no way of telling whether they had been legitimately acquired or stolen by some office clerk from the stamp drawer of his employer.

The Post Office, therefore, permitted employers to mark their stamps and these could not be negotiated. The first stamps to be so marked were those of the Union Society of Oxford University who had the letters "O.U.S" printed in red between two wavy lines. Later, firms could perforate their initials through the stamp but when the proprietors of Pears Soap sought to print an advertisement on the backs of the stamps the Post Office intervened.

In 1950 another speaker attracted a large audience for his account of when the Cambridge post went by Hobson's wagons. In those days it took three or more days for the six and eight-horse wagons to carry the post to London over the deeply rutted roads of the early 1600s. In 1635 the Government established a scheme for letters to be put in bags and delivered to towns on the route from London to Edinburgh.

They were taken from the Great North Road at Caxton and brought to Cambridge where they were delivered by a special foot post. It was 1792 when the first mail coach ran direct to Cambridge from London, covering the distance in seven and a half hours, reducing to five and a half hours by 1828.

One of the earliest post offices was in Bene't Street with others in Green Street and opposite Sidney Sussex college. Since T.F. Turton gave his talk there has been significant additional research with a Postal History of Cambridge by D.J. Muggleton being published in 1970. This, however, is too late to be included in the Cambridge Philatelic Society scrap-book which we have recently been allowed to copy for addition to the Cambridgeshire Collection.

Two other items caught my eye. One is a note that the 1938 Congress, also held in Cambridge, was filmed by a Mr H.C. Green. It featured scenes of local landmarks, including the hotels where delegates stayed, the views from their sight-seeing buses and a trip to Midsummer Fair. It would be wonderful if this could now be located.

The other is a warning to potential delegates which was written in 1763:
"Do not go to Cambridge, sir, there are ale houses-in which you will be drunk, there are tennis courts and bowling greens that will heat you in excess, and then you will drink cold small

beer and die. "There is a river, too, in which you will be drowned and you will study yourself into a consumption and break your brains."

Reflections 1995 05 10

Two of Cambridge's villages have come under the spotlight recently with the publication of quite substantial histories by relatively new parishioners. One is an East Anglian estate village, the identity of the other is not disclosed.

It seems appropriate that the story of Chippenham should be recorded by a Rear Admiral since the Hall, which dominates the village and the book, was remodelled by Admiral Edward Russell whose naval career is detailed. Although he won the battle of Barfleur against the French (described by Winston Churchill as "the Trafalgar of the seventeenth century") Russell was later criticised and subsequently charged with corruption in that he sold ships and kept the money for himself. His career survived the scandal and he became Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, even entertaining the King at Chippenham in 1717.

When such an important personage decided to improve his home by demolishing some twenty-five houses, closing roads, and taking part of the High Street it was difficult for mere peasants to complain. The big house had full-size pictures of the Royal family in their Coronation robes, gold and silver wall hangings, green damaske curtains - even a painting of the famous battle against the French. His Lordship employed eighteen men, two boys and eight female staff in 1717 at an annual cost of just under £350. All this is documented, as are the problems of later generations including those of John Tharp in 1815. Due to "his inferiority of intellect" he was married off by his mother to the daughter of a Marquis, but there was no love on either side and the lad became unmanageable and be physically restrained. By then it was felt that the park expensive to be maintained and the hall extremely damp and ill-built - more a shooting box than a house which if left uninhabited for a season and without good fires would go to ruin. Doubtless the tenants in their hovels would have sympathised to a degree!

Admiral Ross continues the story to the present day highlighting the decline in facilities which prompted the vicar in 1972 to complain that the village was dying. Subsequently the school has closed but new residents have been attracted to this most unusual of local villages, bringing new life although very different from that of a few centuries ago.

By contrast there is no great house in Charles Moseley's hamlet, nor any tradition of domination of local life by outsiders. When he arrived just thirty years ago he was the interloper in a self-contained community; now such has been the change that he is considered an old-stager! In "A field full of folk" he charts the trials and tribulations, troubles and triumphs of restoring a run-down cottage. He introduces his former neighbours - Alfred the dirtiest man he'd ever known whose thick Cambridgeshire accent was made even less understandable by his voice having to escape past a roll-up that was perpetually at the corner of his mouth. Once he started to talk at you there was no alternative but to interpose an odd "oh" and "really" and wait until he stopped - making sure you stood upwind of him and idly counting the fly-specks on his glasses. Then there was Seth, the poacher -- "as innocent and harmless as only an elderly rogue can be" - who would follow behind the lawnmower with his scythe to prove it could do a better job. And how did Seth know that the village spinster, a respectable straight-backed figure, once had her pants held up by nineteen safety pins?

It all makes a most charming account of the life that was lived only the day before yesterday in one local village, perhaps your own

Reflections 1995 05 17

Faced with an 800 page biography of a Cambridge economist, theorist & educator- there I immediately scan the index for a clue as to what it is all about. But consult "Alfred Marshall" in the back of Peter- Groenewegen's book and one finds fourteen pages of double column entries - "Franco-Prussian war experiences", "growing impatience with metaphysical inquiry", "mathematising of Mill" and "touch of malaria in the Lake district" amongst them.

This is obviously not something that can be assessed easily - nor should it be when it has taken the author some ten years to research, three of them virtually full-time. Those at the official launch in the Marshall Library of Economics were fully appreciative of the importance of the subject - the man who established a separate economics and political sciences tripos and - incidentally - the opportunity to acquire a copy of the £60 book at special discount prices - economists obviously appreciating a bargain, though whether Alfred Marshall would have approved is perhaps another matter.

Denied an easy summary there is no alternative but to peruse the entire volume and appreciate Marshall's theories such as his wish "to jettison the pessimistic conclusions of classical economics on the future possibilities for the working class, inherent in its perspectives on the stationary state and in the limitations implied for human progress from its laws of population and wages, which permanently tied workers to low incomes", a proposition which one could doubtless debate at some length as the Professor of Economics and Director of the Centre for the Study of the History of Economic Thought, University of Sidney proceeds to do.

Yet this is no dry-as-dust book for the serious academic alone for it provides also a fascinating insight into Alfred Marshall the man and his personal life. In 1939 John Maynard Keynes was invited to tea by Marshall's widow, The food was on the Spartan side and the one-sided conversation comprised a continual diatribe about what a jealous and selfish intellectual wretch her husband had been.

The couple had first met when Alfred lectured at Newnham college in 1871 at a time when women's education was much in its infancy. A year later she took the initiative by inviting him to dance "The Lancers", and later attended social evenings in his bachelor rooms at St John's college. They married in 1877 by which time they were both were teaching political economy. Political and economic reality meant that Marshall now had to give up his teaching post at Cambridge, Fellows being not allowed to marry, and start a new career at Bristol University. They took with them oddments of furniture that he had purchased from second-hand shops and friends noticed that their tastes conflicted somewhat, she preferring much brighter colourings.

In 1884 Alfred was elected to the Chair of political economy back in Cambridge and they soon were house-hunting. St John's College was then developing land along Grange Road, but only allowing the construction of houses costing more than £2,000. Marshall was adamant he would only spend half that amount so he had to settle for Madingley Road where he build Balliol Croft, to his designs, economising on smaller items such as the kitchen - although one guest thought this the most comfortable room in the house. They employed a single maid who had fits of gloomy depression and always threatened to resign - perhaps because Alfred was rather fussy and would explain to ladies how they ought to dust their rooms. Here he was able to continue to write his important books and pursue his increasing hostility over women's education - their families ought to come first - a cause his wife was supporting. At the end of his life many personal papers were destroyed buy enough have survived to ensure that this biography is equally interesting to both the academic and her husband.

"A soaring eagle: Alfred Marshall 1842-1924" by Peter Groenewegen.

Reflections 1995 05 24

James Reynolds Withers was born at Weston Colville, near Newmarket in May 1842. His father had been village shoemaker but had fallen on bad times so when the boy was born he was a less than welcome addition to the family's precarious budget. There was no money for schooling so the lad was sent out at an early age to pick stones, weed corn and scare birds, gaining what little education he could from his mother as she sat and stitched from morning to night.

Writing he never cared for and arithmetic left him cold but he did learn to read the old ballads and broadsheets that found their way into the village. As he watched the farmer's sheep he read of Robin Good, Robinson Crusoe and Pilgrim's Progress and also absorbed something of the natural life around him, the flowers of the fields and the birds he was employed to keep in the air.

When aged 12 he went to work for a market gardener at Fordham, finding more reading matter in the tattered pages from Shakespeare amongst the waste paper from which he made seed bags. There was much more reading at Magdalene College, Cambridge, so there he went – not as a student but as under-porter, though he soon felt confined in the bustle of the town and returned once more to his old job and old wage.

Good fortune came his way in the form of a legacy from his deceased grandmother with which he entered into his father's old trade, learning from the man who had succeeded to that business. It was not a success, he returned to Fordham, took a wife, started a family and failed to earn enough to support them. In 1846 in desperation he turned to the workhouse for relief.

All the while he was composing rhymes – though his lack of writing made it difficult for him to set them down until a farmer's wife took notice of him and funded his first volume of poetry, published in 1854. Two years later a second volume appeared and Macmillan's Magazine of 1860 hailed him as Cambridgeshire's hedge-side poet.

His fame spread, he travelled to Windsor, Bath and Bristol, and received many letters of encouragement from Charles Dickens, Queen Victoria – who included a welcome gift of £50 – and Tom Hughes, author of "Tom Brown's School-days". His output and his income increased but soon his literary friends passed a way and his capital was lost in a disastrous investment, though villagers in Fordham rallied round to ensure he could continue to live a thrifty life in his cottage.

When he lost his daughter and then his wife, one of his remaining admirers built him a house in the north of London, though Withers decided to stay in Cambridgeshire until his death in 1892

His verses covered many topics, some of them local: Fordham Fire Brigade –
"They all stand ready, fully equip'd, against the hour of need",

Wicken –

Going to your church, is like going out of town,
Not pleasant at all when the rain is coming down

and his native village of Weston Colville –

The foot-paths leading through the fields and groves,
Where once a careless boy I loved to rove,
Are overturned by the encroaching plough;
And I should trespass if I walked there now.

Others deal with the hardship of life including a complaint to the lady whose cow insisted on eating his flowers:

“And when I try and frighten her, and stamp and loudly bawl,
She licks her nose and coughs and stares, and does not mind at all”

and a description of life at Newmarket workhouse—

“Two days in the week we’ve puddings for dinner,
And two we have broth, so like water, but thinner”

Recently we have received even more samples of his work and on 30th June at a celebration of English songs to be held at Beechurst Hall, Soham Village College, there will be given a first performance of a setting of one of Wither’s poems whilst a small display will chronicle something of the life and times of one of Cambridgeshire’s most famous, yet almost forgotten Victorian poets

Reflections 1995 05 31

It must be boring having law-abiding ancestors. Let a man live a frugal, blameless life and raise a god-fearing and sober family and the chances are that he will appear as but a name in the annals of history. But let just one of the family stray from the paths of righteousness and all the world may learn of it.

This at least is the opinion of Cedric Parcel who has ventured to research the story of Parcells past. From their early ancestry at Patishall in Northamptonshire the story progresses through an Ashwell connection to a humble cottage in the village of Wendy in the 1730s where Piomer and Ann Parcel1 struggled to cope with poverty and a family of five girls - all of whom died - and a single son, William. The lad was apprenticed to a shoemaker in the village at a time when prices were rising, wages hard to find and the news of revolution in France had made the English ruling classes nervous, with hangings and transportation brought in to counter the talk of rebellion and the outbreaks of incendiarism.

William took a bride in 1734 when the price of a loaf had risen from 7d (3p) to 1/2 (6p) in three years. The cobblers shop was within sight of the parish stocks and their four sons were given good Biblical names. In 1804 they moved to Orwell where perhaps more labourers would feel able to devote some of their harvest wages to supplying themselves with the good strong boots that William supplied, providing some income to set aside the mere patching and mending that would have to suffice for the rest of the year. Somehow they survived and raised more sons till in 1826 William sold his cottage and aged 52 disappeared from the record books. Perhaps his eyesight had failed, or rheumatism brought on by years crouched over his last may have taken its toll., Doubtless however his first-born. Hall, would have added to his problems.

The lad had been in trouble from an early age and imprisoned for six months for the theft of trees. Then in 1820 he collected two sacks of potatoes from Daniel Cartwright of Gamlingay, claiming they were for Robert Taylor, a local blacksmith. The fraud was detected and Hall Parcel found himself sentenced to seven years transportation - his previous convictions prompting such a severe punishment.

He was taken to the hulks to await transportation and incarcerated in the old wooden warship "Leviathan" in Portsmouth harbour. For eleven months he was kept in the rotting, decaying hulk, infested with rats and cockroaches, rowed ashore to work in chains by day, and battered down between decks at night with a 14 lb bail shackled to his ankle to discourage any idea of jumping overboard. Then on 19th November 1821 the Orwell lad together with 183 other criminals were transferred to the "Phoenix", a convict ship bound for Van Diemens Land, to be exiled for ever.

The long sea voyage to Australia in the days of sail was no light undertaking. To travel as a convict, confined in quarters which were dark, gloomy and utterly foul was awful. Water seeped through the ships seams and the convict's bunks and bedding could not be kept dry. In heavy seas it was not uncommon for the prisoners to find themselves washed from their bunks by a swirling mass of water. The stench was indescribable, especially in the sweltering heat of the tropics when stale bilge water, mouldy rotten timber and the odours of closely-packed humanity made it surprising that so many survived the conditions.

Hall Parcell survived the journey and the hardships to follow; twenty-two years after his fraud he was released and was never heard of again. However the Parcel name continued in Australia as it has in New Zealand and America, all of which come together in "Parcel past"

"Parcel past ; a history of the Parcel 1 family" by Cedric Parcel from the author at 1 Porter Close, Sutton Coldfield 672 1DR £6.60

Reflections 1995 06 07

THE border country of Scotland is beautiful and peaceful, the old and ruined castles a back-drop to forgotten conflicts. To that far country I had gone to speak to a conference of the Scottish Library Association held in the magnificent Hydro Hotel in Peebles.

My presentation contrived to bring in not only the Scots King Malcolm III who led his troops to the assistance of Fenland's Hereward the Wake but also 'Dennis of Grunty Fen', the 'Weekly News' and a CD-ROM on Robert Burns produced by a Cambridgeshire software company.

Back in Cambridge and the Collection I found that conflict had been far from forgotten in my absence. Out of a batch of new acquisitions four related to a war we should never forget. From Sawston, Whittlesford and Burwell have come accounts of their village at war, but presented in different ways. Sawston puts the local scene into its national context and emphasises the aerial activities, due in part to their proximity to Duxford airfield, but also gives details of the production of paper by the Spicer company - and of their development of the early 'Dufaycolour' film.

Whittlesford's booklet provides a most welcome detailed account of the role of the Home Guard whose armoury included Molotov cocktails and larger do-it-yourself firebombs made from old five-gallon oil drums which were installed in batteries of up to eight dug into the banks at the side of the road.

When needed, an explosive charge would - hopefully - hurl them towards the road producing a sheet of flame intending to cascade on to passing vehicles.

From Burwell have come a compilation of villager's memories, including that of a medical student who answered an appeal to work at Belsen concentration camp and a personal account by Eileen Mason who worked at Shorts Repair Hangers, Madingley Road, Cambridge. On one occasion she looked into one of the gun turrets of the Stirling bomber she was rivetting and saw an airman's jacket peppered into the back and sides of the turret by bullets.

He must have been shot to bits.

We would welcome any other such accounts or programmes produced to commemorate the end of the Second, or any other, war so that we can continue to ensure that future researchers can have an insight into the present and past of Cambridgeshire

'Sawston: the village at war 1939-1945' by Tony Cartwright, published by Sawston village history society; 'Whittlesford at War', published by The Whittlesford Society; 'Memories of the second world war contributed by people of Burwell' and 'My story' by Eileen Adelaide Mason available from Burwell History Society.

Reflections 1995 06 14

Seventy years ago Arthur Almond published a booklet on a subject of which he was a Master - college gowns. He was the son of a Sheringham schoolmaster who made an early career as a furniture dealer, rising in 13 years from junior to manager. In 1886 he sought a change of direction and purchased & tailoring business near Downing College, moving to Sidney Street about 1831: He took an active interest in the Congregational church and the League of Nations and was elected to the Town council on behalf of the Liberal Party, holding a seat in Abbey Ward between 1913 and 1921. He served on various committees, including that of Libraries and Town Planning as well as the Local Employment Committee, endeavouring to find ways of building new jobs during the severe period of recession, He was also a trustee of the Barnwell Theatre until it became the Festival.

But in 1924 he decided to turn his attention to something that had long puzzled him : when had the various Undergraduate Gowns been introduced. The first mention of Gowns seem to have been in 1585 when Lord Burleigh, then Chancellor, had made orders governing student dress ; "They might walk in cloake and hatt to and fro the fields, Also within his College, Hall, Hostel or Habitation it was lawful for any student to wear a gowne, or gaberdyne of playne Turkye fashion with a round failing cap without garde, welte lace, cutt or silks except one cutt in the sleeves thereof to putt out his armes onllye" - this latter probably only allowed when dining, for otherwise they should be concealed.

With this was to go a square cap or in certain clearly defined cases a hat "for infirmities sake with a kerchiffe about his head ,, when it shall happen to rayne, hayle or snow; the hatt which shall be worne to be blacke ... and not excessive in bigness, without feather brooche or such lyke uncomelye for Students"

All this Almond could find by referring to various books, but at some stage the sleeveless gown - known as a Curtain - had become superceded by gowns of different colours and shapes. Almond wrote to the various colleges seeking advice from their senior dons but to little result. Christ's college replied that their order book between 1818 and 1842 was missing, most of Emmanuel's records had been destroyed and Pembroke college suggested he contact Messrs Ryder and Amies (another gownmaker). Others racked their memories and suggested avenues of approach but Caius did find a resolution dated May 1837 "To adopt a new gown next October", though it was Corpus who came up with the earliest date, 1827.

Having gathered together the evidence Almond needed a publisher, Bowes and Bowes at first declined to oblige, though their name appears on the pamphlet entitled "Gowns and Gossip", 500 copies of which cost £16.10.0. Almond now embarked on another round of letter writing, despatching copies to interested parties and back came letters of thanks, including that of the Borough Librarian for the copy still held in the Cambridgeshire Collection. These letters together with other incidental notes have now found their way into the Collection.

But Almond's small booklet caused a storm over his definition of a blazer ; named, he claimed, from the scarlet coat made for Lady Margaret Boat Club , whose vivid colour was applied to other similar garments. It had been devised by Reuben Buttress, formerly chapel clerk at St John's but no date was given. From Queen's college Oxford came a letter seeking further information and speculating that the term had first originated there. This prompted Almond to another round of correspondence and letters came back from the Royal Historical Society as well as the Borough Librarian dating Buttress' business in St John's street as between 1841 and 1854. Quite probably the question has been fully resolved since 1925. If not somebody will doubtless tell us and add to the story of Cambridge gowns

V.W.K0 25315, V.W.K05 5487, T.B.J14 13242

Reflections 1995 06 21

Some weeks seem much longer than others; all the enquiries seem more complicated, and just as you start something the telephone rings again. Last week was one such - and then by some bit of mismanagement on my part I found that I was no longer able to get home before it was time to turn out again for a talk and it was necessary to pull out the last reserves of energy for a 12-hour day. Half way across Market Hill I remembered I had left the slides back in the Library and it was a case of retracing footsteps and climbing the stairs again. Finally driving out to Linton it was easy to wonder whether it was worth the effort.

A welcoming group, friendly faces able to identify scenes of the area taken 60 years before and share memories of the days when they had no option but to work from dawn to dusk, but best of all the opportunity to reacquaint myself with the notebook of Henry Pamment which I had borrowed and transcribed some years ago and - as I was proudly reminded - had broadcast extracts on the wireless. Its handwritten pages records the life and struggles of a local lad whose arrival in the world had coincided with the Harvest Hoke, causing his father to be called away from the roast beef and plum puddings to run puffing and blowing for the doctor just because such a lad as he had arrived. Early childhood happiness soon gave way to stone-picking despair and eventually the realisation that there was nothing for him in Linton, so it was off to London to seek his fortune. Like thousands before and since he found that fortune was a mixed commodity and returned home to further hardship, and some hope. Through the pages of the notebook we can appreciate his trials and tribulations, without it Henry Pamment would only be a name in the church registers.

But for the scratched name on a Linton brick Robert Webbe might be equally obscure but it prompted an inquisitive schoolboy to seek further information without much success, though "probably many documents ... were locked away in libraries and record offices to which school boys could not easily gain access". However within a year or two Matthew Manning had actually met him, they had spoken, given each other gifts and nearly shaken hands. The only thing was that Robert Webbe had died in 1733. Matthew travelled the world talking about his friend and showing pictures of all the signatures that had mysteriously appeared on his bedroom walls - not just names from the eighteenth century but those of Bertrand Russell, Henry Cooper and Elizabeth Taylor (though presumably these were not those we know today); paintings and sketches by Durer and Aubrey Beardsley also manifested themselves.

Matthew wrote books about his experiences one of which "The strangers" issued in 1978 is entirely devoted to his Linton home (but then why did I not spot it until last week!). I have however acquired a copy of the Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research for October 1994 which analyses the signatures - some upside down in inaccessible corners of the ceiling, out of reach of human hands. It considers the possibilities of eidetic imagery, cryptomnesia or honest fraud, and tries once more to investigate the ghostly Robert Webbe.

Like Manning they search documents in Record Offices and church chests for possible clues without result.

There is another mystery. Of all the Cambridge antiquarians one of the most prolific was William Mortlock Palmer, a doctor based in Linton for many years. Palmer visited hundreds of patients and learned of many family treasures - such as the Pamment notebook - which might have been passed to him for safekeeping. Palmer wrote dozens of books and articles which he deposited in Linton library - freely open to all schoolboys. Why then is his a name that is overlooked by researcher or schoolboy psychic?

Y.Lin.K1 6811a, Y.Lin.K2 7526, Y.Lin.K0 7560, Y.Lin.J73 7503

Reflections 1995 06 28

It was a week that began, and nearly ended, on the banks of the Cam. Friday evening - with Saturday still to work - saw a gathering of friends and colleagues to bid farewell to Anne Cooper who after 17 years dedicated service to the County Record Office is starting a new life and career elsewhere. The venue was a former pub called Paradise on a little island in the Cam. Formerly belonging to Hudson's Brewery of Pampisford and famed for its home brewed ales, it is now a private house standing high above the surrounding grassland, though floodwater has been heard under the raised floorboards in years gone by. That evening as glasses were raised and nibbles consumed young people in punts glided past en route to Grantchester, discovering the delights that were hidden just around the next bend in the muddy stream.

Nearly 200 years earlier the Rev James Plumptre made a similar exploration to the source of the Cam, setting off from Clare College "with our garters on our legs and our staffs in our hands, and a change of linen in our pockets". Soon, "crossing the new turnpike road from Camb, into the great north road we got into a Lane which leads into Paradise, But wherefore it has acquired that name I know not, as it consists only of gravel-pit-pools overgrown with willow herbs and coltsfoot etc and surrounded by trees: the place contains good studies for broken ground, but is not paradisaical",

He appreciated subsequent sights more and at Harston joined the village men, women and children at the muscle fishery - poking sticks into the opened shells and pulling them out hanging fast upon the wood. The fish itself was not of any interest, but the shells were much prized and found a ready sale. On and on they went past Haslingfield and Barrington - where the food was indifferent but the civility of the host made ample amends for any deficiencies of fare - to Arrington where the view was one of the finest in the land. Plumptre ought to know for he was famed for his walking tours and had previously journeyed to the Highlands of Scotland and wilds of Wales. Why he wondered did travellers explore distant regions "whilst their own Country has been unnoticed, tho constantly spread out before their eyes and easy of access"

Similar sentiments might have been echoed by the dozens of people who, the Sunday before, had assembled at Waterbeach to explore the Cam en route to Ely and mark the official opening of The Fen Rivers way. Some found the companionship and conversation so interesting that they forgot to admire the scenery - or that part of it which could be appreciated through the dampness and drizzle of a June day. On arrival at Upware - formerly more renowned for its scraps between University and fenmen during the days of the Upware republic or the subsequent rule of the self-proclaimed King, Richard Ramsey Fielder - the party paused for refreshment and to witness the formal cutting of the ribbon strung across the newly-cleared and accessible track, the result of hard work between the County Council's Rural Group and the various parish councils and parishioners along the way. There too was

launched a most informative pack including explanatory history, notes about connecting buses and a detailed route map which also gives hints on a separate series of walks just off the new long-distance footpath.

Then the intrepid journeyers were off once more, knowing that although "Fives miles from Anywhere" there was no hurry, and no worry either that they would need what was previously indispensable to earlier travellers - a large pole with which they could try and jump the deep wide ditches that might have previously impeded their progress

"James Plumptre's Britain" Hutchinson, 1992, "The Fen Rivers Way"

Reflections 1995 07 05

SOME 30 years ago when the Central Library was at the back of the Guildhall and the Cambridgeshire Collection still crammed into the cupboard at the back of the Reference Library I undertook the job of compiling a list of Who's Where in Cambridgeshire monumental brass.

This later developed into a guide for brass-rubbers and ran to several duplicated editions. Seeking the information meant scanning a variety of books, including the Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society — which one would expect to have the information — and a little guide to Rides around Cambridgeshire by a former vicar of Barrington which was designed to assist cyclists but also contained one of the most comprehensive lists of local brasses.

Then there was the Cambridge Camden Society's 1846 volume of Illustrations of Monumental Brasses covering brasses from around the country which sought to find details about the people it featured.

However, Dr John Blodwell of Balsham is largely unknown, though the inscription around his brass proclaims that he came from Shropshire, studied law and then took holy orders. By 1439 he held the rectory of Balsham by which time he was probably suffering from blindness and died in 1462. The antiquarians debated and deciphered the meaning of the Latin inscription around his brass figure, speculated about the saints surrounding him and on the history of the church in which he rests.

Blodwell survived the visit of the puritan William Dowsing in 1643 who destroyed superstitious pictures, crosses and sculptures but not the activities of the Victorians. For in August 1836 excavations were made at the head of his tomb to the depth of three or four feet where his skeleton was discovered surrounded by fragments of his coffin. No remains of any funeral garments had survived and his skull they noticed was thin and old, with only two teeth remaining.

Having conducted their researches the tomb was closed up again and they turned their attention to other monuments in the churchyard.

Such details are omitted from a new and comprehensive guide to the Monumental brasses of Cambridgeshire which describes and illustrates many of the ancient memorials, pointing out details such as the set-square and dividers incorporated into the canopy of George Basevi, architect of the Fitzwilliam Museum (a copy of the plan of which he holds), but not telling how he fell to his death from scaffolding at Ely Cathedral.

Basevi and Blodwell, Sir Roger de Trumpington and Thomas Peyton — all famous brasses — feature in the index, but so do many other much more recent and much less grand people. For the authors have scanned each church and located and listed simple memorials to those who gave pianos or tables, modern lecterns or seats and whose names are recorded on small

brass plaques in the buildings in which they worshipped just as others had done in the centuries before.

The Monumental brasses of Cambridgeshire, published by Monumental Brass Society, £15.

Reflections 1995 07 12

In 1911 Julian Julian had a problem. As Borough Surveyor it was his job to work out how best various essential functions could be most effectively undertaken once the previously independent area of Chesterton actually became part of Cambridge.

Finally in November he was ready to present his findings to members of the Paving,, Drainage and Lighting Committee in a report newly acquired by the Collection

One thing was obvious - new areas to cope with must mean more staff - for the moment - he could manage with just four more men. Motors he was less sure about. At present the Corporation hired transport, paying 7/- (35p) a day for horse. harness and driver with an extra sixpence (2.5p) if the contractor provided a cart. But a motor vehicle would cost £600 and 27/- per day to work – including repairs, renewals, fuel, driver etc.

His calculations go on and on but finally he concludes that if horse hire charges do not increase then they should stay as they are. However they should also consider the sanitary advantages of using motors, though putting this against the noise and vibration caused.

Julian then turns his attention to scavenging. In 1911 there were four miles of streets in the town centre which were constantly cleared, some sections being cleansed 12 times a day. He also pointed out that although bye-laws required householders to clean the footpaths in front of their houses few did so, and many shopkeepers swept out their premises into the streets after the scavengers had already done their rounds.

Councillors should also remember that whereas house refuse was collected without charge, garden rubbish was not accepted at all in Cambridge - but residents of Chesterton could have it taken away free and would be sure to raise a stink if the proposed amalgamation removed this service

If all of this seems unchanging the poor Surveyor had other problems not faced by his modern equivalent - street watering. Nearly 10,000 gallons of water a year were spread on the town's roads. Many of the streets were only watered twice a day but the main route from the Station to the town centre had to be sprayed six times daily. People did argue that if the roads were tarred this would lead to a reduction in watering but experience actually showed that residents expected just as regular a service because the dust from neighbouring untarred roads was blown on to their streets. If a whole district were to be tarred then they would be able to use a van with a finer sprinkler but until then the same amount had to be spread whether it was needed or not.

Put it all together and they would need another 3 water vans, 2 picking-up vans, 5 ashes vans, 2 gully carts and a horse broom - total cost £550 - in addition to those which would be inherited from Chesterton Urban Council. Of course if the motor traffic did increase the situation could be looked at again

c.21.15

Reflections 1995 07 19

"Oh, Nurse., it's like 'eaven" : such was the verdict of some of the mangled men who found themselves in Cambridgeshire convalescent hospitals in the early days of the Great War.

The first opened on 2nd November 1914 for wounded Belgian soldiers when England was full of Belgian refugees and patients from the hospitals of Antwerp, whilst the English military hospitals were full to overflowing with our own wounded from Flanders. Three large empty houses in Cintra terrace, Hills Road, were placed at the disposal of the Cambridge Women's Voluntary Aid Detachment and the girls who had been practising since the outbreak of war and allowed to learn the practical side of nursing at Addenbrooke's Hospital now had a Hospital of their own.

The houses were swept and scrubbed and the girls drove around Cambridge collecting the furniture which had been promised by the Red Cross Society, and when the van failed to appear went out with a handcart to bring in mattresses, coalscuttles, glasses, dish-cloths and all the other essentials.

Despite all their efforts Cintra House was poorly fashioned and inconvenient and lasted only a few months. But then homes for wounded Tommies sprang up, each receiving men who had been treated in the First Eastern General Hospital but needed time to recover their health and strength with more individual attention to cheer him and hearten him up.

There were three in Cambridge: St. Chads on Grange Road with lofty sunny rooms facing south, croquet on the lawn, and a recreation room with billiard table, Wordsworth Grove, under the Command of Alex Wood arranged concerts each week and a Hospital band of patients and staff provided much mirth, whilst "Huntly" in Herschel Road arranged regular visits from a conjuror.

In surrounding villages accommodation varied as Church Schools (Fulbourn) and Baptist schoolrooms (Cottenham), Parish Rooms (Willingham), Halls (Shepreth) and Institutes (Whittlesford) were pressed into service. The Belgians who first arrived at Linton were housed in a wing of the Workhouse but this was not considered so suitable for British lads who moved to the Manor House.

Those based at Mount Blow., Great Shelford had sunny rooms facing south with lovely views and even a chalk pit which had been adapted to form a miniature rifle range - so they could practice shooting once again.

Some idea of "heaven" has been recorded in an album of photographs of Milton Hall, just lent to us. There are the stately rooms with beds under the family portraits, the attendant nurses, the camp band, mock battles, badger hunting, food and frolics. There is also a tribute in verse to "the finest band of nurses old England's ever seen" And when the war is over and England's done her all, We won't forget the nurses we had at Milton Hall"

There is just one snag - our Milton Hall never took wounded soldiers, not did it look like the house depicted - so where in the world was it

c.45.5 # c.21.4

Reflections 1995 07 26

An unauthorised biography of an eminent writer might be sure to cause some difficulties to the subject especially if there are skeletons in the cupboard, a history of money problems and

a certain amount of sexual scandal. However even if the subject does not like the book the reader is likely to find much to interest.

In "Romantic egotist" we are introduced to an author with distinct Cambridgeshire connections., one of the most fascinating and complex literary and media figures with a private life of bewildering complexity.

The son of a first-world-war soldier whose father's business had, reputedly, collapsed forcing him to flee to escape his creditors - a claim disputed by other members of the family - the embryonic writer knew little of his father, having been conceived whilst he was lying badly wounded in a hospital bed and soon to be shipped back to France and death. His mother coped well with a family and a tea-shop until a rogue named Monty entered their lives. Dressed partly in army gear - a useful source of clothing for the poorer classes once the war had ended - he won her affection. A decided con-man he used the upper rooms of the shop for storing stolen goods - once even pinching cutlery from the tea-shop and joining in a police hunt for the missing items. Nobody knew whether they actually legally married but soon there was another child - and the new father vanished with a very young waitress.

The family moved to Meldreth, but no rent was paid and it was time to make a moonlight flit, their furniture loaded on to a primitive pick-up truck and the children tied with ropes on to the sofa - making a terrific commotion as they trundled through the streets of Cambridge en route to their new home. They arrived at Burwell to find the accommodation roofless but kindly neighbours gave them shelter whilst the furniture remained outdoors, lined up down the garden path and was almost ruined in the torrential rain.

Here the budding author went to school and earned pocket money by running errands for an eccentric chemist whose reputation derived from an interest in unwanted cats that were due to be put down. The lad would be given a cat-basket and the bus fare and brought the animals back to the shop. Then they would be killed so that his employer could experiment in resurrecting them! Fertile grounding indeed for the embryo novelist who spent much of his time reading crime stories from the local library and sending off articles which were constantly rejected. He even sought employment at the Cambridge Daily News without success. When, much later, that paper published extracts from one of his books it caused some consternation as he had named real people in the mistaken belief that they would have died.

Though never achieving the success of a Jeffrey Archer, Jack Trevor Story became a much-admired writer's writer who never forgot his Burwell boyhood and his Cambridgeshire experiences

"Romantic egotist: an unauthorised biography of Jack Trevor Story" by Brian Darwent...
Minerva press. 1993

Reflections 1995 08 02

IN the oppressive heat of a July Saturday I peruse the piles of newly acquired Cambridgeshire titles - murder mysteries, biographies, even more planning reports, and seek inspiration. Poetry seems to outnumber all other topics so perhaps there might be something there for a light recreational read.

"Last train to Ely" by Edward Storey laments and records the harsh days of the past - the work of the river-maker who with muscle and spade drained the wildfowl's roosting-place to provided a soil which has fed man's children for three hundred years but which is now being covered by iron and brick as more and more houses submerge once-drowned fields.

My reinterpretation of others of his words might not find favour for in an introduction to "Fen and Ink", an anthology of new writing from East Cambridgeshire Storey offers advice - avoid such phrases as "cotton-wool clouds" and "blankets of snow" and especially careless repetition like "At first my parents at first..."

He continues "I make these points to persuade would-be contributors to take another look at their work before sending it out". I turn the page and the first line repeats: "work before sending it out". Oops!

So if not poetry how about song? Three new cassettes from Jancis Harvey have recently been added to our stock. Jancis sings gentle songs about the local area, extolling the wonders of Suffolk- and Cambridgeshire, church bells and gently-flowing Cam.

But just when nicely lulled into a feeling of serenity she hits you with the story of the gypsy boy whose lonely grave by the roadside recalls the personal tragedy of a miscounted flock of sheep and the even greater disaster of the Fire of Burwell. There, in September 1727, over eighty local men, women and children died when the barn in which they had gathered to watch a puppet show caught fire. Thomas Howe, 16 years old, saw it all: "Everybody was thrown into terror, they were surrounded by straw, they rushed towards the door but that opened inwards and they'd put the table they used for the conjuring tricks against it. The crush was so great they couldn't open it." I heard old Shepheard the puppet man call out to his wife and say 'we shall certainly be burned'- that he was." Jancis' account may be less graphic, but however told the tale is terrible.

Perhaps the gently turning sails of Swaffham Prior windmills might more appropriately reflect Summer Sundays and these have just been featured in a new video by Ron Prime. There is something tranquil about watching drive the mighty cogs and stones inside as they carry out their age-old task of grinding corn into flour. But the restoration work which was needed to provide this illusion was immense - 15 years' labour and over £50,000 so that breadmakers may have the proper ingredients.

Meanwhile across the road a second mill, of particularly rare design has been transformed into a house and office, despite the Planners initial rejection of the proposals.

"Last train to Ely" by Edward Storey Rockingham Press £6. 95. "Fen and Ink : an anthology of new writing from East Cambridge-shire" ADeC £3.95. "Requests" cassette by Jancis Harvey, 53 High St, Bottisham. "The Windmills" video by Ron Prime. Swaffham Prior village films.

Reflections 1995 08 09

PARISH magazines are a regular, monthly addition to the Collection; they convey something of the community life and concerns current-ly occupying the minds of some of the local residents.

Last week however we were lucky enough to be given a file of the magazine which circu-lated to the various parishes in the Camps Deanery some 100 or so years ago and I thought it might be interesting to consider some of the issues of those days.

At that time - before television, radio or Sunday newspaper supplements - the parish magazine would have provided cottagers with perhaps their principal reading material and the local news was supplemented by a nationally-produced magazine, in this case "The Church Monthly".

This provided an insight into the world beyond the parish confines - Switzerland and Cashmere, Macclesfield and Norwich.

There were articles on the keeping of backyard hens - be sure not to keep a cock so save "annoying the neighbours, over-the-wall conversation, complaints to the newspapers on the cock-crowing nuisance, solicitors letters, and a sundry visit to the police-court" (and we thought these were modern complaints).

And how a Norfolk churchman, Mr John Abbey, had invented a new series of drinks to replace beer for harvest workers - Stokos, Hopkos and Cokos - the latter made with oatmeal, cocoa and sugar which cost 4d a gallon and could be carried to the fields in a stone jar.

When there was time to read, various stories could while away the time before bed, of Susan, whose Lincolnshire cottage was always spick and span, and her neighbour Ann "who put off every kind of household work to the last possible minute ... allowed pots, pans and crockery to rust into holes, or get cracked or spoiled for want of cleanliness and care, then borrowed her neighbour's belongings to make up for those she lacked". Which, I wonder, was to become "The real owner of Swallowdale" of the serial.

Meanwhile the local villagers were concerned about the necessary repairs to the parish churches at Babraham, Balsham and Bartlow, how the Sunday school treat was rained off at Whittlesford and what the Inspectors said of the school at Linton.

There were innovations - incandescent light at Sawston church, though this had not deterred some sacrilegious soul from stealing from the Alms box for the Waifs and Strays (and coincidentally "The Church Monthly" shortly afterwards devoted one of its full-page engravings to a mother and daughter adding their mite into just such a box)

Not all youngsters were beyond reproach however for Sawston parents were urged to control smoking in their children - "it is common to see boys not ten years old smoking about the streets with monkey-like impudence; and the other day we actually saw a child of five puffing gravely at the pernicious cigarette".

With their mixture of local and international news and their interesting illustrations old Parish Magazines are a most welcome addition to the Collection and we should appreciate any more for our files.

Reflections 1995 08 16

Two fighting doctors have - unknown to each other - donated items to the Collection in the same week.

Dr David H Clark came to Cambridge in 1938 determined to row and to study medicine. But it was not the time when carefree studies were to be on the agenda for long and he expected to be called up as an artillery officer in the impending war. To his surprise he was ordered to complete medical training.

By July of 1943 he was a Lieutenant in the RAMC but it was not until December 1944 that he finally saw action. Later he parachuted into Germany and was hit in the belly - the shrapnel fragment smashing through his clothing but without power enough to enter the skin. His luck had held, his skill was to save other lives - of German prisoners captured by Russians, of Dutch prisoners captured by Japanese in Sumatra.

Clark travelled on to Singapore and Palestine before returning to his native Edinburgh to study psychiatry., and then back to Addenbrooke's and Fulbourn hospitals to practice his skills in the more peaceful atmosphere of Cambridge.

Of Leonard S Danzig I know but little, but his fight against Nazidom brought him to Europe from New Jersey and in 1946 he found himself in Cambridge. I met him following a lecture at Emmanuel college as part of a course organised by the Cambridge University Board of Continuing Education. Previously he had studied at Bull College at an education programme arranged by the US army.,

Bull College is now on no tourist map but during the war the Bull Hotel, Trumpington Street, was converted into a hostel administered by the American Red Cross. When the war was won American servicemen were invited to spend a term studying in Cambridge and Leonard arrived with the second contingent in Lent 1946.

By then there had been changes, students were no longer billeted in the centre of town but instead studied under barrack-room conditions at Brooklands Avenue. If this robbed them of the ambience they had expected they could still participate in the sporting life - baseball,, rugger, darts, table-tennis - one representing Cambridge University in a match against Oxford - and of course rowing where they made history by appointing a woman cox - and their boat rammed and split the St. Catharine's shell in two!

All that was nearly 50 years ago. Now Dr Danzig an expert in cariovascular disease and still in New Jersey, was back. He brought with him some snapshots of the staff who made his first stay enjoyable. one of which he has left in the Collection. We in turn gave him a copy of "The Cambridge Bull", the magazine produced by the students in 1946, which he had not bought at the time, and which contains a photograph of himself as a Cambridge student all those years ago.,

"Descent into conflict 1945 a doctor's war" by David H Clark. Book Guild., 12..95

Reflections 1995 08 23

The story of the popular theatre in Cambridge around the turn of the century is one that has still to be written..

It would doubtless record the debate and discussion over the use of the old Corn Exchange once the present buildings had been opened and how it was used as an indoor shopping centre until 1884 after which Ernie Hayward, and enterprising local concert promoter, opened it as a Variety Music Hall. For a while it was successful but then the deep frost between December 1894 to March 1895 proved its downfall. Other entrepreneurs took the opportunity to flood three fields in Newnham and install electric light. Skaters flocked there in droves, emptying the Arcade which was forced to cancel a Marie Lloyd concert and close.

Its place was taken by the New Theatre just around the corner in St. Andrew's Street which opened in 1896 shortly after the University surrendered its powers to limit theatrical performances during term time. It suffered from undergraduate excesses - on one occasion in 1903 the play was stopped and three of them expelled - but successfully fought off proposals for a new Palace of Varieties in Auckland Road in 1902 and survived the competition from the more upmarket Festival Theatre after 1926.

The story of the Cambridge Pierrots troupe who gave their first performance in 1898. the Rodney dramatic club. the Excelsior and X-L-C-R minstrels will all have their place but what of Coulson and company?

We have just acquired a list of theatrical and carnival goods available from Coulson's theatrical stores in St. Andrew's street. The business flourished from about 1910 into the 1950s and our 56-page catalogue is undated.

It was however at a time when you could dress as King Charles for 12/6 (62p), Cromwell for 10/6 (52p) or Charlie Chaplin for 7/6 (38p) - for which same price you could act as a Professor, parson or "Bing Boy". There were wigs and beards to be hired or bought, eyebrow pencils and grease paint sets, cheap scenery for amateur productions — even second-hand tights from 1/11 (20p),,

Desperadoes could invest in papier mache revolvers or realistic daggers but those who wished to deceive could invest just 2/6 (12p) for the secrets of a modern magician.

The Wandering Coin and the Magnetic Card - where a marked coin dropped in a glass of water vanishes only to reappear from a pack of cards, the Indian Rope Trick and the New Guinea Band could all be yours and, given just fifteen minutes practice, you could make a career on the music Hall Stage and puzzle the most astute audiences.

Our catalogue was once owned by "W.F.H". He purchased gum for fixing moustaches, crepe hair for making beards and horn rimmed spectacles. Perhaps somebody might remember him or add other details about the company that supplied the budding theatricals

Coulson catalogue K07.2008

c.76

Reflections 1995 09 06

THE Cambridgeshire Collection collects Cambridgeshire. We do not collect Norfolk or Suffolk, Essex or Huntingdonshire.

By concentrating on one small county we can try to provide an in-depth coverage of both past and present topics.

Thus in recent days we have acquired not only the Inspector's report on the Cambridge City Plan but also consultants reports promoting a large new shopping development off King's Hedges Road which may or may not accord with its recommendations.

But recently too we have been sent publications outside our geo-graphical area which can put Cambridgeshire stories into context.

One is a most interest-ing account of the development of King's Lynn throughout the Victorian period which was prompted by the discovery of letters by Sarah Mace, a village midwife's widow who came to spend her retirement years in the town.

It was a period of considerable develop-ment, grand new build-ings transforming the townscape as Sarah reported to her children, "All New Conduit Street is coming down where the old Post Office used to be, 8 houses coming down on High Bridge They are pulling the fleet right away from the old Custom House out King Street, and the new docks are going to be at Fisher End. All them houses are pulled down opposite the Ethemen (the Athenaeum)..."

The text gives the background - New Conduit Street marked the line of an open sewer which flowed under the High bridge surmounted by venerable houses like a miniature Old London Bridge.

The docks were being moved as part of a massive project to improve the trading position of the town, and at the same time efforts were being made to construct a railway to link King's Lynn to Cambridge and the rest of the world - which enticed Sarah's children away to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

The Athenaeum provided a concert hall and housed a Library of 5,000 volumes, principally for the working classes which opened in 1854 just a year before the Cambridge Free Library started to collect the local books we still treasure.

Meanwhile in St Ives another Victorian benefactor was establishing a collection and that Norris Museum has material for a newly revised history of Huntingdonshire.

It covers the whole county from earliest times to the present featuring Nicholas Ferrar (after whom a Cambridge church is named), St Ives fair - a rival to the great Stourbridge Fair held on the common off Newmarket Road and, of course, the one-time Cambridge MP Oliver Cromwell whose successor as supreme national politician, John Major, has contributed the foreword.

The last words however relate to the demise of Huntingdonshire as a separate administrative area, an issue now being hotly debated once more - as another of our recent accessions, the County Council's submission to the Local Government Commissioners testifies.

"Victoria's Lynn : boom & prosperity" by Vera Perrot. Vista books £5.95 "A history of Huntingdonshire" by Michael Wickes. Phillimore £14.95.

Reflections 1995 09 13

It has been one of those weeks when pictures have been dominant. It started with an enquiry for biographical information on Mary C Greene of Harston. I knew a little for some of her paintings of Cambridge backstreets are already in our stock or displayed at the Folk Museum.

Mary and her brother Graham were well-known characters between the wars; she was deaf and could only see with one eye whilst her brother was blind. This did not deter them walking the footpaths around their Harston home or taking the bus to Drummer Street. If Mary made the journey alone she would watch the passengers, mostly mothers with children, and then give a detailed report to Sir Graham - formerly Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty - on her return home. Perhaps she described the scene to her nephew, the novelist Graham Greene.

Her housekeeper wrote a memoir in 1974 recalling Mary's early art training in Paris in 1885, her membership of the Cambridge Drawing Society and how she taught painting at the beginning of the century. But it was whilst at Harston that she was most prolific. She would paint aided by the slightest sketches and what she called a "photographic" memory, absorbed with her paints and turps from breakfast to lunch.

But why should there be a revival of interest in her now, over 40 years after her death. The answer is that several of her pictures have now come on the market and are due to be sold by Cheffins Grain & Comings on 14th September..

I was given the chance of a preview and climbed the stairs of the storeroom, baking in the hot afternoon sun. There amongst numerous paintings were a number by Mary. Some depict her beloved Harston including a threshing scene painted in 1921, the Swan Inn and a fine view of Harston House in 1904 when the Greene's entertained Mrs Sarah Smith, owner of the Old Vicarage, Grantchester which provides the subject for another painting.

Three scenes depict Cambridge: a view of Coe Fen which was an area of particular pleasure to the artist who fought Council plans to transform the essentially rural area with its grass, willows, poplars and meandering streams which she painted. A second captures the corner of Peas Hill and the Bell Inn before the great rebuilding of the mid 1930s which swept away the old shops for the new Guildhall.

For me however the third is the most interesting. It is a view of Drummer Street bus station painted between 1942 and 1944 whilst Mary was waiting for the red omnibus which would carry her back to her Harston home.

We have taken photographic copies and placed small bids for some of the canvasses, now we wait to see whether we are successful in adding to our collection of the work of one of the most prolific local artists

Reflections 1995 09 20

Memory of this week must be sewage and the day spent trying to make slides to tell its story.

When Cambridge was a small trading town, before the arrival of the clerks and their learning in the 1200s, King John ordered the construction of a defence fortification. With the river Cam already guarding the northern and western approaches a ditch was dug around the other two sides from the river quite near Magdalene bridge and running down the present Hobson Street, across the current Lion Yard and back to the Cam.

Soon however the King's Ditch became the depository for rubbish of all kinds. It was a handy place too to empty cesspits and the resultant ant stench can be imagined. Indeed in 1393 King Richard II empowered the University Chancellor to take steps to reform certain gutters which were "causing the air to be corrupted and many masters, scholars and others passing through the streets fell sick thereof"

As the town expanded so did the problem and even Queen Victoria is said to have noticed the raw sewage flowing down the filthy River Cam – each of the riverside colleges discharging its privies directly into the water. By the 1860s the Town Council was talking about remedying the situation. Report after report after report was produced, discussed and rejected with one surveyor complaining of uninformed criticism of his proposals from certain members of the Committee. There was more criticism when the agreed scheme finally got under way, and when in 1897 it seemed not to be working Cambridge Ratepayers revolted and rejected proposals for a new Guildhall until the sewers were efficient.

Even when the sewage was running through the underground channels to the new steam pumping station at Riverside there were still problems. In 1916 engineers were experimenting with the mechanism when a massive explosion cracked internal walls and sent sewage gushing into the river

It was not all gloom however for people commented that, thanks to the bad workmanship when the pipes were laid the formerly waterlogged soil had dried out transforming Cambridge from a "damp., moist., misty rheumatically place into a dry and healthy spot". Even so it could

not cope with sudden thunderstorms such as that of July 1950 when houses and shops were inundated with both surface and foul water.

All of this and much more will be explored at the Centenary meeting of the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management at Girton college on 26th September. Talks on both sewage and on land drainage will be given by experts, and illustrated by slides (if my film comes out!). The meeting is open to all and starts at 7.30.

c.29.8

Reflections 1995 09 27

Did Hereward the Wake actually exist? If so who was he and what were the crimes he committed which led to his expulsion from England?

What prompted his return, why did he become leader of the resistance to William the Conqueror and how did he defend the Island of Ely against the Nor-man's advances. Following his betrayal by the Monks who showed the Conqueror the secret passageway through the fens what happened to Hereward? Did he survive to make his peace with William and if so where is he buried? Assuming he existed in the first place.

It all happened a very long time ago and there are few sources which can be drawn upon. Those documents which do exist are written in a language foreign to our own - we may need to rely on other people's translations. Victor Head attempts to answer the questions and to put the story of the fenland hero into the context of the period, identifying places which feature in the action and concluding that Hereward was indeed a worthy hero of resistance against oppression.

The hero of Marshall Jevons new mystery did really exist, though not at the time he records, even though the author does not. The pen name is one adopted by two American economics professors who spent some time in Cambridge. While here they took a trip on a chauffeur punt and were impressed with the young man who guided them along the Backs and could converse as knowledgeably on macro-economics as on the wonder of the colleges. So they feature him in "A deadly inheritance" which is set in the Cambridge of the mid-1960s (although chauffeur-driven punts did not start until 1975).

The story revolves around Balliol Croft, the former home of economist Alfred Marshall which - in the story - is hoped to be converted into an institute for the study of free enterprise. Many other locations will be familiar: St John's College, Lensfield and Victoria Roads and Grantchester, -though 'Bishop's College' where various murders take place is (probably) fictitious. They are investigated by Cambridge police Lieutenant Forbush (well, the authors are American) and suspicion falls on the undergraduate punter (despite his skill which prevented yet another death).

With its mixture of real people and places among the thinly disguised and invented the tale is pleasant enough. But there is a real mystery. The authors wish to present a copy of the book to the punter who impressed them, but he has moved on. If anybody can help track down the real Steve Pipes, who used to lodge at Grantchester would they please get in touch with the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library.

Hereward, by Victor Head. Alan Sutton £18.99. A deadly indifference, by Marshall Jevons. Carroll & Graf, New York.

Reflections 1995 10 04

IT was, I told a lady, one of those days when we felt like doing things.

It started on the Monday when the Serjeant at Mace came into the Library seeking appropriate music to be played in the Guildhall when the City was honouring its Far East Prisoners of War.

Some may have felt the forgotten heroes as they limped home at the end of the war when all the celebration were over but the Cambridgeshire Regiment had been awarded the Freedom of the Borough in 1946 and now the City was once more saluting them.

The Cambridgeshire Collection has been staging a wartime display for some time now, why not we suggested take it to the Guildhall for the occasion. So on Tuesday morning my colleague transported it across and began re-erecting it.

Coffee break is the time to sort the post and amongst the envelopes there was a parcel. When unpacked it was found to contain three banners produced to celebrate Victory which had been last displayed in May 1945. They were sent to us by a group we had been assisting earlier in the year. These were rushed across to the Guildhall and once more proclaimed their message.

Meanwhile the ordinary business of the morning continued - readers came and asked questions, some we answered, some we referred elsewhere.

One of the displays in the Collection features photos by Briscoe Snelson of pre-war river scenes. These will shortly be published, but how should the book be launched? Inspiration struck, ideas canvassed and, should it all go to plan, the result will be seen in a week or two. So with the Guildhall display, the Victory flags and the book launch all sorted before lunch-time it was going well. Then came the next enquirer.

She had come up to Cambridge from the South coast intent on discovering something of the presentation of the Freedom of the Borough - not to the Cambridgeshire regiment - but to the American 8th Army Air Force.

We quickly turned up the programme for the occasion and the newspaper reports for 2nd August 1945 which described the scene on Market Hill, decked with flags and banners (exactly the banners we had received that morning!). The front page had a picture which was of particular relevance for as well as American forces there were a contingent of RAF and the WAAF - and somewhere among the girls in uniform right at the front of the parade was our reader.

A quick call to the Mayor's office was all that was needed to secure for her an invitation back to the Guildhall to participate in that afternoon's reception with the other Freemen of the borough of 50 years ago.

As I said it was one of those days when we felt like doing things!

Reflections 1995 10 11

TWO poets and a multi-married African chief from Ludlow have come together on our new accessions shelves.

The poets are Rupert Brooke and A E Housman, almost contemporaries in Cambridge. The former had come up to King's College in 1906, leaving after three years to lodge at The Orchard, Grantchester - and the rest is history. In 1912 when sitting in a Berlin cafe he reminisced about his Cambridgeshire days, extolling the beauties of Grantchester, attacking the mean and dirty Ditton girls, black and fierce Roystonians, unfriendly Overians and the nameless crimes of Coton.

The meaning of it all has been analysed in various books and now in a new video by Denis Cheason which follows the poet to the places he mentions, revealing their charms but commenting also on some of the changes over the intervening years.

Next year will see celebrations for the centenary of the publication of 'A Shropshire Lad', a collection of poems dealing with the themes of love, death and war against a background of the flow of life and the seasons in the fields and woodlands of the English countryside. In anticipation of the event Robin Shaw has produced a guide to places associated with the poet embracing Bromsgrove, London, Oxford and Cambridge where Housman arrived as Kennedy professor of Latin in 1911 and stayed until his death in 1936.

Housman's first lodgings were in Panton Street. He died in the Evelyn Nursing Home but most of his time was in Whewell's Court, Trinity College, whose Wren Library possesses the autographed manuscript of the poem celebrating its centenary.

One of those responsible for organising the celebrations is an African chief, James Moxon, who when not attending to his seven wives in his adopted tribe in Ghana devotes time to his family ancestry.

We met at the annual meeting of the Moxon Society, held this year at St John's college when our brief was to introduce them to the wonders of Chatteris, Lt Downham and Ely. The latest issue of the Moxon Magazine tells how the family arrived in fenland with the Dutch drainers, certainly one William Moxon married a Downham widow, Mary Page in 1638 and the name had previously flourished in Thorne, Yorkshire where Cornelius Vermuyden had been employed.

Offspring from that marriage found partners in the neighbouring parishes of Witchford, Haddenham and Prickwillow from where in 1900 Henry Moxon described how on rough winter's nights the parson would fight his way on horseback through heavy snow down long droves lined with deep rush-covered ditches, attired in oilskins, sou'wester and thick boots to visit a dying parishioner in some isolated cottage.

One more name to be entered into the burial registers, one more place to be sought by family historians in years to come.

'The Cambridgeshire of Rupert Brooke' video from Denis Cheason, 4 Primrose Lane, Waterbeach CB5 9JZ, £9.85

'Housman's places' by Colin Shaw published by the Housman Society, 80 New Road, Bromsgrove, Worcs, B60 2LA, £7.99 (ISBN 0-904579-03-4)

'Moxon Magazine' from The Tortoise Shell Press, 131 Corve Street, Ludlow, Shrops. SY8 2PG.

A recent letter to the Cambridge Evening News criticised the design of buildings along Newmarket Road. By contrast the correspondent to the Cambridge Chronicle of January 8th 1853 was concerned with the moral quality of life in this part of Cambridge an area characterised by habitations of cruelty and immorality.

Guided by a member of the local constabulary the reporter explored the "dark entries tortuous windings, trap doors and zig zag passages" which provided the "focus of villainy, the receptacle of dishonest spoil, the refuge of the petty thief and the full developed scoundrel" of the Barnwell area

In Bradmore Lane the very railings were patched with rusty tea-trays, whilst Short Street was a horrid place of broken windows, dissipated women, cesspools, pigs-houses and dung-heaps. In New Street a bone manufactory added to the miseries and disease of the place in summer time - indeed the correspondent was glad to visit in the cold of winter and in the brightness of midday let the sun be cloudy and how terrible must the scenery be.

In one area however a field of winter wheat flourished quite next to the gravel pits. It was here that one Walls had been murdered some sixteen years earlier. The remains had been discovered by an old woman – she was fetching a pail of water one night and her bucket knocked against his head. How many, one wonders., had drunk of that water before her discovery!

The Victorian newspaper article goes on to suggest ways of remedying the worst excesses of the area, perhaps by employing men to watch the movement of the inhabitants. But it does concede that even here there were opulent, moral and religious inhabitants

There were also hard workers. For it was this area of Cambridge which produced the bricks which constructed the many new streets that were growing in profusion to provide homes for those seeking to make a life for themselves away from the poverty of the rural villages.

One such firm was Walls and Company, established about 1822 and which continued to trade until 1968.

In about 1887 they produced a print of their works with its proximity to the railway line and in the background the Barnwell bridge with the Leper chapel just visible to one side and sundry houses peeping from trees on the other. We have been allowed to make a copy for the Collection and it proved just the right token to mark the 10th anniversary of the flourishing Barnwell and Fen Ditton Local History Society, whose members may in turn research more of the story of this most important yet perhaps unappreciated area of Cambridge

P.Watt,K22 7324 – RASE 1922 p211

P.Watt.J7 50728 B.Newm.K29 16347, O.Red.J9 11003

Reflections 1995 10 25

THROUGH THE: MODERN MIRACLE OF "NEWS" TECHNOLOGY MIKE PETTY
WAS RECENTLY TRANSPORTED BACK TO CAMBRIDGE MARKET HILL 130
YEARS AGO. IN THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF ARTICLES HE REFLECTS ON THE
ISSUES OF THE PERIOD

It must have been about 1865 that the photograph was taken - I remember standing on Cambridge Market Hill, just beside the Guildhall, watching the man who was standing there in Petty Cury with his funny box on a tripod and the black cloth over his head.

I think he said his name was Arthur Nicholls and he had moved his photographic studio to Post Office Terrace because of all the dust and noise from the building work near his old studio off St. John's street. If it was not bad enough to have the demolition of All Saints church and the building of that massive chapel at St John's college, now there's talk of a massive new block by Alfred Waterhouse in place of the old houses next to the Senate House. If it carries on at this rate there'll be nothing left of old Cambridge soon

Mind you I know the Council had to do something after the great fire of 1849 burnt down the shops that used to stand between me and the church - though Cambridge council being what it is they did take a long while to make up their minds - and even longer to do something! When they finally did knock the rest of the buildings down to give this massive Market Square they had all that fuss about what to put in the middle - they thought the old Hobson's Conduit on the corner of the Market was too old fashioned and would have a grand new fountain. That was nearly 10 years ago now.

The soldier-lad had been out at the Crimean War - he was telling me all about the Charge of the Light Brigade and all the casualties he'd seen. He'd been wounded himself he said, and had it not been from that Florence Nightingale - the lady with the lamp he called her - well he'd not have recovered.

Mind you he was lodging in Falcon Yard - just down Petty Cury near the Lion Hotel - and the conditions there he says are nearly as bad. Dozens of families are crammed into dark and decaying rooms, just one or two privies for the lot of them and all the rubbish tossed out of the back windows into a reeking heap in the Lion yard.

We were saying that it's no wonder that the Prince Albert died of fever: he might have been Chancellor of the University but that didn't make him immune from infection - what with all the sewage floating down the Cam what comes straight out of the colleges. We reckon that might be why Bertie - sorry The Prince of Wales - was based out at Madingley Hall when he was studying - if that's what they call it. You should hear some of the stories they tell about his goings on. Now there's some talk about erecting a statue to Prince Albert, though whether it would go in the Senate House or at the Fitzwilliam Museum only time will tell.

SEPARATE NOTE

The statue was finally unveiled in the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1878 — the sculptor had been busy with the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park. The Prince of Wales, later to be crowned King Edward VII performed the ceremony. In 1956 it was moved to the grounds of Madingley Hall where it stands beside a lake

Reflections 1995 11 01

THROUGH THE MODERN MIRACLE OF "NEWS" TECHNOLOGY MIKE PETTY WAS RECENTLY TRANSPORTED BACK TO CAMBRIDGE MARKET HILL 130 YEARS AGO, IN THE SECOND OF A SERIES OF ARTICLES HE REFLECTS ON THE ISSUES OF THE PERIOD REFLECTIONS ON 1865

Arthur Nicholls had asked everybody to stand very still so he could get a good picture. We men did as he asked but the old woman would not - she said she had other things to do than stand around on street corners - poor Arthur had a devil of a job in the darkroom working on his negative to make her skirt look anyhow

Mind you when she got talking she would stop for hours. I think she said she was one of the bedders at the colleges: she was old enough and ugly enough that's for sure — (the University was always very careful to make sure of that so as not to put temptation in the way of their

students). Always dashing out for this and that - and with a basket full of the left-overs from the undergraduate's tables. She was not very keen on the shops in the centre though - saying how Petty Cury was full of wine merchants and hatters, robe-makers, hosiers, bootmakers and tobacconists - not like Fitzroy Street with its greengrocers, butchers, hardware dealers and lots of general shops. There were useful people too like the chimney sweep, pram-maker and the chemists.

At the chemists she would always get some of that Laudanum for her sister out in the fens, Burwell way, and would send it out to her on the carrier's cart. She said these tablets were essential to fight all the ague and rheumaticky pain they got out there and how as that was very useful when the poppies weren't around. Women in the fens would mix a little poppy-head tea for their youngsters when they wanted them to be quiet - it was amazing how that little bit of opium did the trick .

Mind you the older children were very good workers and the gang-master would always find work for them out in the fields. Some people thought it was a sin to see the youngsters lining up in the street in the very early morning to be ready to walk out to some distant fields to pick twitch or do other jobs But they should realise that the money they made came in very handy, even if the girls in particular were worn out at the end of the week. One mother had even sent her very youngest kid - six year old. She worked from early morning to late in the afternoon but were that tired she had to be carried home, and never went no more.

Children in the towns could find other work - delivery boys were always wanted, though shopkeepers soon got rid of them when they got too old. Better that than be a chimney-sweep boy. One rich lady had been entertaining her upper-crust friends when the chimney caught fire and the sweep man had made the lad climb up the inside of the chimney to clear it out - they often did that and would sometimes pour a pail or two of water down from the top to cool them if they got too hot. The smaller boys were particularly useful cos they could get through smaller chimneys and were also put down into the privies to find rings or things that had dropped down there - that made them stink worse than any fen mud!

Reflections 1995 11 08

IN THIS FINAL REFLECTIONS SPECIAL MIKE PETTY RETURNS TO THE CAMBRIDGE MARKET HILL OF 1865 AND THE ISSUES OF THE DAY

Those standing just outside the Guildhall in the closing months of 1865 had plenty to reflect about. The opening up of trade now that the last turnpike gate - that, at Castle End - had been removed. Now however the Council were imposing restrictions on traction engines, limiting the time they could come into the town, making a man with a red flag walk in front of them and cutting their speed - mind you some said it was right because of the damage they did to the streets - the weight of them had caused the sewer in Sidney Street to collapse and Lilley's horse fell down the hole!

The council's had other things on their mind with proposals to build a new Corn Exchange, though plans by Rowe for a building in Peas Hill stretching down Wheeler Street and including offices for the Town Clerk were causing disagreement - as was the site for a statue to Jonas Webb, the sheep breeder - some said it should be on the new Market Hill whilst others wanted to put it in the new Corn Exchange - if there was to be a new Corn Exchange of course.

It was not helped by the fact that, there were squabbles as to who did what between the two different bodies - the Borough Council and the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners who were supposed to oversee the cleaning, paving and lighting of the town as well as sewage

disposal. They were claiming that the River Cam would soon be clean enough for salmon – but what about the reports that the new Water Company were losing one third of their production of water/

Mind you everybody, despite their political feelings were united in their horror at the assassination of President Lincoln in America and at the news of the death of Lord Palmerston who as Prime Minister might have upset Queen Victoria but was; popular with the ordinary people. He had started as a Tory and then switched to the Whigs - but what was politics to the ordinary man in the street.

An election - like the one in July - was an opportunity to earn a pound or two. Mind you it was a bit different this last time because the hustings had been moved off Parker's Piece and erected on Market Hill instead. You still had to go up on to the stage in full view of everybody and make a public declaration as to which of the candidates you wanted to vote for. You did get two votes as there were two MPs for Cambridge but you usually supported the same pair - two Whigs or two Tories. They wrote it all down in a poll book and when the voting was over these were published so that everybody could see who voted for who.

Then just before the election you could expect a visit from a canvasser offering you £5, £10 - some even got more - to vote for their candidate. Even if you didn't have a vote you could get money to carry the party flags, or protect them from the opponent's men — or even just walk the streets at night to make sure people didn't pull down your posters - but don't say too much about it because there was nearly always an Inquiry afterwards and you had to take time off work to answer the Commissioners' questions. Sooner there was a different system the better some said

Note: THE LECTORAL SYSTEM WAS CHANGED BY THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT OF 1867 AND SECRET BALLOTS WERE INTRODUCED FOLLOWING THE 1868 ELECTION

REFLECTIONS 1995 11 15 MISSING

REFLECTIONS 1995 11 22 MISSING

Reflections 1995 11 29

Ladies who wish to become proficient as cyclists or those who being already past-mistresses of the pastime find themselves in want of new cycles certainly cannot do better in their own interests than look at Ison's establishment and test for themselves the comfort and running qualities of the famous New Chesterton Bicycles".

So reads an advertisement on the back page of Westrope's Year Book for 1911, a copy of which has recently been acquired by the Collection.

Other Cambridge advertisers trumpet the merits of Dale's Pale Ales (awarded three prize medals at the Brewer's exhibition in London 1910), Suttle the Tailor of Fitzroy Street, J.S. Banyard manufacturers of mixture and shags and retailers of cigarettes and fancy goods from East Road. Mr P. Hawkes practitioner of English and American dentistry who travelled out from Hills Road to Cottenham each Tuesday promising painless extractions and a set of teeth from £1.1.0

Many Cottenham traders took the opportunity to secure their place in the Almanack including T., Burgess painter and plumber, Harold Bell practical cabinet maker and upholsterer whilst W Gordon Holdgate's high class mineral waters were well-known for their excellency, pungency and good quality. Though if it was stronger liquid you fancied then the Barley Mow

at Histon would supply strong Bailey and Tebbutt ale at 1/8 a gallon or John Walker's whisky at the wholesale price of 4/- a bottle.

Elsewhere harnessmakers, bootmakers, laundries and watchmakers demonstrate that everything could be obtained within the village, though should residents insist on leaving then Arthur Bavidge of Denmark Road runs his bus to Cambridge every Saturday afternoon, returning at 6 p m, for one shilling .

But Westrope's year book was a compendium of local information detailing parish councillors and constables, charities and churches, clubs and societies which catered to the villagers in the area - Histon, Waterbeach, Milton amongst them..

It also recorded a great deal of local history including in 1910 an extract from Thomas Pauley's memorandum book recording that in 1842 after Cottenham inclosure "I was the first one that plowed in Cottenham field and I worked for Edward Ivatt. He drove the horses although he was blind and his son Edward led the harrow horses and he was blind", whilst Baptist Minister John Corbitt's early life in the parish from 1800 is told in an extract from his autobiography - not currently held in the Collection but one which we can now try to locate.

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Such is the magic of items such as Westrope's Almanack and I should appreciate the opportunity to copy others which may be hidden away amongst personal papers.

Reflections 1995 12 06

THE flood of small publications continues to be produced presenting difficulties for the buyer since most bookshops need to ask large discounts on the copies they stock and for the most part the producers have priced their items too low to allow for such trade terms.

Although the Cambridge Central Library shop takes a wide range on a sale or return basis there are many books which are only available from village retailers, village societies or from the author themselves.

Three of the latest of such publications cover Melbourn, Barrington and the Gransdens. For Victorian Melbourn Miss McNeice has read the wide range of other parish histories, selected from them and added information not previously recorded to give a glance at the houses and pubs, trades and customs of the village. She includes "Gooding" when on St Thomas' day, 21st December, poor widows went around asking for money or goods preparatory to Christmas. The streets they tramped are still there but the names may have changed. Norgetts Lane was previously known as Morgan Lane and Organ Lane was originally the place where Mr Norgan kept the pound for stray animals.

May Day customs are recalled at Barrington. For many the village is notable for its large green, attractive cottages and the half-timbered Royal Oak public house -once one of seven hostelrys locals could patronise but there is another side - the industrial heritage of the village, the brick and coprolite pits and cement works (now greatly in the news) which clash with the image of old-world thatched cottages.

But as Ray Jude shows these were essential providers of employment for local men when labour was even shorter than today. The terraced houses built by the brick company for its workers provided accommodation and were later supplemented by discarded railway carriages which made good mobile homes for four families while mobile food was supplied from Coote's fish and chip van which operated between 1930 and 1952.

Bakers and butchers feature in the most professionally produced volume issued by the Gransden Society where a most interesting range of pictures, taken by a wealth of local photographers are supplemented by detailed captions. They introduce crazy Betty Cade, a former resident of the Oley Almshouses, who was kept chained up - an object of mingled terror and wonderment to village children, and recount how a lad came to be able to claim that he had sat on the weather-cock on the top of the church. From more recent days come memories of the Queen of Yugoslavia who lived in the village during the second world war, when Wellingtons and Lancasters took off from local fields and village trees were cut down so that lorries carrying bombs could manoeuvre round the corners.

Victorian Melbourn - a passing glance by Miss J McNeice, 6 Dolphin Lane, Melbourn, £3.50 plus postage. Barrington : a tour in old photographs by Raymond & Margaret Jude published by the Barrington Society, c/o 12 Upsheres, Saffron Walden CB113BP. £5.00. The Gransdens in old picture postcards by the Gransden Society published by European Library (ISBN 90-288-6077-0). £8.95.

Reflections 1995 12 13

WHEN did they move Hobson's Conduit to Huntingdon, scrap the one way system in Ely or sell Chivers Christmas puddings to the Americans in fancy glass basins at \$3.53 per dozen?

The answer to the last question is January 1912 and is revealed in a newly acquired copy of Chivers Export catalogue of that date which gives some glimpse of the difficulties to be faced when endeavouring to establish an international market for local produce.

To attract the attention of buyers, the company used the back page to depict colour views of its Histon canning works as it was in 1901 but illustrated its front cover by a most attractive colour view of the village green with contented cows drinking from the brook to the mild consternation of wildfowl and the background dominated by olde-world white-washed thatched cottages - surely appealing to its potential customers in Boston.

How much of the rural scene was accurate and how much artistic licence is something only a local can say, but sometimes the truth can be manipulated.

Certainly the former Head of Ely Kings' School, Hubert Ward, spotted some discrepancies on a painting by Dennis Flanders - choristers never processed down the Gallery in Cathedral robes, no member of staff wore gown and square in 1980 and some of the cars seem to be heading the wrong way up a one-way street - but he felt they did not spoil a good picture.

It is one of 52 colour plates in 'Watercolours in Academe' by the topographical draughtsman who died in 1994.

Amongst others is (inevitably) King's College, though the forecourt and positioning of the famous pillar box are different from today and there is a profusion of academic gowns in this view first produced in 1955.

There are also pictures of Peterhouse, where the caption refers to the memorial to Godfrey Washington at the college whereas other sources place it in St Mary's Church nearby, and Kimbolton School, whose main building is the castle where VIII's first wife Katharine of Aragon died.

As for Hobson's Conduit well that is my mistake. But a photograph in a new pictorial history of Huntingdon does show an edifice very like it being unveiled at Hinchbrooke House in 1889.

It is one of over 170 views taken by local photographers Arthur Maddison, Frederick Hinde and Ernest Whitney some of whose negatives were rescued from an old cellar and are now at Huntingdon county record office. Others reveal much of the unexpected history of the town - the Portholme Aerodrome company which built sea-planes, Sopwith Snipes and Camels during the Great War from works alongside those of Eddison Bell, manufacturers of gramophone records between 1923 and 1930.

Elsewhere Murkett Brothers built motorised tricycles and George Maddox's locally manufactured motor cars carried mourners at his funeral in 1921.

Nor must one overlook the processing works of Messrs Chivers and sons which from 1930 helped meet the demand for that company's products around the world

"Watercolours in Academe by Dennis Flanders published by Cotenporary Watercolours at £25, "Huntingdon : a pictorial history" by David Cozens, Phillimore, £12.95

Reflections 1995 12 20

The donation of an odd issue of a magazine called "Punch in Cambridge" would I thought make an easy subject for an article. How wrong can one be. It was published between 1833 and 1834 as a Whig journal and was soon opposed by "Toby in Cambridge" which supported the Tory cause.

As their titles suggest they endeavoured to amuse and to provide pleasant company for dark winter evenings as well as to enlighten townsfolk on matters of topical interest.

In this latter role they are now very hard for me at least to appreciate. One might enjoy the wit of contemporary political satire and be familiar with current political nicknames (like "Tarzan") but it is entirely a different matter when trying to understand the politics of 160 years ago when Earl Grey, Viscount Melbourne, Robert Peel and Viscount Melbourne were Prime Ministers.

Locally there were various contentious issues. The Reform Act enfranchised many more voters and the Corporation Commissioners were investigating corruption in local government. Indeed The Times slated the council for "shameless profligacy and inveterate dishonesty. Just 158 freemen (only 118 of whom lived in Cambridge) controlled the affairs of 20,000 people. They obtained corporation property with one Alderman paying L40 for two acres of land in Hills Road and then selling it next year for L400. In the previous 14 years they had spent just L480 for public purposes and L1,3000 on dinners. The University was debating changes in their rules which might allow dissenters to attend, Downing college was petitioning against paying rates and a mob attacked the Anatomical Theatre after a pauper's body was mistakenly supplied for dissection. The Riot Act was read and order was finally restored after considerable damage had been done to the building and its contents.

In a rare example of co operation the University and Town combined to establish a Board of Health to combat the feared spread of cholera. Punch in Cambridge took up the subject on in its first issue, 7th February 1832 claiming that the Corporation hoped to use the disease to direct attention from Reform. They also comment on a new fashion of duelling reporting that two students at Berlin rather than resorting to pistols or swords they both went up to a patient attacked with cholera and kissed him. Both apparently survived.

Such happenings are recorded in Charles Henry Cooper's "Annals of Cambridge" reported in the columns of the local newspapers Cambridge Independent Press and the Cambridge

Chronicle but it takes "Toby" to leak the news that a proposed Tax surcharge on each of the new voters had been delayed until after the Borough Elections perhaps some things do not change

Reflections 1995 12 27

IN WINTER the black fenland soil turns white with frost and the dark, cold fenland waters turn white with swans.

Like bulky ghosts thousands of Whooper and Bewick swans arrive from even more Arctic climes of Siberia or Iceland - a mere 500 miles away over inhospitable seas which need to be crossed in a single flight.

The man-made expanses of Washes at Welney become a resting place for this remarkable assemblage of wildfowl and people flock in their hundreds to view them and to witness the remarkable ritual when at night, under the glow of floodlights, these majestic birds taken sustenance from the keeper's wheelbarrow, the corn cast across the water. Yet hidden beyond the high river banks this wonderful sight is so easily missed -it needs to be sought out to be appreciated. The same applies to an excellent photographic record of Black fens, white swans published from Meldreth in 1994 but only noticed by me in a St Ives bookshop recently.

Alongside it on the shelves was a small book of poetry, privately published in Hemingford Grey by Toni Watson. It is a retelling in verse of several of the tales from the Fens recounted by W.H. Barrett and including his reference to the five swans who arrived in the skies above Littleport on June 28, 1816 at precisely the time when five local bodies were twitching convulsively on the gallows at Ely, executed for their part in the protest at the harshness of fenland life which has been immortalised in the phrase "Littleport Riots."

Perhaps if they had possessed a single grey goose quill their lives might not have been forfeit - for there was a fenland tradition that such a token, when accompanied by the secret password, would ensure that a true fenman must do anything to aid its holder.

Oliver Cromwell is said to have presented one to each of the local men who had rallied to his cause - an undying token of his support for them. Yet Cromwell himself broke the fenland code when he refused to honour a plea for assistance from King Charles I on the eve of his execution.

The King had received the slit grey goose quill after he had spared the life of a fenman condemned to hang - the criminal himself was prepared to die but the hangman's rope would also mean the death of the family who depended on him - the family for whom he had stolen a sheep.

Others found that a partridge or hare might mean the difference between a full belly or starvation and John Bell includes one such case in his second anthology of Cambridgeshire crimes.

In 1833 a gamekeeper to the Earl of Hardwick was on patrol in Wimpole wood when he heard a gunshot. He confronted two poachers both of whom lifted their shotguns and fired at him from a distance of nine feet.

Remarkably he escaped death and, thanks to clever detection, his assailants were later hanged at Cambridge castle – without benefit of a single goose quill.

Black fens, white swans by Lindley Good is published by Wigeon Publications, 21 North End, Meldreth. The grey goose quill and other ballads of the Fens is by Toni Watson of Hemingford Grey at £7.95

More crimes of Cambridgeshire by John Bell Popular Books Ltd, PO Box 111, St Ives ISBN. £6.99

Reflections 1996 01 03

Just occasionally I start to catch up with some of the items which have come in during previous weeks and months, though the reports accessioned this week may well take another two or three months before they finally find their way into our catalogues

On the face of it the official report of debates in the House of Commons on 23rd March 1937 may not be compulsive reading, especially when the main business of the day was the Consolidated Fund (no.2) Bill. Speakers included the Honorable Members for Wakefield, Leominster and Carnarvon a certain Lloyd George. But the MPs for the Isle of Ely, James de Rothschild, and Cambridgeshire (Captain Briscoe) were well to the fore.

The issue for debate however was one of urgent and definite national importance one of the heroic struggles of peace time which found men and women labouring by day and night with the aid of flickering oil lamps, under conditions of the last Great War, in mud and slime, with water up to the knees in order to defend their own homes. People were trapped in isolated cottages surrounded by water, children not able to go to school for six months and households marooned and unable to provide themselves even with food and the necessities of life. Yes it was the issue of fen drainage once more.

James de Rothschild was appreciative of the opinions of his colleagues, though found it hard to reconcile some of what was being reported in the National papers with the situation he knew it at first hand for example he had read how Mepal had been evacuated on Tuesday night, but knew for a fact that there had been a successful Liberal Party meeting on the Friday and people would hardly have returned to a war zone for such an event. However large areas had been lost to cultivation including Cawdle Fen between Ely and Lt Thetford where one farmer had 74 acres under water last year, it had flooded again this year and was now under water again.

Captain Briscoe speaking for his Cambridgeshire constituents singled out the 8,000 acres around Bottisham and Swaffham Prior. It had flooded in 1911, 1919, 1928 and now 1937. Part of the problem was inadequate pumping equipment and the only remedy had to be more expenditure at Denver Sluice.

Another brave MP, had himself paid a visit to the area and seen just how unpleasant it could be to live in a house within a few yards of an enormously high bank brim full of menacing water, knowing full well that if the bank were to give way their homes would be gone and their livelihood also. The blame, as always, lay on the Government be it Tory Government, Liberal Government or a combination of both.... On and on the debate ranged until it was time to turn to other topics the National Health Insurance Act (amendment) Bill, the Electricity (Supply) Act special order relating to Dover and then, at just before 10pm the most important debate of all that the House should adjourn.

FLOODS 1937

Reflections 1996 01 10

The day before Christmas Eve two people struggled into the Cambridgeshire Collection bearing gifts hidden in three very heavy carrier bags. The day after Boxing Day another such parcel was delivered to our door at home. For some people the opportunity of a few days break, especially at this time of year, gives an excuse for a good clear out of paper to make way for the mass likely to arrive as the new year progresses, adding to the duplicate stock available for others to borrow from the Collection.

For much of the content of the four carrier bags we already held in profusion. Structure Plan and town planning reports are usually delivered to us when just produced, giving people the chance to consult and read what is being proposed – they are essential for some, irrelevant to others. Thus the contents of the first carriers related to plans for the now developed Grafton Centre whilst it was still known as the Kite Area, whilst the second was concerned with the new village known as Westmere by the planners, Wetmere by the protestors. This included an Environmental statement, part of the package of plans and papers finally revealed to our village by the developers at a display in the Parish Hall where smartly suited executives with their mobile phones kept a watchful eye on the protesting yokels whose opposition was to be anticipated but whose eventual victory inconceivable.

Strangely at the end of the evening one of these bulky reports had gone missing – the guards had virtually frisked everybody who left to ensure their information remained confidential until they chose to make it available – always just before Christmas – year after year we knew the festive season was approaching when a new plan was produced days before everybody knocked off for their turkey and puddings and an immediate response required. Quite how the elusive report came to get tucked away behind the curtains at the back of the hall is a mystery not yet formally solved, but certainly the one now before me seems to have the same watermarks from the condensation on the windowsill|

There have been many plans and proposals over the last century or so – a new road to replace Emmanuel Street in 1901 which was dropped after public opposition – but which led to the Borough Council building an underpass to link the two parts of Emmanuel College split by the existing road. In 1912 there were plans for a new road from Mill Pool to Coe Fen through the disused Kings and Bishops Mills building which were finally demolished in 1927.

In 1932 Magdalene College proposals to replace the old shops and houses opposite its gates to provide a wide new roadway into the centre of town were dropped but in 1949 that area was once more in the headlines, the County wanting to close the street whilst the Borough wanted it widened with a bigger and better bridge. The discussions continue to take place, old ideas being revived and old objections rethought. Who knows how the papers just received will be reworked in the years to come

REFLECTIONS 1996 01 17 MISSING

Reflections by Mike Petty 24th January 1996

Papworth St Agnes is a small settlement buried within south Cambridgeshire, the road down into the valley leads to nowhere else and a few years ago led only to a church, bakehouse a few farms and some tumbled down cottages. Many of the cottages have now disappeared and in their stead have arisen modern new dwellings.

When Dora Tack arrived there in 1942 as an escapee from from Brixton she found herself in a world far removed from the metropolis. When she fell in love with a local farm labourer she needed to register the impending marriage with a proper address, yet neither streets nor houses had names. So she had recorded it as "near the church" Papworth St Agnes – though every cottage could equally claim that distinction. However it satisfied the registrar.

Having already recorded her own experiences in "From bombs to buckets" Dora has now encouraged the other residents to share their recollections of the settlement as it was in 1942 to provide a fascinating account of the community and houses from that period.

All the buildings are there, from the Manor House with its priest hole entered from the panelling high in the landing from which a rope ladder led down into the secret chamber to cottages where rats rustled in the thatch but nobody bothered as long as they did not come down into the house itself.

The Reading Room had been erected so that men of the village could have somewhere to meet in winter evenings the Squire having ruled against a pub. It was understood that there should be no alcohol on the premises but one night the Rector arrived to find a beer bottle though it was explained that it contained vinegar for the fish and chips then being consumed. As the building stood empty and unused people asked whether it might be converted into living accommodation and the tales of its occupants are fully recorded together with the Tilley reading lamp that was brought in to replace the dull yellow glow of the oil lamps.

Dora does not shrink from recording the other everyday details of life before mains water and flushing toilets, recalling the "Coffee shop" the family name for the brick built slated roof lavatory at the back of the cottage which lacked windows but had holes cut in the door. Inside were two wooden seats, one adult size the other lower and smaller for children. The buckets were emptied every Saturday, being removed via a hinged door at the back of the building which could be draughty when the loo was actually in use|

There were bats in bedrooms and fleas in the beds best caught and dropped in the po underneath but all the while there was a war to be fought with Home Guard hut, Italian prisoners of war and even German air raids to contend with and all are recorded in a most readable manner.

"Whispering elms : Papworth St Agnes in 1942" by Dora Tack published by Kings Music ISBN 1 871775 05 1 price

CAPTIONS :

Reflections 1996 01 31

From time to time people come into the Cambridgeshire Collection and go through our waste paper box. Our photocopier is quite adequate and most people use it happily enough but from time to time something goes wrong the copy is too dark or has not quite got the section needed so the duff copies go into a box so that others can use them as scrap paper.

So what does end up in that box and how much a reflection is it of what people are actually using for their research. To find out I have pulled out a handful of paper and will now analyse it just as it comes.

First out comes a super enlarged picture of the construction of the new Cambridge regional college, next a panorama of the most established centre of learning, looking across the centre of town with the Castle Hill on one side and Downing on the other. This is a particularly attractive view looking down the river from Jesus Lock and showing Magdalene and St John's college bridges spanning the Cam drawn about 110 years ago.

A map of St Matthew's parish showing the area bounded by Mill Road, East Road and the railway line about 1860 which accompanies a dissertation for an MA degree at Anglia on the theme of "Bedders and brewers : women of St Matthews, work and images 1850 1900" has

obviously been found useful for somebody whilst alongside it is a part of a much more modern map of the area around Ferry Burrows, Pickle Fen, Old Halves and Stocking Drove farm just outside Chatteris.

Over 2,000 people packed Ely Cathedral for the funeral of the Bishop of Ely, Dr White Thomson, who had been appointed in 1924 and seems to have passed away at the end of 1933, according to clues on the extract made from a microfilm copy of the Cambridge Independent Press. By pure coincidence the next item is also from a newspaper, being a cutting from a report of a Parish Council meeting in one of the local villages, September 1995. We have taken such cuttings files on 800 places and topics since 1958.

Yet another newspaper extract : this time the front page of the Cambridge Daily News for 13th November 1964. Which of the stories attracted our user the squabble in the Labour Party, the distribution of food at a camp in the Congo, was it the report that London's Christmas shoppers who go by car would find it even tougher that year with Mr Marples announcing a reduction in the number of special car parks or the protest on Russian nuclear tests.

More maps Wimpole park about 1886, more cuttings, an enlargement of a picture of a horse (head missed off so that's why it was done again), engravings of the founders of Pambroke and Queens' college and the construction of air raid trenches at the Cambridge High School, 1939 no wonder people find it interesting enough to plunder them|

Reflections by Mike Petty, 7th February 1996

For the last several months I have become particularly acquainted with the visiting times at Addenbrooke's Hospital. But now the need for a few days away but nearby seemed irresistible.

There were just a few commitments to honour. A Thursday afternoon talk to Histon junior school about Victorian times would be over by 3.30 except for the telephone call from the Radio Station wanting somebody to talk about the newly discovered air raid shelter at Parkside school. This proved a useful introduction to the Friday morning presentation at RAF Lakenheath about Cambridge at war when American troops flocked to the town for rest and recuperation.

Then back for the daily Visit before joining the traffic en route to Bury and taking to the black back roads of Suffolk. The Grange Hotel Thurston stands amongst trees down a winding, lonely drive. We had discovered it in daylight or might never have found our way. Finally the house loomed ghostly and dark with just the thinnest glimmer of light around the heavy entrance door surely the Histon kids would have appreciated just what life was like for their ancestors in the days before electricity Inside a fire sparkled in the grate, the Grandfather clock ticked and a friendly (but almost Victorian|) receptionist informed us we would be the only guests. When booking we had asked about the prospect of extending our two night break, to be told that nobody stayed a third night ... Offered a choice of rooms we selected the bridal suite brass bedstead, new furniture and massive windows that overlooked the surrounding gardens and trees. We filled the kettle and scanned the line of books to discover one particularly rare title my "Cambridge in pictures 1888 1988" unsigned by the author (and surely I had defaced every one|)

The prospect of a lonely evening vanished as the hotel filled for a dinner dance on behalf of the local hospice, though the chef proprietor could still produce food which would grace the table at Claridges (where he had trained before lecturing on his craft in Germany and Canada). On the second evening the dining room with its Adam fireplace was filled and a mystery resolved it was the size of the portions which discouraged an extended stay.

Afterwards we wondered just what it was trying to gain entry to the bar from the floodlit garden. Apparently it was a deer and not the ghost which some say haunts one of the rooms, a reflection of the time when the building had served as an Anglo American club after the war.

Previously it had been a private home built for an Archdeacon of Ely about 100 years ago. Back at work I tracked him down Rev Frank Robert Chapman who in 1906 had published a now scarce work on "The Sacrist Rolls of Ely Cathedral". I have his book in the Collection, just as his old house holds one of mine but no longer quite so rare as it was.

Reflections 1996 02 14

When people choose to move house there are a number of considerations. Prospective locations need to be assessed having due consideration for features such as accessibility, type of property available quaint thatched cottage with an earth floor and single outside tap or stately mansion; are there roses around the door or robins on the bird table

For those experiencing such predicaments a number of newly received items might give guidance. From Thriplow has come a village guide and history emphasizing that although the motorway is only a mile away it is out of sight and out of earshot, that mains sewage has now been installed and that it has retained the best of its legacies from the past. Colour photographs capture its charm, especially in springtime when its daffodil weekend attract visitors from near and far.

Visitors flock too to a garden of a thatched cottage nestling in the bend of a river with an early Tudor Guild Hall and a Norman Church for neighbours. Here an American novice has constructed his version of an English country garden and has described the experience in a booklet published in America back in 1987 and finally arriving in the Collection last week. "Gardening for fun in England" is illustrated with sketches of sherry with the Vicar, flower shows, rabbits and moles and just enough clues to indicate that this rural idyll is based in Linton where the arrival of a blackbird or the birth of thrushes is a major event.

Haddenham folk are somewhat more systematic in their recording of ornithological data and its Conservation Society have published an illustrated study listing the Black Tailed Godwits, Green Sandpipers, Redshanks and Hoopoes and other visitors that have been glimpsed by its human residents.

But wherever one chooses to live there is another problems : that of getting your furniture there. For nearly 100 years one of the firms that would have eased that difficulty was George Bolton. Established in the early days of the railways its wagons could be loaded on goods trucks. Sized between 12 and 18 feet in length and about 7 foot high they would be tested against the height of the tunnels on the route. They were constructed with a well in the floor into which crockery could be packed and covered over before heavier items were positioned on top of it.

Removals were one thing, the storage of furniture another and warehouses were built in Tenison & Glisson Road. Initially there was plenty of space and one of the floors was hired out for roller skating, but soon the buildings would be packed, each family's possessions kept separated and secure inside hessian shrouds, awaiting the day then they would be reassembled as part of somebody's life.

"About Thriplow" published by the Thriplow Society

"Gardening for fun in England" by Charles R. Anderson, published by The Saturday Shop, Clarkesville, Georgia 30523

"The birds of Haddenham" from Wendy Lanman, 1 The Pond, Haddenham 3.00

"The warehouse, George Bolton's : a family history" by Alan Brigham (unpublished study)

Reflections by Mike Petty 21st February 1996

It was a perfectly reasonable request for a our reader to make : he wanted a catalogue of the Cambridgeshire Collection that could be taken away.

We have a wide range of different catalogues of books, illustrations, maps, handbills, videos together with a number of indexes to newspapers, local biography, portraits taken by Ramsey & Muspratt and files of various sorts all of which are listed in our Guide to catalogues.

Several of these catalogues can indeed be obtained for use outside the library since those covering books, illustrations and our news index have been microfilmed at various times whilst the more recent book accession are recorded on computer disks a copy of which are filed at the County Record Office. The duplicate stock we hold which can be borrowed for reading at home is now nearly all included on the Cambook computers held in many of the county's libraries

The newly published material we acquire is listed in three separate publications, including Conduit, the newsletter of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society and "East Anglian Bibliography" where they join similar titles notified by my colleagues throughout the rest of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

But what was needed was just a printed list of the books held. Our colleagues in the former Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely County Library managed to produce "Fen and Furrow" : a list of their local books (though not covering Cambridge itself), why not us.

There have in the past been two major lists of Cambridge titles chief amongst which is Robert Bowes "A catalogue of books printed at or relating to ... Cambridge from 1521 to 1893" published in 1894. It was supplemented in 1912 by a Catalogue of the books and papers collected by John Willis Clark and bequeathed by him to Cambridge University Library.

Now these have been joined by a third. Dr Pierre Gorman has collected Cambridge books for over forty years, amassing one of the largest private collections around which he has now donated to his local University Library, that of Melbourne, Australia. They have issued printed catalogues of nearly 1,300 titles published between 1574 and the present day, one arranged by author, another by date which shows how books have continued to be issued particularly in recent years with nearly 150 during the 1990s. A third catalogue, by subject is in course of preparation

The catalogues are available both in printed form and on computer disk from the Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne, Australia and may be consulted (but still not as yet to take away) in the Cambridgeshire Collection. They are an essential guide for anybody wishing to read about the city and University.

Dear Pierre

thank you for you parcel containtng the catalogues of Cambridge books.

It was nice to hear from you again for I feared that perhaps all your exertions whilst here in Cambridge may have proved too strenuous. I now suspect that all your energies have gone into the compilation of your catalogues.

I have browsed them with interest, though not yet scanned each item page by page seeking items we have missed in our own files.

One or two slight discrepancies seem to have arisen for example the works by Arthur Beales Gray (the bookbinder) are listed between those of Arthur Gray (Master of Jesus college), you have Salman instead of Salmon for the author of *Foreigners companion* and *Cantabrigia illustrata* rather than *Cantabrigia* for the Sayer. There is also the old problem of authors who insist on using abbreviations for their forenames.

These are just small points to prove I have looked at the work and to disguise my envy that you have produced such an important work of scholarship which will be of great benefit to many people

I have featured it in a forthcoming article for the Cambridge Weekly News and will send a cutting when it is issued

Life in the Collection continues apace with developments in the new technology line involving a Geographic Information System, the development of our scanning and hopeful printing facilities and the ability to search various items on CD, including Palmer's Index to the Times.

Chris has finally issued his first book of pictures of Ely and area (in which I believe he has managed to include pictures of all his family) and is planning another on Cambridge.

Library reorganisation continues apace with a reduction in opening hours for all the county's libraries (except for us who are to increase hours!) and talk of closer links between local studies libraries, the county record office, museums and archaeology. This latter has been trumpeted before and come to nothing. However in recent months we have seen the retirement of the County Archivist and the departure of the County Archaeologist or more properly she has been granted a 19 month sabbatical to get her to the required retirement age. Effectively this means two of the longest established "Heritage" officers have gone leaving just me. Voluntary redundancy forms are going around again but I think I will stick it out for a bit longer if I get the chance

Domestically we lost father just before Christmas and now have mother in Addenbrooke's Hospital so that with one thing and another life is somewhat hectic at present

I trust things stay well with you and look forward to volume three in due course

Ys

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COLLECTION # c.77.4

Reflections 1996 02 28

It was one of the biggest funerals the small village had ever seen. Contingents of Cambridgeshire police, Territorials and Cambridge University Officer Training Corps joined the procession to the churchyard where two coffins were laid side by side. One contained the body of an old soldier William Holden Westnutt who had enlisted in Cambridge in September 1857 and served his country for over 10 years before returning to his native Caldecote. The other was that of a much younger man, former Sergeant William Nicholas who had soldiered

for 21 years before making his home in the village. The two became firm friends and had died on the same day at the same hour.

It had been the idea of the Chief Constable that they should be buried in a joint military funeral and hundreds of people flocked to watch the spectacle. They included a photographer who issued a series of postcards just donated to the Collection. It would appear however that there is no headstone to the graves in which they lay and that without the snaps, and the account in the Cambridge Chronicle of May 1914, the story would be largely forgotten

By contrast Louis Mander Stokes is commemorated on four memorials, half of which he had no real connection with. He attended St Faith's Preparatory School and Rugby School but was killed before he took up his place at Corpus Christi College whilst Lt Wilbraham would have been just a name to him for his father did not take up Ministry there until 1917, the year following his son's death at the Battle of the Somme and burial in Mailly Wood Cemetery.

Henry Paine Stokes was a fellow of Corpus and, at the start of the Great War, vicar of St Paul's church in Cambridge. He sent his son to Rugby School and kept the letters that the lad wrote home from September 1911. Through them he learned of Toast fagging and other rituals which marked Public School life at the time. Soon however there was conflict ahead for as the world was plunged into war Louis felt he must pay his part whilst his father, a member of the Cambridge Arbitration Association, was ardently opposed to militarism. Letters home soon record the sacrifices which former Rugby students had already made 100 killed by May 1915 one of whom had sat at the very desk the lad now used.

Louis agreed to sit the entrance examination for his father's old college and failed, his heart was set on the Royal Marines. Soon he was being saluted by sergeants and writing home for his school manual on shooting. He went overseas in July 1916, writing home to describe his living and sleeping conditions and in November to thank them for a parcel of fruitcake, nuts and socks a welcome relief after a long and muddy task. "I wish I could tell you what we are doing, but I can't. However I am having great fun, as I hope you are". It was the last he wrote.

"A dear and noble boy : the life and letter of Louis Stokes 1897 1916", edited by R.A. Barlow & H.V. Bowen & published by Leo Cooper 15.95

Reflections 1996 03 06

A selection of newspaper cuttings, carefully snipped from the Cambridge Daily News of March 1947 have been given to the Collection. They show how on just 49 years ago today the county was in chaos due to a heavy fall of snow.

Housewives were being urged to conserve their liquid milk supplies since roads blocked by snow were preventing the milk lorries getting through to farms. Elsworth and Knapwell were completely cut off with waist high drifts in the village and children enjoying an enforced absence from school.

County roads chiefs proclaimed it the worse snow since 1927. Conditions around Linton, Caxton and Newmarket were particularly bad with drifts varying from two to twelve feet and the London to Newmarket road was blocked between Royston and Duxford aerodrome. Several cars were stranded and at the foot of Clunchpit Hill between Royston and Kneesworth a private car, a N.A.A.F.I. van and two mail vans were dug out of deep drifts

Several country buses services from Cambridge were suspended, whilst Eastern Counties were estimating that it would be two days before their vehicles could force a passage between Exning and Burwell which, like Soham, Fordham, Wicken and Isleham were completely cut off by road. School buses had been unable to get round to Gazeley, Kennett and other

neighbouring villages whilst workers employed at Pyes and Chivers have had to spend the day at home.

Soon however the snow was melting fast and by 14th March Cambridge was hit by some of the worst flooding for nearly 30 years. Silver street was closed to all traffic, the Backs under water, Midsummer Common was a swimming pool for ducks and houses in Riverside had a foot of river in their ground floor rooms. Meanwhile at the Tivoli cinema near Mitcham's Corner management were reporting their front stalls flooded but were denying the rumour of a change in their programme to "I cover the waterfront"

At Linton houses in Meadow Lane and Chapel Terrace were evacuated and water rose to well over knee deep. Hinxton, Stapleford and Whittlesford were also experiencing flooding whilst at Sawston the sub power station was marooned and electricity supplies cut off

Then on 16th March came a gale which added to the havoc, stripping the roof from the kitchens of Downing College and from a pre fab in Gilbert Close. In Fitzroy Street the window of Taylor's chemists shop shattered and sponges valued between 35 and 45 shillings each were blown away whilst tiles from its roof hurtled across the road and smashed a second floor window in Laurie & McConnal's shop opposite. Trees were uprooted and chaos continued but the newspapers had other and even more dramatic news to report from the fens as has been told before.

Reflections 1996 03 13

Whilst millions come to Cambridge to admire the magnificence of the college architecture few will ever penetrate into the maze of University buildings which occupy the large chunk of central area from the Corn Exchange to Downing College

The Collection itself does not attempt to fully cover the activities of the University departments but in recent weeks two items have come our way which provide an insight into this most important area

One is a series of maps compiled 60 years ago by G.S. Graham Smith of the Pathology department which chart the development of the area from 1574 to 1936. In the early days the land between Pease Market (Peas Hill), Slaughter house lane (Corn Exchange Street), Dowdivers Lane (Downing Street) and Lutborne Lane (Free School Lane) belonged to an Augustinian Friary, founded in 1290 and was surrounded by a wall.

When the Friary ceased in 1538 the Professor of Physic bought the grounds and lived there. He left the house and grounds to the University in his will of 1584 but this was not implemented. Instead it passed to Stephen Perse who left part of the site for a free grammar school and for almshouses.

By 1720 the old Friary buildings had become ruinous and were pulled down whilst much of the remaining site was given to the University for a Botanic Garden in 1762. When this

moved in 1831 it left the ground clear for the erection of the new laboratories necessary for the growth in the teaching of natural sciences then been undertaken by the University

This included a department of Chemistry, completed 1888, although the first Professor had been appointed in 1702. Initially laboratories were set up in various colleges including Sidney Sussex where complaints about the smell of fumes soon caused it to be relocated. The most significant research to be undertaken there was that of Thomas Heycock and Francis Neville who for some 30 years studied metallurgy including alloys of gold and aluminium work which was to prove significant in the development of semiconductors some 100 years later.

When Neville retired in 1908 his colleague moved his work to the Chemistry Laboratory in Pembroke Street as Reader in Metallurgy a position funded by the Goldsmith's Company who later gave a grant of L5,500 for the laboratory which now carries their name.

The old Sidney Street laboratories stood empty until students celebrating the success of their rowing crew during the 1910 May Bumping Races smashed its glass roof, burning books and papers, laboratory notes and photographic negatives in what the Cambridge Daily News described as "youth having its fling" and which led to Sidney Sussex students being barred from Heycock's lectures for some years to follow.

"The origins of the Goldsmith's metallurgical laboratory at Cambridge" by Lindsay Greer from University department of materials science & metallurgy
c.14

Reflections by Mike Petty 20 March 1996

Old papers fade away. No matter how well treated what started out as white and supple becomes old and brittle and given any rough handling soon crumbles into dust

The same applies to old soldiers except that they start out much fitter and stronger before being subjected to treatment much more violent than words on paper can record. Dennis Poulter was born in Babraham in 1924 and played his part during the Second World War as a Royal Marine. But now he has turned his attention to other conflicts and to the pages of those crumbling local newspapers which include some record of the sacrifices made by Sawston men in earlier conflicts.

There were no Cambridgeshire journalist in 1643 when John Byatt took part in the engagement at Linton Bridge as one of the King's army who were utterly defeated by a Roundhead night attack.

By the time of the Crimean war villagers could learn of local involvement and letters home from those taking part in the Boer War give some insight into suffering "it is horrible here. God and those engaged only know"

Inevitably however it is the period 1914 to 1919 which makes the greatest impact. Dennis sketches the international and Sawston scene as well as recording the words written home and reported in the local paper such as the sinking of H.M.S. Aboukir in September 1914 which left Alfred Maskell drifting for 30 hours semiconscious on a raft whilst 1,400 others drowned.

Private Spicer wrote home in May 1915 "... a shell came over and struck a house at the corner of the market square and killed several soldiers. One poor chap had his head blown off ... but of course we get used to this. It made one think of home if the Germans were to get there, and yet there are scores of able bodied chaps that will not join the Army"

When conscription was introduced in 1916 local tribunals were set up to decide who should be put into reserved occupations or who should be sent to the front. Companies such as

leather manufacturers Thomas Evans had to fight to keep skilled men, as did butchers, dairymen and shopkeepers. Alfred Wakefield, aged 40, married with seven children was engaged in making gloves for munitions workers and had fifteen girls under him he was exempted for a time, though as the situation got worse the regulations became even tighter.

Even so at the end of the war there was disagreement in Sawston over a memorial to the fallen heroes. Now flesh has been added to the bare names etched in stone and now crumbling away.

Copies of the book will be made to order from Dennis Poulter, 43 Churchfield Ave, Sawston CB2 4LA. It deserves to sell in the thousands.

"Going for a soldier ... dedicated to the men and women of Sawston who served in the armed forces 1640 1919"

Reflections 1996 03 27

IT WAS Rag Week recently but I missed it.

Fortunately somebody brought us a Rag Mag so that future researchers may learn from print what was not overtly obvious in the street - that "a bunch of utterly crazy students" had been "doing even more utterly crazy things" to raise money for local, national and international charities Among the "wild and wacky events" were a comedy revue, a beer-fest, bed race and procession while the magazine itself reprinted "old, tried and tested" jokes including the profound observation that "A university is a fountain of knowledge where all come to drink".

A glance back at the equivalent for 1969 shows that students then favoured more political comment reprinting what it claimed to be captured enemy documents from Vietnam and quotes from two contradictory speeches of Harold Wilson of 1961 and 1964 relating to the Dunkirk spirit.

Sixties students raised money through concerts featuring Fairport Convention and The Who, arm wrestling, an attempt on the world prune-eating record or a dwyle flonking marathon. Turning back to 1959 and the Rag target was to be raised through a cycle marathon, the World Bridge Record, a Tiddley Winks grand prix, punt joisting and the Dagenham Girl Pipers.

The magazine was prefaced by the President of the British Legion extolling the importance of the funds being raised to support the Earl Haig Poppy Day appeal - later dropped during a period of discussion and dispute.

The changing face of the Rag activities is one of the issues summarised in "From our Cambridge correspondent" - a selection of articles from the student magazine, "Varsity" over the last 50 years but perhaps the high spots of undergraduate excesses and genius had been earlier in the century. One was in 1905 when the Mayor received a telegram announcing the arrival at Cambridge station of the Sultan of Zanzibar and requesting appropriate arrangements be put in place to ensure him an adequate tour of the University. Accordingly the Mayor sent the horse-omnibus from the Bull Hotel with an inn servant as his representative and the party were duly shown the principal sights - an exercise made more difficult by the apparent lack of any understanding of the English language (apart from a very familiar swear-word when one of the party stubbed his toe). On their return to the station the assembled crowds were amazed to see the VIPs gather up their robes and make a speedy dash back up Station Road. It was soon exposed as an undergraduate hoax probably echoing a jape in 1873 when Mayor & University had found themselves waiting for-lornly at

Cambridge station for a non-arriving Shah of Persia - an event recalled just weeks earlier by the Cambridge Daily News

"From our Cambridge correspondent : Cambridge student life 1945-95" by Mark Weatherall, Varsity publications. £5.

Reflections 1996 04 03

Quite why the person responsible for the Cambridgeshire Collection in December 1946 chose to keep one of the many posters displayed on the notice boards in the library in Wheeler Street is a mystery.

The advertisement for the contest of Foot the Ball was most distinctive, parodying those issued in Victorian times posters which were themselves filed away afterwards.

The event itself was unusual with two teams of fifteen players dressed in Victorian costume. The kick offs were performed by the Mayor, the Chief Constable and the Senior University Proctor three being needed since the game was to be played with three balls and if history was to be any guide they would also be needed to exercise their respective authority in sorting out the rowdiness that was certain to follow.

In 1579 the Head Constable, Thomas Parise, was one of a team of local men who challenged student sportsmen to "play at the fote ball" on ground near Chesterton church. Unbeknown to the scholars the home team had secretly hidden staves in the church porch and during the course of the game "did pike quarrells agenst the schollars, and did bringe owte there staves, wherewith they did so beat the schollers that divers had there heades broken and wear driven to runne throughe the river" to escape.

Others turned to the Constable and urged him to do his duty and restore peace wherewith Parise "did turne to the schollers, willing them to keep the queenes peace, and turning to the townsmen of Chesterton, willed them to beat the schollers downe".

The result of the match was not reported, the result of the brawl was that the Constable was imprisoned in Cambridge castle.

By contrast the 1946 engagement was relatively peaceful, though one player was penalised for forgetting to remove his top hat before heading the ball and if one or two beards were torn off it was only to do with the strength of post war elastic.

The final result on the day was a 6 4 win for Cambridge, success being clinched in the third half when two balls entered the Oxford goal at the same time.

The final result of the match may be known if the planned reunion does take place, some 50 years later, when the original poster may once again be displayed.

c.38 : football

Reflections 1996 04 10

It is always a sad experience to be invited into a house which was once somebody's home and which now has to be cleared. Books which have been collected and cherished must now be dispersed giving others the opportunity to acquire and cherish but before the dealers are

invited in some people, who have perhaps appreciated using the Collection, will give us the opportunity of selecting items for preservation in our files.

Most books we will already have both in our main collections and in the duplicate stock which is available for home reading but extra copies of certain titles are always welcome.

So it is that two finely bound volumes of Henry Gunning's "Reminiscences of the University, town and county of Cambridge" have recently come into our possession by coincidence just a week or so after I had serialised them in my weekly "Cambridgeshire echoes" spot on Mandy Morton's Sunday arts and entertainment programme on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire.

They indeed make most interesting reading with Gunning's description of shooting snipe in Coe Fen, taking wildfowl on Foulmire Mere (now a bird reserve) and exploring the fens around Bottisham where local lads carried the University sportsmen's game and supplied them with long poles to enable the hunter to leap the very wide ditches which intersected the fens in every direction.

Clayhithe provided a popular meeting place as there was a public house on each side of the river where the ale was very good and the fishing assured. For the landlord of the smaller pub kept well stocked ponds where for a modest charge sportsmen could net sufficient fish to ensure themselves a tale with which to regale their college friends. There was usually assistance on hand in the form of a good natured, pipe smoking bystander who always willing to give advice and lend a hand in landing the catch but only when the big fish had unaccountably escaped the net did the scholar learn that countryfolk could teach even the most academically gifted a thing or two about maximising the profits of their landlord friends.

Gunning attended the opening of Stourbridge Fair, joining the University party in consuming quantities of Oysters at the Oyster House; he recorded the activities of Richard Kidman who masterminded a series of robberies of plate from various colleges and was only discovered after his accomplice's house had been literally pulled down to reveal the hidden store of silver.

Elizabeth Woodcock, buried in snow for seven days and Jemmy Gordon, notorious drunkard who so scared magistrates that they tolerated his outbursts for fear of what he should declare publicly about their own failings are just two of the remarkable characters to be met with in the pages of Gunning's reminiscences truly a book to be cherished for a lifetime

Reflections 1996 04 17

It was really just a programme like so many others : plenty of advertisements for up to date furniture from Laurie and McConnal, comfortable road travel on the Varsity Express Motors and wine from Matthews of Trinity street.

Theatre goers paid them little heed preferring instead to read an analysis of the following week's production or even the names of the actors whose appearance on the stage before them they awaited with anticipation.

But the thing that made it special to us was that it enabled us to complete our file of Festival Theatre programmes for 1935, one more volume could now go to binding, one more set complete.

In truth tracking down the programmes of the Festival is almost as complicated as sorting out the story of the Theatre itself. Happily all has now been made clear in a new history which recounts the development of drama from a temporary wooden and canvas structure erected during Stourbridge Fair, where in 1802 a cry of fire panicked a packed house leaving five people trodden to death and the building condemned as unsafe.

A new Theatre opened near the junction of East Road and Newmarket Road in September 1808 though not even the excellence of the Norwich players nor productions such as "Merry Wives of Windsor" could revive audiences and the building was auctioned in 1815.

By then its replacement was already in being, designed by William Wilkins and lauded in 1814 as "the best provincial theatre in the Kingdom". Crowds flocked to the comic pantomime "Harelquin and Mother Goose" but their favourite was the tragic melodrama entitled "George Barnwell".

The theatre could hold about 700 people in its commodious and well arranged gallery, upper circle, private boxes, dress circle and pit and was visited by many famous Victorian actors during its 60 year run before it was put up for sale. In November 1878 it reopened with tea and buns for 600 people but as an Evangelistic Mission Hall those seeking their more traditional entertainment transferred to another Theatre Royal, this time in Mill Road, soon renamed Sturton Town Hall, Empire Music Hall and finally the Kinema

In 1926 the curtain rose on a new era and most exciting period of drama when Terence Gray established The Festival Theatre. What happened next is told by Roy Brazier who carries the story beyond its closure in 1935 to the 1995 performance by the Marlowe Dramatic Society and expresses the hope that perhaps the future for the building might become once more as successful as its past

"The story of the Festival Theatre, Cambridge" by Roy Brazier 16 Broadfield Cres., Haverhill
L1.99 # c.76

Reflections 1996 04 24

Cambridge colleges are a community unto themselves. Secure within their walls they control their own affairs through Master and Fellows desperately concerned about their own college, often less knowledgeable or bothered about the life outside. Likewise those outside will have little grasp of the fundamental changes in every branch of college life, work and ethos they have experienced during the post war years.

A visitor invited to join their number for a meal at the Top Table will enjoy great hospitality and the brief companionship of number of Fellows whose names one may hear but whose expertise and background one can only guess at.

Now however Corpus Christi has produced a volume of biographical essays on its senior staff from 1952 to 1994 or in their terms from the Mastership of Sir George Thomson to that of Michael McCrum. Two Bishops, two University Librarians and one remarkable nonagenarian, Archie Clark Kennedy, who was a Fellow for almost 66 years, oldest member of the Youth Hostels Association and mountain climber at the age of 80 feature amongst its pages.

Not all senior academics are such pleasant personalities. William Chafy voted for himself in the Mastership election at Sidney Sussex college in 1807. It was the only vote he received. However in 1813 his opponent was disqualified from the post having himself never been a Fellow of the college and Chafy found himself Master.

He seemed to be what teachers now call a strong personality – an arrogant bully. A solicitor described his tone as "loud and imperious" and complained that the Master had "thrust out his tongue at him". His enemies sought to discredit him by sending letters to the Cambridge Chronicle in Chafy's style and signed with his name, whilst his reputation has suffered since the majority of contemporary writers were unsympathetic to his politics and position within the University.

As both Master and Bursar he had a most secure position and could dominate College council meetings. He undertook the refurbishment of the Masters Lodge, making it a fit place for the lavish entertainment for which he was famous.

He also masterminded the building of houses in the Master's garden – the rents for which should go to himself, in Malcolm Street and in Sussex street – where the contractor claimed Chafy wanted so many alterations "that I'll build as I like, for all the Master, the Fellows and the Devil". It all resulted in extra expense, in court cases and redevelopment taking five years longer than planned.

Chafy may not have been popular with his colleagues and the work undertaken during his Mastership soon denigrated but he made his mark on college life and features in a most interesting series of essays produced to mark the College's quartercentary celebrations

"The college of Corpus Christi .. : a contribution to its history from 1952 to 1994" by A. Geoffrey Woodhead. Boydell Press 29.50

"Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge : historical essays" edited by D.E.D. Beales & H.B. Nisbet. Boydell press 35.00

Reflections by Mike Petty 1st May 1996

Each Sunday thousands of people go to church. Many are delighted with recent changes such in the forms of worship, others may be less content with the religious state of affairs. At Kingston in 1993 church life was flourishing though they had been without a Rector for some years and their community was suffering as a result. Their concerns are outlined in a wide ranging parish profile produced in 1993 and recently received in the Collection.

Two other items accessioned on that same day reveal problems in local parishes are nothing new.

Kirtling is a small village near Newmarket which at the turn of the century was dominated by its squire, Lord North. He was a Roman Catholic with a private chapel and chaplain of his own at his home, Kirtling Tower, adjacent to the church. The North Family had however added a memorial chapel to the parish church in the sixteenth century in which several members of the family were interred.

In 1905 his Lordship noticed that a communion table had been placed in "the family's private chapel" and the new Vicar had started conducting services there. He ordered him to stop. The Vicar however was reluctant to surrender one third of his church and felt that this represented an attack on his ministry. Matters were exasperated when the Catholic chaplain objected to the inclusion of religious material in the Vicar's parish magazine and supplied a list of 10 parishioners who did not wish to receive it – though the Vicar claimed the right to deliver it to anyone who wanted them.

Some details of the dispute are contained in copies of correspondence at the County Record Office, though the magazines themselves have not apparently survived. In her University

dissertation Rachel Kemsley has been unable to locate other reports of the controversy which came to a head in 1906 when the Vicar resigned claiming North "has made further demands which ... he may be inclined to drop if I leave". Was it a clash of personalities, or had the resignation something to do with the poverty of the post a mere L92 a year when even L200 was thought of as a "starvation living".

There are more records to chart the dispute at Madingley in 1894 when it was the Lord of the Manor who complained that the new Vicar had introduced "popery" and established a separate meeting house where many parishioners worshipped instead of at the church. This not only deprived the Vicar of his congregation but also of the support of the wealthiest man for the church restoration which was then necessary. Vestry meetings were attended by no one except the Vicar until in 1897 when a large attendance protested at the installation of a new altar without necessary permission, leading to a consistory court hearing in Cambridge which ordered its removal.

"All Saints and St Andrew, Kingston : a parish profile" (Kington PCC 1993)

"An avowedly hostile religion? : conflict in ... Kirtling 1905 06" by Rachel Kemsley (Liverpool University unpublished dissertation, 1996)

"St Mary Magdalene Madingley : the history" by Richard Seale 2nd ed. 1995

Reflections 1996 05 08

The week seems dominated by the bicycle. It started with the arrival of a copy of "The boneshaker" for Spring 1996 containing an article on the Honourable Ion Keith Falconer and the Cambridge University bicycle club, which itself owes much to this column where some months ago I reported the arrival of photographs of cycle races of the 1880s now reproduced in this journal of the Veteran cycle club. Since then we have been in communication with another researcher anxious to add to the known records of cycling in Cambridge.

By coincidence my colleague this week discovered in the Cambridge Chronicle of August 1857 a letter of complaint about two undergraduates on a double velocipede running down a child watching a Punch and Judy show in Barnwell. His attack on "this dangerous and ever growing evil" prompted another correspondent to describe the machines which were propelled by the pressure of the rider's feet on the ground as ridiculous and immoral whenever he met one he went "as close to upsetting it as possible ... I long to send it and its lunatic piped propeller to immortal smash"

The velocipede was defended by John Howes ... one might imagine they were "miniature cars of Juggernaut and that broken arms and legs were of frequent occurrence". However he had had the management of them for 14 or 15 years and could positively state that no accident had occurred except such slight ones "as the clothes brush, soap and court plaister" could remedy.

The machines were already popular in 1843 for when Queen Victoria visited Cambridge in October her progress was greeted by crowds in carriages, "spring van, tumbril gig, and even the eccentric velocipede for which these parts are famous"

An even earlier reference occurs in the Cambridge Chronicle for 14th May 1819 when the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners issued a notice "that any person riding a Machine entitled a Velocipede upon the foot pavement ... is liable to the penalty of twenty shillings". Perhaps by coincidence the next issue includes an advertisement for the sale of furniture and effects of a gentleman leaving Cambridge including two piano forte, three violins, two aeolian harps and a velocipede by Johnson.

Proper bicycling increased in popularity with the invention of pneumatic tyres and Ernest Terah Hooley made his fortune by buying up the Humber and other cycle companies and then selling the shares on the stock market. Using the profits he bought the Dunlop Tyre Company for £3 million and then sold it for £5M. He went on to add to his property empire the estates at Papworth where he entertained the great and the good to extravagant parties. He became a millionaire but went bankrupt for a million and a half and ended up serialising his memoirs in the News of the World extracts from which have also recently come our way.

"The boneshaker : the journal of the veteran cycle club" edited by Nick Clayton, 34 Congelton Road, Alderley Edge, Cheshire, SK9 7AB

c26.485

Reflections by Mike Petty 15th May 1996

Having closed the Cambridgeshire Collection at 7pm (though the last reader had left about an hour before) I was driving to my meeting with Swaffham Bulbeck Women's Institute, wondering how I could describe what had been a comparatively quiet day and listening on the car radio to Brother Cadfael's adventures at Shrewsbury in 1143 expertly recounted on an audio book.

Suddenly amongst the details of a disinterred woman's body discovered by the Abbey plough team came a graphic account of the attack by Geoffrey de Mandeville on Ramsey abbey standing isolated on its small island in the middle of inhospitable fenland. A contemporary chronicler recorded the devastation which followed and that "while the church was held as a castle, blood issued from the walls of the church and of the adjacent cloister"

Here was a good starting point for my talk for that same Geoffrey had subsequently attacked King Stephen's castle at nearby Burwell. His first assault carried the outer lines of the defences. Geoffrey paused, removing his helmet in the July heat, the better to spot some part of the as yet unconquered walls where his final attack might be delivered. As he did so a single arrow from the castle walls grazed his ear and temple a derisory wound which did not deter his attack, but did lead to his death through infection a short time later. Whether this detail is included in "The potter's field" I cannot yet say for I am only on the second of the six cassettes.

Had it been a book I could scan its pages, as I have been doing to seek details of another character who influenced both local and national life.

Stretham has in its centre a fine stone cross of which little is recorded save the tale that when Bishop Morton was on his way to take up his appointment at Ely in 1478 he was so overcome by the magnificent appearance of the Cathedral that he stripped himself of his rich apparel and walked bare foot the remainder of the distance to Ely.

Yet this Bishop John Morton has been another unknown quantity, for he apparently has no biographer yet played a vital role in the most troubled Wars of the Roses between 1455 and 1487 when blood ran far more freely than in even de Mandeville's time. Morton himself witnessed a battle at Ferrybridge in the bitter winter of 1461 when some 20,000 men were slaughtered in an area of bloodstained snow some six miles long and three miles wide. He survived the changing fortunes of the period, switching allegiance from Lancaster to York, being imprisoned in the Tower of London, and made Archbishop of Canterbury. His story is

told, along with that of Margaret Beaufort whose arms dominate the gateways of Christs and St John's colleges in a survey of the lives of five men and women who played their part in a most complicated period of English history but still leaves the mystery of our cross unsolved

"The potter's field" by Ellis Peters (on tape or in print form)

"The wars of the Roses" by Desmond Steward. BCA 1995

Reflections 1996 05 22

Twelve ladies of a certain age come under the spotlight in a new study. The age is that one before their sex was formally admitted to membership of the University in 1947. Their number include Eleanor Sidgwick one of the founders of Newnham college, Mary Paley Marshall whose marriage to economist Alfred was far from idyllic and Marjorie Stephenson whose work on bacterial biochemistry earned her the distinction of being one of the first women to be elected as Fellow of the Royal Society.

Frances Cornford, Charles Darwin's granddaughter, recorded her impressions of Rupert Brooke in her poems and was with him on the day the First World War broke out. She mourned his death as she did that of her son John who, having gained admittance into her husband's college, Trinity, aged 17 (and having fathered a child shortly afterwards) elected to play his part in the Spanish Civil War where he perished. By then Frances was suffering a period of intense depression from which she emerged to share their Conduit Head Road home with refugees and evacuees from the Second World War before the early death of her husband.

Eileen Power, economic and social historian, taught at Girton in 1914 when sentries searched each car passing along Huntingdon road and was there at the end of the War when a horde of undergraduates stormed up to the college demanding "where are all the women we have been fighting for?". Hanging out of every window were the girls in question as the Mistress and senior dons received the invaders at the doorway under the arch and invited them to a dance at college the following Saturday.

Helen Cam another Girton historian supported the fledgling Romsey Town Labour Club in the 1930s and wrote a most detailed account of the city's history. She is remembered as a medieval figure, wrapped in a black cloak, serious and matronly who would listen carefully to a student's theory and remark "this is nonsense, think again". She had a rigorous regard for fact, evidence and honesty of argument and a single eloquent "Oh|" in the margin of an essay would be enough to cause the writer to reconsider

One wonders how many "Oh|"s she might have written in the pages of a new county history guide with its frank and personal comments about the county's bleak and boring landscapes ... Cambridge Guildhall which "might have been designed by Albert Speer on an off day" ... and Lion Yard littered with cider drinking vagabonds ... whilst on the outskirts overpriced yellow brick houses prompt salesmen of plastic doors to ply profitably "with grins as gaping and as ill fitting as their product".

Those seeking historical facts on University education can learn of a Girton girl who became the only Classics candidate to be awarded first class honours. "For this achievement she was allowed to marry the Master of Trinity". Oh|

"Cambridge women : twelve portraits" CUP

"Cambridgeshire" by Ross Clark. Pimlico county history guide, 12.50

Reflections 1996 05 29

Church, school and pub are three of the basic ingredients of village life. These commonplace topics come together also in a new history of Teversham which examines the village in detail over the fifty years from 1850 to 1900.

Tables of occupations culled from census enumerators returns combine with details from school log books and local newspapers to recreate a period of considerable change. We are introduced to the notable characters such as Corney Grain, a Victorian entertainer who was born in the village and whose memoirs recall topics such as the church band of two clarinets and a violincello who produced a sound probably unique in its style with no attempt at harmony or even of melody, each individual going whichever way his instrument took him. The clerk would give one line of the hymn and then proceed to sing it solo whilst the orchestra gambolled around the melody and the congregation stood respectfully listening to the nasal voiced shoemaker snuffing forth some dreary tune which discord reigned triumphant about him.

At the General election of 1885 the Rector endeavoured to lead his flock along the paths of righteousness as he saw it. For the farm workers were to have the vote for the first time and had the choice of two candidates, the more Liberal of which was the founder and publisher of the popular magazine "Tit Bits", George Newnes. To the Rector's chagrin he was elected.

Then there was the workhouse, intended to be a regime harder than that lived by the poorest labourers in their own homes although inmates were kept clean and dry, adequately clothed and had just about enough to eat. They could not live in family units nor receive visitors without the express permission of the Workhouse master. They were however free to leave whenever they chose although they must not take with them any article belonging to the workhouse including the clothes they were issued with. Anybody doing so could be brought back and charged with theft. One such was Thomas Carter who was found guilty in 1850 and sentenced to fourteen days hard labour in the county gaol though as prison food was acknowledged to be superior to that in the workhouse it was difficult to see how such imprisonment was a deterrent.

The school was subject to regular inspection with absenteeism a regular complaint with in 1885 half the children absent, some working in the fields, some nursing at home, others playing at home because their mothers had not time to get them ready for school though time was obviously at a premium most days if the number attending with dirty faces and unclean pinafores was anything to go by.

Although "Thoroughly commonplace" it makes most interesting reading of everyday life in a Victorian village

"Thoroughly commonplace : Teversham 1850 1900" by John Patrick; from the village shop or the author at 5 Sable Close, Teversham 3.00

TEVERSHAM

these articles need to be slotted in

Reflections by Mike Petty CHECK 18 January 1995 DATE WRONG

By 1794 the British parliament viewed with alarm the situation in France where, following the Revolution, power had been seized by Napoleon Bonaparte.

There was a distinct threat of invasion and the Government took steps to establish a fighting force in each county who could be called upon to resist. Thus on 29th March 1794 a meeting was called at the Crown Inn in Huntingdon where leading figures pledged themselves to form a Volunteer Cavalry "for the suppression of any seditious or other riots or tumults, in this or any other neighbouring county" with further commitments in the event of an actual invasion. Heading the lists were the Earls of Manchester, Sandwich, and Hinchbrook along with their loyal friend and supporter Owsley Rowley. Owsley was the man entrusted with the money to pay expenses for hiring horses, renting rooms for meetings, employing clerks and making lists of the names of those willing to fight in cavalry or infantry, including James Chambor servant, William Colopost boy, John Stevens baptist minister and numerous bakers, butchers and publicans. Cavalrymen needed a horse and horse cost money, there was also payment to the men themselves at a daily rate of 3/ {shillings} (about £20.00 {pounds} at present prices).

Several of the volunteers soon sought exemption and others supplied substitutes, all of which must have added to Rowley's workload especially at a time when he was busy building himself a new residence at Priory Hill, St Neots. By 1799 however he could report a force of 1141 horses, only to find Parliament changing its mind as to the need for them and disbanding such troops|

By 1801 Parliament was once more seeking a Militia of men on foot to meet the renewed French threat and once more Owsley was prominent in his role as tax collector for the county often sleeping with perhaps £30,000 (£3 million at today's rates) in his house and two loaded pistols at his bedside.

Papers related to these and other Rowley family activities have been reconstructed from amongst piles of family papers which have lain untouched in a warehouse in St Neots and now published for the first time.

Trevor Bevis also includes some record of the Napoleonic threat in his latest book on Ely telling how in 1809 the Militia there expressed great dissatisfaction at being told they had to pay for their knapsack and gaiters out of the guinea they were paid. Several refused and were arrested with four squadrons of German cavalry galloping in a single day from Ipswich to ensure peace. The ringleaders were sentenced to receive 500 lashes each and the thought of English volunteers being publicly flogged by German troops excited wide opposition.

"The Chronicles of the Rowleys" by Peter Rowley published by Huntingdonshire Local History Society c/o Huntingdon County Record Office 15.00

"Historical snippets from old Ely" by Trevor Bevis, published by author 28 St Peter's Rd, March 3.00

Reflections 1994 04 20 date wrong

Many books carry acknowledgements to the assistance of the Cambridgeshire Collection, They may draw upon our newspaper indexing, select from our illustrations or compile their information from the wealth of material previously published. The danger in all this is that the new book may end up just regurgitating things already recorded - and perpetuating the errors that inevitably creep in to even the best-researched book

Great Shelford residents therefore decided that their latest publication should draw mainly upon the untold stories of local people, by encouraging people to reminisce and record the elements of village life which they had most knowledge of. Thus the village library, opened in 1945 in a small shop in the High Street for three afternoon and one evening a week started with just 490 readers but now boasts issues of over 100,000 books every year, With so much happening in the community it is surprising anybody has time to read as the pen-pictures of the W.I., Red Cross or Royal British Legion will testify - and in what other book would the activities of the Dog Owners' Association fill a full page!

The story of the village bobby is told; set up to deal with "tramps, wandering thieves, half lunatics and other questionable characters" in 1834 patrols had to be carried out on foot for nine hours - four in daylight and five at night for which the constable was paid 21/7 (£1.08). Although the village's own police station has now closed community policing has been introduced and radio communication and Panda cars improve response times, One incident requiring their attention was in 1970 when an Unidentified Flying Object was spotted in a field, now Chaston Way, by a police motor-cyclists who called for reinforcements. Local and national newspapers took up the story, as did BBC television intrigued by the arrival of the space rocket with its tall tapering nose, bright flashing light and eerie rasping sound. It had arrived in the field on the back of a wooden go-kart having been constructed as a prank by two naughty schoolchildren who have now confessed their part in the incident.

Perhaps the same children may have been providing the information for a new pamphlet on Haunted Cambridge, or perhaps the author has indulged too fully of the brews sold in some of the pubs he visited to compile his piece of research. No sources are actually quoted to prove the existence of a phantom squirrel apparently last seen in 1927, whilst the information that Rupert Brooke died in Greece of sunstroke may cause other histories to be rewritten. John Pink might indeed haunt the balconies of the old library in Wheeler Street - certainly there was often clicking and creaking which seemed to coincide with the lighting of the boiler - but research in the Street directories has as yet failed to locate "15 Sidney Park" where hauntings were said to have occurred until 1915. Perhaps it is all a ploy to attract tourists to visit Arbury Road where a gigantic ghostly black dog is apparently to be seen bounding along at high speed and growling.

If so it has not deterred the congregation from attending Arbury Baptist Church whose 150th anniversary souvenir booklet is packed with dates and facts culled from their records and enlivened by personal memories from worshippers. No matter what the quality of the research none would ever be read where it not for the skills of the printer. Anglia Polytechnic University will close its printing division in August this year, 73 years after it was set up as part of the School of Art. Designed to train boys and girls for employment on skilled industries it has succeeded in introducing generations of printers to their craft and kept up-to-date on the ever changing technology, Their story has now been told in a booklet compiled by the Head of the department, Featuring both black and white and colour photography it goes without saying that it is immaculately printed!

"Great Shelford remembered 1894-1994", published by Gt Shelford parish council

"Haunted Cambridge" by Rupert Matthews (Pitkin)

"Arbury Road Baptist church 150th anniversary souvenir booklet" issued by the church

"Printing education in Cambridge 1921-1944" by Colin Wood published by Anglia Polytechnic University in a limited edition

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Stories from a Year:

Looking Back on Cambridgeshire 1898-1989

A series of articles in the Cambridge Weekly News

Mike Petty

Mike Petty Stories from a Year - 1888

In July 1888 an important piece of Cambridge was sold by auction at the Lion Hotel for £5,400. Prospective purchasers did not have far to go to view the property for it was right beside the hotel itself

Numbers 8 and 9 Petty Cury included a double-fronted shop and four-bedroomed house, and printing offices let to Messrs Foister and Jagg. But the main property was the old-established fully licensed inn known as "The Falcon" with its bar, bar parlour, large smoke and billiard rooms, eight bedrooms and three attics. It came complete with the Falcon Tap with its bar, sitting room with six rooms above and cellars

Obviously a desirable property and of some antiquity, it had once belonged to Richard Kinge of Wisbech who had willed it in 1504 to the prior of Barnwell. Queen Elizabeth I is said to have stayed in a suite of rooms along one of the open galleries & to have watched Shakespeare or Marlowe performing their plays in the yard beneath. When here the university petitioned her to limit the export of corn from the town and so keep Cambridge prices low - a plea she rejected

She also courted disapproval by abolishing a centuries-old tradition, the Corpus Christi procession which involved a parade with the college Master carrying a tabernacle of silver-gilt containing the Host, the whole protected under a canopy. On the final procession that canopy caught fire as it past the Falcon – possibly caused by somebody deliberately "casting fire thereon out of some window"

By Victorian times however the grandeur had long passed. By 1850 it had become the most disgraceful slum in Cambridge. About 300 people lived in the Yard and "there are two privies for the use of the whole of the inhabitants, but as they are at a distance of fifty yards from some portion of the premises those of the inhabitants who have back windows to their rooms are in the habit of throwing all their refuse out of the windows on to a large dung heap in the Red Lion yard, the reeking steam from which is constantly penetrating the room"

One woman described the single room in which she had lived for 34 years, the bed "as big as an old pocket handkerchief" had to accommodate her husband and daughter as well. Another bedded down in a room with no light whatsoever, a candle revealing a black hole in which a pile of clothes on the floor served for bedding.

The stately galleries so loved by antiquarians had been divided into apartments let at rent varying from 1 /4 to 2/- per week and although several were remarkably clean "the majority are as wretched as it is possible to conceive". By 1885 they had been condemned by the Medical Officer of Health and the poor forced to find other lodgings

Redevelopment soon followed the sale in 1888, one side of the Yard being replaced by offices, while the galleried side was demolished for extensions to the old Lion Hotel about 1904. The design included an archway across the yard, a feature reproduced in the modern

Lion Yard development whose large windows on the first floor recall the ancient galleries where once a Queen, then later many beggars slept.

Stories from a year - 1889

Not another new paper!

Such was the reaction that greeted the first edition of the Cambridgeshire Weekly News in February 1889

Not so long before there had just been the two old staggers - "Cambridge Chronicle and University Journal" for the Tories and the "Cambridge Independent Press" for the Liberals. Then in 1867 the Reform Act had increased the numbers eligible to vote, most of them urban working class people who were unlikely to be persuaded to pay 2d just for a weekly paper.

The proprietors of the existing papers had held the price despite the removal of the newspaper tax and the way was open for somebody to undercut them. So in September 1868 the "Cambridge Express" hit the streets costing just 1d and offering free and unbiased reporting. It was an instant success and by 1872 was selling 400,000 issues - a number previously unknown in Cambridgeshire newspaper history.

In 1884 the franchise was extended again and 2 million agricultural workers now had the vote. It was a market the political papers could not ignore and in the run-up to the impending election the "Chronicle" issued a new mid-week penny paper the "Cambridge Observer and County Guardian" to give undeviating support to the Conservative cause. It ceased once that party had won the December 1885 election

Early next year the Tories produced a successor. The "Labourers' News" would "expose the hypocrisy of sham friends of the labourer" (by which they meant their political opponents, the Liberals). The new journal cost only 6d making it the cheapest paper in the town.

This was the situation when in 1888 William Farrow Taylor defied all sceptics by issuing a Cambridge Daily News, using the latest technology and selling for only a ½ d. Its aim was to cater for all interests and classes and it would be neutral in politics. It soon caught on and based on its success he launched a new series of weekly papers

Thus it was that February 8th 1889 saw not only a "Cambridgeshire Weekly News" but also a host of other titles. There were Weekly News's for Newmarket, Saffron Walden, Royston and Huntingdonshire whilst Ely had a "Weekly Guardian" and St Ives a "Weekly Chronicle". People were encouraged to buy the local edition which allowed small towns better coverage though based on the same core content. It competed with the established papers in those areas and soon was rivalling the popularity of the "Daily News" itself.

In November 1889 the "Cambridge Express" was put up for sale by its owners. A new Conservative company was formed to take it over and soon the "Labourers News" ceased, urging its readers to switch to the "Express". By 1909 however its circulation had dwindled and amalgamation deals were discussed. The "Chronicle" was approached without success but talks with the "Weekly" bore fruit and the two amalgamated.

The new joint publication was to be "one of the largest and ... one of the best weekly papers in the United Kingdom" said Taylor who stressed its political neutrality and expanded his printing presses to cope with increasing demand.

The hardships of the Great War hit all newspapers; the price of newsprint rocketed, the amount of paper allowed was reduced. The "Chronicle" struggled through, the "Cambridge Independent Press" did not and it merged with the "Weekly" group in 1917. Still independent in politics it was the "Independent" title that the joint papers adopted as they battled for readership with the one remaining Cambridge weekly paper, the "Chronicle" until in 1934 that too became part of the Taylor empire.

There had been other skirmishes throughout the period. Two other daily papers had been published briefly, the "Daily Independent Press" in 1892, the "Cambridge Daily Gazette" between 1898 and 1900. The latter had even produced its own weekly - the Cambridgeshire Weekly Gazette, and the "Cambridge Graphic" had also flourished for a couple of years.

In 1935 the "Cambridge Town & County Standard" appeared on the streets but failed to attract sufficient readers to ensure its financial viability.

In the 1970s new technology and market forces saw the growth of free distribution newspapers and ever alert to a changing world the "Cambridge Independent Press" finally reached the end of another chapter in its history. The title disappeared from newsstands in 1981 and in its place re-emerged the "Cambridgeshire Weekly News" with its sister titles.

Its proprietor had described it in 1909 as "one of the best weekly papers in the United Kingdom". Its modern equivalent was judged in 1988 as not just one of the best - but the very best. Long may it flourish.

Stories from a year - 1890

Cambridge councillors were anxious to expand the boundaries of their town and eyes turned to Chesterton, just across the river but still obstinately independent - though its residents easily crossed into Cambridge and made use of the facilities provided without contributing to the rates.

Suggestions for amalgamation received a cool response; as a dowry Cambridge suggested a new bridge making access far easier than the inconvenient ferries and far closer than the long trudge to Magdalene bridge. There was much local opposition but on a poll of ratepayers the idea was approved and an application for an Act of Parliament to build it (- and another as well, while they were about it) was successful, though the amount of land they could take for the controversial main road across Midsummer Common was restricted to two acres.

In September 1889 operations began; the Engineers appointed were Messrs Webster of Liverpool and Waters of Cambridge, the contractor John Mackay of Hereford. The superstructure was to be of iron and steel with 6 main ribs spanning the river at an angle of 105 degrees given a clear rise above the water of 14 feet six inches. Its main ribs would be wrought iron plate capable easily of taking the weight of two traction engines. Further details were specified - a length of 40 feet, footways of 7 feet width giving a roadway of 26 feet - ample room for the two widest vehicles to pass with ease. It was to use local materials where possible, to employ a number of local men, be completed within 10 months and the cost, including the road across the common would be £10,000.

It was November 1889 when the Mayor of Cambridge left the Guildhall, escorted by ten policemen, to join the Chairman of the Chesterton Local Board, J. Bester, on the site. Together they performed the ceremonial laying of the foundation stone, each tapping it with the mallets and silver trowels that had been presented by the engineer and contractors. Beneath the stone was placed a vase containing copies of the local newspapers, an account of

the background to the new bridge, a copy of the act of parliament and a list of the people involved. The speeches over councillors and crowds dispersed leaving workmen to remove the bunting and decoration that had formed the backdrop to the occasion and continue the work of construction.

The planned 10 month construction period became extended to 15 and it was 11th December 1890 before the great opening ceremony could be performed. The proceedings were scheduled to start at noon but council business delayed the departure of the official procession of 13 carriages from the Guildhall by half an hour. They proceeded to the start of the new road where a silk cord blocked their route. Mayor and Chairman formally untied the bow, named "The Victoria Avenue" and - to only feeble cheers from a few onlookers - proceeded slowly towards the bridge.

Here they found hundreds of onlookers, chilled by the weather and impatient at the delay, and another silken cord. Chairman declared the bridge open, Mayor named it and together they pulled at the rope from which dangled a bottle of champagne, intended to smash against the parapet in the traditional way. Sadly it was not to be - the bottle merely swung tamely and eventually had to be hurled by hand. The cheers that rang out were feeble in the extreme, the contingent of police had no disorder to contain except for a restive horse who contrived to break the shaft of his carriage. The official party walked across, then rode across and returned to the Guildhall, having duly declared the Victoria Bridge well and truly open.

They left behind a remarkable monument to forward thinking - a bridge designed before the age of the motor car that was to carry the weight of heavy lorries. By 1986 it was found to be rusting away and in need of urgent repairs which will take as long to complete as the Victorians took to build it. It will cause traffic chaos - but not total chaos - for that second bridge anticipated by the Act of 1889 was finally opened in 1971. Much longer, much wider and much more expensive Elizabeth Bridge will soon have to carry more of the burden of her older sister.

Chesterton incidentally welcomed the Victoria Bridge - but still declined to surrender themselves to the borough and had to be forced into the marriage, kicking and squealing in 1912.

Stories from a year – 1891

Darkness became a thing of the past in 1891 when a Cambridge firm, Baily Grundy and Barrett started the town's first public electricity supply from a dynamo in the basement of their shop in Gt St Mary's Passage. They only covered a small area around Kings Parade and Peas Hill but also charged accumulators for the University labs. Some people believed this was how electricity would be spread to outlying areas with accumulators delivered door to door along with the milk and papers.

The Company also supplied and installed private generators - including one in 1898 at Milton Hall - till recently headquarters of Eastern Electricity and Sir Clive Sinclair. Peterhouse had become one of the first places in the country to introduce electric lighting in 1884 when they installed their own generating plant which fed light to bulbs the equivalent of 10 watts - little better than candle power - with each bulb costing the modern equivalent of over £30. Their enterprise did not find favour with the laundry ladies who used to hang their washing on Coe Fen since smuts from the generating plant got on to their nice clean sheets.

The Cambridge Improvement Commissioners had been quick to appreciate the potential of the new invention and in 1889 had decided to try and provide a municipal electricity supply; almost inevitably chaos ensued and the enterprise failed.

Then in 1892 the Cambridge Electric Supply Company was established. Despite objections by Magdalene College they chose a site in Thompson's Lane and put in large steam turbines which they ran during the hours of darkness. Soon 10 colleges were connected and as business expanded and more consumers adopted the electric light the generators were worked continuously. Cables were laid, transformers installed, and bright ideas flowed - floodlights on Coe Fen allowed people to skate at night. St Paul's and all Saints churches saw the light in 1904 and although the tramway company suggested electrification of their lines and came to nothing the Cambridge Daily News adopted the new technology when in 1912 it became the first paper in the area to be printed by electricity.

By 1927 the spread of a net-work of power cables brought power from the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Electricity Company power house at Lt Barford to the edge of Cambridge, reaching the Observatory on Madingley Road.

Folk hoped competition would lead to a reduction in charges which in 1929 stood at 10d per unit for lighting or an annual service rate of 54/- (£2.70) per year which reduced the price to three-farthings (©p) a unit, making it economical to heat and cook as well.

Nationalisation in 1947 heralded the standardisation of electricity voltage from the 200 volts supplied by the works to the national 240 volt standard; it was to be 1972 before the last of the 35,000 houses had been converted.

As blackouts became the norm during the 1970s Cambridge had no alternative but to suffer; the Thompson's Lane station had closed in 1966, and in 1973 the plug was pulled on the firm that had sparked electrical storm as Bailey Grundy and Barrett ceased trading.

Stories from a year 1892 by Mike Petty

Respectable ladies, daughters and wives of professional men, were afraid to walk the Cambridge streets at night. They were worried not of muggers or criminals but of learned and senior members of the University. Time after time there were stories of how these clerical gentlemen had stopped and insulted them in the most gross and offensive manner, asking disgusting questions and subjecting them to brutal violence, purely and simply because they were walking unaccompanied in the street and did not happen to be known to the Proctor.

The University took its responsibilities for the moral wellbeing of its gentlemen undergraduates very seriously and there was no shortage of young ladies, attracted into the town by the prospect of numerous rich and lonely young men, anxious for female company. The Barnwell area became notorious as a haunt of loose ladies but it was the central streets that were most patrolled by the Proctor and his men.

They were armed with an ancient statute which gave the University power to arrest women "suspected of evil." Once detained they were taken to a grim building on St Andrews street erected as a workhouse in the 1600s and known after its founder as "Hobson's Workhouse". Here unruly and stubborn rogues were imprisoned and the poor set to work, spinning and weaving. It soon became known as "The Spinning House" changing to become principally a prison used by the University to imprison the prostitutes it arrested.

Conditions inside were investigated by "The Morning Chronicle" of 1851 who quizzed ex-inmates. They found it one of the most wretched and miserable places in the country. The building was dilapidated, the walls cracked and windows broken. It consisted of sixty cells about six feet by eight, each furnished with an iron bedstead, flock bed, two blankets and counterpane. There was no glass in the windows and in winter the floor of the cells was often covered in snow. There was no form of heating although new inmates were allowed a warming pan to air the beds if they had not been slept in for some time.

Prisoners huddled together talking, swearing and discussing their profession. . “The was poor ---; when she went in she was as modest a girl as possible for one of her sort to be, and she would blush when she heard any bad language, but when she came out she was as bad as any of us. She used often to say she got her education finished there. We call it ‘going to college’”.

Once detained by the Proctor conviction was almost sure to follow since the Vice Chancellor held his daily court in a private room, with no public or legal representation allowed and only the Proctor and Gaoler present. The former gave evidence, the latter was asked whether the accused had been imprisoned before and if so the case was proved. Sentence could range up to three months.

Not all the ladies accepted their imprisonment quietly; some kicked and screamed, some planned revenge – one even locking the Proctor in one of the cells – others planned escape. One got through the window and fled to her parent’s house at Dullingham. She was re-arrested on a charge of gaol-breaking but this meant the case had to be heard in public and attracted wide publicity – the University actions being likened to those of the

Stories from a year – 1893, by Mike Petty
6.11.1989

It was possible for the poor to avoid the restraint and humiliation of the workhouse, but it was difficult to do so in Cambridge because of the seasonal nature of much of the work available

The building trade was a traditional source of employment but, as elsewhere, could only be carried on when the weather allowed and was subject to periodic slumps. But Cambridge also looked to the colleges and for months every summer and weeks in the hardest part of the winter, when living expenses were heaviest, great numbers of college servants whose livelihood depended on the University were thrown out of work when the grads went down.

Schemes were set up to encourage the poor to save for the hard days that were to follow. The Post office Savings Banks had opened in 1861 and accepted deposits of any sum from £50 down to one shilling. But many had trouble saving up the twelve pennies needed to get to the minimum sum and although people could save penny stamps there was then a form to be read over and filled in, all in public view – which for somebody not too good at reading or writing was something to dread

That journey to the Post Office could be a chore for a busy mother when she had so little to deposit so groups such as the Prudential Insurance Company had collectors who went round to each house to collect the savings that could otherwise be frittered away. One woman put in £3 by weekly sixpences and during the hard winter when her husband, a painter, was out of work she had enough to pay the rent and keep the family in food, another having suffered chronic indigestion for years put aside enough to treat herself to a set of false teeth

Some of the collectors were University students, though some felt that many of their colleagues were setting a bad example – rich young men released from parental bonds spending money like water, wining, dining and gambling with little thought for the bills that were to follow – bills that could be settled by pater’s cheque, drawn on his bank and by the 1890’s Cambridge had two banks of its own.

One was Mortlock's which had been established in 1754 and developed into a successful business despite great personal scandal. In 1896 the banks amalgamated with Barclays

The second had been founded by Ebenezer Foster, a miller. He started his banking by simply issuing receipts to farmers who would exchange them amongst themselves instead of cash, trusting the Foster name as a guarantee that the bill would be honoured. The bank began trading in Bridge Street but in 1836 moved to the Turks Head Coffee House where security was provided by three junior staff who were obliged to sleep in the bank, one in front of the strong room with his sword by his side. The bank prospered and the business passed down to his sons.

By 1890 the premises were too small and the decision was taken to move. The London architect Waterhouse was employed to design the new buildings and authorised to spare no expense. The construction was undertaken by William Sindall. It was to have a clock tower 100 feet high that would dominate the town centre from its position opposite the entrance to Petty Cury.

In November 1893 the new bank opened with a flourish and although in 1903 it amalgamated with Capital and Counties Bank and in 1919 was absorbed into Lloyds the Foster name is still carved into the stonework. Through the great entrance troop rich and poor alike, undergraduate and college bedder being accorded equal service in a way unthinkable at the time it was opened

Stories from a year 1894 by Mike Petty

This Christmastide much talk will be of the good old days when villagers knew everybody's name, and much thought will be given to the year to come. In Dry Drayton, Bourn and Bottisham parishes now scheduled by developers to be the lucky recipient of a new settlement unpaid councillors – shopkeepers, farmers, policemen will be preparing to spend weeks arguing the views of their residents against the smart-suited businessmen and their lawyers at the forthcoming Inquiry. Meetings will be held to draw up statements and work out lunch expenses for the battle ahead, not for them the £4,000 a day budget of the Developers' legal teams.

In Stretham and Wilburton however the councillors will be able to relax, knowing that their 3 year ordeal is over. Since December 1986 when the bombshell announcement that their area had been earmarked for a new town drew villagers away from Festive whist drives and into a school hall anxious for any scrap of information they had been endeavouring to learn of and comment on the proposals. This Christmas for them the last Government Inquiry will be over, their cross-examining complete, their views at last heard. They have nothing to do but wait for the decision.

This lowest tier of local democracy was established in 1894 by a Government convinced it was conferring beneficial self-rule on the countryside. It was in November and December that year that the first elections were held. Minute books were bought, meeting rooms arranged and ordinary folk debated ordinary issues transferred from the Parish Vestry to the Parish Council.

Mike the date is in RED as I do not know which year you intended this to be.

Stories from a year 1895 by Mike Petty

1895 was the year of the great frost. It lasted from January to March unbroken except for brief thaws; from January 18th to 25th there were snowstorms, floods and north-west gales with frosts of 15 to 20 degrees turning hundreds of acres of flooded land into skating rinks.

It was ideal weather for the sport in which the fenman excelled – speed skating, organised by the National Skating Association, which had been established in Cambridge in 1879. The competitions started in December 1894 but the New brought racing at Littleport where 4000 people assembled to witness the 50-guinea challenge cup for which all the famous names were present. From Cowbit, Southery, Upwell and Whittlesea the skaters came to compete against southerners from Cottenham, Waterbeach and Landbeach. Then there were the outsiders from Walthamstowe and Leicester. There was also the foreign challenge in the form of the famous Hendrik Lindahl from Norway, reckoned to have been the best skater in the world before his marriage to an English lady. He had quit the sport until last year when he visited Littleport as a spectator and was tempted back on to the ice. Then he had beaten James Smart – but this year the Welney man got his revenge only to lose to F. Ward from Tydd fen at the finish.

Two days later they were back when A. E. Tebbitt of Milton became amateur champion but three days later those who travelled from London to witness the Hayes-Fisher cup were frustrated as ice had turned to water at Littleport. Swavesey men quickly telegraphed to report that their ice was suitable and at the end of the month they were rewarded when one of the most successful meetings ever held was skated on the finest of ice seen in years.

The preparation of the half-mile track with a barrel at each end and sides marked by swept-up ridges of snow involved much hard labour with men often working through out the night. Although the fen winter might be severe the work was warm and refreshment essential. One problem was that the beer supplied to keep the spirits up tended to freeze in the barrel and one worker might be delegated to cuddle it to keep the liquid ice-free.

In Cambridge three fields were flooded at Newnham and electric lights installed so that people could flock for the novelty of skating at night. Indeed so many responded that the Arcade Variety Music Hall, in the Old Corn Exchange, Downing Street, was forced to close. Not even Marie Lloyd could compete with Jack Frost.

In 1895 race followed race and the normal programme was soon completed so in February they decided on a special event: a skating race from Cambridge to Ely and back. Interest was intense and amongst those attending was W. G. Grace the famous cricketer. The entry list included men from Cottenham, Kettering, Haslingfield, Coventry and March.

In the event the starting point had to be moved to Bottisham so it was decided to make it a race from there to Ely, back to Bottisham and on to Ely again – a distance so it was said of 36 miles (although subsequent measurement made it something less than 30).

By the time they reached Upware several of the men of unknown reputations had fallen behind but the lead was being closely contested by a group who arrived at Ely in just 45 minutes. Turning back with the wind behind them they increased speed, averaging a mile in 2 minutes 50 seconds they reached the turn in 34 minutes 11 seconds. As they started the final leg the competition was between Albert Tebbitt from Milton, the Amateur champion and H. A. Palmer of Kettering, winner of an International race at Hendon earlier in the month. They skated side by side, fighting every inch of the way as they travelled once more past Upware, beyond the junction of the Cam and Old West and on towards the Cathedral which the winner reached just one minute slower than in the first leg.

In fact there were two winners – for the men could not be separated and crossed the line in a dead heat. Ten others followed them home – just half of the hardy souls who had set off on the greatest race ever held by the National Skating Association.

Stories from a year - 1896

For the enterprising Victorian a Kelly's county directory was as essential as any modern filofax. The Cambridgeshire edition issued in September 1896 was no less important than those that had preceded it, continuing the tradition of publishing at roughly five-yearly intervals since 1847 - a tradition that was to last for 90 years.

Compiled with the assistance of clergymen, magistrates, clerks, registrars and other eminent officials it provided everything one needed to know. Perhaps the introductory paragraphs were updated less often than they might be but the editors reported that in the fens steam engines were taking the place of windmills for pumping the water from ditches into the rivers and that the wildfowl were diminishing as their habitats vanished. Sedge cutting was reckoned to be one of the few remaining fen industries, a-

Although basket making, mat making and barge building was still continuing. Farmers were increasingly devoting large acreages to new crops such as potatoes with resulting increase in employment and improving the fertility of their land by spreading manure formed by burning lime whilst the coprolite works were said to be a major factor in the local economy.

The bulk of the Directory was devoted to the county's towns and villages. First came a summary of its location and facilities - "Cottenham is a large village and parish four miles from the Histon station on the St Ives and Cambridge branch of the Great Eastern Railway, 2.5 miles south-west from Oakington station on the same line ... Sawston "is lighted with gas, first used in November 1882, the sum of £104 being subscribed for the purpose ... the works erected in 1867". The parish church and nonconformist chapels are described, together with dates of restoration or erection alongside details of the agriculture, soil, acreage and population.

Not content with this Kelly goes on to detail postal facilities and the local school - Madingley's "National school (mixed) with house for the mistress, built 1844 ... will hold 46 children, average attendance 45; Mrs Mary Tennant, mistress". Then comes the directory - first the names of the "private residents (landed gentry) then the "commercial". Caxton's tradespeople included William Cox and Elizabeth Tasker shopkeepers and Charles Simpson harness maker. Villages were self sufficient - most had tailors boot and shoe makers, wheelwrights and blacksmiths together with dairymen, publicans and beer retailers. It can be a fascinating exercise checking their arrival and departure and wondering just how they could all have made their living in a small community and where their premises were situated in the village street

For those wanting a broader view of employment the classified trades section repay study. From "Abyssinian tube wells" (no local representative, though a London firm is featured) to Zinc workers (Mark Turner of 36 Bradmore street, Cambridge) all commercial life is there. Amongst those featured in 1896 were banjo makers (C.M. Wood, 3 Alexandra St), sausage makers (including Swann and Sansom, Sturton Street), umbrella makers (a choice of several in Cambridge with others in Wisbech and Whittlesey) and a waterproof cover maker in Christopher Gall of Lt Shelford. Display advertisements describe their services - Ernest Kett of Newmarket supplies pianos and American organs for cheapness and durability whilst D.J. Smith, ironmonger of Wisbech holds the patent for the "Turnip fly brush for destroying bug, beetle, caterpillar etc on growing crops"

By 1896 there were also a number of names of photographers. Some such as J.P. Clarke, Scott and Wilkinson and T. Stearn well-known, others like David Spencely of Littleport and John Simpson of Chesterton less familiar. Their views of life through the camera lens will provide the subject for a new series of articles with the hope that others can supply personal details of the men who recorded their present, for the future.

Stories from a year - 1897

Another Jubilee! Just 10 years after the celebrations for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 it was time to start again - this time her Diamond anniversary.

What sort of celebrations should there be this time - and what sort of memorial should the money that was sure to be raised be actually spent on. It was time for another public meeting and for the ideas to be sorted out.

First in the list was Addenbrooke's Hospital - "no institution was of greater benefit to the poorer classes". But how about the District nurses - they looked after the poor in their own houses, a Nurses Home was needed in Barnwell. Surely the children should be looked after - why not rebuild East Road Girls and Infants school together with one of the British schools and make a donation towards a workshop for the Perse School as well. But the Friendly Societies in Cambridge numbered upwards of 500 members - the working men of the town - and needed to expand their Institute, the money would be well spent there and the medical and surgical equipment would have a proper home. Others felt that the Cambridgeshire Rifle Volunteers were a more needy case and needed a proper Headquarters and gymnasium.

Debate raged and in the end it was left to a Jubilee Committee to decide. Their suggestion of support for all the ideas, except the Friendly Societies Institute, prompted more discussion in the press and elsewhere. Why not give the money to the Addenbrooke's Hospital convalescent home at Hunstanton instead. In the end it was decided to support the District Nurses.

Now that was out of the way they could decide how to actually celebrate the great day. There would be two Processions; one starting from Victoria Avenue at 2 pm, another from Queens Road two hours later - this one including decorated traps, carriages and cycles. But the Friendly Societies - who were going to be the central part of the early procession took umbrage - who were the Committee to dictate to them, didn't they realise that there were certain procedures to be followed ... The Mayor apologised, tempers cooled only to flare again when somebody thought that the procession of decorated carriages - a procession of toffs - separate from the working men's parade - would set class from class; either they combined or the Friendly Societies would pull out. This time there was no compromise, one procession was cancelled.

Working classes could however participate in a decorated cycle competition with their own lantern parade and prizes for the smartest costumes and bicycles. This was the highlight of the celebrations, held on the eve of Jubilee day and attracting over 100 entrants, including ladies.

Jubilee day, 20th June, kicked off with a Royal Salute fired on Parkers Piece, a flight of 1,000 pigeons, sports on Midsummer Common with prizes of £3.00 for the winners. Then, to music from the band of the Yorkshire Dragoons, came the Procession of flower-decorated carriages along the Backs, with prizes too for the best decorated lady's and gentleman's bicycle. They joined the procession led by the Mayor and Corporation with the Fire Brigade and decorated tradesmen's vehicles which wound its way through the town, down Hills Road, Mill Road,

East Road and back to the Market Place, passing Parkers Piece where a variety entertainment was taking place. A Water Carnival on the river and musical concert in the Guildhall filled the time until dusk when public buildings were illuminated before the great bonfire on Midsummer Common was lit and a gigantic display of fireworks on Parkers Piece brought to an end a memorable day, despite the squabbles that had threatened to spoil it.

Stories from a year - 1898

The death of General Gordon at Khartoum at the hands of the Mahdi in 1885 prompted a national outcry. The victory at the battle of Omdurman "where within sight of Khartoum stained with Gordon's blood the ruthless tyranny of the usurper was crushed for ever and the fair Province of the Sudan was restored to peaceful husbandry & opened to the commerce of the world" (as the Mayor of Cambridge put it) brought public adulation on its General, Horatio Kitchener. He was showered with honours and awards - made Baron - and in November 1898 he was in Cambridge.

His arrival of the 10.25 train was supposed to be a secret but somehow it leaked out. He was greeted by the Master of Christ's college and Alderman T.H. Hills before starting his carriage drive into Cambridge through streets decorated with flags and bunting and a few cheering spectators - the weather was blamed for the small turnout.

At Parson's Court, beside the Corn Exchange, a contingent of 50 members of the 3rd (Cambs) Volunteer Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment were preparing to form a guard of honour for the distinguished visitor. At the due time they marched off to form up on Market Hill. The front of the Guildhall itself was barricaded, the vestibule smothered under palms and plants, the steps leading to the large hall carpeted and drapery covered the unattractive walls. The floor of the Hall itself was covered in crimson cloth, the councillors chairs had been removed from the Council Chamber and placed facing the stage on which was a table bearing a beautiful casket - especially designed by Mr G Munsey, the jeweller, in which lay the scroll conferring the Freedom of the Borough.

Everywhere else was packed with those fortunate ratepayers who had been able to get tickets. They thronged the orchestra and gallery - itself adorned with green and yellow drapery.

Then Kitchener was there amongst them, alongside George Kett, the Mayor whose speech was of great difficulties cheerfully overcome and the glory of the British Empire. The Freedom conferred it was the turn of their visitor - he was flattered - and he did like the casket. Then it was over and he was gone off to Downing College for lunch (though not before inspecting the Guard of Honour).

Whilst Mayor and Aldermen could relax another section of local life were getting excited. For next it was to be the turn of the University to honour the hero. Already Kings Parade was packed and undergraduates had taken their places high in the Senate House - where they found a hose pipe to spray water to cool the temper of distinguished gathering down below, already annoyed by chants and songs such as "The Soldiers of the Queen" repeated endlessly. Cheers from outside announced His arrival, drowning the cries of pain and distress of undergraduates crushed when the great railings around Senate House itself were pushed over by sheer weight of numbers.

Of this Kitchener may have been unaware; he could not miss the sight of one of his former enemies suspended from the gallery which greeted him as he entered the building - a second glance was needed to ensure that it was after all just an effigy. More speeches of praise - this time in Latin (and accompanied by undergraduate comments) - before the procession moved

off, his carriage pulled by undergraduates as far as Christ college where a contingent of police could not prevent the crowds surging through.

Kitchener had yet another engagement - at the Union Society before he could relax over lunch. There was no relaxation for the undergraduates or the police as anything that would burn - hand carts, goal posts, fences from the Backs and much of the Christ's Pieces bandstand was ransacked to feed the flames of a Bonfire on Market Hill. Next morning the centre had all the appearance of having been in the hands of a mob, many cart loads of debris being removed from the bonfire site.

Cambridge pulled itself together; Baron Kitchener moved on to other adulation and honours.

Stories from a year – 1899 by Mike Petty

No smoking on the premises" was the rule of the Y.M.C.A. in 1899 but it found disfavour with a considerable number of members who decided to petition for the ban to be lifted. The petition was refused and the organisers were asked to resign from the Association. This they did, being followed by many of their supporters. On the pavement outside the disgruntled band discussed their future. They were now free to smoke whenever they wished, they were no longer free to pursue their favourite sport - rowing - and would certainly not now be allowed in the Y.M.C.A.'s boat, as they had planned

Rowing as an Undergraduate sport dated back to 1825 when St John's college boat club was established followed shortly afterwards by the First Trinity. Soon other colleges joined the fray with the Cambridge University Boat Club being formed in 1828, challenging their Oxford equivalents for the first time the next year.

Racing side by side was not possible on the narrow River Cam so they adopted the practice already developed at Oxford, that of chasing each other and attempting to "bump" the boat in front.

This had tragic results in 1888 when an undergraduate was killed when the pointed prow of the chasing boat hit him in the ribs, which pierced his heart.

Four years later came two additional headlines when one of the rowers was lit by lightning during the May Races and the Lady Margaret boat arrived at the traditional procession of boats with only two oarsmen, other members of the crew being "sent down" for taking part in yet another tradition - that of the winning crew setting fire to a boat - not its fine racing shell, but an old one of little value - following the boozy bump supper'. The combination of events led to the abandonment of the procession in which the eights rowed down the Backs adorned with flags and flowers, ending up in a line across the river whilst crowds gathered on the lawns of Kings college to watch – allowed on the sacred grass for this one occasion.

It was not always pleasant to be beside the river for by 1868 the Cam was an open sewer with effluent flowing into it from the Colleges along the Backs, and combined with the smell from the Gas Works was said to improve competition - one had to learn to row fast to get past as quickly as possible.

There was even a tale that in 1852 when Midsummer Common was under some feet of water time races were rowed over the Common - but that one of the boats lost its rudder and shot between the legs of a horse waiting by a coal barge. It is said that the boat escaped without damage but that the horse was cut across its stomach - but whether by the bow or by one of the oars is not quite certain!

In 1868 various town clubs came together to form the Cambridgeshire Rowing Association in an attempt to improve the River. A subscription-list was opened, Queen Victoria gave £100, and agreement was made with the railway for the removal of the old bridge at Chesterton whose span was too narrow to allow boats to pass under. The improvements were much appreciated

All this was no avail to the debarred smokers. They called a meeting at the Mitre inn in Bridge Street on 2nd June and decided to form a club of their own, naming it the "Ninety Nine" to commemorate the year - and a success for the University crew against Oxford after a period of reversals, They entered two crews in the Bumping races that year and soon demonstrated their mettle. In 1903 they ended up "head of the River" - a feat they might have achieved earlier had they given up smoking!

Stories from a year 1900

It was a special New Year's Eve, the first of a New Century.

As midnight 1900 approached streets which on 364 nights of the year were solitary and deserted after 11 o'clock were packed. Throughout the town all forms of entertainment both public and private stopped, coats and hats were donned & shoes laced. All feet were heading for Kings Parade, feet of all ages for although the young predominated the middle aged and old were also there. They paced up and down the street while the century hastened to its close and although there was no unnatural solemnity about the gathering there was something in the demeanour of the crowd that proclaimed that it was no ordinary celebration. As the century got into its last quarter of an hour the crowd in front of Deck's the chemist grew even larger. Finally the door opened and the hero of the hour emerged.

Alderman Arthur Deck was one of the grand old men of Cambridge. He had been a town councillor for nearly 50 years, he was and an enthusiastic balloonist but most importantly he was the Rocket Man. The elderly gentleman was greeted by cheers as he crossed Kings Parade to the open space in front of the College and prepared for the ritual that had been started by his father Isaiah in 1820.

As King's clock struck the first chime of midnight a rocket whizzed up into the night sky and everybody waited for the distant explosion and the pretty coloured lights that would follow. Then before the clock had finished striking up went the second.

The Twentieth Century had now officially arrived in Cambridge. It was welcomed with much shaking of hands and exchanging of good wishes, with the singing of Auld Lang Syne and rousing cheers. Then all adjourned to Deck's back parlour where steaming punch was ladled out with unsparing hand and the Alderman's health was drunk time and time again. Arthur Deck saw the start of 1908, but not its conclusion; his rockets continued until 1913, then Dora the Defence of the Realm Act forbade them for the duration of the war. In December 1919 those Cambridge people looking forward to a general return to pre war conditions at the festive season were disappointed to learn that there would be no rockets to signal the New Year. Sometimes, Mr Deck junior explained, the rocket sticks caused damage when they fell and perhaps more significantly the crowd had been rowdy things not to be tolerated in those days. So he had decided that his father's custom must not be his. It seems a pity said the paper "there are many losses we could submit to with less regret than the loss of the rockets and the abandonment of a celebration which was based on good fellowship". It was the end of a chapter, but not the end of the story. In 1922 the custom was revived in response to continued pressure. But it was thought no longer safe to use Kings Parade for the launch and the ceremony transferred to Parkers Piece. Midnight found a thousand people assembled to watch the rockets. But it was not quite the same, numbers dropped off and people found other

attractions in the town on New Years Eve. So it was that 1929 arrived uncelebrated by any rockets and one of the most celebrated of Cambridge customs fizzled out.

Stories from a Year, 1901, by Mike Petty
CWN 24th April 1989

The returning heroes on 6th May 1901 had many tales to tell of hardship and toil, of extremes of climate, long marches and occasional action. Little did they know that their worst danger was yet to come

The Volunteers had responded to the call in January 1900. On the 20th they had assembled for a last breakfast - the town contingent at King's College, the University contingent at Caius. Then they had each marched independently to the station before boarding the same train for a month's hard training at Bury St Edmunds. Finally it was off in the snow on the gruelling railway journey to the Southampton where in a draughty shed they waited without food or comfort for the arrival of the boat that was to carry them across the Bay of Biscay and on to South Africa

Truly they could now do their duty. Armed with rifles and a hundred rounds of cartridges and with rolled overcoats in the tremendous heat they stood their ground as the enemy swept through their positions - trainloads of them, wounded in battles further up the line,

Somewhere there was excitement but the men of Cambridgeshire were getting bored standing guard beside a railway track where the main talking point was a visit from Rudyard Kipling. In desperation they planned an ambush to get themselves noticed at the highest level - and what better than to intercept the Commander's Lady and get her to carry a polite letter to her husband!

Perhaps Lord Roberts responded. At any rate they were soon on the move on long hot marches, interspersed with long hot boring periods of inactivity and the occasional spell of excitement. Sometimes they heard the sounds of gunfire, on Whit Monday they were fired upon by shells and responded with great cheerfulness. They were less happy when ordered to carry the battalion's baggage across twelve miles of hostile country, fighting nature's rivers with only four biscuits as rations

It was September when they really saw action, getting near enough to the Boers to fire their rifles, and three days later in the chief incident of their campaign they captured a hill-top camp all by themselves and held on to it for three days without rations. Had it not been for the sheep they found and the captured wagons of flour they might have gone hungry.

Everything else was anticlimax. More long marches, more waiting, a little more excitement at the turn of the year, and then home. Home by coal truck and cattle boat, home to Bury St Edmunds a day too soon for the great celebrations that Cambridge had planned its returning heroes.

Traffic was banned, shops were shut, and flags flew as the Volunteers both town & gown, now united and in their khaki were escorted by other Volunteers in scarlet tunics before attempting the final march from the station into town. It was prove one of the most dangerous of their entire campaign

Every inch of space was occupied as walls, fences, balconies, windows & roads were packed. Near the Senate House a contingent of mounted police were drafted in to help their colleagues but without avail. In the chaotic crush people were subjected to suffocating pressure and a bandsman was seen fighting for his life, using his drumsticks as weapons.

Somehow they squeezed into Gt St Mary's for a service, thence to the Guildhall where they were admitted Honorary Freeman of the Borough and into a Corn Exchange laid out as a banqueting hall for a meal of lamb, turkey and ox followed by African Gateau and Kimberley Jelly.

Meanwhile the streets of Cambridge saw the traditional "rag, "Mob law on the common and the Market Place" read the headlines over stories of battle, charge and counter charge that resulted in more casualties amongst the participants than had been suffered by the Heroes they had gathered to honour

Stories from a year – 1902

The Coronation dinner on Parker's Piece took tremendous organisation. There were the tables to find, the food to prepare, the volunteers to marshal and of course the very special guests to be assembled.

Some 2,500 aged poor had to be identified, located, equipped with knife, fork and spoon and transported to Parker's Piece for their outdoor dinner. Eventually the plans were laid and the food was ready. Everybody kept fingers crossed that the weather would hold

A similar meal had been organised for the previous Coronation in 1838; at the start of the Victorian age, Now that age was dead and the Edwardian was about to begin, There was no doubt about it - the 26th June 1902 would show that modern Cambridge could match the loyalty of their forefathers. Sadly it was not to be

The news of the King's illness - some thought it might be fatal - and the postponement of the Coronation shocked the Country. It shocked the Committee, concerned about what to do with all the food prepared for the feast that would not now take place, Hasty arrangements were made to distribute it to the elderly in their own homes before it went off in the July heat

The postponement was a short one and on August 9th the Corporation and dignitaries proceeded to King's College chapel for the celebration service, Then came a parade of decorated vehicles intended to illustrate "Progress" , Boer war veterans processed alongside a float depicting "Africa" resplendent with pythons and crocodiles, monkeys and leopards.

Nearby came the Great Eastern Railway ambulance corps, motor cars and cycles represented "Modern times" in contrast to the old-time coach and four, whilst tradesmen showed their wares with the Co-operative Society displaying a single piece of coal weighing 7 cwt. In all the procession stretched for a mile and a half,

The programme continued with daylight fireworks, a balloon ascent and promenade concert on Parker's Piece and culminated with a grand display of fireworks by Messrs Brock, It was an occasion to remember, but the only food was the public luncheon in the Guildhall and that cost 3/6 (18p) a head,

But on September 4th all that was put right, Tents sprouted on Parker's Piece despite the strong winds that tugged tent poles out of the ground and threatened to cause a catastrophe. Meanwhile dozens of women were buttering bread as it fell from a machine and an engine was heating several boilers each holding 100 gallons of water. The Stetchworth Dairy had supplied 110 gallons of milk and E.A.Wadsworth came up with the ginger beer and lemonade that were to be consumed by 6,000 children rounded up from all the schools in the Borough. They munched their way through 120 stone of bread, 120 stone of cake and 4 cwt of biscuits, watched by onlookers who paid 6d for the privilege.

It was all so reminiscent of the Coronation celebrations for Queen Victoria when 15,000 had been entertained. But that was 64 years before and try as they might the Council could find only 250 residents who had been present on that occasion. But whilst the 1838 coronation had become part of the folklore of Cambridge, the 1902 is forgotten except when somebody discovers one of the official Coronation Medals depicting the King and the Corporation arms distributed to the children at the time.

Stories from a year – 1903

It was Friday 13th February 1903 when fire ripped through Laurie and McConnal's store in Fitzroy Street, opened just 20 years before. The fire fighters rushed to the scene but had no fire engine they could bring – just six hose reel carts stationed at various parts of the town. With no pumping equipment they relied entirely on the poor mains water pressure and quite expected the whole of Fitzroy Street to be devastated. They considered wiring to London for an engine to be sent up by special train, but considered that this would have taken too long.

In the event the street was saved, though the shop was just a mass of blackened ruins. But Mr McConnal was not one to accept defeat. He moved some of the salvaged stock to the garden of the house in which he was lodging, opened a temporary shop in Fair Street, accepted an insurance settlement of £22,650 and set to work constructing a magnificent new building.

One of the other shops in that street was the Co-operative, formed by a committee which had included three shoemakers, a carpenter, odd-job man and some mechanics. They had set up there in 1871 after two years in City Road, taking care to watch every penny – even chopping up the packing cases in which goods were received and selling them as firewood. By hard work they prospered and opened branches in Mill Road and Victoria Road, a bakery in James Street and in 1900 a new store in Burleigh Street.

The advent of the motor bus enhanced Cambridge as a shopping centre which attracted multiple shops and up-to-date proprietors such as Sainsbury, Woolworth and Boots. But whilst these might attract new shoppers to the centre, the old population which had originally supported the small-scale shops in the Fitzroy Street area was drifting away with slum clearance, for by 1952 it was found that 91% of the properties in the East Road area were worn out – over 100 years old and poorly constructed. Laurie's however continued to expand and modernise.

The 1950 Holford Report indicated that the Fitzroy Street area would be a “valuable relief for shopping pressure on the historic centre. But it also proposed a shopping development in the Lion Yard area and released a string of plans and counter-plans. Whilst the City favoured a pedestrianised shipping area, the University wanted more cultural amenities such as a library and art gallery with a regional shopping development based in the Fitzroy Street area – which the City agreed would be a good idea, but in addition to Lion Yard rather than instead of it

Plan followed plan and as the arguments rumbled on so the area deteriorated; a disused pub became a shelter for alcoholics, small shops with low rents and short leases were taken over by small businesses and their new owners added to the debate. Laurie and McConnal continued to emphasise their faith in the area in 1965 by modernising their extensive frontage and in 1970 the Co-op increased its Burleigh Street floor area by 50%

But as parking restrictions were introduced the Co-op pioneered a new form of shopping when in 1970 it established a discount warehouse for people wishing to purchase in bulk – the Beehive – which it opened to the public, winning a planning appeal to allow it to continue. At an inquiry into their second warehouse development they stated “Fitzroy Burleigh is no nearer solution than it was in 1952”.

Laurie and McConnal could not wait. In 1977 they announced their closure blaming planning indecision. Next year Grosvenor Estates entered into partnership with the City Council to develop the Grafton Centre.

Stories from a year – 1904

12.12.1989

As Christmas 1904 approached older folks' thoughts turned to some of the good old customs the modern generation would never know, when Christmas was merry and for a fortnight before and a fortnight after the event there was a constant round of junketing and sleep was very little thought of.

They recalled "Show Night" when all Cambridge and his wife used to turn into the streets and every shopkeeper did his best to make a display of his wares and catch the public eye by some form of novel window dressing. The chief objects of attention were the butcher's and poulterer's where the carcasses of prize beasts and poultry were exhibited in prestigious quantities whilst the proprietors dispensed hospitality to their customers in their private offices or parlours.

But it all got out of hand and in their endeavours to beat one another the butcher's killed more meat than they could get rid of in the ordinary way and losses followed. And then 'sentimentality' came on the scene – people thought it was barbarous and unworthy of nineteenth-century civilisation. The custom died and with it went the art of the butchers' 'windowdresser' of which the modern generation knew nothing. 'Show Night' provided a considerable fillip to trade and provided an opportunity for a great deal of harmless enjoyment and useful social intercourse. There were plans in 1904 to revive it.

The excess meat might anyway be used up in another custom – 'Beef Eating' – a free meal offered by the owner of the hotel or inn to his regular customers who dined well on cold beef and pickles, but paid for their own drinks.

Draws and raffles were also popular. Draw tickets were a shilling each and prizes of suckling pigs, gigantic turkeys, bottles and bottles of spirits were offered by publicans whose takings rose to compensate them for any expense involved. Raffles were organised by shops where people rolled dice for Christmas trees, stands of wool flowers, musical boxes or cases of stuffed birds. Although illegal the police turned a blind eye.

They also turned a deaf ear to the Christmas waits – a band of musicians who patrolled the streets, and to the children carol singers who 'howl Christmas carols and hymns, or their own perverted version on our doorstep and cadge for money – the practice is most objectionable', thought one correspondent.

Another custom which was still present in 1904 were the 'Share-our club' nights. Often these clubs were organised by public houses and working men were encouraged to pay a small sum weekly – perhaps sixpence or one shilling. These were sometimes subject to criticism with claims that for every sixpence a man invested in the club he would spend the same amount in the pub. For his investment a man got eight shillings a week sick benefit if he fell ill during the year with the residue of the funds shared out amongst members at Christmas.

In 1903 a wife sued one club you had refused her husband payment since he was not being given medicine by the doctors and so could not be 'on the club'. When told he was beyond medical care and dying they brought forward their 'share-out' night by three weeks, distributing the funds the day before the man died. There was nothing left to pay the funeral expenses and the widow's plight evoked much sympathy in the days leading up to Christmas

Stories from a year 1905

Sultan of Zanzibar

In March 1905 the Mayor, Alderman Campkin had worked hard on his civic duties all morning - a morning when Cambridge was full of hustle and bustle over the Greek controversy - in which the Prime Minister had become personally involved - voting to make Greek no longer compulsory within the University.

Then at two in the afternoon came the telegram - the Sultan of Zanzibar (in London for the coronation) would arrive at the station in 2 hours time and would appreciate an escort around the ancient town and its colleges. What was he to do: the reputation of Cambridge hospitality was at stake for a visit of royalty "even of more or less obscure regions" is a matter of some moment. The chief constable was an authority on the orient but was out of town, the University involved in its own turmoil; it was up to him. He despatched a carriage to meet the visitors - not the official Mayor's coach but the one from the Lion Hotel with one of the hotel waiters as escort.

The Royal party in turbans and flowing white robes descended in majesty from the train but of the Sultan himself there was no sign - "he had been detained in London for an audience with the King". His entourage was escorted to the Mayoral parlour but the party preferred to visit the Bazaar - in progress in the Guildhall - whose worthy stallholders (including one who had spent some time in Zanzibar) were delighted at such wealthy visitors- but disappointed when they spend not a halfpenny.

Then came the tour - to Kings to Caius and Trinity where as the Porters bowed low the Prince fell to his knees articulating his praise for its architecture in a language that none (including the interpreter) understood. This was the only word he spoke - except when one of the party stumbled and stubbed his toe - then it became apparent that some words were the same in English and Zanzibarian

After three quarters of an hour it was time to depart and with many salaams they set off for the station Crowds gathered to watch their departure learned something of the mysterious ways of the Orient when the Royal party suddenly dashed to a couple of hansom cabs, and disappeared at speed towards Hills Road.

Next evening a representative from the Daily Mail travelled to Cambridge with "exclusive" news - it had all been a marvellous undergraduate hoax by members of Trinity College.

It all came as no surprise to the Editor of the Cambridge Daily News who had written only two weeks previously about an incident in 1873 when not only the Mayor but the University officials and Volunteer band had paraded to the Station to welcome an non-arriving" Shah of Persia" - an article which had obviously caught the eye of "The Sultan" at Trinity college. And the Mayor who obviously read the paper carefully had been right in his caution.

Stories from a year: 1905 [CAMBRIDGE VERSION]

In April 1905 Cambridge Railway station became the centre of attraction for at last the lumbering, slow horse-trams would be challenged by new technology - motor buses were here; not just one bus company but two, travelling the same route, competing for the same passenger

People flocked to stare at the two new rival buses, one painted Light Blue- the Cambridge colours, the other Dark Blue - that of Oxford! On the first day 2,000 brave souls climbed on board to make the journey into the centre. An undergraduate recorded his impressions in a poem published in May 1905

Oh, who will not go for a roar and a blow to the station and back to the Square
On one of the two apparitions in blue that the Vac has evolved for us here?
Oh, who would not rush in the Saturday crush for joy of a ride on the top.
Or quiver with pride - and the engine - inside, at the snort and the start and the stop

The "apparitions" were for some an unwelcome addition to the traffic congestion - for already in 1905 probably no other town had as many cars and motorcycles as Cambridge in term time. People soon became worried at the speed and the size of the monsters in the narrow central streets

"Amazes the eyes the Gargantuan size, amazes the hooter the sense,
As swoops on its way in despotic array the Triton of traffic immense
In sooth but a few will remain in the Cury at hearing the omnibus roar
There cannot be space in that limited place for the monster and anything more"

One of the new buses was an open-top, double decker, and from it passengers could see things previously hidden

Oh, bring up your "brown" for a tour of the town, from nine in the morning till ten.
This way for a new and sensational view of Christ's and Emmanuel men!
The rooms where they keep, how they look as they sleep, the muffins for tea that they buy.
The Bridge that they play and the rent that they pay, you can see all the lot from on high!

Environmentalists became concerned about the impact of this modern technology. The buses filled the streets with black exhaust smoke, and the snort of the engine was everywhere

But a Stygian gloom will assuredly loom on the brow of the lover of peace,
That another new noise should detract from the joys that for ever and ever decrease;
And loud is the wail of the bike and the trailer and trap as they scatter afar
To left and right in discomfited flight at the voice of the God in the Car

Within 6 months the double decker was banned. The single-decker lasted a bit longer before it too was forced off the road - and the slow, safe and solid trams reigned supreme once more. Their triumph was short-lived. In 1907 came another Company - the Ortona - whose direct descendents still ply the Cambridge streets

They have been joined most recently by a new generation of open-topped buses which have prompted exactly the same reactions now as in 1905!

Stories from a year: 1905 [COUNTY VARIANT]

In April 1905 Cambridge Railway station became the centre of attraction for country and townsfolk alike for the lumbering, slow horse-trams were to be challenged by new technology - motor buses had arrived.

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Environmentalists became concerned about the impact of this modern technology. The buses filled the streets with black exhaust smoke, and the snort of the engine was everywhere. Their concerns were shared by others and within 6 months the double decker was banned. The single-decker lasted a bit longer before it too was forced off the road - and the slow, safe and solid trams reigned supreme once more.

Their triumph was short-lived. In 1907 came another Company - the Ortona whose direct descendents still ply the Cambridge streets. Soon they trundled the roads outside the town. Sawston and Cottenham routes were established by 1910. A service to Royston came in 1914 and although the war brought a halt to further expansion the postwar days saw routes to Ely, Linton, Haverhill and Willingham.

During the 1920s other companies were formed

In 1919 the newly established "Whippet" buses from Graveley started a service between Cambridge and St Ives

In 1922 the Burwell and District Motor Services started to serve the east of the county

Cambridge Blue based at Arrington started services to Bedford and Biggleswade

Premier Travel, a partnership of undergraduates, started in 1935 with a route to Royston

and although the type of buses have varied - some early pioneers even used coal-lorries which they "converted" to buses on Saturday by adding a row of seats - buses have been part of the local scene ever since. Indeed such is the congestion in central Cambridge nowadays that there are plans to force people to leave their cars on the outskirts and take instead an "apparition in blue" (now called a mini-shuttle)

Stories from a year – 1906 by Mike Petty

In November 1906 councillors held a special meeting on a Saturday morning to pass a special proposition: "To place on record the sincere regret felt by the Committee on hearing the news of the death of Mr. Pink, Librarian for more than 51 years. Their memorial went on to single out his constant care for the interests of the library and the single-minded devotion to duty of this the oldest official of the Corporation.

The young John Pink had been selected as Cambridge's first librarian in 1855: he had been one of thirteen applicants and the 22 year old got the job in preference to a retired stage coach driver, Thomas Cross.

His early days were spent in planning for the opening of the new library in a rented room in the Friends Meeting House in Jesus Lane. The great day dawned on the 28th June 1855 and at first people flocked to the library to consult the books in the room provided but it soon became clear that more was needed. It took three years of debate and planning before a Lending department was established. Readers also wanted newspapers but the Committee were reluctant.

Eventually Pink won them over – he could take them provided they were free. The proprietors of the Cambridge Chronicle and Cambridge Independent Press duly obliged and others agreed to let the library have copies of ‘the times’ and ‘the Daily news’ that were only one day old.

Addition

Pink went on developing – he established the basis of the present “Cambridgeshire Collection” and a library for children. As the service grew he supervised its move into the Guildhall and saw the opening of a domed reading room in 1884.

But John also found great public pressure demanding a branch library in the expanding Barnwell area. A site was offered, the “low roofed tile shed made as comfortable as possible” and in 1875 it opened. Pink was allowed a new member of staff to run it but it was soon apparent that the new librarian was as fond of the public house as the public library and was dismissed for intoxication.

By now it was obvious that the building was in the wrong place and it was time to find a new site. In 1897 after considerable problems the new Mill Road library opened and was heavily used “by many of the poorest and some of the roughest classes”. But with the new library the old Barnwell branch could be closed – or so he thought. The public outcry was amazing: a petition was circulated calling for it to be kept open but neither the Library Committee nor the whole Borough Council was impressed and the library closed in June 1897.

It was not the end however, for in September a public meeting was held calling for its reopening. Local newspaper letters pages were inundated and Pink was drawn into the debate angering the logic of his case. It was a debate he was to lose for eventually the matter came before full Council once more and they gave in to the public pressure, reopening the old building as an evening reading room.

Thus John Pink learned that it was easier to open libraries than close them – a fitting testimony to the public appreciation in which his work was held then, as now.

Stories from a year – 1907 by Mike Petty
Compiled 11.9.1989

It was, said Gwen Raverat a kind of water-borne cart or floating wheel- barrow". She was referring to the garden punt that the children used for playing pirates and other water games. Engravings show Undergraduates in similar craft obstructing the commercial trade on the Backs in 1792.

Perhaps St Johns college students might have had a better result had they chosen to use one when they stole one of the balls from Clare College Bridge about 1897. Instead they used canoe and sadly the weight of the stolen item was such that their craft capsized

The garden punts bore little resemblance to the elegant slim tourist punts of today. These arrived in force in 1907 and proved tremendously popular; the previous year there had been

hardly a punt available and before that, said "Table Talk "such a thing was not known in Cambridge. Yet this summer every boatyard possesses a flotilla

They were readily adopted by a number of punt hirers including Dolby, Strange, Bullen, Scudamore, Reynolds and Banham. The latter, an eminent boat builder modified the original design, making them shorter and more easy to handle in the crowded Cam, They were redesigned again in 1967 by Scudamore as the "Camford", Other modifications have followed though some ideas, such as the fibre glass punts introduced in 1961 proved unsuccessful.

Whilst Chauffeurs can now be hired to overcome some of the problems of punting on the Backs the more hardy visitors making the voyage to Grantchester can sometimes wish for protection from childish misbehaviour. Although river patrols have been instigated nobody has as yet suggested fitting shotguns to the punts. Yet this was precisely what the old fenmen did.

Their punts were sixteen to twenty-two feet long and used for wildfowling. From the front projected a massive punt gun. As he neared the flock the stalker would lay flat on the bottom of the punt, his legs stretched out on either side to steady it and a small stalking stick in each hand as he manoeuvred into position. The explosion from the mighty muzzle loading gun could leave dozens of wildfowl dead or dying. One gunner recorded that a single shot killed 20 widgeon in January 1947.

Three months later at Haddenham other fenmen were punting into their own homes, heads bumping against ceilings as they sought to salvage something from homes flooded by the bursting of a river bank. The landscape might not resemble the beauty of the Backs but never was "a waterborne cart or floating wheel-barrow more appreciated.

Stories from a year 1908

It was old-fashioned Christmas weather snow, snow and more snow. The only problem was that it came at Easter,

In 1908 Easter fell at the end of April and people laid their plans, remembering the enjoyment of the previous year when temperatures of 70 degrees in the shade had tempted hundreds of railway excursionists to the beaches of Hunstanton. People at Ely claimed that the old legend had come true and that "The Sun had danced on Easter morning; those up early enough might have witnessed the phenomenon (due no doubt, they said, to radiation since the sun, did shine very grandly after it rose but gave way to blizzards and ended up with vivid lightning and the roar of distant thunder at nightfall,

Nevertheless many awoke on the Monday hoping against hope that English climate would revert to the previous year's pattern. The reality was very different; they found the rooftops & ground carpeted with a couple of inches of snow with more large flakes falling, The fens lay covered to a depth of four inches whilst Huntingdon measured twelve inches and pronounced it the worst snow since the famous Easter storm of 1876

Traffic was disrupted although few actually went anywhere - the railways carried just 54 to Great Yarmouth, 75 to Huntingdon races and a scattering to Bury St Edmunds or Bishops Stortford, Only a few took the longer excursions to Bedford, Oxford or Scotland. Everywhere trips to the country or down the river were abandoned and those brave enough to venture into Cambridge itself did so with the certain knowledge that some wit would be sure to wish them Merry Christmas,

Then at midday the sky cleared & the sun shone. Cambridge people were not to be fooled however & stayed in front of the fire – only to find the temperatures continuing to rise. At

Ely a mini-boom of visitors climbed to the top of the Cathedral tower for a glimpse the snow-clad landscape

The impending cricket season was attracting attention, as was the young cricketer returning home from a successful trip to Australia with the M.C.C. A smoking concert was arranged and many turned up to witness the presentation of an inscribed gold watch to Jack Hobbs

Perhaps summer could not be far away after all. But in 1908 it was to be May before the thaw came & the young folk of Milton had to be lifted over large snow drifts before they could attend their village feast

April has seen snow in other years, including 1903 and 1978, in 1912 it was the month of a record drought, and in 1918 of the highest floods since 1879. But at a time when modern headline-, are of impending climatic change it is perhaps worth recalling a comment from 81 years ago. "The English climate can not and will not be regulated ... no reliance is to be placed upon it"

Stories from a year 1909

Early in February 1909 the Committee were busy pursuing the same old problem they'd pursued before lack of parking spaces. Since 1888 there had been a "defence fund" set up to pay fines incurred when drivers were summonsed for "loitering about the streets". But still there was no answer. There were just too many licensed cabs for the available spaces. If all the hackney carriages in Cambridge plied for hire at the same time then every rank would be full and there would still be 50 horses and vehicles wandering around the streets unable to find a place to rest. But of the 213 licensed cabs the majority were kept in livery stables and only brought out when ordered leaving just 50 vehicles in vacation and 70 in term time to ply the streets. The Committee found that most of the authorised ranks were largely unused; hardly anybody wanted a cab in Drummer Street or Victoria Road, whilst Queens Road and Grange Road were usually deserted. Of the 50 spaces at the station most stood vacant except at the beginning of term. The traveller returning to Cambridge by the last train would often find the rank deserted except for Phil Stocker, whose horse was acknowledged to be the slowest in town. His death in 1917 left only "lame Walter" Mansfield plying his trade, a character so loved by his regular customers that when his old cab failed to pass its inspection in 1912 they'd rallied round to buy him a new landau. At the turn of the century the hansom cabby had been king of the streets. With his shiny top hat cocked rakishly over one ear, a bunch of violets in his buttonhole, thick double seamed overcoat buttoned closely around his portly form and a pair of stout driving gloves "Gentleman Joe" on his dickey was a great personality. The arrival of the motor taxis in 1908 hit them badly but many passengers confessed they would prefer to sit behind a spanking good 'gee' than the bald, uninteresting back of a chauffeur. The cabs themselves might sport rubber tyred wheels for a smoother ride but one passenger who jumped into his seat too heavily found himself running down St Andrews Street when an old tin tray which had been placed over a large hole in the wooden floor gave way under his weight. Today's modern motor taxis are much more comfortable and reliable but none of them can boost their takings like one old cab owner. He used an former circus horse which had been taught to rear up on his hind legs to say "thank you" for any tip received an act much appreciated by his customers|

Stories from a year – 1910, by Mike Petty

Cambridge has a habit of doing things in twos; in 1888 an act of parliament allowed the construction of two new bridges, in 1905 two bus companies started operating and in 1910

two groups built their own aeroplane. Both consortia included a member of the Wallis family.

One was a biplane constructed in Chesterton by four young scientific instrument makers called Knightley, Booth, Miller and Wallis. They hired a large barn in the High Street and by May their aircraft – a glider – was virtually complete, ready for display during May week. The machine was virtually all their own design, though they had taken one idea from the Wright Brothers. It was held together with 3,000 brass screws and was to be launched from Royston for trial flights. If successful an engine would be fitted.

More successful was the steel-framed Wallbro machine with its 25hp JAP engine built in St Barnabas Road by H.S. and P. B. Wallis. By July it was ready for flight trials in a field near Abington; it rose a few feet from the ground and sailed along for 3 or 4 yards before coming down nose first and somersaulting. The pilot jumped clear and was uninjured, the machine was picked up and exhibited next month at the Mammoth Show when over 6,000 paid to see it. It was destroyed shortly afterwards when its hanger collapsed but recreated in 1981 helped by the detailed technical notes that had been published in the Cambridge Daily News in 1910.

Meanwhile Huntingdon was preparing for the opening an Aviation Race Course, on Portholme Meadow, witnessing its first flight, by a Bleriot monoplane in April 1910. It was August 1911 before a man flew over Cambridge itself and October when the first plane landed when Second Lieutenant W. B. Rhodes Moorhouse became lost en route to the new Huntingdon airfield and came down on Parkers Piece with an empty fuel tank.

Public interest in flying had been heightened by reports of the activity in an Oakington farmyard where in 1909 two well-known aeronauts had been building a monoplane in a bid to win the prize of £1,000 offered by the Daily Mail for the first circular mile flight by an all-British aeroplane. Its constructors were A. M. Grose, the first person to have been granted a motor drivers licence, and N. A. Feary, a native of the village. It was powered by a specially designed engine by a Northampton company, the propeller was by Handley Page and the chassis constructed by H. V. Quinsee of East Road, Cambridge. As the day of the flight neared the partners argued over who should not be the pilot – one had a family, the other a widowed mother to support. The first trials were with the machine tethered to a stake but then it was let free, careered across a field but only became airborne when it hit a bump.

But the grand pioneer of local aviation had been E. P. Frost of West Wrattling Hall who as early as 1867 had started to invest £1,000 and ten years in the construction of a flying machine with flexible wings that would flap up and down and lift it into the air. It needed a 25 horse power engine but in those days there was only steam and the power was not available. By the time a petrol engine came along thirty years later the machine, left under trees in the park, was a total wreck.

Airplanes with flapping wings seem totally illogical today but so does the autogyro – a mini helicopter featured in one of the James Bond films. Yet that does fly and was developed by a company registered in 1975 at Chesterton Road – almost inevitably by another member of the Wallis family.

Stories from a year 1911

"Why are there so many hard working men on the scrap heap, living a life of degradation and misery"? These were the sentiments of an Aberdeen man, one of the first to use the newly opened Labour Exchange in Guildhall Street in 1911. His quest for work had been unsuccessful.

Through the hardships of the 1920s and 1930s soup kitchens were opened to soften the pangs of hunger and the Town Council initiated a series of measures to find work for the unemployed. The sports facilities on Jesus Green, and the paving stones along Queens Road are testimony to some of the job creation schemes initiated.

Roads were constructed to serve the soon to be developed acres off Cherry Hinton Road and long delayed schemes reassessed. One of these was the revival of a project to relieve traffic congestion in Silver Street and make better communication with Newnham that had been long mooted indeed the need for such a route had been voiced at the opening of Victoria Bridge in 1889. There was great opposition with nine separate schemes drawn up in 1923 and "if not for the urgency of the unemployment position we should be in the same position today, only instead of nine there would have been nineteen". Such was the opinion of the Mayor in December 1926 when the Fen Causeway was formally opened. It had given employment to 90 men over a two year period.

By 1932 Cambridge was reported as responding to a Government appeal to sell gold, jewellery and trinkets to help the national financial crisis. "This is the time to spend buy new clothes, furniture or extra food. Have your house decorated or painted. A prompt response to this appeal will lift thousands of homes from misery into happiness by Christmas". The Cambridge Master Builders took out an advertisement to emphasise the problem: "Do you realise that 1,653 able bodied men are totally unemployed in your own town. Do you realise that of this appalling total 543 men are of the building trade"

The suicide rate rose, despair continued and the International Situation became graver. But during the War years the unemployment situation lessened due in part to 'Butlins' the 'in' name for the Government Offices established at Brooklands Avenue which boosted Central government employment by 350%. In 1959 the Employment Exchange was moved there from Newnham and reported that there were only 340 men and 67 women unemployed in the area, compared to 1,400 in July 1938. "All out drive to lure workers to pricey Cambridge" read the headlines in 1973 sentiments repeated almost exactly today. Shops have difficulty attracting staff, firms move away and leaflets are distributed in Lion Yard begging for workers. The windows of the Job Centre now once more in Guildhall Street are full of positions, but not for the Scotsmen on the benches in Lion Yard who still experience the degradation and misery bemoaned by their compatriot 87 years ago.

Stories from a Year, 1912

28.8.1989

In a room at Trinity College plans were laid for the annihilation of thousands of British troops. Soon 130,000 enemy soldiers were landed at Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft and were heading inland. Cambridge took it all very placidly – watched the officers start off in their motor cars, and chatted to the men in the bar of the Lion Hotel. It was after all just a paper exercise with Sir John French and his cronies returning nightly to the peace of their college. It was September 1907

Within a year the troops were real and the area patrolled by cavalry. 150 passed through Cambridge and a squadron spent the night on Grantchester Meadows, another by the side the Witchford Road at Ely, yet more in Withersfield Road, Haverhill. A country policeman found eight in full uniform with hats and spurs, their horses tethered by their side, lying dead to the world, fast asleep. Meanwhile the invading Irish Hussars fought inland from Colchester. Again Cambridge did not panic – it was just a military exercise.

In 1910 the German army swarmed ashore at Kings Lynn and conquered Lincoln. The King issued a proclamation imposing military control throughout Cambridgeshire as the invaders

swept south. This time Cambridge fell and a fierce battle raged from Helions Bumpstead to Kelshall, fiercest around Elmdon where British trenches were more than once captured by the Magdeburg battalions only to be hurled out again by the Coldstream Guards. By noon the magnificent palace at Audley End was in flames and desperate fighting was taking place in the streets of Saffron Walden. The timely arrival of General Packington's force from Pottun proved decisive; despite a final cavalry charge the Germans were slaughtered, swept out of existence by a terrible cross fire. By nightfall there was no unwounded German south of Whittlesford, except as a prisoner. The Battle of Royston was hailed as a great victory in the Daily Mail of September 10th 1910.

But this too was a fictional war, recounted in a novel by William Le Queux to point out the likely impact of such a real invasion, a story that so impressed Field Marshall Lord Roberts that he added a Foreword. The book was written in 1906, next year French planned his invasion and in 1912 all the preparations were tested properly.

The area selected was that part of the country "which should invasion take place, will assuredly witness a life or death struggle between the defenders of the country and the invaders". Thus Newmarket, Royston and Linton were again the scene of great activity, of route marches and cavalry charges, airships and artillery. This time the invaders were led by Sir Douglas Haig, while Sir John French directed the manoeuvres from his base at Trinity College. There the guards on the gates were for real, with bayonets fixed, when the King came to see for himself the progress of a realistic – but phoney – war in September of 1912.

In September 1914 the troops on the commons told their own tale, but as for 1939 well only time will tell if this time the war was for real or just another exercise in September sabre-rattling

Stories from a year 1913

By May 1913 Cambridge was quite used to the call of votes for women. Generally the struggle for the Parliamentary vote was conducted by serious political lobbying and debate, but such meetings passed largely unnoticed whilst the more extreme "Suffragettes" made the news.

Cambridge's first experience of such protestors came in 1908 when in what the male reporters described as a "very exciting" incident one struggling female had to be carried out of a meeting - they would soon find out that Cambridge was not a congenial place for this sort of activity.

However 1910 saw a visit from the leading militant, Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst who was greeted with hostile demonstrations. 1911 saw women walking the streets to avoid being counted on census night and a local minister's wife being arrested during a suffragette raid on the House of Commons. In 1912 the University Men's League for Women's Suffrage was lobbying on their behalf and the Conservative Women's Franchise Association was formed but it was the militants who hit the headlines in May 1913.

Early one Saturday morning two plain clothed policemen spotted smoke coming from a newly-built houses in Storeys Way, The new motor fire engine roared off from St Andrews street, followed shortly afterwards by the firemen, some cycling, some running and some riding in a covered van. They were too late to save the roof of the first house but did manage to prevent serious damage to the second.

Detective Sergeant Marsh was set on the case. He discovered somebody had broken in through the study window, poured paraffin over sawdust and packing cases and set them on fire. They had then moved to the adjoining premises and repeated the process. There were three clues: bloodstains from broken glass, footprints and a ladies gold watch. On Wednesday he travelled to Norwich and arrested a schoolteacher.

The suspect, an active Suffragette, admitted being in Cambridge on the evening in question and she had a fresh wound on her hand. The crucial evidence was the watch, a present from her uncle, a Norwich policeman. She was sentenced to 18 months hard labour but went on hunger strike and was released in October.

Meanwhile other Suffragette outrages continued to hit the headlines; they tried to set fire to the Varsity rugby pavilion. They landed by boat at St Johns College to paint the gates purple, green and white and daub "Votes for Women" on the stone work. They disrupted a garden party at Magdalene College and generally caused such mayhem that Colleges closed their gates during the Long Vacation.

Meanwhile the ladies of the Union of Suffrage Societies prepared to welcome a contingent of women taking part in a Pilgrimage to London in July 1913. Their march was heckled as it made its way past the colleges the "suffragettes" had terrorised and an attempt to address the gathering on Huntingdon Road was shouted down. But the large numbers who turned out were left in no doubt as to the success of the occasion, and all were content that they had helped to break down some of the prejudice created by their militant sisters.

Stories from a year – 1914 by Mike Petty

What a time to be a boy!

August Bank Holiday 1914 meant the Mammoth Show – not so “Mammoth” as once it had been, but still exciting. There were athletic sports, side shows, dancing and fireworks, even a balloon ascent. But that day there was something better – following the crowds down to the railway station to see the first of the Naval Reservists off to the War.

The station was crowded with boisterous farewells between relative and friend, so there were no tears, only shouting and laughter, and when the train finally drew in there was singing with most of the people joining in. The train doors were slammed shut, embraces hastily given, hands shaken and promises made to be home by Christmas; then with shouting and waving, and chanting about the boys of the bull-dog breed, the naval reservists were off. Jack Overhill watched them go and wandered home.

Soon Cambridge got quite used to seeing the khaki uniforms as the Territorials mobilised. Appeals went out for extra men to join the Royal Army Medical Corps – the first Eastern General Hospital – quartered in one of the large rooms adjoining Corn Exchange Street and soon to be based at the Leys School before moving on to Trinity College.

Some were not happy of course. Farmers were worried that the Army would take their horses, grown-ups moaned about the soaring prices – butter up 2d a pound, bacon now 1s. 4d (7p), and shelves emptying rapidly as panic buying set in.

But the Boy Scouts were being prepared. They could help the war effort in a number of ways – distribute notices, help in soup kitchens, look after the families whose men were at War, and – more excitingly – assist despatch riders, (especially in the way of puncture mending), pick up despatches dropped from aircraft – and watch out for spies!

One morning came the rumour that there were soldiers on Coe Fen, Jack Overhill dashed off to see. There stretching away to the far end of the Fen was a row of white bell tents. Parallel with them, over the middle ditch, were horses and wagons. As there were no sentries he could wander amongst them, peering into the tents where soldiers were sitting and lying.

Somebody said there were more on Midsummer Common and off he ran. He'd never seen anything like it. Soldiers, horses, tents, wagons, limbers, guns – there was hardly room to move. The men were washing, shaving, cleaning their boots, belts and buckles, grooming, cooking.... doing all the everyday soldierly things that fascinated youngsters and their parents.

Everybody turned out to look and marvel. Local folk brought pails of water, hot meals, cups of tea, apples – anything; hawkers did the same but charged extortionate prices. Jack made friends with two of the lads, learning the words to *It's a Long Way to Tipperary* that they played on the mouth-organ and listening to their chatter long into the summer night. It was a great time to be a boy!

One morning he ran down to the Fen to find grass, trees, and sky. Soldiers, horses, tents and wagons had vanished. They had come in the night and had gone in the night.

Stories from a year 1915

Cambridge Antiquarian Society is the most senior of the groups who have an interest in the area's past. Its meetings and its prestigious "Proceedings" comprise contributions fully researched by specialists and usually devoted to topics such as Anglo Saxon cemeteries, Roman Burials, iron age swords or Victorian stage coach routes.

In January 1915 Catherine Parsons was speaking on witchcraft but this time she was not dwelling on the past but speaking of the present the life and feelings of her Cambridgeshire village where witchcraft was very much alive.

The parishioners had told her there always were witches and there always would be and they truly believed she was in league with the Devil and had the power to do evil. To make the contract the Devil usually appeared to the person in the shape of an animal such as a rat, mouse or toad. Once recruited the witch became possessed of imps or spirits which lived upon her body and unless given plenty of work to do became a terrible torment to their owner.

Villagers sometimes spotted one of the imps in their house "it looked something like a mouse with very large eyes and a tail only two inches long, and as soon as it was spotted it scrambled away up the chimney to report what it had seen to the witch". The local rag and bone man chased an imp she had sent to spy on him "but the faster I ran the faster he ran till that got to her cottage, where the witch stood, she quickly caught it up and put it in her bosom they always carry them there, or under her armpit she takes them to church with her".

Superstitious people ascribed various powers to the wise woman and generally went out of their way to stay in her good books. People believed they were safe provided the witch did not possess anything that belonged to them but how could they be sure she had not picked up a piece of your broken crockery or taken a spring from the garden hedge, just enough to give her power.

Witches were extortioners and their craft remunerative; she could put a spell on your dough so the bread did not rise or on coal so it would not burn. She could influence animals, making horses stop dead in their tracks, pigs go off their feed, and cows stop giving milk or even send swarms of fleas to bite her victim.

Villagers had various remedies to protect themselves "you go to the village shop and buy a halfpenny worth of salt without saying please or thank you for it" ... "you put a piece of steel under your doormat for a witch cannot cross steel, and a knife under the chair will stop with witch sitting down".

Eventually a witch got old and longed to be at rest. But, it was believed, she could not die until she found somebody to take care of her imps. "When one was dying nobody could stay in the room with her because of the sulphur which came from her nose and mouth and she wouldn't have died except for the nurse witch told her not to open a certain hutch she kept in the room, but the old nurse would not listen she looked in and there was a red underskirt the imps was wrapped up in it and escaped!" Sometimes the witch tried to burn the imps by putting them in a hot oven, "but they screamed so loud they had to be taken out and were returned to the witch ... eventually they were put in the coffin and buried with her". On another occasion "it was as much as two strong men with pitchforks could do to keep the imps from bursting the oven door open and the men were terrified by the strength of the imps who screamed and cried like a lot of little children".

The folklore of Cambridgeshire is full of tales of witchcraft, modern newspapers carry contemporary stories, but few can match the details given by a respected historian to an audience of Cambridge academics some 74 years ago.

Storied from a year – 1916 by Mike Petty

"We have bombed the town of Cambridge" all its factories are useless, lying now in smoking ruins". Thus came the news from Berlin.

It was expected. The Red Cross nurses from Wordsworth Grove had been alerted, stretcher bearers called for. Meanwhile the other patients, convalescing from operations had been tucked up safely in their beds whilst bandages and scissors, lint and slings and dressings were prepared for use.

Outside the night was peaceful – just the sound of running water from the weir and the river, or a distant hoot from a motor horn. The scattered stretcher-bearers in their dark and cheerless posts were getting cold and hungry, whilst in the Hospitals nurses piled up fires and warmed up coffee. The night dragged by and dawn was approaching when the field Marshall dismissed them all and they turned home in the early hours of April 1st, thinking it had been a hoax. Yet the later German communiqué implied that Cambridge might have been a target after all.

The first-hand account of the raid that wasn't was recorded in the Wordsworth Grove "Monthly Magazine", the first issue of which was published in January 1916. The articles, poems and jokes capture something of the atmosphere of the Convalescent homes which tended the wounded and maimed after their surgery at the first Eastern General Hospital in Burrell's Walk. Under the administration of Commandant Alex Wood its staff catered for 30 patients at a time, organising dances or theatre visits, river trips and even band concerts, using the talents staff and patients alike. It was just one of many such Hospitals opened during 1915 in anticipation of the casualties that were to be expected. Others were based in "Huntley", Herschel Road and at 2, 3, and 4 Cintra Terrace, Hills Road, which had originally treated wounded Belgian soldiers. The three houses were old-fashioned and inconvenient so they had transferred to St Chad's in Grange Road, a large house with sunny room and delightful garden.

In the surrounding area various large houses such as "The Firs" at Histon, "Mount Blow", Shelford, "Old House" Swavesey and the "Park House" Balsham were made available by their owners. They were supplemented by Parish, village or church halls in Fulbourn,

Willingham, Shepreth, Whittlesford, and Cottenham, whilst for a time the Union workhouse at Linton was pressed into use. Between them they treated over 21,000 patients until disbanded in May 1919 whilst 80,000 were transported from the station to the various hospitals without mishap.

Transport of another nature is featured in the first magazine with a poem entitled "The wreck of the Sunbeam" recalling the adventures of a soldier who borrowed Sister's bicycle to explore the town. His adventure ended with the machine wedged beneath the wheels of a car and no amount of repair could salvage anything from the wreckage. In fear and trembling he approached its owner.

"They rushed downstairs to view the wreck
A sorry sight to see!
She turned away with curses low,
Then bathed the hero's knee!"

In August 1916 the King saw for himself some of the care bestowed locally on wounded soldiers and, 5 months later, the Zeppelins did arrive over Cambridgeshire and bombs were dropped. It would appear that little damage was done but without copies of the Wordsworth Grove magazine one cannot be sure since details were censored in the official press – and who would believe the Germans following their April claims!

Stories from a year – 1917 by Mike Petty

By 1917 the Great War had dragged on and the costs had rocketed. In January they were estimated at £5.7 million a day. But the real cost of the war was not money but men – patriotic appeals from volunteers were now being supplemented with compulsion. Throughout the country local tribunals were established who had to decide who could be allowed to stay at home for essential local duties - a terrible responsibility for its members – one of whom resigned when his own son was refused exemption. Others took it more stoically.

John Henry Sadler was called before the tribunal – he was 32, married a thatcher spent some time vermin killing and chimney sweeping. The exchange is reported verbatim.

"What were you doing yesterday?"

"Mole catching sir because they destruct the crops, I skinned 40 moles last night after I had my tea" (laughter).

"Moles you had by you"

"No, they were all fresh ones." Sadler also stated that he had a brother who was a Prisoner of War.

"That is why you should go and fight the Germans – I am afraid you will have to join up".

"I am sorry to hear it"

Often farmers appeared on behalf of their men. Charles Wright appeared for George Dimock, a 39 year old married man with 6 children, and for Arthur Nightingale, a horsekeeper. Wright stated that since they had taken two of his men some 30 acres had gone out of cultivation – what should have been wheat was nothing but thistles and grass. He was worse off than any other farmer for labour since he employed more single men than others. He lost his case. Albert Wright, aged 19, applied for himself. He was a smallholder and carter who farmed 9½ acres on his own as well as working for other smallholders. He had lost his left eye when working as a blacksmith's assistant and been advised to take up agricultural work. He was one of the hardest working lads in the village and was granted conditional exemption.

Although a formula was produced allowing so many men per head of cattle, the impact on food production was severe, and newly formed agricultural labourers union protested about the need for Sunday working – when munitions workers were given the day off – and wages – what was the use of giving labourers 25/- per week when inflation meant it was only worth 14/6. The proposals that young girls might be trained for milking and feeding cows – “turned from domestic employment on to a farm to work among boys and men without any supervision” met with opposition from some quarters. Many of those granted exemption were required to join the Defence Force where they were trained to guard the home front and be ready to prevent invasion. Should the Germans land on the East Coast it would be essential that men and munitions be deployed as quickly as possible, yet road links were poor. Thus in 1917 soldiers were employed to construct a new road between Stretham and Wicken where locals anticipated the benefits that would accrue to their village whose large greens would be certain to prove irresistible as camping ground for passing cavalry. The road was duly completed – but scarcely used since nobody could decide who should pay for the bridges across the Old West and cam rivers – and therefore not built.

Strict controls were brought in over foodstuff and an eight year old boy sent to prison for 14 days and whipped for stealing bread; people were urged not to shoot pigeons – they might be carrying important messages.

But the real carriers of important messages were the postmen. After every new assault his progress down the village street would be watched carefully. Time after time he would stop and deliver the letter that people dreaded receiving – that a son or husband was wounded, dead, or – worse – just “missing”.

Stories from a year 1918

It was Christmas in Cambridge and people who had been fighting for the future were spending as if there was no tomorrow. Nobody could begrudge them having a bit of a fling but caution was being urged. Money would not be coming in so easily very shortly; the emergency munitions works in Cambridge were all shutting down; several factories had given notice that they would have to reduce staff and when demobilisation came it would mark the end of the separation allowances which had been providing regular income into many homes. It all went unheeded. Never had there been more people in Cambridge than on the Saturday afternoon before Christmas.

The principal streets were absolutely crowded, the shops congested. From a trading point of view it was the best for many years and several shops were completely cleared out.

But where were the raisins for the Christmas pudding, the abundant shiploads of apples, the light foreign wines that were to turn thoughts from the unobtainable whisky. These and many little comforts and luxuries which had been alluring held out to the British housekeeper had simply failed to materialise proving once more that the profiteer was too strong for the controller.

For this was 1918; the armistice had been signed, the rejoicings on Market Hill had taken place only a week or so before, and already there was news of returning husbands and sweethearts. Cambridge itself was full of soldiers and sailors home on leave. Meanwhile all but 600 of the wounded from the First Eastern General Hospital across the Backs had been sent home on 12 day passes. The remainder were fully entertained in the wards made as bright and attractive as possible with decorations much in evidence.

Addenbrooke's Hospital was also transformed; Chinese lanterns, evergreens and chrysanthemums decorated every ward and "festivities of extraordinary gaiety" planned. The

presence of soldier patients shattered in nerve and body made the civilian patients, both male and female, who were lying ill in bed feel much more thoroughly that there was much to be thankful for and as they thought of the men in blue and what they had gone through their own ailments became light in comparison. Nature too joined in the celebrations with an aurora borealis on Christmas night which lasted for some hours and attracted considerable attention.

The northern sky glowed with a ghostly radiance and at times great shafts of pearly light lit the night sky like the rays of a searchlight, reminding some of their experiences on the Western Front.

All this was seen and reported by vigilant newspapermen. Nobody took much notice however when a returned army chaplain, Eric Milner White, started a new sort of carol service at King's College. He adapted the idea that had been begun at Truro Cathedral in 1880 with nine carols and nine lessons read by various officers of the church beginning with a chorister and ending with a bishop. It would, he said, symbolise the link between Kings and Eton, the goodwill between University and Town and peace within the whole Church at Christmas time.

Ten years later the BBC broadcast it for the first time; they continued even during the Second War when the Chapel glass was removed for safe keeping, there was no heating and for security reasons the name of the Chapel had to be kept secret. This year the Saturday afternoon tills will ring a little less frantically as millions throughout the world stop their shopping to celebrate with the congregation in a Cambridge chapel a Christmas tradition with its roots in wartime.

Stories from a year – 1919, by Mike Petty 24th May 1990

In April 1919 Homerton College became the venue for the first Rally of the Cambridgeshire Girl Guides. By then there were 31 Troops throughout the county with Guides established in Linton, Harston and Bottisham as well as Cambridge. Here the first group had been established in 1911 to cater for the aspiration of a few girls who had been inspired to become Girl Scouts by seeing the activities of their Brothers.

The Boy Scout movement in Cambridge had started at a meeting in the YMCA addressed by General Baden Powell on 21st February 1908. It was followed by a public meeting at the Perse school the next month following which "monkey patrols" of boys were formed, playing at scouting without being under any proper control. These were soon formed into Troops in Cambridge, Cherry Hinton, Chesterton and at the Higher Grade and Perse schools. In May 1910 200 scouts were inspected in the grounds of the Perse school and a meeting inaugurated the Cambridge Boy Scout Association. Later 125 members of the local troops made their way to Windsor park for a Coronation Rally where they were inspected by the new King, George V. The excitement of meeting the King could surely only be equated with that of seeing the hero of the defence of Mafeking Robert Baden Powell himself.

Yet in 1911 he was at Cambridge. It was a bitterly cold day and the wind howled across Parkers Piece where 400 scouts assembled before marching off with cyclists and mounted scouts in the rear to the University O.T.C. ground where the great man inspected them. At the sound of a bugle call the apparently empty field became filled with scouts, saluting their Chief with their staves, Zulu fashion, and shouting their patrol calls. Further rallies followed in 1912 and 1913*, but then came war.

In July 1914 a mixed group of scouts left Cambridge for camp at Lt Downham. They camped on a splendid site on a hill overlooking the rich Fenland. They explored the great Cathedral, gave a display at the village fete, were inspected by the Principal of the Ely Theological

College, and listened to the rumours of War. As soon as it was declared they started keeping a night watch, sent messages in Morse code to Littleport, 4 miles away, and gave a concert for the local troops. Then came the telegram from General Baden Powell, ordering them back home.

Next day they struck camp and marched to Ely station, arriving just behind the Ely territorials then leaving for Ipswich. Anxious women, standing at cottage doors were heard to ask: "What are they going to send those little chaps to the front too?" Whilst they did not leave for France they did play their part, guarding bridges during the passage of troop trains and guarding the water tower and pumping station at Isleham though what, some asked, could they do against German spies trying to blow them up.

In June 1915 the Perse troop joined the Volunteer Training Corps in a military field exercise between Cherry Hinton and Gt Shelford, attempting to penetrate a defensive cordon thrown around Cambridge. Next year "Wolf cub" packs were formed and in 1922 they succeeded in ambushing the Chief Scout himself at Queens' college in June 1922. B P was en route to present Kings Badges to a number of senior scouts when a large group of cub scouts leapt over the wall of Cloister Court to surround him and reaffirm their pledge "Achela we will do our best".

In November 1917 the Cambridge executive committee passed a resolution allowing girls to attend social evenings but only if chaperoned by their mothers. That has now changed but both Guides and Scouts continue to offer the youth of the County a challenging and rewarding alternative to television and boredom. |

* this 1913 rally was held in the grounds of Downing College in May

Stories from a year 1920

When Lazarus Marsh retired in March 1920 many were pleased to see him go.

His career had started in 1875 and since then he had poked and pried into the seamy side of Cambridge life ending up with a reputation of one of the town's top crime busters. For Lazarus was a 'tec a Detective Sergeant in the police force.

His reminiscences published in the Cambridge Chronicle omitted much of the more serious crime that had occupied the police during the period of his employment. He did refer to the "Jack the Ripper" threats that had been prominent in 1888 but drew a veil over the controversy that surrounded the University's imprisonment of young ladies they suspected of "walking" with undergraduates, powers that were transferred to the police in 1894. Perhaps he smiled when he remembered the appointment of the first women constables in 1918 in response to complaints that girls were "ogling" soldiers.

Marsh would have known the new Police Station erected on the site of the University's "Spinning House" in 1901, and would have followed with interest the council debate in 1910 on whether to give police a day off each week no came the reply, it would cost 23/7 (£1.18) a week more and could not be afforded.

Like others of his profession he would be accused of heartless and brutal violence every November 5th "inhuman monsters who dash hither and thither" in the attempt to restore peace on a night shattered by fires and explosions.

He may have shared the private agony of the policeman who recognised the watch dropped amongst the ashes of a Storeys Way house burnt by Suffragettes as being the one he had given his niece a clue that led to her imprisonment and subsequent hunger strike.

As a young constable he might have participated in the security escort for a suspected Saffron Walden murderer transferred each morning from the County Gaol to the station en route to his trial in 1903 or, ten years later, helped with the case of the Spiritualist who shot his two children and then committed suicide "so that the family could be reunited with his dead wife".

His memoirs recalled his first case burglars who cut the back from a safe in Huntingdon Road to steal the silver it contained, but who took too long over it and missed their escape train. Marsh nabbed them on the platform.

Often he travelled by train himself, warning undergraduates about the activities of card sharps, two of whom he once caught just outside the police station in St Andrews Street and bundled them in through the door with the minimum of inconvenience.

Other crimes needed much more time. Hours of observation caught bank swindlers living in Chesterton and the hardened London villains who found Cambridge a happy hunting ground for bicycles could never rest easy once they knew that Marsh was on their trail.

Lazarus won many commendations from magistrates and villains alike during his 45 years service, he retired to his gardening. "Offending weeds", said the paper, "would receive the same close attention that he has given for years to the worthless growth which has endeavoured to feed itself on society".

Stories from a year 1921

As the bugler played the last post some of the village lads demonstrated their Freedom of Speech in noisy conversation; others exercised their Freedom of Action by riding their Japanese motorcycles noisily past the war memorial.

"We will remember them ..." but the lads have never known that 118 sons like themselves had left their village for France in the early years of the Great War.

Week after week the local paper was full of familiar faces that would never be seen again; by September 1916 12 had been killed a number that was to treble. Two who had been home on leave that June were dead by then, a sister was told in November that both her brothers had been injured one was lying wounded in a Gloucester Convalescent Home, no body knew where the other lay his body was never found.

The news filtered back. Private Joe had lost his left eye, Corporal Frank was killed during an assault when a bullet hit him in the heart. Heber wrote home "I am again out in the trenches ... just as we were going after the Germans a shell exploded in front of me and knocked me back in the trench and buried me ... mates with shovels got me out". His name appears on the memorial, his luck did not last.

Then in July 1919 a public meeting was called to consider a suitable way to commemorate the 38 men killed in action. Various forms of memorial were considered; the Territorial Association was unable to supply a Field Gun but could offer two German machine guns they were declined. Instead the village collected £170 and erected an obelisk of grey Cornish granite.

On Armistice Sunday 1921 it was unveiled in the cemetery by the Member of Parliament in the presence of the whole village together with a contingent of the local British Legion and three clergy Free Church, Baptist and Methodist ministers, none of them village men. There

was no representative from the Church of England, nor was the Rector present despite the fact that one of the names inscribed on the memorial was that of his son.

In July 1922 another war memorial was unveiled, just eight months after the first. The MP was there again, the speeches of sadness yet pride were again heard. The same buglers who had sounded the Last Post at the Cemetery repeated their mournful call, this time in the Churchyard.

Throughout the county similar battles were being fought, squabbles over where memorials should be placed, their design and the names of those who should be commemorated divided communities and were hotly debated by parson and people.

Now in 1988 the deep feelings which split the village in 1921 are forgotten at the United Service. A solitary poppy decorates the Cemetery memorial whilst in the Churchyard people assemble to pay homage to the names from two Wars inscribed in stone but now fading away. And as those who have grown old remember those who did not the trumpet note drowns the carefree banter of a Sunday afternoon in one Cambridgeshire village.

Stories from a year 1922 by Mike Petty

In January 1922 the death was announced of Mrs A. A. Moyes, the proprietress of the Lion Hotel in Petty Cury. Her demise would be mourned far and near for, it was said, there is hardly a civilised country in which there cannot be found many people who had at some time or other received kindnesses from this skilful and courageous lady. To generations of undergraduates she was a good friend, indulgent to the extravagances of youth but firm and capable in preventing lapses into hooliganism. Townsmen remembered the interest she took in their various enterprises and agriculturalists her ready sympathy in all their undertakings.

But those who would cherish her memory most were the Belgian refugees of 1915 to whom she showed the care and devotion of a mother.

She had first come to prominence as landlady at the Bath Hotel which on her marriage came under the joint management of herself & her husband, an enterprising caterer. Their menus for public dinners set the fashion for Cambridge and the Bath market dinner was the talk of the county. Various societies made the hotel their base, including the Cambridge Cycling Club whose smoking concerts were copied by almost every other club and institution. The amateur and cottage garden societies which were just beginning to flourish also found it a suitable place to meet – all testimony Mrs Moyes ability to please. As the success grew so it became apparent that more space was necessary; by now a widow she was contemplating extensions when in 1894 she was offered the opportunity of taking over the Lion, following the death of the proprietor, her late husband's father

With her departure from the Bath a chapter in the social history of the town closed. Now she started to make the Lion an institution. Under her rule it grew famous, particularly as a Commercial Hotel and the headquarters of visiting sportsmen and athletic teams. Each visitor was made to feel that he or she was the only person the hostess delighted to honour - so they came back time and again. The old Inn Yard was covered with a glass roof and the rooms became shops for travelling salesmen who laid out samples in the yard were buyers from the big stores come to inspect the goods that were despatched by rail. The practice died out with the increased use of the motor car. These vehicles were having a profound impact on Cambridge life as the Royal Show held here in 1922 demonstrated. Many people came in their cars and went home in their cars, rather than stay the night in the town

Neither such developments, licensing difficulties or physical ill health could quench Mrs Moyes' enterprise or check her enthusiasm. She was urged by friends to retire and take a

well-earned rest but instead she continued and died "in harness". Her daughters continued the business.

..

While motor cars might reduce the visitors to the Lion Hotel it was realised that somewhere would be needed to station the vehicles. At the rear of the hotel a number of wooden outbuildings - stables, smithy, bottle store and laundry - stood around a former bowl green now no longer needed for its original purpose. These buildings were gradually demolished to provide car parking space. By 1950 over 80,000 motorists were using the Lion Hotel yard and the Council were planning a ramped car park - or should it be an underground car park - the inevitable debates continued

In 1961 in the single largest property transaction the city had seen, the Hotel was purchased by a property company. Two years later the hotel closed, though the bars remained, and the demolition men moved in in 1968. They briefly reopened the old courtyard for the development that perpetuates the name of the hotel that the Moyes family made famous

Stories from a year 1923

The Mayor was adamant he would not do it, and nor would the Mayoress for that matter. Civic duty was one thing, this something completely different. So he turned to his fellow Councillors on the Commons Committee this was their chance to make a piece of Cambridge history not one of them dared. So in desperation he had turned to his friend, Councillor Symonds. But not even he would spring forward to salvage Cambridge pride. The 1,500 people assembled for the occasion Aldermen, Borough Surveyor, Chief Constable and County Coroner amongst them would witness the opening of Jesus Green swimming pool without the traditional spectacle of seeing the biggest big wig jump in.

But why should they choose this, of all sites. Speaking through his megaphone he rehearsed the benefits that had been debated so fiercely it was in the centre of a large number of schools and the children would now use it rather than jumping into the river which, with its sloping bed, mud and weeds, was dangerous.

The new baths were 300 ft long and 40 ft wide and ideal for water polo ... By putting them near Jesus Lock they were able to get a natural flow of water from the river, which would constantly keep the water pure and clean without the expense of pumping. Not all were convinced there were those who thought them unsightly and others who were adamant that it was wrong to take up common land for such things.

This argument had dragged on and on although an Act of Parliament in 1894 had given power to enclose parts of such lands, and the Mammoth Show was regularly held on Jesus Green, with fences being erected around it to keep gatecrashers out.

Then in 1913 the Council had agreed to turn Jesus Green and Lammas Land into recreation areas which meant abolishing the ancient rights for people too keep their cattle or horses on these stretches of grassland. Now the opposition almost overshadowed the other Great War a war which saw the commons filled with the tents of the military, artillery parked on Coldham's Common, bayonet practice on Butt Green and drilling on Parkers Piece.

In 1922 another Act of Parliament increased the Council's power over the common lands they could now restrict grazing on Lammas Land and Jesus Green, they could legally built the swimming pool on grass which some considered sacred. Surely it was a small price to pay for such a welcome amenity.

But councillors were also faced with other problems including the great growth of motor traffic, and the need for a new road to Newnham to relieve pressure on the central streets. Nine separate schemes were then being discussed but the obvious solution was to push a route over Coe Fen. Opponents argued that such a road would be ugly and would spoil the amenities of the area – it was "some monstrosity they had conjured up" but to no avail, a public inquiry in February 1924 was to find in favour of the scheme and the road opened in 1926. That was also the year that a new sports pavilion opened near the new swimming pool. Jesus Green was now truly a fine recreation ground and the old Mammoth Show was finally given its marching orders – perhaps in this motor age it was just too common.

Stories from a year – 1924 by Mike Petty

Crowds packed Cambridge Market Square in April 1924. They had come to hear the Kin, but he was not there. However, his voice was and the speech he made when opening the Exhibition at Wembley was broadcast over the new wireless system.

Cambridge was already aware of the wonder of wireless. Two years before at the Royal Show held at Trumpington a local company had set up a demonstration, only to find its reception interrupted by the voice of a pilot of a cross-channel biplane who was commenting on the weather in somewhat "blue" RAF language.

William George Pye was not dismayed. He had started up in business making instruments in 1896, the year that Lord Rutherford transmitted the first radio signals from the Cavendish Laboratory to Madingley Road observatory. But it was the drop in the scientific instrument market in 1921 that encouraged him to switch to the production of wireless receivers.

His trade was given a boost with the beginning of public broadcasting at the end of 1922 and more and more people were attracted by the new technology. Pye, however, could neither afford to mount a major advertising campaign nor meet the demand it might attract so it was left to Harold Pye to leave his home in Grange Road and distribute leaflets to cycle shops, electrical retailers and garages in his bull nosed Morris Cowley.

Receivers were in their infancy and the Cambridge Daily News started a series of articles instructing its readers in the use of the equipment. Many built their own and were rewarded by the crackles that came through their earphones.

By 1925 the "Mammoth Show" committee launched an appeal to provide Addenbrooke's Hospital with a headphone at every bed and many would have listened three years later when the King's College carol service was broadcast for the first time.

Pye continued to flourish, adopting the "Rising Sun" design for the front of their sets in 1929, and much later pioneering stereo sound and the transistor radio. It was Pye too who demonstrated the first Cambridge radio station at the Royal Show in 1960. Six years later the city Council decided not to bid to be one of the first BBC experimental VHF stations.

Proposals for a Commercial radio station were aired in 1971 and Cambridge Free Radio started pirate transmission but it was to be July 1980 before Hereward Radio broadcast local news from its Peterborough studios.

In May 1982 BBC Radio Cambridgeshire went on air for the first time to be followed this year by the Histon-based CN, FM one of whose presenters, David Hamilton had himself made news in May 1974 when his live broadcast for Radio One was cut short as his punt was attacked by some 300 young rowdies.

Fewer turned out when the new station broadcast from Market Hill recently showing that radio may reach thousands more than in April 1924 but cannot match the excitement of hearing voices from the air for the first time.

Stories from a Year - 1926

The General Strike of May 1926 found Cambridge divided. In the “Red Romsey” area across Mill Road bridge railwaymen stopped work, and in the True Blue central Cambridge undergraduates did likewise. The University gave time off studying for any that wished to respond to the call and keep the country going at this time of need. And as the time of need coincided with the time of examinations many were only too happy to oblige.

Over 2,000 students took the opportunity for work experience in professions normally denied to men of their breeding. Upper-class gentlemen could be found working as labourers at the docks in Grimsby, maintaining the peace as Special Constables in London, or keeping the wheels of transport rolling. On the Tubes, on the buses, lorries or trams the Cambridge accent could be heard.

Some could fulfil every schoolboy’s dream and play on the trains. It was imperative that the trains be kept running so that food supplies could be maintained – and also so that undergraduates could be despatched to the places where their services as strike-breakers were in demand. Many however travelled by car with daily convoys leaving the Backs and heading off to all points of the compass. Others found work nearer home.

Whilst the Baptist and Methodist churches on Mill Road, Cambridge, opened their doors to local striking railwaymen, a Chesterton town councillor made his way to the station and on the first day of the strike found himself driving a locomotive to Sudbury. His companions on the footplate included a number of undergraduates. One was the son of a former chief of the Conservative Association, there was a member of the Macintosh toffee family, Lord Hinchingbrooke from Huntingdon, two rowing Blues, a White Russian émigré and the son of a Newcastle manufacturer.

A newspaper correspondent joined two undergraduates from St John’s College for a trip on the footplate, one stoking the furnace whilst the other kept watch with the driver for obstructions on the line. They found the work dirty and hard, and the twelve-hour shift was somewhat different from their usual labour at college. It was all good fun.

The strikers found their fun in cricket matches on Parker’s Piece, in sports on the Rec and a concert in Romsey School. They also found great amusement when an engine went off the rails in their own heartland near Mill Road Bridge. Hundreds of strikers turned out to mock and chaff at the students’ misfortune.

Then came the tragic news of a fatal accident at Bishop’s Stortford where a good train had rammed a passenger train waiting at the platform. The impact lifted two carriages off the track and smashed the station awning, two men waiting on the platform were killed.

The strike was soon over, the Unions beaten. Some local railway strikers were victimised, as was the one engine driver who had reported for duty. For the students it was the end of a great adventure; they had been to places and done things that had given them a new outlook on life – but the dreaded examinations were still waiting for them.

Stories from a year: 1927

In January 1927 a daughter telephoned her mother. Nothing unusual about that, except that the caller was 300 years old and was speaking from America. In the first Trans Atlantic telephone call to be received in Cambridge President Lowell of Harvard University spoke to senior members of the University of Cambridge including the Master of Emmanuel College which numbered amongst its old boys the John Harvard after whom the American college was named

Newspaper correspondents reported the thrill of the occasion akin, they said, to Columbus sighting land. They commented on the technical feat involved, the call travelling via Boston and New York, then "through the ether" to Rugby and finally down to the switchboard at the Cambridge telephone exchange in the usual way. Reception was somewhat "mushy" but nothing worse than was often experienced in domestic calls. Much of the conversation reflected the formality of the occasion, an exchange of greetings and ideals but once others joined in more mundane matters were discussed. It was Sir Ernest Rutherford who introduced the inevitable topic of the weather informing the New World that in the Old it had been snowing.

Though they had spanned the Atlantic in 1927 the Post Office experienced great difficulty getting through to Sandringham in January 1936. As news that the King's life was moving peacefully to its close journalists flocked to the Norfolk estate. They chose as their base the Feathers Hotel at Dersingham, its one telephone together with the one outside kiosk their only means of communicating the news to the Empire. Engineers immediately set about providing the extra lines needed. Heavy snow had blocked all roads, the AA advising that no driver, however skilful, could force a heavily loaded wagon through the surrounding drifts. Undaunted the Post Office made it. Round the clock they struggled to string cables along hedgerows, loop them over cottage roofs or tie them to trees or electric light poles. Soon there were thirteen telephones to be shared amongst the ninety reporters. The technicians watched as the body of their King left Sandringham on a gun carriage without pomp or pageantry. By the time they returned to their digs the story had travelled around the world.

The hard work involved in erecting telephone lines has been recalled by Ernie Gill in his marvellous unpublished memoirs of life "From muck spreader to Mayor". In it he describes his part in erecting new wires between Cambridge and Norwich in 1919, sweating with pick and shovel throughout a long working day then cycling home at night.

The earliest recognised telephones in Cambridge were installed by the South of England Telephone Company in 1892 based in Alexandra Street and taken over by the Post office in 1912. However the honour of owning the very first telephone in Cambridge was claimed by an Undergraduate at Pembroke College in 1878. He fixed up two between his 'diggings' in St Andrews Street and a summer house at the bottom of the garden. The little retreat was an excellent place for an illicit game of cards and the telephone allowed his landlord to give warning of any approaching Proctor.

Stories from a year – 1928 by Mike Petty

In July 1928 the Cambridge Preservation Society was up in arms over a Council plan; the Cambridge Drawing Society was also adamant that their proposals would be tantamount to turning a most ancient area into "something like a concrete tea garden".

The site under dispute was derelict; the two ancient mills that had stood side by side facing Mill Pool for 900 years had been swept away the previous year without much murmuring. They were obviously obsolete once Ebenezer Foster had erected his new steam mill in Station Road.

Before the advent of steam it had been water power that turned the mill wheels of the three watermills on Mill Pool. Two shared the same roof; one called the Bishop's Mill had belonged to the Abbot of Ely at the time of the Domesday survey, the second known as the King's Mill had been erected shortly after. A third, just across Mill Pool at Newnham and formerly known as Mortimer Mill still stands.

Elaborate arrangements had been devised during the centuries to govern which mill had first call on the small amount of water that tumbled into the Mill Pool. In 1566 it was decreed that the King's Mill was the most important. No other Mill could operate until it had started or continue after it finished. The adjacent miller could well see what was happening but the miller at Newnham had to be warned by blowing on a horn or sending a runner to give him notice. All this must have been most annoying and in 1634 that the Newnham miller encouraged some boys to blow their own horn so that he could start work at his own convenience.

The power of steam brought the era to an end. First a steam engine was installed making the Mills less dependent on water power – a facility featured by the Auctioneers when the property came up for sale in 1842. Both were acquired by Ebenezer Bird Foster who bought the Bishop's Mill outright and leased the King's from the Corporation. But then came the second steam invasion – the railway – and Foster erected new mills in Station Road, though he renewed his lease in 1879 for another 40 years.

By 1911 motorists were urging a better road link to Newnham and somebody suggested a new bridge across the Mill Pool. It would mean demolishing the old mills and the Corporation bought out Foster's interests. Inevitably the scheme collapsed and the premises which were old and dilapidated could not be relet and became derelict. After 15 years the University suggested a swap for land they owned in Corn Exchange Street, the council preferred a case deal and the University offered £2,500 for the site.

As negotiations dragged on so the Mills got worse and in 1927 the old buildings were demolished. Somebody thought it an ideal place for a new mortuary but then Messrs. Reynolds and Scudamore applied to buy it for a boat house. In the end the Council decided not to sell but to erect a boat house themselves, reconstruct the sluices and slipway and construct a weir and footbridge.

It was the suggestion that the ancient arches through which the mill race had roared for centuries were to be swept away that caused the Artists and Preservationists to rise in anger. Plans were redrawn and the archways retained.

Once more the Mill Pool is packed with craft but now punts jostle where once seagoing boats loaded the flour produced with the aid of the water that still thunders as it had since before the Colleges were founded.

Stories from a year 1929

The Great War brought with it the threat of invasion. It was feared that the Germans might land on the East coast and that there would be need to transport men and munitions speedily from the Midlands to the Coast. The Military sprung into action and built a fine new road between Stretham and Wicken to replace the previous droves that were the only link. Once Wicken was reached the route to Soham and beyond was already well established. Wicken people rejoiced at the prosperity the new road would bring its fine village greens would

make excellent staging posts for the cavalry and probably mechanised troops would pause there as well. Yet the great new road brought no great increase in traffic since nobody could decide who should pay for the fine new bridges that would be needed to cross the Rivers Old West and Cam. So nobody built them until the war was over and the battle of words finally resolved. Yet there was another approach from the west along the river bank to Upware, crossing at the ferry by the "Five Miles from Anywhere No Hurry" inn. In this isolated corner of fenland Cambridge undergraduates had in 1851 established their own "Republic" with its own President, Minister of Education, Interpreter and State Fiddler. Its members included young men later to make their names in life such as Henry Arthur Morgan, subsequently Master of Jesus college, Samuel Butler the author and a certain James Clerk Maxwell, famous Director of the Cavendish Laboratory in whose honour the world's scientists journeyed to Cambridge in 1931. Once the Republic has ceased a "King" arose to take its place a muscular fellow who delighted in defending his title against all comers, be they coprolite diggers from the adjacent villages or bargees carrying commodities along the lodes to Burwell, Reach or Wicken. The area was undrained and unspoiled, a haunt of wildfowl and fish, but even then the drainers were working on the last of the great meres, Whittlesey, converting the wetland to dry lands. A steam pump had been installed at Upware in 1821, soon that whole area would also be tamed. But just next door at Wicken the wetlands remained and in 1899 part was presented to the National Trust. Now other Cambridge students of botany and moths rather than beer and music would surely find the habitat preserved for study. Yet in August 1929 the night sky was illuminated, not with candles to attract moths but with flames that were searing through the dry sedge. The wind kept it away from the village but sent it deeper into the fen. Soham fire brigade were soon on the scene, to be joined by those from Cambridge but as darkness fell the scene of wild grandeur was visible for miles around. Cars and cycles brought onlookers to the scene but in the fen itself the steady work of the fire fighters, beating out the flames was winning. By midnight 9 hours after it started the danger was over. Seventy acres one tenth of its area was now merely black wasteland but the black peatland that surrounded it was safe and soon the swallowtails would be back, as would the botanists to study and the visitors to gaze on this last area of untamed fenland.

Stories from a year - 1930

On 4th June 1930 the headlines were full of tragedy; three undergraduates were dead, one killed by his own pistol, the others by an Ortona bus. The common link was a motorcycle and a yearning for excitement.

Two Pembroke undergraduates, one a double-barrelled young man from Midlothian, the other a Swiss citizen, left Cambridge shortly after 3pm en route for Ely on their Norton motorcycle. They headed, "hell-for-leather" said one witness, down the Milton road and past the new £579 council houses that the Corporation were selling off in weekly instalments. The dust they kicked up settled on the wide green verges that had been laid precisely for this purpose. As they neared the level crossing they found the gates closed but turned up the throttle even more.

The crossing-keeper gave evidence that he always followed instructions and kept his gate closed to road traffic. He had seen the Ortona bus approaching from Milton but could do nothing to speed his journey until the two trains he was expecting had passed by. Anyway buses had to get used to delay. Nothing however need stop the motorcyclist since there was always the underpass on the right-hand side of the crossing. And down the tunnel the undergraduates roared, shooting up into the sunlight on the other side.

It was then that the bus driver saw them. He had already sounded his horn put out his hand to signal that he was keeping to the upper road, and was approaching at 12 mph when the Norton leapt out from the tunnel and smashed into the front of his bus. There was nothing that could be done except call for the police. Both students died instantly.

The third lingered for four hours before succumbing from his gunshot wounds, the policeman he murdered outlived him by half a day; his tutor was already dead.

The young man was always eccentric, had a reputation for being clever and was reading history. He also played the drums in a jazz band and had hired a grand piano which he kept in his room at Kings. Unlike most of his college he wasn't rich or famous, he hadn't been to Eton, and he didn't have the finance to maintain the lifestyle he adopted. He wore garish sweaters and plus-fours, claimed to be a Russian prince and ran up debts.

He also stole a pistol, teamed up with a friend from Fitzwilliam, changed his name and spent the merry month of May touring Cambridgeshire pubs in a second-hand car. When the money ran out they traded the car for a motorbike and set off for London where they found excitement, glamour and company in the flat of a girl named Madge. She worked in a nightclub, had a heart of gold and seemed used to strange young men popping in for a while. By the end of the weekend she knew these two were different. They obviously had money problems and had written to Cambridge for clothes they could pawn. They also had guns.

When they went to collect the parcel of clothes they found two men waiting who invited the runaways to return to Cambridge. Their escort were fellow undergrads - after all there was nothing that a little chat could not sort out.

As luck would have it the Kingsman met his tutor in Trumpington Street. The two strolled off to sort things out over a glass of sherry in rooms in the Gibbs building beside the Chapel. A third figure followed. During their friendly chat a knock came at the door. The plain-clothed policeman had just started to read out his warrant when the first of five shots rang out, hitting him in the shoulder.

When the gunfire ceased the Police had a murdered colleague to bury with full honours, the College a famous explorer to mourn and the University had lost three undergraduates in a week._

Stories from a year: 1931

Today one side of Cambridge Market Square is a jumble of scaffolding and steel as work proceeds to rebuild the north east corner for a new shop. 1931 saw similar development but then they were building what has just been demolished the Victoria Cinema. It opened in September with 1,500 guests and contributed to the Golden Age of cinema indeed in 1931 10,000 miles of film were projected in Cambridge cinemas alone laid end to end it would stretch to Hollywood and 5 million patrons could be accommodated in the four principal cinemas.

The cinema had first come to Cambridge as part of Tudor's circus in October 1896; shortly afterwards films were shown in the Guildhall and the Corn Exchange. The first regular shows were held in the YMCA lecture hall and the Working Men's Club; Sturton Town Hall and the Roller Skating Rink were amongst the venues but the first purpose built building opened in Mill Road in 1913 Although the films in those early days were silent the cinemas were not. First there was the musical accompaniment which varied from a single piano to the eight piece orchestra at the Central Cinema. Then there would be the sound effects cocoa nut shells for horses hooves and a drum to represent canon fire in the popular newsreels about life in the King's army although the operator was not always quick enough to keep up with the

action. The deaf were at no disadvantage in the silent movie days many of them could lip read and were better informed than the rest of the audience though this had its drawbacks and one party of deaf and dumb children were quickly ushered out of the Playhouse in Mill Road when their teachers realised they could understand too well just what the shell shocked victims of the Battle of the Somme were silently mouthing. And then there would be those who could hear but not read very well and would insist on repeating the sub titles very loudly to the great annoyance of the rest of the audience.

The Talkies arrived in Cambridge in August 1929 with the musical 'Broadway Melody'. Some thought it just a novelty that would soon wear off silent pictures offered a haven of peace from the rush and turmoil outside. Most agreed that their music was very pleasant though they deplored the all dominant American accents. As the developments continued first one cinema then another was erected and rebuilt. In July 1931 the Rendezvous in Cambridge was destroyed by fire there were more customers for the new Victoria. Subsequently the Vic was restyled in 1952 in a "eurythmic" design "designer, architect and illuminators combining to make a symphony of shape, colour and tone". New and modern projectors came in 1967, a second screen in 1972; it recovered from a fire in 1983 but rumours of redevelopment were persistent and it closed in 1988 Today all that remains of The Victoria is memories and a 1931 facade held together with steel

Stories from a year: 1931 county variant!

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Of course you did not have to come to the towns to see films, many villages had travelling cinemas. Thurston's the fair people took their Electric Vaudeville to Soham and perhaps this is what prompted 'Nick Knack' Taylor to convert his coach builders workshop into a permanent cinema there in about 1912. It was one of four cinemas to function there at one time or another.

At Burwell the Gardiner Memorial Hall was used for film shows soon after the Great War, its popularity waning when the Doric opened at Newmarket in 1937. At the time it was reputed to have the biggest balcony in East Anglia, outrivaling the older Kingsway and Victoria cinemas which also stood in High Street

Ely's first film shows were held in the Public Rooms although the Electric Cinema in Market Street opened about 1912, followed by the Majestic in Newnham Street and in 1929 by the Rex Littleport filmgoers could choose from the Electric Cinema, (later renamed the Cinema Theatre and The Empire) which was established in the Public Hall in 1913 or the Regal which opened just before the Second World War and was hit by incendiaries in October 1940 (ironically when showing the film "On the night of the fire")

At Haverhill cinema goers flocked to the Electric Empire in High Street, later renamed the Playhouse. Early cinemas had little of the latter day comforts; sometimes as at Soham they had rough walls, a corrugated iron roof, the floor was just earth, the seats wooden benches. The only heating was a small coke stove, the projector was operated by gaslight, the films often went astray and if they did arrive had to be operated by hand and would frequently break causing the audience to whistle, cat call and stamp their feet.

But despite it all people came to see cowboys and Indians, Harold Lloyd, the Keystone cops and the rest together with the serial such as the Adventures of Pearl White which each week left the heroine in another impossible situation from which she could surely not escape ...

The films in those early days were silent but the cinemas were not. First there was the musical accompaniment which varied from a single piano as at Soham to the eight piece orchestra at the Central Cinema Cambridge. Then there would be the sound effects cocoa nut shells for horses hooves and a drum to represent canon fire in the popular newsreels about life in the King's army but the operator was not always quick enough to keep up with the action.

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Some thought it just a novelty that would soon wear off silent pictures offered a haven of peace from the rush and turmoil outside. Most agreed that their music was very pleasant though they deplored the all dominant American accents. Today those accents issue from innumerable television sets and cinemas are few and far between. Yet more and more films are being hired from video shops which have sprung up in villages around the county. Although there are plans for a new multi screen complex in Cambridge all that remains of The Victoria is memories and a 1931 facade held together with steel

Stories from a Year – 1932
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By 1932 Cambridge was reported as responding to a Government appeal to sell gold, jewellery and trinkets to help the national financial crisis.

"This is the time to spend — buy new clothes, furniture or extra food. Have your house decorated or painted. A prompt response to this appeal will lift thousands of homes from misery into happiness by Christmas."

The Cambridge Master Builders took out an advertisement to emphasise the problem: "Do you realise that 1,653 able-bodied men are totally unemployed in your own town. Do you realise that one of this appalling total 543 men are of the building trade." The corporation initiated new house-building schemes to give employment.

The suicide rate rose, despair continued and the international situation became graver. But during the war years the unemployment situation lessened due in part to "Butlins" — the "in" name for the government offices established at Brooklands Avenue which boosted central government employment by 35 per cent.

In 1959 the employment exchange was moved there from Newnham and reported that there were only 340 men and 67 women unemployed in the area, compared to 1,400 in July 1938.

"All-out drive to lure workers to pricey Cambridge" read the headlines in 1973 — sentiments repeated almost exactly today. "Shops have difficulty attracting staff, firms

move away and leaflets are distributed in Lion Yard begging for workers. The windows of the job centre — now once more in Guildhall Street — are full of positions, but not for the Scotsmen on the benches in Lion Yard who still epitomise the degradation and misery bemoaned by their compatriot 87 years ago (Stories from a year — 1911).

"Why are there so many hard-working men on the scrapheap, living a life of degradation and misery?" These were the sentiments of an Aberdeen man, one of the first to use the newly-opened labour exchange in Guildhall Street in 1911. His quest for work had been unsuccessful.

Through the hardships of the 1920s and 1930s soup kitchens were opened to soften the pangs of hunger and the Town Council initiated a series of measures to find work for the unemployed. The sports facilities on Jesus Green and the paving stones along Queens Road are testimony to some of the job-creation schemes undertaken. Roads were constructed to serve the soon to be developed acres off Cherry Hinton Road and long-delayed schemes reassessed.

One of these was the revival of a project to relieve traffic congestion in Silver Street and make better communication with Newnham that had been long mooted — indeed the need for such a route had been voiced at the opening of Victoria Bridge in 1889. There was great opposition with nine separate schemes drawn up in 1923 and "if not for the urgency of the unemployment position we should be in the same position today, only instead of nine there would have been nineteen."

Such was the opinion of the Mayor in December, 1916 when the Fen Causeway was formally opened. It had given employment to 90 men during a two-year period.

Stories from a year - 1933

By June 1933 some ten years work was coming to an end as the dredging of the River Cam was nearly complete. A steam dredger had been used in 1923 and one decade later so much soil had been removed that it could have covered Parker's Piece to a depth of nearly seven feet. The Conservators of the Cam were convinced that there would be no need for any more clearance for 30 years.

The maintenance of the River had always been a concern, many recalled the great flood of 1895 - the year that the scheme to divert sewage which flowed untreated from the colleges along the Backs away from the River to underground pipes leading to Cheddar's Lane pumping station had been initiated. Then in 1909 there had been more dredging - which was supposed to stop floods. But in 1914, 1916, 1918 and 1919 the old enemy, flooding, had returned - at precisely the time when resources had to be diverted to fighting the new enemy, Germany.

But the struggle to tame the river is much older than all this. One person who joined the fray was Charles Humfrey, in 1829. A banker by profession he turned his eyes to river banks instead, surveying the stretch of water from Mill Pool to Clayhithe which was the responsibility of the Cam Conservators, set up by Act of Parliament in 1702 to ensure that the barges on which Cambridge depended for its supplies should still be able to navigate, despite the activities of the Drainers - the interests of the one - who needed water to float the barges, conflicting with the other - who wanted to get rid of water as quickly as possible.

Despite their efforts there were complaints that the river was not deep enough for the 20 ton barges that were allowed to ply up to Cambridge. These vessels needed a depth of 2 ft 8 inches - Humfrey found the Cam to be at least 3 feet deep everywhere - and in some places there was nearly 10 feet of water. But the boatmen continued to claim that it took them as long to get from Kings Lynn to Clayhithe as it did from Clayhithe to the town.

Humfrey solved the mystery of the missing water. The River below Clayhithe was too shallow and the Conservators' water was being used to flush the barges over the shoals, emptying the Cam in the process. No wonder they then had to wait until the depth built up again. Various proposals were put forward - build a new sluice at Clayhithe, remove those at Baitsbite and Chesterton, do away with the old wooden construction in front of the Fort St George and put in a new lock further along Jesus Green. Then deepen the whole river to prevent the constant flooding along Midsummer Common which made the area an unhealthy swamp (especially with the sewage drifting down from the "Backs").

There was the additional problem of the stretch between Magdalene and Silver Street bridges. It could easily take half a day to make the journey, with the horses straining to pull against the tide and the bargees pushing with their "spread". And when they did get to Mill Pool they often found it so congested there was no room for them to enter and needed to moor alongside the college walls with their string of barges stretching down the Backs. Humfrey recommended that a series of posts be placed in the bed of the river and that the barges be winched up by pulleys mounted in the front of the lead boat. Journey time could be cut to an hour and academic calm restored. This idea, like most of his others, found few supporters.

The inmates of Colleges with apartments near the River continue to complain of the noise from the river but the working boats are now pleasure craft & Bargees' curses have changed to tourist laughter. The Cam which once brought commerce to the town now acts as a commercial for it._

Stories from a year 1934

January 29th 1934 started as just an ordinary day for Percy Titmous. By the time it was over he was world famous, In the words of the New York Herald Tribune he had become a "motorized knight", a Launcelot who'd rescued his Queen from dire distress.

Queen Mary was a regular visitor to Cambridge, in fact her honeymoon train had paused here briefly when en route to Sandringham in 1893. In 1918 she visited Papworth Hospital and the Cambridge military hospital in Burrell's Walk with King George V. Three years later they returned to inspect the National Institute of Agricultural Botany where crowds glimpsed a tall Imperial lady inside the smoothly running Royal car,

It was the car that betrayed what was to have been a secret visit in 1932 to the Fitzwilliam Museum. The Royal car had again been spotted in January 1934 parked outside the Cambridge Tapestry Works in Thompson's Lane and then in St Andrew's Street whilst her Majesty chose numerous tiny ivory objects for her famous Dolls House from Woolston's antiques shop.

Three weeks later she was due to return. The police were alerted that the Royal car had left and were keeping the route clear so that the Daimler should have an unimpeded run. In fact it was nothing of the sort. Three times the limousine broke down through overheating, finally coming to rest outside the Slap Up public house at Waterbeach.

It was here that Percy found them. His wife suggested he turn round to see if they needed assistance, but how do you approach a Queen. Percy paused some way off and waited for a sign. Soon the Lady in Waiting approached to explain the predicament and ask whether the Queen might hitch a lift to Cambridge in their little car.

The constables charged with keeping the road free from traffic tried several times to intercept the Titmous vehicle, only to jump aside when they recognised the passenger. Even Cambridge crowds normally used to anything were stunned they saw the Queen arrive in such a car. Queen Mary did her shopping, took tea at the Copper Kettle, and continued her journey to Exning and Sandringham in a replacement Royal limousine

Percy Titmous himself tried to slip away unobserved, but somebody had taken his car number and a call to the Council offices soon elicited his name. The news spread quickly and soon pressmen, news agencies and even film companies were hot on his trail.

The American newspapers were full of the story: "Queen Mary Thumbs Ride as Auto Quits" ran one headline which went on to describe how "townspeople stared in amazement from the sidewalks".

The Queen herself seemed unperturbed by the incident; her visits to Antiques shops continued unabated, as did her motoring adventures. In May 1939 her car was involved in an accident; on another occasion she got lost in the lanes around Six Mile Bottom causing her escort considerable anxiety and in August 1948 the Royal limo again broke down again at Lt Thetford Corner

History was not allowed to repeat itself however and this time she continued her journey in a police car.

Queen Mary was a great favourite with the people of Cambridge and her death in 1953 was keenly felt. Amongst those present at the funeral service in St George's chapel, Windsor, was Stanley Woolston, proprietor of the Antique shop she visited in a subject's car.

Stories from a year - 1935

Crossing the road could be difficult.

Ely was a case in point; in the early 1800s Fore Hill was, in bad weather, in a worse state than any fen drove. The ruts were so deep that most of the horse drawn vehicles couldn't get down them and large pieces of timber were placed across the street in various places so pedestrians could cross without being sucked into the mire.

Various views of Cambridge streets show somewhat similar situation but as the twentieth century arrived it was the amount of traffic that was the problem. A cartoon in the Cambridge Graphic of 1900 summarised the difficulties; seeing courteous drivers giving way to an elderly lady crossing on the arm of a kindly policeman one gentleman decides to try the same trick. Grabbing a likely escort he launches himself into the maelstrom only to find that it was the blue of the uniform, rather than the blue of the lady's eyes that had earned the passage.

Soon the horse traffic was being supplemented by the motor car with some drivers in 1904 making an effort to register their vehicles in Cambridge rather than London to take advantage of the more attractive number plates - the London registration was the letter "A" followed by four numbers, whereas here it was "CE" followed by just two figures. By then the number of licenced motor cars had rocketed from 27 in January up to 42 by April. By 1905 things were worse: it was doubtful whether any town of similar size had as many motors and motorcycles

running about the streets as Cambridge in term time. Whereas once the problem had been the speeding cyclist now it was these mechanical monsters scorching by at 30-40 mph - although in 1909 a taxi driver was fined £2 for driving at the dangerous speed of 10-12 mph and by 1913 there was a speed limit of 15 mph in any inhabited part of the borough.

Various improvements were needed to make things safer. In 1916 the first traffic island was installed at the junction of Victoria Avenue and Chesterton Road. It was a wooden structure carried into the centre of the road every morning and removed each evening - much to the amusement of residents, though it was 1932 before the "Milton road merry-go-round" - Mitcham's corner roundabout was installed permanently.

The first one-way system started in Market Street and Petty Cury in 1925 and was followed two years later by the first traffic lights at the bottom of Castle Hill. They were supposed to release the policeman usually stationed there on point duty but - according to some sources - in fact meant that two police were needed - one to explain the system to befuddled motorists and the other to hold back the crowds of onlookers enchanted by the pretty changing lights.

By 1934 there were complaints that sometimes cars and bicycles were parked so closely in line in Petty Cury and Sidney Street that pedestrians could not find a space to cross over. Councillors debated long and hard, then decided to experiment with what one of them called "Orange Groves". By then the traffic congestion was so bad that the newspaper did not think they would be much use but the Belisha Beacons were installed in Market Street, Petty Cury, Emmanuel road and outside the Jolly Waterman at Mitcham's Corner in July 1935. The operation was conducted during the University vacation - what would the undergraduates make of them?

Within a week one of the orange globes - which it was claimed were tamper proof - was found lying in the roadway; the Beacon in Petty Cury suffered the same fate nights later. Those that did remain were "decorated" by student artists, though police vigilance removed the painted faces before many had chance to appreciate their handiwork. But the decision was made and despite their attraction - 34 stolen between January and April 1955 - the Beacons lit the way for pedestrians until the advent of "Zebra" crossings in 1952 and the modern "Pelican" in 1971._

Stories from a year - 1936

Just across the river from Cambridge lay the little village of Chesterton, a prime site for development and the Inclosure Act of 1840 made the land available Edward Meadows, a brewer, saw his chance.

It was an area he knew well, being variously publican at the Fort St George, landlord of the Jolly Waterman and builder of the Portland Arms. Edward paid £1,200 for the old East Farthing Meadows in 1843 and by next year he had constructed a Road down to the river and started selling off building plots in Ferry Path. Elsewhere others were doing likewise and the new residents could stroll into town across the lush green commons separated from their homes only by the lush green stinking river Cam into which the town's sewage poured without check.

Several ferries plied across the river, the ferrymen making a useful living from the tolls they charged and the residents not being too inconvenienced by the delay in crossing. Sometimes people took themselves across, turning the handle that engaged the chain that ran across the bed of the river although when the ferry was on the other side it had to be pulled over by tugging on the chain itself, slimy - and worse - from the depths of the river.

Cambridge councillors meanwhile looked with dismay at the good folk of Chesterton who were using their facilities but not contributing to their rates. They tried to encourage them to become part of a greater Cambridge. One inducement proffered was a new road bridge to replace William Bates' ferry. In 1888 Chestertonians voted for the bridge, but then declined the amalgamation. Development continued apace.

Whilst the residents of Ferry Path were content to cross the river in the traditional way occupants of the new houses on the De Freville Estate were soon campaigning for something better - a footbridge. The tragic loss of life when a ferry sank at Fen Ditton in 1905 would have added fuel to their cause but no bridges were to be forthcoming whilst Chesterton was independent.

In 1913 the Borough council, having won its battle to absorb Chesterton, decided that a bridge was indeed necessary at Ferry Path, though it was another 14 years before it actually opened. William Pauley had operated the ferry since 1887 and carried an estimated one and a quarter million passengers. Those waiting to make a last nostalgic crossing were disappointed when the ferry sank just before the new bridge opened. Further downstream the Cutter ferry, worked for years by the Dant family, was also superseded by a footbridge, though it was brought back into use five years later when the bridge needed repairs.

Thus New Chesterton was up-to-date. But Old Chesterton still had to rely on the two ferries opposite the Green Dragon in Water Street. One was a heavily built craft that could carry horses and cattle across to Stourbridge Common, alongside it a light passenger ferry. When the river had been lowered in October 1920 to allow repairs at Baitsbite lock the two had been placed across the river with planks crossing the gap between them but this was only a temporary expedient.

Throughout 1935 they watched as foundations were put in, they listened to the thud of the pile driver in November but it was May 1936 before the bridge was actually open. The smaller ferry was repositioned near Banham's boatyard and was used by the engineers constructing the latest link between Chesterton and Cambridge - Elizabeth Bridge

_ Stories from a year 1937

The High spring tides coincide with heavy rain.

The great sluice at Denver cannot be opened to allow the rivers to empty into the sea and more and more water drains into the fenland river system.

The high river banks are full to the brim and are crumbling and dissolving in the water just as sugar dissolves in tea. Slips occur, the bank slides a bit, but as it threatens to break men rush to bolster it up with clay and sandbags.

The banks themselves are already two feet higher because of these lines of sacks but still the water seeps through and strong winds blow sheets of water out from the river and down into the adjoining fen fen that is itself a sea of mud comparable with the mud of Flanders. "The way feet sink in with a dull sucking noise reminds me of the time when we moved into Passchendale during the war".

The sodden fen means that lorries cannot get near to bring bags potato bags, sandbags any sort of bag and the sodden land itself is unsuitable for filling them. 10,000 bags have been laid since yesterday morning and the water is seeping through at the places they placed the bags yesterday afternoon

The men are willing but almost at the end of their tether. Most are now so tired that if some really terrible disaster came along they would hardly be any use at all.

Throughout the fen, along the top of river and drain every available man hundreds of men, wet and weary, watch the water in the river while even more rain penetrates their clothing and the incessant cold wind chills them even more.

There is talk of calling in the army and at Ely a bugler is standing by to sound a "fall in" for volunteers in the event of a major burst. The town criers at Haddenham and Swavesey are appealing for extra men to go to the aid of Willingham, just one of the danger points.

Barway and Lt Thetford have breached and the main A10 is cut by flooding near Stretham the car loads of undergraduates flocking to help must find another way on to the Isle of Ely.

The BBC broadcasts flood warnings urging people to alert their neighbours without wireless sets to listen for the church bells which will announce the time has come for evacuation. For many families it is already too later. Their land is under water, their homes are flooded.

"We fenland folk can stand a lot. The water has got to be coming over the doorstep before we begin to flit. A horseman tells me that the water has reached his front door... his wife is sweeping it away with a broom". It is the worst flood for many years worse than 1928, worse than last year. It is March 1937. "We've got out of scrapes before, and we'll get out of this one" says a fen farmer.

He is right. The floods of March 1937 are now largely forgotten. They were only a minor dampness compared to the devastation that was to follow ten years later.

Stories from a year - 1938

The plane was kept in the barn between a hay-tedder and a horse-rack, neglected for weeks at a time until the morning brought big white clouds and the spring air was soft. Then it was time to open the barn doors, to flush the brown hen from her clutch of eggs in the cockpit and brush away the hay dust, the straws dropped by the nest-building sparrows and the bird muck on the wings. Push the plane into the meadow, turn the propeller a time or two and then off and away.

It was David Garnett's dream since the afternoon in October 1929 when he had left his Hilton home for a stroll with his wife across the fields to Conington. The peace of the countryside was disturbed by the buzz of an engine as an aeroplane climbed, dived and landed in the farmer's field. They pushed through the hedge and strolled to the little shed where a group of young men were standing beside a light car and a couple of motorcycles. Did they give joy-rides - yes, come back in twenty minutes.

They walked around the small village, past the church and back to the field - what had they let themselves in for. Soon the plane was down again and one of them had to be first. David picked up his courage and climbed awkwardly into the cockpit, hitting his head as he did so. He gripped the side of the cockpit as the machine bumped across the grass, then suddenly they were above the hedges, above the trees and above the thin, narrow-gutted building that was his own house, looking down one of the chimneys as the pilot turned. But then came a dive and with it came panic. He was no longer interested in the view of the dove house or the fields of stubble brushed and combed with horse-rakes. His face was frozen, his hair felt as if it were being torn out by the roots - he would surely be bald by the time they landed - if they

landed - when would they land. Then they were down and it was his wife's turn for her five-minute flip.

The engineer had no change when he paid for their ride - there was 9/- owing out of the pound note and he would have to come back. The second joy ride was followed by a first flying lesson when he actually took the controls, glimpsing the mysteries of stalling, gliding and banking. He landed slightly deaf but fifteen-years younger, very hungry and determined to fly.

By March 1930 the Cambridge Aero Club was losing money, the telephone was disconnected, the machines dispersed. It was inconvenient to undergraduates who had to drive nine miles through twisty by-roads for a twenty-minute lesson. And there was an alternative for in April 1929 an aerodrome had opened on Cambridge's Newmarket Road and in October they too had started giving flying lessons. Many famous aeronauts were to be found there, including Alan Cobham with his Flying Circus and in 1932 council officials were given an opportunity to see their town from the air, flying in a giant air liner.

Soon the airfield was too small and meetings were being held to discuss a new site near Teversham Corner; permission was granted and it opened in October of 1938. By then David Garnett was flying himself; he had followed his old instructor to Ipswich but had still failed to go solo. The journey depressed him as much as his lack of success so in October 1930 he had turned up at Marshalls and tried their Gipsy Moth aircraft. Once adapted by the addition of two cushions so that he could see out of the cockpit he made steady progress and on 22nd July 1931 he found himself in the air alone. He also got down and recorded his reminiscences in "A rabbit in the air" published in 1932, dreaming of his own plane in a barn but in the meantime borrowing one of Arthur Marshall's - as thousands have done since._

Stories from a year - 1939

Perhaps it was somebody's idea of a joke; perhaps they hated capital punishment; perhaps they had consumed too much of the local brew. Whatever the reason there was no doubt. On Sunday night the gibbet was there, by Monday morning it had gone.

The monument in question stood beside the Old North Road at Caxton. It was of no great antiquity, having only been erected in April 1934, using timbers obtained from an old house at Baldock to replace a poor imitation. But it was part of the local folk-lore. It had even featured as a Christmas card - "with the season's greetings" - but who would want a reminder of such a grisly sight to decorate their festive mantelpiece.

It was here, locals remembered that they hung Kaiser Bill in August 1919 - though only in effigy - a fate that was to befall others in later times, including Arthur Scargill in

But as to who had actually been hanged there there is some doubt. One historian recorded the erection of gallows there in about 1346; others tell of seeing the body of a highwayman, the son of a Royston landlady, who had been convicted of robbing the mail coach in about 1753. After four or five months the screw which held the body was filed off and the next high wind brought the body to the ground. An inquisitive Fellow of Trinity College who was passing opened the corpse's clothes to see what a state the body was in and found it dry and not offensive.

There is a story too of a Yorkshireman who committed a murder in the neighbourhood, escaped to America, but returned some years later to the scene of his crime and talked too freely about his activities. He was hanged alive on the gallows to die through exposure or starvation; a passing baker took pity and gave him a loaf of bread. For this he too was hanged.

Then one Sunday night in April 1939 it was cut down, leaving just a stump about six inches high. Eight men carried the carcass with due solemnity into the Hotel yard. The men from the brewery came out post haste and decided that the gibbet should not be allowed to die. Soon a replacement was once more standing near the cross-roads, an attraction to tourists and a deterrent to highwaymen - none of which have been seen near the site since._

Stories from a year – 1940, by Mike Petty

Wartime was no time for preservation. With the threat of bombing, the need to save for warships and the uncertainty of the future who could worry about the past.

Thus the announcement at Easter 1940 that the Cambridgeshire Cottage Preservation Society had finished restoring the group of buildings known as Wright's Row in Grantchester - and had done so without recourse to the public purse - was remarkable. Even more so was the report that two additional cottages adjoining the Row and known as Crossways had been given to the Society and were themselves being reconditioned.

The Society had been formed two years earlier by a small group of people who were saddened to see the derelict cottages scattered everywhere throughout the County. They were part of the rural heritage and, in their decay, picturesque.

They had earlier attracted the attention of another group of people - the Cambridge Antiquarian Society - who had decided in 1904 to build up a pictorial record of the contemporary scene before it was changed forever by "natural decay, accident or wilful destruction". The Cambridgeshire Photographic Survey was revived post-war when various members journeyed to the surrounding villages, collected postcards and took photographs of domestic architecture, barns and farmyards which have now often disappeared. Sometimes the original photographer was less than certain of the name of the street in which he stood to take his picture and today even dedicated village historians have difficulty today identifying all the scenes they recorded.

Their pictures are now in daily use in the Cambridgeshire Collection where people planning to re-restore their cottages take the opportunity of seeing just what it did look like before post-war, and less sympathetic alteration. But whereas the work of the Antiquarian Society members picture the past, the work of the Cottage Preservation Society has allowed it to survive.

In 1940 they were also owners of two cottages at Kingston, for which they paid £80, and three at Orwell, bought for £120. Generally, as at Grantchester, the buildings, although inhabited, had no amenities whatsoever and were in a bad state of repair. The Society turned its attention to its first purchase, a group of cottages at Toft, most of which were covered by a demolition order. But before it could act some were requisitioned for the use of evacuees. A Yorkshire woman, fleeing from Sheffield with her old parents and her children arrived in Toft and worried the authorities into letting her have the oldest of the condemned cottages, promising to make it habitable herself. Neighbours had been emptying their earth closets there along with all manner of rubbish; rats had made it their home and flies infested the cottages. She cleared and cleaned and killed and buried, then moved in.

In 1944 the Society acquired cottages at Landbeach, ten years later 29 cottages in the High Street at Gt Abington were put up for sale and 15 bought for the Society. Next year they bought five cottages in Willingham - for the grand price of £200. The rents then were £18 per year.

Some tenants were not too regular with the rent. At one of their properties at Fen Drayton the occupier claimed nobody had called for the rent for three years and he had not known where to send it. When members of the committee arrived he slowly ascended the creaking stairs and descended with a bag containing the cash. Three years rent came to £30.

When Helen Larke wrote the history of the Cottage Improvement Society in 1970 she stated that they were always on the look out for suitable cottages for sale at a reasonable price. Twenty years later many individuals are also searching for the cottage with roses around the door - and are horrified to see just what a state their dream home was in when the Antiquarian men saw photographed it 60 years ago. The Cottage Improvement Society continue their work, acquiring properties to let to village folk.

compiled 2.4.1990
Stories from a year - 1941

The case before the court was, said the Mayor, "the worst we have ever had". During 1941 many of the offences that had been brought for trial had related to wartime activities - soldiers driving the wrong way down one-way streets, a bigamous marriage to a gunner air sergeant, a waitress undercharging evacuees - "she felt sorry for them" - or theft of Hurricane or Spitfire collecting boxes. This was no exception. It was indeed a shocking offence in a year that had seen Cambridge bombed on several occasions.

They had started on the bitter night of January 16th with something like 200 incendiaries in the vicinity of Hyde Park corner; the Perse school had been hit along with a warehouse in Regent Street. Next morning the sight of the blackened buildings contrasted vividly with a May tree transformed to a solid mass of icicles by the water from the firemen's hoses. Two weeks later the houses beside Mill Road Bridge had been hit and two died.

February saw a bomb in Cherry Hinton road demolish the porch of a house, but on the 24th the raiders returned to the area with Incendiaries followed by High Explosives in Grantchester Meadows and a mixture of both between Hyde Park Corner and Station Road. The three-phase attack killed eleven, including wardens and firewatchers.

A more determined attack with fire bombs came on 9th May when hundreds were showered in the area between Hills Road and Trumpington Road. Fifty houses received direct hits yet all but four were put out within a few minutes with stirrup pumps and sand, testimony to the efficiency of the wardens and Auxiliary Fire Service. Romsey Town was the next area to suffer with ten high explosives; two houses in Great Eastern Street were hit, causing two more deaths and injuries to seven people.

Newspapers were prevented by the censor from identifying the area raided - it was just "an East Anglian town". They were banned too from commenting on the weather conditions but it was felt that the heavy rain, which kept people indoors, was responsible for the complete absence of casualties when a stick of high explosives and incendiaries fell in Huntingdon Road just beside Shire Hall on September 29th. Extensive damage was caused to telephone wires but there was no traffic in the road at the time or they could not have escaped.

Following each raid came the repairs - replacing damaged tiles and cracked glass, with the WVS on the scene to supply refreshment and neighbours rallying around to hear of narrow escapes - how the children had slept through it all, though bombs fell only feet away.

But not all the damage was caused by enemy action. In February three old ladies were killed instantly when a returning RAF bomber crashed on to houses in Histon Road. Damage to morale was coming from Lord Haw Haw broadcasting from Germany whose claims that

every house in every village and hamlet in the Isle of Ely were to be smashed as a punishment for receiving evacuated Jews were mentioned as one factor in another court case.

The Mayor's wrath however was aimed at a Glisson Road resident who had allowed a light to show from an upstairs window whilst a raid was actually taking place. The offender, himself a warden, had gone to his post when the bombs started falling, unaware of the defective blackout. After deliberation the Mayor decided not to impose a prison sentence but fined him £5 - the equivalent of two weeks wages for a farm worker.

Stories from a year – 1942, by Mike Petty

The news of the fall of the impregnable naval base and fortress at Singapore broke in the Cambridge area a few days after its capitulation. Official spokesmen revealed that amongst the forces that had put up a magnificent fight against the invading Japanese were members of the Cambridgeshire Regiment. It was known that the Governor, Sir Shenton Thomas, son of a former vicar of St Barnabas church, had been interned.

It was not known what had happened to the local soldiers. "It may be some time before details of a personal nature are received ... it is, regrettable and trying as it may be, just a matter of waiting with as much patience as possible."

First news arrived in March. It was heartbreakingly brief - a mere statement that four named officers were posted as "missing"; "it is hoped that he is safe although he may be a prisoner of war". Next week came more names to add to the missing list - and more photographs in the local paper. There was however more positive news for one family - a cable from Lieut Harradine to say that he had reached safety after an adventurous journey of 24 days - but no indication of where the cable had originated. By 27th March the Cambridge Independent Press was having to devote two pages to photographs of familiar faces whose status was unknown. By the 9th of April there were so many to record that the paper did not have space for them all and restricted itself to the village men - Bolton and Davies, Rouse and Brown, Brand and Brown ... The town lads were however being featured in the Cambridge Daily News as space permitted.

There was still no news by May when relatives met at the Guildhall to hear the Founder of the British Prisoners of War Books and Games Fund. So far one-third of a million books had been sent out and libraries equipped in every Prisoner of War camp in Germany, Italy, Occupied France and North Africa. But for most in her audience all that was too near - their thoughts were further East.

Meanwhile life went on. During the hardship of the time farmers tried to hide petrol in pigsties, conscientious objectors tried to dodge the conditions of their registration. There were threats of a water shortage - to save coal at the pumping station and Herbert Morrison - Minister of Home Security - called for a "clean and decisive victory" when addressing a meeting of students at that same Guildhall. There were worries of invasion, rumours of air raids, and tales of daring from returning heroes.

Then in Mid May came a letter from Singapore. It said there were only light casualties - but had been written before the capitulation from a ship somewhere between Singapore and Sumatra. A Malayan civil servant supplied news of Sir Shenton, being with him at Government House during the Japanese bombardment. He was concerned about the health of his wife who developed dysentery on the very day the enemy landed. Nevertheless he was awaiting his future with great courage and dignity.

Weeks passed with only negative news until a Bourn lady received a letter from a business friend with Far East connections. "All prisoners of war and internees in Singapore are being well treated, have their freedom on the island and are being well fed, and can play games". Bombs hit the Union society and shattered houses and lives, German-born students were interned as aliens, the King toured Burwell fen - and then in October came news. 1100 postcards had arrived by ship in Lourenzo Marques addressed to relatives of men who had been in Singapore, the War office were trying to contact the families involved. Later Lord Haw Haw had news on his German radio broadcast - how could he know what we did not - or was it just his usual propaganda.

In December came the first official lists of Prisoners of War in Japanese hands - just name, rank and number - but seen as heartening news for some local families at the end of a year of waiting. At the same time news was breaking about the treatment of Jews in German extermination camps - thank goodness our men were elsewhere ..._

Stories from a year – 1943, by Mike Petty

Village life did not stop just because there was a war on. The whist drives and dances, Women's Institutes and Parish councils continued as ever. But there were changes.

Conington church had been tastefully decorated for Christmas 1942 - sadly they could not ring the church bells before Holy Communion; nor could Swavesey sound the traditional peal between 5 and 6 on Christmas Morning - indeed the service had to transfer to the Vicarage because of the lighting restrictions - but they did ring out at midday. If anybody thought that this meant invasion was imminent then it was too bad.

At that time of Good Will it was appropriate that Elsworth's carol-singing total of £10 should go to the Prisoner of War fund, Swavesey dance to the "Crazy Crochets" raise money for the "Comforts Fund" and Lolworth's waste paper and rags salvage should go mainly to the Red Cross - although 10/- was invested in savings stamps for the boys who had collected it.

As 1943 proceeded there was news of local lads - home on leave - Rev W.H. Hills of Fen Drayton who celebrated Communion whilst back in the parish, meeting in the desert, winning medals - a DFM for pilot-officer Wilkerson of Swavesey - or dying for their country - sergeant-pilot Kendrick of Elsworth whose funeral in April was attended by his fellow officers.

The uncertainty after the fall of Singapore was slowly being resolved - a telegram from Tokyo told a mother that amongst those interned in Changi camp was her daughter. Shortly afterwards a son wrote "Dear mother and dad. I am safe and well ... please remember me to all at home". The following week's lecture to Elsworth Women's Institute became especially interesting for it was entitled "Japan before the war"

Wings for Victory week saw parishes raising morale as well as money. Swavesey was set a target of £4,000. They organised a parade headed by the Home Guard which ended on the Recreation Group with a display of their weapons, a dance including the sale of lemons given by a Commando lately returned from Tunisia; the whist drive was disappointing, the fancy dress parade and games better, a pin could be stuck in Hitler - people queuing to be blindfolded and to try to find the most painful place - and the final total came to £6,645. Some of it would go to supply additional large rubber dinghies suitable for a four-engined bomber like the one they'd bought earlier in the year

But there were particular problems during war. Swavesey had to decide where to station the National Fire Service engine - the answer on the site of the old engine house and the adjoining

parish pound - but was it worth cleaning out the pond to provide a source of water should the engine be needed. Certainly the Home Guard were doing a great job but they were also cluttering up the village with the materials they'd wanted as obstructions but never actually used

All this and the weddings, the house sales - a thatched cottage for £620, the pig club meetings and retiring organists, were grist to the mill for Cyril Vincent. Forced by ill health to give up his work in London and settle in Swavesey he became the local reporter for the Cambridge Independent Press in 1896. His paragraphs on Lolworth, Conington and the rest were carefully filed and it was his proud boast that he could turn up any item at will. They are now housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection.

Perhaps his biggest headline came in December 1943. It was the story of the death of one of the newspapers' most valued contributors, a man who had reported village life for nearly 50 years - C.R. Vincent himself._

Stories from a year - 1944

By the 2nd of June 1944 the military preparations for the invasion of Europe were ready to roll. The troops were massed along the South coast waiting for the right conditions for the attack. Despite all the careful planning however surprise was essential. The Germans must be given no hint of what was about to happen

On the 2nd of June 1944 in Cambridge another military exercise was being put into operation. Whereas throughout the war the presence of American servicemen had been hushed up now it was being trumpeted. Though now it was the dead who were attracting the publicity with the dedication of the American Military Cemetery at Madingley.

Many of those commemorated had been lost whilst delivering bombs to Germany - always a hazardous undertaking - as four railwaymen were about to prove on that same day, 2nd June 1944.

It was at fifteen minutes past midnight that Driver Benjamin Gimbert and Fireman James Nightall set off from March marshalling yards with a consignment of fifty-one wagons full of bombs and detonators. Their journey proceeded without incident through Ely and Barway and on towards Soham at a steady 20 mph.

That night the signalman on duty at Soham box was "Sailor" Frank Bridges. He heard the engine whistle and noticed it stop briefly just outside the station. As he looked along the track he could see that what should have been a blacked-out train was in fact a very bright one. He came down on to the platform to offer assistance.

The whistle had been to alert Guard Clarke of an unscheduled stop. He saw the flames 51 ammunition wagons in front of him but walked towards the fire. He walked the length of three wagons forwards, within seconds he found himself thrown the length of six wagons back.

Gimbert had noticed the leading wagon with its forty 500-lb bombs was ablaze and knew that something had to be done. The easiest thing would have been to stop and run but that was not his way. Instead he stopped and Fireman Nightall ran - back to the blazing bomb load. He disconnected that one wagon from the other fifty and rejoined his driver on the footplate. Together they steamed through the station pulling the burning load clear.

Soham citizens slept soundly until their windows shattered and their beds shook as five tons of high explosives detonated and a crater fifteen feet deep and sixty-six feet wide appeared where once their station had stood. Those first on the scene found the twisted machinery, the shattered signal box and the wrecked bodies of Fireman Nightall and Signaller Bridges. They also found the heroic Driver Gimbert and fifty other fully-loaded ammunition wagons amazingly still intact.

American troops were quickly on the scene, the craters were filled and the line reopened to munitions trains. But German newspapers reported the explosions demonstrating their knowledge of every little incident. Meanwhile Somewhere Else in England many other heroes were waiting for the right conditions - A-day, B-day, C-day ... D-Day_

Stories from a year: 1945, by Mike Petty

The cablegram read "Philip fit and well, Bangkok. Reply c/o Swiss Consulate". It had been handed in at Bangkok on August 27th 1945 and meant that Captain W.P.O. Unwin of Histon, a member of the Cambridgeshire Regiment who, like so many others, had been captured at the fall of Singapore in February 1942 was now free and would soon be making the long sea voyage home. Soon came other news 35,000 prisoners had been released on Singapore Island alone, others were in camps inland, still more in Saigon ... For some it was tremendous news in what had been a long, hard year

By 1945 people had become heartily sick of the war and weary of shortages of every kind toilet rolls were virtually unobtainable, you took one with you when you went visiting. Rationing was more severe than ever. On the War Front the success of D Day in the previous June had been followed by the liberation of Paris and the long slog across country; in January HMS Walpole, the destroyer 'adopted' by the people of Ely, was sunk off the Dutch coast with the loss of two of her crew & the British Army crossed the Rhine, Mussolini was killed by Italian partisans and the German army in Italy surrendered; the Russians reached Berlin. Hitler committed suicide on April 30th and Germany capitulated on May 7th

Widespread celebrations greeted VE Day; on May 8th several thousand students assembled in Cambridge Market Square, singing, dancing and cheering; a waste paper dump in St Mary's Passage became a bonfire. Next day there was dancing in the streets, the official proclamations, long queues for tea shops and restaurants & a torchlight procession to Midsummer Common where there was another bonfire. An effigy of Hitler was burnt at Littleport, Sutton church was floodlit, Union Jacks and streamers decorated the Stretham streets.

The statue of Oliver Cromwell at St Ives was decorated with a dustbin lid; at Ramsey a chair was fixed to the church steeple, at Hartford children roasted potatoes in the hot ashes of a bonfire, and a WAAF climbed the war memorial at Huntingdon to put a cigarette in the statue's lips. At St Neots the town echoed to the sound of hammering as men festooned the streets with flags, and two American Military Policemen with white helmets and white spats patrolled the town before the carnival got under way

But amongst all the happy headlines were the usual sad stories a Needingworth family had learned of the death of their son and news came in from Belsen Concentration Camp where a St Ives man was helping tend the victims "They are packed in huts like sardines, and they do everything in the huts because they are too weak to move; some we found sleeping on top of dead bodies the stench is terrible ... the camp stretches over acres and acres, it has been the training place for the SS troops so you can tell how the patients have been treated ..." little comfort for those whose sons were in camps in the Far East.

Evacuee children, some of whom had been with their foster families since the start of the war, were taken to local stations, where foster parents bade them a sad and tearful farewell before returning to homes that were now empty and quiet. The last Parades for the Special Police, Civil Defence and Fire Guard Services were held on Parker's Piece in June, and the 8th US Army Air Force was awarded the Honorary Freedom of Cambridge in July.

But still the Japanese were battling on and the members of the Cambridgeshire Regiment were enduring heaven knows what. August 6th saw an Atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima, three days later another destroyed Nagasaki. On August 11th Japan surrendered; three weeks later came the telegram to the Histon home

As the Prisoners from the Far East returned so civic receptions were held to welcome them home. The local politicians talked about homes for heroes, somebody noticed activity that might mean the glass was about to be restored to the windows at Kings College chapel. The Post Office experienced a bumper rush at Christmas but throughout the county hundreds waited for a letter just a card carrying happy news from foreign parts that never came

compiled 3rd Oct 1988

Stories from a year - 1946

Peace was still coming - the men of the Cambridgeshire Regiment were back from the Far East and in February they gathered at Ely cathedral for a stirring service of thanksgiving and memorial - they had chosen that particular Sunday - it was just 4 years ago that their relations in England had learned the tragic news of their men's capture in Singapore. In March their drums followed them - the drums which carried their Regimental battle honours but been lost in the fall of Singapore had been discovered by a Dullingham woman working for the Red Cross whilst picnicking - they arrived at Cambridge station and were displayed in Joshua Taylor's windows

Padre J.N. Duckworth told a meeting of the Cambridge Royart Club of the grim conditions the Cambridgeshire men had experienced as prisoners of the Japanese ... of the inspiring spirit and morale under the most terrible conditions. In August 1944 he had been in the "valley of the shadow of death", 450 miles long through which they were constructing the Burma-Thailand railway, his audience were horrified to hear of the conditions and of the state of the men suffering ulcers, malaria, beri beri and dysentery. It had been August 13th 1945 when his particular camp had heard on their small Japanese radio of the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima, four days later it was over - "there was no flag waving or anything like that, just a long sigh of relief".

There were housing problems: squatters taking over army Nissen Huts in Hills Road and the Hundred Houses society announced plans for a development of 200 houses to be called the Scotland Farm Estate in Chesterton but South Cambridgeshire Rural district council were boycotting prefabs - they had been waiting 12-18 months for them, had not got any and did not look like getting any - anyway they were getting more expensive - prices had gone up from £600 to £1200. But they were worth the wait according to housewives "It was just marvellous in prefabland - the kind of home I always wanted

RATIONING WAS REINTRODUCED and the Ministry of food introduced a new recipe for Squirrel pie. There were swoops on black marketeers but problems over eggs in Comberton - with a court case involving a 42 year old wife throwing 80 eggs at her 70 year old husband

But there were problems on local farms: county agricultural wages board proposed to increase rate for women workers to 50/- for a 48 hour week - but they could not agree to the claim for a 90/- minimum wage for men

President of the National Union of Agricultural Workers told a Cottenham Labour Party fete what should be done - "there are Italian and German prisoners working on our farms - it is time they were returned to their own countries to work the land there - British farms should have British labour

Polish immigrants were in the news: 6,000 Poles of General Anders army were due in this country shortly with another 12,000 every other week until the army of 100,000 had been absorbed - Cambridge Trades Council were not in favour - though they were told by Major Symonds that they should not forget what the Poles had done for us during the war - 9 out of 10 had fought on our side, a large number were pilots in the Battle of Britain

Not all the foreigners were unwelcome: A Steeple Morden man charged as co-respondent an Italian prisoner of war of adultery - he'd been based at their bungalow between July 1943 and July 1944 and in that November his wife had presented him with a child that looked more like the lodger than the husband

DIVORCE rates soared ... a Cambridge man claimed he was "unlucky in the women he'd married" - a bad run of luck - he'd divorced his first wife, remarried and then made two bigamous marriages just to compound the felony.

The first of some 10,000 GI BRIDES left for America – and Lady Bragg took to the air in January as the first passenger on the reopening of Marshall's civil flying school after the war- it would be building up a fleet of aircraft for air charter and air taxi work

Aneurin Bevan announced plans for a NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE but Addenbrooke's Hospital managers saw it as a threat - it would destroy the local interest, enterprise and pride in the hospital service and set up a soulless state monopoly

Other plans were also being laid and in Cambridge in October the town came to a standstill. The Market Hill was full, windows and roofs packed with spectators as the sound of the drums heralded the arrival of a parade which had left from Parker's Piece and marched proudly along Regent Street and Petty Cury - a route lined with townspeople who watched the passing columns in a quiet, dignified way - no cheering, no applause, just respectful silence.

The Honorary Freedom of the Borough was bestowed on the Cambridgeshire Regiment in recognition of its service in the South African War, for its superb professionalism during the fighting in Flanders and for its valiant fight in the Far East.

That fight had not ended with the last shots fired in the defence of Singapore - in fact the courage that was now being recognised was the years of captivity that followed. In prison camps scattered all over the Far East they had suffered every hardship, lack of food, disease, cruelty, indignities and utter isolation. Among many ordeals the building of the railway in the grim jungles of Siam was singled out by the Mayor for especial mention.

Now there was flag waving - and a particular flag had place of honour from the Guildhall flagpole - the blue flag of the 1st Battalion of the Cambridgeshire Regiment that had somehow been kept hidden from their captives during the long years of captivity.

As the procession wended its way down Petty Cury it was the drums that marked their progress. And amongst the drums were some emblazoned with the Regiment's honours won in earlier wars but lost in the fall of Singapore. Amazingly they had been found by a

Dullingham girl, Mary Taylor during her work with the Red Cross and shipped back to Cambridge.

In October 1946 they led the old men of the First War and prematurely old boys from the Second to the Guildhall to receive the Freedom they had fought to preserve.

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Stories from a year – 1946, by Mike Petty

As 1946 drew to its close the newspaper headlines reflected the principal issues : "A NEW TOWN FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE" - it would be welcomed said Cambridge councillors; "BOUNDARY QUESTION AND CLAIMS OF SUFFOLK" - Suffolk seek to take over the villages of Chippenham and Snailwell in response to Cambridgeshire's claim to take in Newmarket; "FLOOD PROTECTION SCHEME" - details of finance still had to be finalised; "RAILWAY STATION SCHEME" - proposed for Cambridge as part of large improvement programme, including electrification. But this was 1946 and the details below the headlines were different from those currently occupying local politicians.

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That fight had not ended with the last shots fired in the defence of Singapore - in fact the courage that was now being recognised was the 3½ years of captivity that followed. In prison camps scattered all over the Far East they had suffered every hardship, lack of food, disease, cruelty, indignities and utter isolation. Among many ordeals the building of the railway in the grim jungles of Siam was singled out by the Mayor for especial mention.

The full extent of their sufferings was being to be revealed. Padre J.N. Duckworth had told members of Cambridge Rotary of the inspiring spirit and morale under the most terrible conditions. In August 1944 he had been in the "valley of the shadow of death", 450 miles long through which they were constructing the Burma-Thailand railway, his audience were horrified to hear of the conditions and of the state of the men suffering ulcers, malaria, beri beri and dysentery. It had been August 13th 1945 when his particular camp had heard on their small Japanese radio of the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima, four days later it was over - "there was no flag waving or anything like that, just a long sigh of relief".

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Forty three years later plans for new towns, railways and boundaries are set aside whilst Mayors once more pay homage to lads who never aged and old men who can never forget._
compiled 20.11.1989

Stories of flood 1937 & 1947 by Mike Petty 13.3.1997

The High spring tides coincide with heavy rain.

The great sluice at Denver cannot be opened to allow the rivers to empty into the sea and more and more water drains into the fenland river system. The high river banks are full to the brim and are crumbling and dissolving in the water just as sugar dissolves in tea. Slips occur, the bank slides a bit, but as it threatens to break men rush to bolster it up with clay and sandbags.

The banks themselves are already two feet higher because of these lines of sacks but still the water seeps through and strong winds blow sheets of water out from the river and down into the adjoining fen fen that is itself a sea of mud comparable with the mud of Flanders. "The way feet sink in with a dull sucking noise reminds me of the time when we moved into Passchendale during the war".

The sodden fen means that lorries cannot get near to bring bags potato bags, sandbags any sort of bag and the sodden land itself is unsuitable for filling them. 10,000 bags have been laid since yesterday morning and the water is seeping through at the places they placed the bags yesterday afternoon

The men are willing but almost at the end of their tether. Most are now so tired that if some really terrible disaster came along they would hardly be any use at all. Throughout the fen, along the top of river and drain every available man hundreds of men, wet and weary, watch the water in the river while even more rain penetrates their clothing and the incessant cold wind chills them even more.

There is talk of calling in the army and at Ely a bugler is standing by to sound a "fall in" for volunteers in the event of a major burst. The town criers at Haddenham and Swavesey are appealing for extra men to go to the aid of Willingham, just one of the danger points. Barway and Lt Thetford have breached and the main A10 is cut by flooding near Stretham the car loads of undergraduates flocking to help must find another way on to the Isle of Ely.

The BBC broadcasts flood warnings urging people to alert their neighbours without wireless sets to listen for the church bells which will announce the time has come for evacuation.

For many families it is already too later. Their land is under water, their homes are flooded. "We fenland folk can stand a lot. The water has got to be coming over the doorstep before we begin to flit. A horseman tells me that the water has reached his front door... his wife is sweeping it away with a broom".

It is the worst flood for many years worse than 1928, worse than last year. It is March 1937. "We've got out of scrapes before, and we'll get out of this one" says a fen farmer. He is right. The floods of March 1937 are now largely forgotten. They were only a minor dampness compared to the devastation that was to follow ten years later.

1947: The High spring tides coincide with a sudden thaw of the heavy snow. The great sluice at Denver cannot be opened to allow the rivers to empty into the sea and more and more water drains into the fenland river system.

The high river banks are full to the brim and are crumbling and dissolving in the water just as sugar dissolves in tea. Slips occur, the bank slides a bit, but as it threatens to break men rush to bolster it up with clay and sandbags ... it's the same old story, March 1937 over again but this time worse.

On March 16th 1947 hurricane force winds swept sheets of water over the bank tops and sent the patrolling men scurrying for shelter. Roads were blocked by fallen trees, telephone lines blown down and 190 people evacuated from the Prickwillow area as flooding threatened. But it was March 17th when the main breaches occurred. One was at Lt Thetford which swamped the main railway line and spread south to close the Wicken road and threaten the main A10 at Stretham Ferry. The other was way out in the fen near Earith where a 50 yard gap had been torn in the river bank and properties at Over and Willingham were flooded, the water flowing east until it was checked by the main Old West river bank alongside which runs the Earith to Willingham road

For a while this held back the flood but as the water level increased so the very bank itself was overtopped and water began to trickle into Hill Row fen. A wholesale evacuation started, first the tools of their trade farm implements and livestock, then furniture and effects. Behind them came a steady stream of water driving rabbits and rats ahead of it. By nightfall on the 18th much of what in the morning had been fertile fen was a mass of grey water. Houses, farm buildings and stacks stood deserted and marooned whilst families found shelter where they could. Elsewhere the battle continued.

For five days water poured unchecked through the broken bank and rose higher and higher, brick by brick, up the flooded houses. Then on the 24th "Operation Neptune" finally sealed the breach by constructing a steel wall of amphibious vehicles around it and allowing more orthodox repair work to start. Hundreds of pumps were brought in to suck the water off the land and throw it back into the rivers.

As the floods went down and families returned to their shattered homes they were horrified by the sights that confronted them. Ruined shells of houses, stinking mud impregnated walls, scratches on the windowsills where rats had scabbled to keep above the water. Undeterred they replanted their fields, rebuilt their houses and eventually when the walls had finally dried out made them homes again.

Since then new rivers have been cut, the banks have been strengthened but should nature once more combine wind, waves and water then danger will once more threaten. The fenman can never be complacent, the threat is never ending

Stories from a year - 1948

In Soham in 1948 the talk was of the two mills, one was now rising from the ashes and would be good for the village whilst the other was good for nothing.

It had been in July 1945 that fire had gutted the fine, modern roller mill owned by Messrs Clark and Butcher. One of the oldest and best-known firms in East Anglia, they specialised in making biscuit flour and indeed had won medals for their product. Its destruction was a serious setback but now, three years later the firm was back in production and corn was once more arriving by road and rail.

By contrast no corn arrived at the other mill in Soham mere. It had been built by Hunts, the Soham millwrights, in 1867 at a cost of £1,000, for two brothers. One was tall and stout and

of uncertain temper, while the other was short and thin and very good natured. The tall brother died aged 75 but when the short brother was ninety Mr Clark, who owned the roller mills, met him in the street. "Well, John," he said, "if you live to be one hundred I'll give you half a crown a week". The old man lived to be 107!

His mill was one of the thousands used for draining the fens. As the wind blew and the sails turned so the power was converted to drive a large wooden wheel that would reach down into the fenland dykes and scoop the water up and over the high river banks into the river.

When the fens were drained and the water extracted from the peat soil so the level of the land shrank, leaving the bed of the river higher than the adjacent fields. High banks had now to be constructed to keep the water in and some method found to lift the water from the ditches and throw it up into the river. Hence the need for these wind engines which grew up throughout the area.

Yet as the land dried more so it shrank further. One windmill could no longer lift the water high enough. So a second was built alongside the first to raise the water part way - and sometimes another beside that. Yet they were all dependent on the wind. If there was no breeze to turn the sails then the mill would not pump; if the breeze turned into a gale then it might turn the sails too quickly, causing friction that could set it on fire, or even blow the mill off its base and send it walking across the fen.

New technology came to the drainers' aid with the advent of the great steam pumps that could work whenever needed and could move far more water than the old-fashioned windmill. In turn steam was phased out by diesel and so by 1948, just a year after the great floods, the ramshackled old mill was no further use to anybody.

The County Council had been busily negotiating the transfer of their drainage powers throughout 1948 and by May had come to the decision that the only answer lay in demolition. Enthusiasts protested at the loss of this rare survival of a drainage mill but to no avail - it was just too dangerous.

So the demolition men moved in to pull it over with a tractor. They failed. Undaunted they returned with gunpowder. They failed. So in the end eight charges of gelignite had to be used to topple the "dangerous" structure. Ironically just eight years later another Hunt's mill, much younger, much less impressive and in a much worse state, was re-built and erected just next door, at Wicken Fen, where it is lauded as the last of the fenland wind drainage mills._

Stories from a year 1949

In January 1949 motorists at Trumpington experienced a warm glow, the shadows that had been blighting their lives disappeared at least in part when sodium lighting was introduced as an experiment on the stretch of road between Brooklands Avenue and Bentley Road.

Twelve 140 watt bulbs dramatically improved their night time visibility providing six times more light than the old fittings and at cheaper cost. By 1952 the Council had decided to install 400 of the new lights in a crash programme and the following year Cambridge could boast that it was one of the first cities in the country to be lit entirely by sodium.

Sometimes brighter lights caused dangers in 1911 complaints had been aired that the new gas lights on Barnwell Bridge were too powerful and were dazzling motorists. Generally however they were appreciated.

New lights were welcomed in one village: "The traffic through Sawston has increased considerably of late years" commented the Cambridge Chronicle. "The one continuous street,

in the bends and narrow parts, where the inhabitants are their thickest, has been dangerous to drive through during the dark evenings of winter" a common statement, except that it was written in November 1882 106 years ago.

It was 1836 when the streets of Ely were lighted with coal gas for the first time; the lamps were "well made and placed upon elegant painted cast iron pillars" and the inhabitants well pleased with the result. Swavesey had followed suit in February 1886 with Willingham limping behind in 1891, whilst at Fulbourn in January 1893 a public supper was held at the Six Bells Inn to celebrate the completion of the lighting of their village by oil lamps following a successful experiment the previous year. The parish debates all took much time.

In 1893 Cherry Hinton were anxiously scanning the various Acts of Parliament to see which one was best suited to their circumstances. Such had been the recent expansion that unless they were careful the old part of the village would end up paying for the lighting of the newly developed Rock and Cavendish estates. They were also debating the type of light oil or gas or perhaps they should form their own company to generate electricity, at a cost of about £4,000.

It was a familiar debate for Cambridge where in 1757 people were quite convinced that better lighting would increase fights between groups who now groped their way past each other unrecognised in the dark. However an Act of Parliament of 1788 empowered the better lighting of the town, new lamps were installed and lit for the first time on a September evening that year. Oil lamps gave way to gas and in 1840 a contract was signed with the Cambridge Gas Light Company for the installation of 350 lamps. The first lamp post was installed outside the Newmarket Road works and others followed throughout the central area.

The lamp posts themselves were often the subject of motor accidents or high spirits, with inebriated undergraduates often shinning up them to light their cigarettes from the gas flame. During rag time it became the norm to put out the light the answer to this was to wrap the posts in greasy rags to prevent people climbing them though it was soon realised that such greasy rags could easily be set alight a much better sport! During both World Wars the lights were extinguished and a reflective strip painted on the posts to prevent people walking into them in the black out. However it was on VJ night in 1945 that the most prominent street light became a casualty of the celebrations. The large light on Parker's Piece had been erected in 1894 at a cost of £39 and when repaired and redesigned in 1946 became the first fluorescent light in the country. It was repainted in 1973 and now adds a touch of brightness to the Cambridge scene by both day and night.

Stories from a year 1950

Cambridge was quite used to bangs in November but usually Guy Fawkes had been celebrated and forgotten at the beginning of the month. In 1950 the bangs "explosions" said the paper came at the end. Newspaper reporters scurried round to find the cause. Was it yet another fire at the Cavendish Laboratory there had been two within eight months earlier in the year, or were the Civil defenders rehearsing their plans to see how the town would cope in the event of attack.

The Laboratories still stood intact, there was no broken glass in college courts yet Cambridge had undergone a radical transformation. Sixteen giant elm trees each older than the buildings they framed had been dynamited along the Backs. It was just the latest stage in the removal of the mature trees in that area.

The Avenue at Trinity College had been removed in 1948; that at St Johns was to follow in 1951. Elms have been the victim of many attacks. As early as 1922 those lining Brooklands Avenue were being described as dangerous; 180 had been planted in about 1850 but disease

was taking its toll. By 1937 50 had been destroyed, by 1940 the disease was so endemic that there was no point in planting new. In 1950 only 92 of the trees remained and they were coming down at the rate of between one and five a year. Parker's Piece trees were dangerous by 1962, a decade before the notorious outbreak of Dutch Elm Disease which is still so lamented and which led to the removal of a particularly rare specimen from the corner of Drummer Street in 1978.

Trees have a finite life. In 1912 the Lombardy Poplar at Hyde Park corner originally planted by Julian Skrine in the garden of his house Lensfield was cut down and with it went part of old Cambridge. It had been under threat before: in 1864 when the Improvement Commissioners had debated alterations on the corner, in 1888 when the new Catholic Church was being planned; in 1901 underground toilets had been constructed beneath its branches but now it was victim to the ravages of time.

In 1894 however perfectly good trees were being uprooted in Victoria Avenue to benefit farmers. The Royal Agricultural Show was to be held on Midsummer Common and people feared that the rows of trees newly planted to soften the impact of the great new roadway carved across the common to carry traffic to and from the new Victoria Bridge would be damaged. So they were dug up, to be replanted in Chesterton and replaced once the Show had departed.

New trees have often been planted for special occasion. In 1897 limes along Chesterton Road were seen as one way of celebrating Queen Victoria's Jubilee. The willow population along the River Cam will be greatly enhanced to commemorate the centenary of the Cambridge Evening News in 1988

Despite the replacement programme along the Backs themselves it will be generations before residents and visitors will once more witness the magnificent trees most of which vanished, unrecorded and unremarked except when the saw and axe have given way to more dramatic methods of felling.

Stories from a year 1951

Slaughter House Lane was just inside the Kings Ditch the ancient trench that had been dug around Cambridge to act as a defence, linking the river in the north to the river in the west. The name indicates the chief occupation of the area and the offal and waste from the slaughtered animals found a ready home at the bottom of the ditch, contributing to the stench and smell that pervaded the area.

Later the site became known as Hog Hill and once more animals were in evidence but this time live animals for sale from the Beast Market. It was this site that was chosen for the Corn Exchange which opened in 1842.

Seven years later the Market Hill area was devastated by a fire and when the ashes had cooled the debate began on how best to make use of this new opportunity to redevelop the commercial centre of the town. The present square market is one result of the deliberation.

A second consequence was more slowly realised and necessitated much debate, argument, revision of plans and recourse to the House of Lords. Eventually however in 1876 a New Corn Exchange was opened right beside the Old.

The question as to what was to be done with the Old building occupied many minds. For a while it was used as an indoor market the Cambridge Arcade but perhaps it was too far from the mainstream of shopping and it closed in 1884.

For a while the building stood empty until Ernie Hayward, an enterprising local concert promoter, opened it as a variety music hall and enjoyed considerable success. The long frost between December 1894 and March 1895 was its downfall.

The cold weather prompted another enterprising businessman, Mr Bartholomew, to install floodlights so people could skate on a specially flooded area of Grantchester Meadows through the hours of darkness. This combination of a popular pastime and the novelty of floodlighting caught the imagination of those patrons who ought to have been flocking into the Arcade Music Hall. Even the prospect of a Marie Lloyd concert was insufficient attraction and the theatre closed shortly before the thaw came.

From 1895 to 1914 the Old Corn Exchange was used as a cycle repair shop, benefiting from its position adjacent to the Downing Street and New Museums laboratories whose students might learn the high technology physics but preferred to let others tend to their low technology bicycles. Subsequently the motorist was also catered for just one of the many garages which have now disappeared from central Cambridge.

Then in January 1951 came demolition the site was more useful than the old, listed, building for car parking. Now in January 1989 work is supposed to start on the construction of a new Hotel complex, its deep foundations stretching into and below the old Kings Ditch, disturbing the remains and quite probably the smell of the animals dumped there hundreds of years ago.

Stories from a year - 1952

A dirty and neglected boy died of typhus fever in Abbey Street. There was nothing remarkable in that - it was all too common in that disgraceful area of Barnwell in the earliest years of Queen Victoria's reign. His father, a glazier, was perpetually drunk. But now he had repented of his sinful ways - "Oh, sir, there was no resisting the prayers and entreaties of that dying boy. He made me ashamed of myself, and I could not help reading the chapters which he had marked in his Bible for my own and his mother's benefit ... "

The student preacher loved to tell the story of the successful missionary work undertaken by himself and his college friends. They had ventured into the mean back streets of Barnwell to knock on doors and try to entice the children to God.

They found some response. "Women came to their doors to see so strange a sight as gownsmen visiting their homes on an errand of mercy ... some parents, acting upon the principle that gownsmen might be easily ... fleeced, wanted to know what they would be paid if the children were sent".

The idea of establishing a Sunday School for such an area was first discussed in 1827. They were granted the use of the Friends Meeting House and so the "Jesus Lane Sunday School" came into being.

On that first Sunday the room was packed with 220 children. "I shall not readily forget the shouting and uproar which saluted our ears on entering the building ... there never was gathered together such a set on unruly, boisterous, dirty, ragged children".

The initial issue of tickets for regular attendance was discontinued when it was discovered that similar designs were also distributed elsewhere and were bartered between children to be redeemed at Jesus Lane where twelve could be converted into a penny.

Fortified by their progress in spreading the word of God into a godless community the Sunday School went from strength to strength. It outgrew its original home and moved to King Street in 1833, but kept the old name.

Much remained to be done. A newspaper correspondent in 1853 reported "The abodes are cheerless, squalid; their occupants eye you with a restless, wistful glance ... all is poverty and barren dreariness ..." A clergyman recalled "Devil's Row" a "wretched heaven-forsaken haunt of men ... the focus of villany, the receptacle of dishonest spoil, the refuge of the petty thief and the fully developed scoundrel".

In 1865 the Jesus Lane Sunday School moved to Paradise Street and new buildings. Here for 70 years it remained a great institution with 5-600 children on the books and with many of its teachers going on to positions of distinction in Church and State. The Great War dealt a blow from which it never recovered. In 1936 the building was sold to the Boy Scouts Association and St Radegund's Hall erected to serve the new housing estates east of the railway

In August 1952 the Jesus Lane Sunday School finally closed after 120 years of devoted work, its building used for the new Church of St Stephen, its funds to support the work with youth now undertaken in every parish._

Stories from a year -1953

Early in January 1953 the Cambridge Daily News carried a notice of the death of Herbert Charles Banham, Alderman of the city and founder of the boat-building firm that carried his name. He had been in poor health for some time.

His father had been a boot and shoe dealer and Herbert took over that business on his father's death. But his heart was in boats and not boots. He was to do more to popularise motor-boating in Cambridge than anybody else, with thousands using his large passenger boats such as the Viscountess Bury and others discovering the fenland waterways in his feller of self-drive day boats and hire cruisers.

It was in 1906 that he started his boat-building activities at Riverside and by 1914 had a small fleet of boats; he had developed a boat building business and during the Great War built launches for the Russian navy.

When the war ended he bought a racing rowing boat business at Victoria Bridge and as the years passed his expertise in such boats became recognised with his firm constructing many of the eights used by University and college crews.

In the early days the rowing boats often competed for river space with the working boats - the various tugs that brought lines of barges into Cambridge, vessels like the Nancy and the Cutter, the first steam tug to work the Cam. This was owned and operated by the Dant family, who also operated the chain ferry at the Cutter Inn, Chesterton. When the barge trade declined in the 1890s the family auctioned the business and the land they owned became Banhams Boat Yard in 1927.

That year Herbert tried to revive the commercial trade on the river by running a large steel deisel-diven barge which he named 'Nancy II' to carry sugar from Kings Lynn for the Chivers factory at Histon. The enterprise proved unsuccessful not least because the boat was rather too large and had some difficulty both in passing through the locks on the Cam and in the tidal section of the river Ouse below Denver where it was found that when there was sufficient tide to float her clear of the bottom she was often unable to squeeze under the bridges.

Fortunately his hire craft were more profitable and during the Second War he supplied the Admiralty with whalers and high speed motor craft. He also operated at his own expense a fire float for the Auxiliary Fire Service, adapting one of his hire craft.. Postwar his business boomed. His boats were graphically described in the brochures the firm produced to entice holiday makers on to the fenland waterways and the company issued its own charts.

They were waters Banham knew well for he was a founder-member of the Cambridge Motor Boat Club and served as Vice-Commodore for 30 years before being elected Commodore in 1952. This was not the only election he won for in 1939 he began to represent East Chesterton on the borough council; ten years later his wife Cora took over whilst Herbert became an Alderman. The river which was his business and his hobby also became his duty not only as a Conservator of the Cam and member of the Sewage disposal committee but also serving on the committees of the Great Ouse River and Inland Waterways Boards.

In 1961 the firm he founded became part of the Pye Group and as work on the Elizabeth Bridge proceeded the old site had to be vacated, though the old chain ferry continued to ply across the river carrying engineers from one bank to the other. In 1973 Banhams executives bought back the boat hire and chandlery side of the business but in 1976 the firm moved its business to Ely. Attempts to move back during the 1980s were frustrated, they sold the 'Viscountess Bury', flagship of their fleet, and another chapter in Cambridge history closed._

Stories from a year - 1954

Many of the old established collages have extensive cellars of fine wine but such luxuries might be thought low on the scale of a new foundation. Yet one of the first achievements of the new students of New Hall was to win a firkin of ale to supplement the fare supplied by the college. This they achieved by throwing themselves fully into the Poppy Day Rag activities and raising the highest total per head of any college.

October 1954 saw the arrival of 16 women students, selected following an entrance examination designed to test logical thought and power of expression and the combination of brains and charm brought articles in the Iraq Times, Rhodesia Herald and the Cairo Times. The girls were photographed with books and bicycles, with the college head and college gatekeeper - the same person - for, as they explained, "you try to be in by 11pm because otherwise Miss Murray has to sit up - we can't afford a porter yet".

Miss Rosemary Murray was more than that. She was the person who fixed any broken electrical equipment, who looked after the two college punts when they had a river frontage and tended gardens when they moved to Huntingdon Road. She served on numerous outside bodies, educational councils and commissions and became the University's first woman Vice Chancellor.

The starting point for the new college came in 1946 when a Memorial was presented to the Senate to consider what changes should be made in the status of women in the University. By December 1947 they had agreed to admit them as members, a change ratified by the King in April 1948. Girton and Newnham, the two established ladies colleges were formally recognised, but after a few years it was felt that more places were needed to balance the increasing numbers of male undergraduates. In July 1952 a meeting chaired by the Principal of Newnham established an Association to work for a third foundation for women and the die was cast.

Amongst the many difficulties to be tackled were finance, accommodation and name. Few responded to a fund-raising party to be hosted by R.A. Butler at 11 Downing Street but money came from educational trusts, individuals and colleges. A freehold site of "The

Orchard" on Huntingdon Road was given to the new college by two daughters of Horace Darwin, though Sir Charles Darwin was unwilling for the family name to be used for the venture. By ballot supporters chose "New Hall" as an alternative.

But the first home for the new college was "The Hermitage", a large Guest House in Silver Street. The new building was soon overcrowded, a dining room full with 50 was overflowing with 80, people eating their meals in the college office whilst the cooks, striving to cope, were resorting to an old gas oven in the pantry to supplement the one in the kitchen.

Meanwhile fund raising efforts were boosted by donations from the National Union of Women Teachers and others whilst the Isaac Wolfson Foundation grant of £100,000 would go towards the new dining block. By 1962 work was underway - just part of a variety of developments along the Huntingdon Road which with the adjacent Fitzwilliam College was changing the overall character of the area. Electronic computers were brought in to reduce delays caused by the severe winter and the first part of new building was occupied in October 1964. Building activity was still apparent when the Queen Mother formally opened the College in June 1965, speaking of the foresight and courage that had led to its establishment, whose first President, by then Dame Rosemary Murray, retired in September 1981._

Stories from a year 1955

In September 1955 the first house was completed on the new Arbury Estate extension, an area that would take a large bite out of Cambridge's 4,337 housing waiting list. Monkman, the builders, took out an advertisement to emphasise the speed of their construction, started 1st June, occupied 17th September.

Others took much longer to complete their dream house. Several families responded to an advertisement in the local paper announcing a meeting for ordinary people who were prepared to co-operate to build their own homes. Cambridge Self-Build Society was set up and eventually they learned of some building plots in the barren fields and allotments off Milton Road. Soon however the landscape was changing as roads were laid and plots pegged out.

The men bought a second-hand cement mixer some scaffolding, some spades and the various bits and pieces needed to build a house. This included floodlights so work could continue long into the night as "Essex Close" started to rise. It was one way of beating the housing shortage. Post-war housing had started with pre-fabs as a temporary measure; 450 were built in Church End and Walpole Way, 100 in the Lichfield, Golding road area, another 40 at Gilbert Close. Mowlems erected concrete 'Easiform' houses at a cost of £1,400 providing dwellings within the capacity of people to pay, after all not everybody could afford 35/- (£1.75) per week!

By 1952 the Council had built 2,000 non-traditional houses since the war but when that year Ernest Marples opened the 5,000th Unity steel and concrete house he urged caution on those who advocated cutting costs by reducing standards "one had got to stop somewhere, otherwise we could be building little pigeon houses with one room upstairs and one down"

By 1954 there was a 15-year waiting list for council houses and nearly half of new buildings were set aside to re-house people living in some 1,250 "slum" dwellings. Not all residents relished departure to pastures new; their small houses might be over a century old, with a blank wall at the back, inadequate ventilation, lavatories or drainage but they were in the New Town or Fitzroy Street areas with their local amenities and community spirit.

The new Arbury was bleak and unwelcoming.

The Mayor urged the erection of large blocks of flats in the newly cleared area rather than taking acres of agricultural land but instead eyes turned to the County Council smallholdings and poultry farms on the north of the town, already separated from Milton Road by a line of houses. Gilbert Road had been established shortly after the Great War and sold off to speculative developers who had erected villas but other development had paused for the Second. Now it was all systems go again.

But as the vast estate mushroomed and new phases expanded towards Kings Hedges Road some thought it less of an estate than a New Town without the facilities of a new town. An Editorial of December 1968 described it as "an urban wilderness, a dormitory suburb with no life of its own"; others termed it "slumburbia", "like a prairie" and "completely soulless"

The plan unveiled in February 1955 had included provision for shops, schools, a pub, cinema and two churches. The cinema did not materialise but the church did. For a while the congregation met in individual houses but then an army hut was bought for their first church. In July 1957 Princess Margaret came to lay the foundation stone of the permanent building, returning nearly 20 years later for a service to celebrate its completion.

Other facilities have followed, adventure playground, community centre and according to the children who live there it is "a friendly place... I love Arbury and never want to move away"

Stories from a year, _1956...__

In April 1956 it was goodbye to the bandstand and with it a memory of the Titanic sank.

The bandstand in question had been constructed for the Royal Show held on Midsummer Common in 1894. The arrival of such a large showpiece event had caused considerable disruption: Midsummer Fair had been diverted to Stourbridge Common and the young trees that had been planted along Victoria Avenue just two years before were dug up moved to the other side of the river and replanted when the machinery and crowds had dispersed.

As the Common was brought back to normality so the bandstand was moved a few hundred yards to Christ's Pieces where it became the centre for much entertainment. Robert Austin remembered in 1956 how he had performed there as band boy, bandsman and conductor for over 45 years. He recalled the various local bands that had competed for public acclaim including the Volunteers Band forerunner of the Territorials, the bands of the Cambridge University Rifle Volunteers, Borough Police and the Cambridge Town Band, between all of whom there was intense rivalry.

It had been the Town Band that scored when they raised the record collection of over £35 mainly in coppers during a Sunday afternoon concert in aid of the 'Titanic' disaster victims following the tragic sinking in 1912.

However the Police had their own disaster when their inaugural trip to Coton had gone wrong. First the wagon that was to convey them had broken on Market Hill forcing the men in blue to dash to a waiting omnibus, leaving one of their colleagues to book the offending vehicle for obstruction! Then on departure the replacement carriage found itself bogged down to the axles in mud and when finally extricated the horses bolted coming down Madingley Hill throwing its passengers off on either side as it galloped away.

By comparison the Cambridge bandstand was very civilised - even though in the early days it was lighted by naked gas jets that usually blew out and had to be relit several times during a performance.

There was no enclosure of any kind and often a noisy crowd of shouting children and young hooligans would mingle right up to the edge of the bandstand leaving the audience well on the outskirts.

Popular concerts were very well supported: in 1910 a series attracted an average audience of 740 people which made a substantial profit, even at only one penny admission.

More serious music by contrast traditionally fared badly and the following year an attempt to promote a series of symphony concerts featuring such names as Henry Wood Edward Elgar and Thomas Beecham flopped badly. The largest audience attracted to the bandstand was in the late 1930s when the Cambridge Band, an amalgamation of the Town and Albion Bands, performed there only a few hours after being “on the air” at Broadcasting House in London.

But the Christ’s Pieces venue was also used for other functions; mass meetings of many kinds were addressed from its stage, open-air dancers swayed rhythmically around its columns and for a while Cambridge Men’s Brotherhood held an annual open-air service there

But in April 1956 it all passed away and no longer would its festoon of coloured lights compete with a lavish decoration of flowers to see which could out-rival the sunset whilst the band played at Cambridge’s favourite outdoor venue.

Stories from a year, 1957

In May 1957 the talk was of a centrally heated leisure centre complete with swimming pool and roof-top tennis court and incorporating a magnificent dining room with a cellar stocked with every kind of wine. In addition a ballroom so popular that dances would be held in the afternoon otherwise nobody would be able to tear themselves away until the early hours of the morning. Four lifts serviced the complex. For maximum utility the building would double as a Council Chamber and be home for the Mayor. This City Councillors’ dream actually existed and was then being torn down to make way for shops and offices in St Andrews Street. Its official name was Ruberdome after the red brick of which it was built. Everyone knew it as Rance’s Folly

Henry Rance was born in Ely, son of the landlord of the Lamb Hotel. He had studied as a solicitor in Mildenhall before establishing an extensive practice in Cambridge about 1828. Forty years later he was elected to the Council becoming an Alderman and serving three years as Mayor. He also filled other hours in a multitude of public positions from visitor of Fulbourn Asylum to Conservator of the Cam. In 1884 he was presented with two solid silver fruit dishes in recognition of his civic service and died in London in May 1891.

His house outlived him. He had built it in the 1850s and part incorporated an office but it was in the magnificent dining room with its mathematical ceiling that Rance held council meetings during his second period as Mayor in 1882. His reputation for hospitality was lavish and several thousand pounds a year was spent on food and drink for his friends.

Young gentlemen of the University were welcomed into his home, where he offered them tuition and showed off his four hundred pictures. Perhaps a greater incentive was the superb ballroom, its floor laid by German experts, especially since Rance had attractive granddaughters who enjoyed dancing and seldom found themselves without a partner. Indeed so many of his guests found themselves so enraptured that they failed to notice the passing hours and were locked out of their college that Rance insisted on the afternoon start_

Henry was a donnish Downing man who enjoyed a varied and busy life but who disliked visiting the barber. Indeed it was said that he never spent more than a shilling on a haircut and only had one every eight weeks.

Nothing was the same after he left Cambridge. For a while the Liberal Club used his former home for their meetings but the flat roofed building was soon dismissed as a "Folly".

In May 1957 John Hales Tooke recalled its past glories in a newspaper article which appeared as the workmen were demolishing the giant extravagant, Hollywood style mansion.

CDN 19.2.1904

Cambridge Liberals have been turned out of their handsome home in St Andrew's Street. Few provincial political clubs have had such a palatial clubhouse with large lofty rooms, spacious hall and staircase with a terrace overlooking gardens. The deceased Alderman, Henry Rance, who built the extensive premises practically ruined himself in the process but conferred a great advantage upon hundreds of men who met there for social as well as political purposes. Members are now removed to a property in St Tibb's Row formerly occupied by a now defunct newspaper until new premises are completed on the site of the old Bird Bolt Hotel.

Mike Petty Stories from a year, 1958

In 1958 they found a solution to the eternal problem of car parking in Cambridge. Ever since the Honourable undergraduate C.S. Rolls had brought the first car to the town in 1897 the mechanical monster had proved a problem. By 1907 it was felt doubtful if any other town of similar size had so many cars and motorbikes as Cambridge in term time, cars that not only knocked over cows in Victoria Avenue but also kicked up dust, cars that exceeded the speed limit at their peril; a taxi driver being fined £2 for driving at 12 mph in 1909.

As traffic increased so new measures were urged to control them. In 1921 staggered lunch hours were being urged to relieve congestion and four years later one, _way traffic was introduced in Market Street and Petty Cury. But if moving cars created difficulties, finding somewhere to park was already the subject of considerable lament. In 1925 one motorist turned to verse to echo his frustration in rhymes that would be equally applicable today.

Relief was soon available with the opening of Drummer Street bus station but the area devoted to cars was soon found to be inadequate and in 1932 New Square car park was opened.

It proved only a temporary solution, by 1934 cars and bikes were often parked so closely in Petty Cury and Sidney Street that pedestrians could not find space to cross over. Parking restrictions were introduced in 1936 which limited motorists to just fifteen minutes, using different sides of the streets on odd or even days and more one-way systems brought into operation.

Already the idea of using commons for cars was being urged and in 1938 came the suggestion of an underground car park on Market Hill, which could double for an air raid shelter in the fast-approaching war_

The war-time restrictions on petrol eased the problem for a while but with its end in 1950 came a survey which showed that whilst 43,000 motorists used New Square and 59,000 parked on Market Hill the favourite parking area was at the rear of the Lion Hotel, attracting over 80,000 cars in a year. No wonder the Council had announced its intention way back in 1948 of acquiring it.

By 1951 it was felt that the lack of central parking was driving shoppers away but the Trades Council wanted parks on the outskirts of the town and all waiting banned.

Much depended on whether the Holford Report, the County's views on how the town should develop, was implemented. The debate and arguments rumbled on... enlarge Lion Yard (1954), scrap Lion yard and Build on the outskirts instead (1956). 1957 saw a plethora of plans ... parking meters in February, Park Street multi-storey car park in April, under Parker's Piece in May. The Parker's Piece plan was deferred until October, the Park Street plan was deferred until the Parker's Piece plan had been discussed, the parking meters idea came up again ... and in the context of all this came the new idea. One morning in June 1958 Cambridge awoke to find that the Undergraduates had come up with their own solution.

Whilst some were saying put cars in the air, and others wanted them underground they had taken action.

Parked neatly on top of the roof of the Senate House was an Austin 7 van. It had arrived there overnight and stayed for several days, finally having to be cut into sections before it could be brought down, perhaps a high price to pay for free parking in central Cambridge!

Stories from a year 1959...

James Ratcliffe had been a dealer in earthenware back in the 1790s and had always paid up whenever he crossed Silver Street Bridge - if he was caught by the toll keeper. Sometimes however he came to Cambridge early and left late so that he got away without.

William Royston a farmer at Hardwick reported that when he'd crossed the bridge and paid the toll they had the wagon marked with chalk a different colour for each day. Sometimes they arranged the load so the collector could not see it above the side of the cart and were not charged.

Such were the dodges but Mrs Norris an old widow woman was toll-collector in 1760 knew most of the tricks as she hobbled along with her stick and the pitcher in which she put the money she took.

For as long as people could remember Cambridge Corporation had demanded a toll of 2d for every loaded wagon that came into town claiming that they needed the money to pay for the upkeep of the streets and bridges.

However others pointed out that as a result of an 1788 Act of Parliament these responsibilities had been transferred to a new body, the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners, who were authorised to levy taxes for road repairs. Why then should people pay twice and what was the money being spent on?

The Editor of the Cambridge Independent Press was sure he knew: "on scenes of riot and gluttony on feasts monthly annual and occasional on every pretext on midnight orgies for councillors".

In 1824 Messrs Beales and Company refused to pay the tolls and were taken to court. The trial involved extensive readings from ancient documents going back to Domesday Book. The hearing lasted for a day and a half by the end of which the Lord Chief Justice was "so inaudible from exhaustion" that he could scarcely be heard as he summed up the case. The

jury had no doubts in deciding the Corporation had no right to the tolls they had hitherto collected. Two more cases followed. The Corporation won the second but lost the decider.

All of that was very annoying especially as the bridge itself was in need of a total rebuild. Public subscriptions were sought towards the cost of £1,956 and the work entrusted to Charles Finch. At his foundry on the Market Hill he cast the iron span that made the new bridge which opened in 1841 virtually the twin of the Great Bridge in Magdalene Street. Sadly it failed to last as well.

An inspection in 1913 revealed the need for repair and by 1950 it was found to be unsafe. Both Queens' College and the Anchor public house were opposed to anything that involved extensive pile-driving fearing damage to their own foundations. A design by Sir Edwin Lutyens was accepted and work started in July 1958 with the erection of a temporary footbridge.

Inevitably there were complications but in March 1959 the bridge reopened to traffic. Then just when everything appeared to be finished the workmen were back digging up the surface pumps were sent for and dams sunk. Some said contractors had hit an underground river, others that the bridge was sinking, that the banks had started to subside and anyway the thud of the pumps was ruining the summer.

But by August 1959 all was settled: Cambridge had a new Silver Street bridge and traffic was again free to cross it though there was still money to be paid to council coffers should it actually want to park.

Stories from a Year – 1960 (slightly reduced)

“In the evening of Thursday the 2nd of July, the lofty wooden bridge over the Cam ... frequently called the Mathematical Bridge broke down. It had been in a decayed state for a considerable time, and boards had been put up several days previous to its falling in, to prevent persons going over. The bridge was erected in the year 1768, from a design by the late Mr James Essex, an eminent architect”

In these words the Cambridge Chronicle of 12th July 1810 records one incident in the story of the bridge at Garret Hostel Lane. The same issue contains a notice of proposals for a cast-iron bridge proposed near Queens' College in place of the 'New Bridge'. It would be adjacent to the other Essex Bridge, the wooden structure he had erected to designs by Etheridge some 20 years previously. This was later rebuilt in 1902 and is itself now known as the “Mathematical Bridge”

The collapse of Garret Hostel caused a problem for travellers, for whereas the college bridges are principally for college people, Garret Hostel was for everybody. The lane had been given to the town by King Henry VI so that its citizens might have access to the river – for he had closed many of the other lanes that used to lead to the riverside wharves when he commandeered the land needed for his new King's college.

Time after time the bridge needed repair and the bills were shared jointly between Trinity Hall and the town of Cambridge. Finally the collage had contributed their half of the expense of building Essex's 'Mathematical Bridge' on the understanding that they would be free from all future claims. So the town paid for it to be patched up. It was soon in trouble again – a wooden bridge just did not have the permanence required.

In 1835 tenders were sought for a cast-iron bridge. The contract was awarded to the Butterley Iron Company and the work undertaken by Finch's iron foundry, a local company famous for

such work. The result was a fine bridge in the Gothic style which featured on as many postcard views as some of its older college neighbours. Despite their earlier agreement Trinity Hall contributed over a quarter of the cost of £960 19s 6d with other colleges joining in.

But by 1959 the bridge was in the news again, settlement having caused the cast iron to fracture, making repairs essential but uneconomic. This time it was not the college but one of its students who picked up the bill. The Trusted Family had been associated with Trinity Hall for 50 years and Sir Harry Trusted, Q.C., decided that a tangible way of recognising the link would be to build the new bridge.

His intention was a bridge that would be an honest example of twentieth century craftsmanship, aiming to please present and future generations. The result was unveiled in October 1960. It won praise for its design, but not from cyclists – some felt the gradient was so steep that only the fittest could bike over it, another that it was an ideal training ground for mountaineers. 40 years on it still taxes the muscles of all who cross it.

Stories from a year 1961

Stories from a year by Mike Petty – 1961

Kings Parade was the most miserable street in Cambridge – wherever one looked there was anguish – so ran one old saying about the street, alluding to the names displayed above the shop fronts where Sadd, Greef, and Pain could be found.

In 1914 Mr. A. H. Sadd moved his old-established Curiosity shop around the corner into St. Edwards Passage, breaking the sequence. He then added to the misery felt by the rest of the town when he threw himself to his death by leaping from the top of Kings College chapel.

“Miserable” is not a word often applied to the Chapel itself. Usually it is praised in glowing terms – “the unparalleled ornament of all England” – and others have climbed to the roof, like Sadd. In March 1627 the Duke of Buckingham, favourite of King Charles I and Chancellor of the University, refused to take part in what was then the custom of having the shape of his foot, together with his name and arms cut in the lead of the roof. – it was, he said, too high for him. However later that year an Antiquarian visitor escorted his new bride to the same height where she left her dainty footprint – one of the smallest in England, but then she was only 13 years old!

In 1660 the Cambridge town band played music from the top of the Chapel and soldiers fired a volley of shots to mark the Restoration of King Charles II. Although Cromwell’s men had used the chapel as a drill hall the famous stained glass had been spared the widespread destruction that was ordered elsewhere by William Dowsing.

The chapel bells were also intact at the time, hanging in a wooden building to the west of the chapel which by 1728 was in such a poor condition that the bellringer, Henry West, was crushed to death when one fell on him. The building was demolished in 1739 and the bell sold for scrap 15 years later.

Some have arrived at the chapel in sedan chair – such as Andrew Snape college Provost, who suffered badly from gout and needed to be lifted into his stall. Others have arrived in dead of night. William Grimshaw and Richard Kidman got a key to the outer door in 1800, and for several nights let themselves in and steadily worked their way picking the other locks that stood between themselves and a valuable collection of college coins and medals. Grimshaw, however, became scared – “the place looked so awful, that he trembled every time as if he had the ague” and he left Kidman to it. Both were caught and transported to Australia.

In March 1961 the College announced that they had been offered the gift of a work of art of the very first rank – the painting of the Adoration of the Magi by the Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens. It had been recently purchased for a world record price of £250,000 by Major Alfred Allnatt who had been searching for an appropriate ecclesiastical building in which to display it.

In November the heavy wooden panel, measuring 12ft by 9ft, arrived in a 30ft lorry and trailer, escorted by two security guards and an Alsatian dog, concerned less about robbery than a student rag. Ten men took two hours to get the picture to the chapel doors and the 13 hundredweight masterpiece was winched on to a giant easel beside the chapel screen where it was to stay whilst they worked out quite how to display it as an altarpiece.

In April 1964 it was moved to the East end, and four years later, confirmed in its position following a major restoration. Not all agree that the Adoration and the setting complement each other. As one man wrote to the Cambridge News in December 1968; “The restored Chapel at King’s College is magnificent but I feel that if the Rubens was moved to the right, say as far as the Fitzwilliam Museum, it would look even better.

Stories from a year 1962

Funerals are sombre affairs mourners follow the hearse with reverence and sadness and the deceased despatched with due dignity

But undergraduates sent down for committing some breach of University discipline were once given a more rousing send off in a tradition known as a Mock Funeral Enid Porter recorded how the body of the student attended by a surpliced "clergyman" was usually carried from his College on a board and placed in a waiting cab. This then drove off towards the station followed by the "choir" and a crowd of "Mourners" in various strange costumes. The journey would be enlivened by strident music the singing of hymns and popular songs and the reading of "Lessons" from Gray's "Anatomy or some other textbook depending on the subject which the expelled man had been reading. At the station the "corpse would be placed in the guard's van and the "nails knocked in the coffin" by undergraduates who clambered on the roof and hammered on it with brooms.

On one occasion in 1920 the "body" escaped from the van and the huge crowd of mourners stormed the buses waiting outside the station and rode back to the centre of town followed by cars filled with shouting undergraduates. They eventually caught up with the "dead man" as he was walking back in procession to the Market Place with the "clergyman" and the "choir. Traffic in Cambridge ground to a halt as the streets became clogged, causing public annoyance.

More offence was caused in 1910 when the cortege included members of the Cambridge University Officer Training Corps in uniform and with rifles reversed. This was thought to be in bad form since it was soon after the funeral of King Edward VII. The following years saw two other Mock Funerals which prompted the University authorities to try and ban them although the practice reoccurred spasmodically. One example was in 1921 when the University were considering whether to award degrees to women. A colossal mock funeral was held for "The death of the Varsity with the corpse of the last male undergraduate being borne on a bier surrounded by aged mourners whose long grey beards dragged in the dust.

Another was in 1962 when 2 undergraduates were sent down for failing their examinations. This time their sports car was pulled through the streets and despite the stir it caused it was according to Miss Porter "a poor affair compared to the elaborate ones of the past"

Many of the old traditions have died out and the town is more peaceful for it.

One such was the "Chariot of fire" in 1920 when a hansom cab was commandeered and set alight before being driven around Market Hill. Although the cabbie was well compensated, and their companions hoped for similar treatment for their ancient vehicles others would have been concerned at the treatment of the horse pulling the blazing vehicle. The exercise was repeated in 1921 when the Chariot collided with the telephone kiosk and in 1945 when a landau was soaked in petrol set alight and paraded through the town.

It was quite usual for bonfires to be started by students ripping the wooden shutters from shops pulling up garden fences or gates to add to the blaze. In 1900 the underground toilets on the Market then under construction were raided for fuel to celebrate the relief of Ladysmith and such was the damage caused in 1905 that the University authorities paid £200 compensation to townsfolk who had had to defend their property against the undergraduate mob. Damage of a similar sum was caused in 1959 following the roughest November 5th for 20 years when a banger battle was fought in the town centre. But perhaps the worst incident was in 1948 when it was not a banger that was thrown at the Senate House but a hand grenade and it was fortunate there was no real funeral to follow that example of youthful high spirits.

Stories from a year 1963...

In July 1963 a Princess met a Viscountess that had once been the plaything of the Prince of Wales. The Viscountess was then seventy, five years old, thick skinned and still watertight, though the original spark that she used to derive from 200 storage batteries had long been extinguished. Indeed a petrol engine had been substituted some time after the Prince had become King Edward VII in 1901. The "lady" in question was named after the wife of Viscount Bury who when in Canada during the 1870s had met the American inventor, Edison and discussed the possibilities of electric vehicles. The initial experiments proved negative but the Viscount found more success with an Electric Launch Company who's largest and finest boat was named "Viscountess Bury".

For four seasons she was on charter to the Prince of Wales but then became a public passenger launch plying the Thames. In 1910 she was acquired by H.C. Banham of Cambridge and brought around the East coast and down the Ouse to the Cam. It was here in 1911 that Bill Leach fell in love with her when as a boy he paid his sixpence to take a trip down to Clayhithe, admiring the bright varnish and polished brass of what had once been described as "the largest electric launch in the world".

But the "Viscountess" was not the only boat to ply the Cam in those days. Steam tugs such as the "Nellie" and "Olga" were still to be seen and the large 70 ton steam barge "Nancy" plied regularly to Cambridge bringing timber from Kings Lynn until August 1914. In 1927 "Nancy II" took to the rivers, a diesel barge bought by Banhams from Holland she was really too large and was taken out of service after nine months.

But in addition to the business craft there were the pleasure boats.

One such was the "Idle Hour", originally a workboat at Kings Lynn, which was fitted with a steam engine by Lack of Cottenham. Soon renamed "Dove" she capsized and sank beneath a boat builder's shop in 1914. It was here that Bill Leach's brother discovered her in 1926 and between them they managed to make the wreck float and steam again. The success was short-lived, soon the boiler was useless and the hull a mere receptacle for fallen leaves in a forgotten corner of another boatyard. When his brother left to build roads in Africa the hulk became the property of the Cambridge schoolteacher. An amateur poet and playwright, an expert renovator of grandfather clocks and with an abiding love for things mechanical A.F. Leach inspired his pupils, fascinated them with tales of travel and, occasionally took them for

trips down the river. They might return covered in sooty smuts but each had his turn at stoking the furnace of the steamboat that he rebuilt and renamed "Phoenix".

For twenty years this relic of a bygone age could be seen steaming up the river, a dirty, stinking old thing" to some, a source of unmitigated delight to its owner. And if a Viscount could name a boat after his wife, then so could a teacher, and "Kathleen" became as much of a character as her Royal neighbour on the Cam. In 1952 the dream had to end, the hull was just too weak to take any more pupils on river trips. But Leach was not finished, he acquired another, rebuilt and refurbished, polished and perfected until once more he owned the largest, finest and fastest steamboat on the river Cam.

Princess Margaret was just one of thousands who has been entertained on the "Viscountess Bury" and the memory has faded, but to thousands of his pupils the fond memory of the late and lamented "Steamboat Bill" Leach will remain fresh.

Stories from a year 1964

Stories from a year by Mike Petty – 1964

In April 1964 Kings College chapel authorities watched with trepidation as the great Rubens painting of the Adoration of the Magi was repositioned as an altar-piece.

The artist had visited Cambridge and been awarded an Honorary M. A. by the University but his painting had been commissioned by the White Sisters of Louvain who were in a hurry and, tradition has it, the job was completed in just eight days. They had paid Reubens 920 florins for it in 1634, but it cost a world record price of £275,000 when purchased by Major A. E. Allnatt who gave it to the College in 1961.

At first it had been installed on scaffolding beside the screen but now it was being moved to a giant steel support specially designed for it. Great care had to be devoted to ensure that the wood on which it is painted did not flex and crack as it was lifted into place.

Any change to the great chapel was sure to create controversy and the Adoration was no exception. How much more debate and concern must have been shown when the great stained glass windows themselves were removed.

Overnight the glass disappeared, stripped from the windows by a group of students, packed in hampers and buried in pits in the gardens, pits that were quickly filled in. By daybreak the deed was done. Passers by stared in amazement and the word spread rapidly. Soon crowds gaped and gossiped surely it was the work of Cromwell and his soldiers – typical of the desecration they were wreaking in churches throughout the Kingdom in 1637.

In fact this version was fiction, invented by a Clare college man, Sabine Baring Gould, and told in "The Chorister", a tale of the Civil War which ran to several editions in the 1890's.

But fiction turned to fact in 1939 with the outbreak of war. At a time when Cambridge residents were being told to sandbag windows to prevent damage during air raids, the Kings College authorities were themselves debating the steps needed to safeguard their stained glass. Some questioned the wisdom of removing the glass – what good would the glass be if the chapel itself was destroyed?

But other councils prevailed and the glass was taken down, the windows being boarded up for the duration of the war. The light and colourful interior became dark and sombre to match the mood of the time.

With peace came restoration. In April 1951 King George VI paid what was to be his last visit to Cambridge to join in the Thanksgiving Service for the completion of the task of replacing the glass.

Cambridge had escaped serious damage during that War as it had in the First. Then its citizens had flocked in to the colours after hearing of the destruction wreaked on the Belgian University town of Louvain – the original home of the “Adoration” that now graces Kings College Chapel.

Stories from a year: 1965

Things that went bump in the night troubled the light sleepers of Cambridge in the middle of the "Swinging Sixties". Some of the strange sounds could be traced to the Regal Cinema where the Rolling Stones rocked and P.J. Proby shocked his act was "too smutty" and was banned. At Cherry Hinton the blame could be laid at the door of the Irish the Clancey Brothers topping the bill at the first Cambridge Folk Festival. Mill Road was learning to live with the rattle and clatter of a new phenomenon Ten P in Bowling but some of the worlds greatest brains startled at an unearthly noise right outside their bedroom windows.

Searchlights were brought in to scan the sky in just the same way that in Reach during the Great War one old lady took her candle to investigate the ghastly, ghostly shape said to hover just above the trees.

Elsewhere through the centuries others have run towards or away from such strange sights, some glimpsed flying horsemen amongst the clouds, others saw creatures descend from them to the ground beneath ...

Near Soham in 1785 an old man and a boy had witnessed an apparition that descended from the heavens into the field in which they were working. The lad had fled, his companion had stood his ground too scared to move; then seeing the shape appearing motionless he approached it "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, what are you, speak and tell me" ...

History shows that such appearances often heralded momentous occasions Coronations or celebrations yet in 1965 there was little of moment the appointment of RAB Butler to Trinity, the opening of New Hall, the proposed merger between Cambridge's two football clubs. Nor could the monumental decision to abolish the need for undergraduate gowns after dark account for an incident of such magnitude.

They were troubled times. "Peace in Vietnam" banners on the pinnacles of Kings College Chapel showed concern for the International situation, and Cambridge was all too aware of the impact of attack from the air the scrapnell wounds still visible in the Bridge Street walls of Whewell's Court combined with memories of the bombing of the Union Society just twenty odd years before. The Kaiser had promised no zeppelin attacks on Cambridge such as the one that had brought Reach villagers to panic yet still one had been photographed over the town. As daylight broke on 27th October 1965 hard headed academics witnessed a fairytale come true. But instead of a beanstalk tempting Jack to climb into the clouds there was a steel cable and far above a wartime barrage balloon was hovering. It had broken away from R.A.F. Cardington carrying its weather instruments with it and dragged its wire rope thirty miles across country before becoming hooked on scaffolding at St Johns College. Nearly two hundred years earlier other students had launched balloons from Emmanuel and Queens' but in 1965 Magdalene College was evacuated whilst this one was winched to the ground. The Soham labourer had advanced and poked his collapsed balloon but now firemen carefully avoided protrusions that might pierce the hydrogen filled canopy and cause an explosion. It all passed peacefully but one speculates on the nineteen sixties headlines had

the balloon as it descended been found to be carrying Mr Green and his aeronautical pony a regular eighteen attraction|

Stories from a year 1966

In the mid 1960s the "in-place" for the young set was a dimly lit beat club in Falcon Yard off Petty Cury. The Alley was cheap membership just 5/-(25p), the music groovy and the company good. In February 1966 however there were unexpected and uninvited guests when Cambridge police descended on force. As dogs guarded the entrance the dancers were searched nothing was found in their pockets but on the floor were pieces of Indian hemp cannabis.

The drug menace had also spread to University students and two Peterhouse men were each fined £50 for smoking hashish; estimates suggested that about 500 local youths were experimenting with drugs with reports that chemistry graduates were actually manufacturing LSD in Cambridge. Police set up a drugs squad amidst claims that the city was the drug distribution centre for the Eastern Region

Similar reports had been current over a century before when fenland folk were recognised as being largely dependent on opium.

In many local towns and villages it took the place of drink. The Privy Council was told in 1864 that one housewife in Lincolnshire was known to have spent £100 on the drug, and that many men never drank beer without dropping a piece of opium into it whilst brewers added narcotics to their brew, to the great surprise of any visiting drinkers.

It was thought the drug was needed to combat the rheumatic pain or "ague" that locals were prone to whilst others claimed it relieved the depression during the hard times.

Much of the farm work was undertaken by labour gangs of women and children who worked long hours in the fields and needed to leave their babies unattended for periods. It was found that a little poppy head tea was efficient at keeping the infants docile: "The young 'uns all lay about the floor like dead 'uns, and there's no bother with 'em. When they cry we give 'em a little of it - p'raps half a spoonful, and that quiets them, sometimes when they're hungry, and the victuals isn't ready for 'em, we give 'em a drop too".

It also led to an extremely high infant mortality rate. Opium was openly sold throughout the area and Charles Kingsley in his novel *Alton Lock* has a parson being told "yow goo into druggist's shop o'market-day, into Cambridge, and you'll see the little boxes, dozens and doozens, a'ready on the counter; and neve a venman's wife goo by, but what calls in for hapennard o'elevation, to last her out the week...well it keeps women-folk quiet, it do; and its mortal good agin ago pains"^^

The women were thought to be the major consumers with their dependence perhaps originating from "tasting" the opiates they gave to their children and preferred to spend money on drugs rather than doctors' bills.

A reporter in 1850 found one woman in Ely, suffering from a broken hip; she had been bedridden for six years. "The exhilarating effects of her last dose had passed off, and had given place to that wretched lowness of spirit in which the life of an opium-taker alternates. As the repulsive-looking hag sat upright in her filthy bed by the chimney corner, her uncouth and cadaverous features streaked by the various courses her tears had taken in her intervals of despondency. With her tangled grey hair hanging over her shoulders, her shrunken neck, and withered arms which were exposed to view as she rolled up another pill of the filthy-looking

drug, and raised it trembling to her discoloured lips, presented a spectacle more loathsome than imagination could conceive".^_

Might the same description apply today of the trendy young things of the dingy 60's discos who so fondly believed they were into something new.

Stories from a year by Mike Petty – 1967

The 1960's were a great period of undergraduate activity in Cambridge. There seemed to be a different sort of students – tailors had noticed a drop in their trade – 80% were now on grants and the fashion was for informal clothes with a trend to jeans & duffle-coats, sloppy-joes & 17" trouser bottoms. Nor did they hold with old tradition of wearing gowns after dark. A campaign of civil disobedience was staged with 150 students marching disrobed through the town and queuing to give their names to the University proctors.

Freedom to of dress was one thing, of expression something else. The Undergraduate magazine *Granta*, was censored after its editor, David Frost, included a poem entitled "Highwayman 474" which used a 4-letter word. There were bans too on Market Hill – at least on bonfire night 1960 when 200 police patrolled to prevent a repetition of the £200 worth of damage caused the previous year. The exercise was successful, the ban stayed. But explosions in 1962 brought a storm of protest, one Civil Defence worker pulling on his uniform before realising that it was only fireworks set off at a May Ball – the traditional celebration when "Popsey expresses" pulled into the station and the city filled with young girls anxious to sample the good life.

But college life was not all fun and in 1962 the Cambridge Samaritans branch started after 6th student suicide in year and a mock funeral took to the streets as two young men were sent down for failing their examinations.

The decade was one of innovation – the first organised rag procession of floats, the King Street run accomplished in a record 28 minutes, and in 1965 Queens College scrapped its strict male-female segregation rule making way for a new foundation that would take both sexes – a decision welcomed by the Union Society which had now opened its doors to women and in 1967 elected its first woman president, Anne Malleliu.

It was time of political awareness; a "Peace in Vietnam" banner fluttered from the pinnacles of Kings College chapel and visits by the US Ambassador, Harold Wilson and Dennis Healey all provoked protests leading the Police Federation to call for curbs on student political demos. University authorities brought in new restrictions but Police needed to mount the biggest security exercise then organised when Reginald Maudlin came to Cambridge to explain the reasons which had prompted him to deny permission for wounded German activist "Red" Rudi Dutschke taking up a place at Clare college. The newly formed Cambridge Students Union took up the case and mounted its first ever national march in London.

Student power was recognised by the University authorities setting up a consultative committee of undergraduates, graduates and senior members too but with sit-ins supporting LSE protesting students and gowns being burned on the Senate House lawns it was no wonder Cambridge attracted international press attention in 1969. Or rather one undergraduate did – a certain young man whose arrival at Trinity College could not go unnoticed but whose subsequent presence in the City passed largely unreported as he quietly pursued his studies despite the distractions of National and local life – such as the 1970 "Garden House riot" when police invoked the Riot Act against protests against holidays in Greece. But there were headlines too when that special student took part in a play, made his maiden speech in the

Union Society and crowning a May Week Queen, as he himself had been earlier crowned at Carnarvon.

Stories from a year 1968 by Mike Petty
CWN 9 Aug 1990

It might have world-wide implications but consider the environment Cambridge was no place for it. News of a dream machine that would whisk people at 300 mph bring Edinburgh a mere one hour away from London and high speed rail link with London's third airport excited many but appalled some. "A monster of steel and concrete will now drive an ugly path along the haunts of snipe and redshank.

The wild ducks dropping in on whickering wing will be frightened off by a three hundred mile an hour monster humming through the winter twilight" wrote naturalist John Humphreys.

The engineers argued that the site they needed, 20 miles without a bend, could only be found between the two Bedford rivers running north from Earith and the River authority raised no objections. Others thought back to the problems which had faced the early railway pioneers as they laid their metal track across the unstable fenland, sometimes needing to drive piles to combat the shrinking peat, and at Lt Thetford was shrinking at an inch a year whilst that under the embankment at Prickwillow had dropped over six feet since it was constructed in 1845. Their doubts were reinforced when one of the large concrete beams that were being installed to provide the elevated track for the new hovertrain collapsed in August 1970. But by then some of the problems had been ironed out.

Notable amongst these had been where the headquarters for the new Company was to be based. Milton, Bar Hill, Chatteris and Ely had been prime candidates as far as the "engine drivers of March and strawberry growers of Wisbech" were concerned, but what could such county councillors know of the needs of Cambridge.

Tracked Hovercraft Ltd wanted to be in the city to be near the specialists of the University Physical Department but County officials were adamant that this would infringe their strict controls on industry within the city.

By March 1968 there was a state of war between the two authorities with attacks on the "pernicious stranglehold" that was preventing Cambridge from developing as a regional centre. But then a little local knowledge ensured success as the Company abandoned their original plans and instead set up next door on land in Ditton Walk that already had permission for industrial use.

Now the County Council had been beaten there were just the French to compete with. Their project might be further advanced but ours was better. Nor would the noise from the test bed in the fens disturb grazing cattle, nor the vibration interfere with isolated cottages or disrupt fishing. This British "Concorde of terra firma" would be racing away from its rivals with advanced linear motors that would whisk the Hovertrain high above the boggy fen. The weather had other ideas as the first public launch had to be cancelled due to fen fog but by December 1971a

Staggering 12 mph had been obtained. By August 1972 they were up to 72 mph, and had permission to build more track.

The Japanese were interested and the British Government reconsidering the venture as funds ran down. January 1973 saw speeds in excess of 106 mph and local MPs urging for a speedy decision on the project's future. Next month came the news, it was to be scrapped with parts sold off to other companies, a decision that brought uproar in the House and complaints of short-sightedness, pessimism, lack of initiative and incompetence.

A Select Committee was scathingly critical of the decision to abandon the project, the one major centre in the country of a new technology. They also attacked the way that the workers had been bundled out of their Ditton Walk offices within 36 hours of the announcement of the cancellation.

But not all were upset as the Earith site was finally dismantled and the fens went back to their isolated peace.

Stories from a year 1969

Rag Day is now regarded as a traditional part of Cambridge life, a day on which anything may happen.

"Rags" defined as a "noisy disorderly scene" have been part of University life for many years but usually involved pitched battles with police, destruction and general hooliganism.

For example in 1904 undergraduates surged through the streets and attempted to start a bonfire on Market Hill. A contingent of mounted police charged the crowd which fled down Petty Cury where a confectioner's shop window was broken and various sweets looted. From there the mob spread towards Parker's Piece where they ripped up railings from three houses and started a fire. Anything that would burn was seized including a watchman's shelter which was smashed with pickaxes and added to the blaze.

Once again police tried to disperse them, succeeded in making an arrest and conveyed the prisoner to the police station despite determined efforts to free him. Once safely inside the crowd attempted a rescue, hurling missiles at policemen guarding the entrance. Meanwhile another fire was started on New Square and the bandstand on Christ's Pieces had to be defended to prevent it being added to the flames. Another police charge was needed before the mob was cleared and the blaze on Parkers Piece finally extinguished by the Fire Brigade amidst the jeers and sneers of onlookers.

It was horseplay of this sort and the fear of further disturbance so near Bonfire Night that prompted the town authorities to refuse the British Legion permission to organise Poppy Day collections for a number of years. But then they took the bold step of allowing the University to participate and on the 10th November 1922 the first Poppy Day rag was held. A procession of "animals" toured the town with a police escort and was hailed as one of the happiest Rags ever seen. It started a tradition that continued until recent times and raised thousands of pounds for the Earl Haig appeal.

The first organised procession of floats was held in 1963 but shortly afterwards everything seemed to fall apart. Many colleges began to boycott the Rag, wanting the money collected to go to other groups as well as the Legion appeal. Following great debate and public concern other charities were added to the list but people became less tolerant of flour bombs, rotten tomatoes, water pistols and eggs and in 1967 the "Poppy Day" rag was held for the last time, its demise marked with fighting between students and local youths.

When revived in February 1969 the event flopped many people did not even know it was on subsequent years attracted little more support and by 1974 enthusiasm was reported at an all time low. Jubilee Year 1977 saw a revival in its fortunes and in 1980 the organisation was

taken over by the Cambridge Students Union who succeeded in uniting town and gown and making the Rag a unifying rather than divisive feature of Cambridge life.

Mike Petty Stories from a year 1970

It was March 1836 when Cambridge first saw a police force established under the Municipal Corporations Act. The initial provision was for a total of 31 policemen who operated from The Mews in Millers Lane (now Emmanuel Street). After 16 years they moved to part of Hobson's Workhouse in St Andrews Street, premises which had provided shelter and employment for those in need but was also used as a house of correction for unruly and stubborn rogues.

The accommodation seems to have been more secure than that in the adjacent Spinning House, which University authorities used to imprison the numerous prostitutes who were attracted to a town full of young gentlemen undergraduates. There was uproar when one of the girls escaped through a window and went home to Dullingham. The Vice Chancellor ordered the police to rearrest her as a gaol breaker and at the trial at the Assize she was duly found guilty but such was the publicity attending the case that the Home Secretary intervened and ordered her release. More bad publicity followed and in 1894 the Vice Chancellor's power to send women to the Spinning House was abolished.

The old buildings were demolished and in October 1901 a large new police station was officially opened. Its Renaissance style front, groined ceilings and mosaic floors won it warm architectural praise and the modern speaking tubes and basement room for drying clothes and making coffee placed it in the forefront of police development nationally. James Sutton and Charles Smith were best able to testify to some of the other facilities for they were the first to sample the cells, one for stealing walnuts, the other for drunkenness.

Meanwhile on Castle Hill another police station had been opened in October 1879 to provide a base for the County Force, established in 1851 after much debate. The two forces worked side by side. Another small station was opened at Mitcham's Corner where it stood until 1930 when it was replaced by a police box.

As the service developed it assumed extra duties; from 1921 the Police not only fought crime but fires as well, replacing the Volunteer Fire Brigades, until the establishment of the Auxiliary Fire Service in 1938. All this put pressure on available space and the Council sought new accommodation. By 1940 they had identified a site on Parkside for a new Police and Fire station but numerous complications arose. Eventually the fire station – by then a County Council responsibility – was officially opened in 1965.

In that year the City and County police forces amalgamated with others – a development that had been anticipated by the appointment of a single Chief Constable for both forces in 1963 – and so it was that Frederick Drayton Porter was in charge when Parkside Police Station opened in October 1970 as the first major building undertaken by "Mid Anglia Constabulary". That force was itself restructured and renamed "Cambridgeshire Constabulary" in 1974.

The new building cost over £145,000 and included provision for Traffic Wardens, a garage block and parking as well as space for storing a large number of bicycles – an ever-present problem as the newspaper of 1910 recorded. "Cambridge", it said, "is an irresistible attraction for professional thieves down from London". It was commenting on the arrest of a gang caught loading bikes on to a train at the station – just one of the successes of the Cambridge bobby over the years.

Stories from a year 1971

“Clamp-down on tourist parties as pedestrians jams hit colleges”, read the headlines of July 1971. They might be echoed in virtually any other year, and have been repeated only weeks ago.

Cambridge has always been a centre of attraction, Kings and Queens, Emperors and Shahs have all made the journey and all experienced the difficulty of travel. Today the roads are congested, in days gone by they were rutted and the trip from London was something to be dreaded. In 1700 Edmund Ward set off from Bishopsgate in one of those romantic images of olden days -the stage coach. But Edmund found it "a dirty lumbering wooden hovel" and did not appreciate being crammed inside with his traveling companions, one of which was a young baby being violently ill at both ends!

With the coming of the railways in 1845 travel became much easier and by 1853 a guidebook commented that although some visitors still arrived by the "semi-barbarous" stagecoaches the much larger contingent now arrived by train. Such excursionists found themselves deposited on the outskirts of the town, forced out by University opposition which defeated numerous proposals for more central stations. Indeed the visitor who arrived on a Sunday might not find himself in Cambridge at all, since at first no trains were allowed to stop at the station on the Sabbath for fear that hordes of visitors would profane that Holy day for those who lived and worked in the University.

By 1912 there was pressure from railwaymen to advertise Cambridge like a seaside town to encourage visitors during the Long Vacation when the town -and its shops - traditionally closed down. Yet whilst some campaigned for more visitors, others condemned their too casual dress, especially in such areas as the Backs where there were complaints in 1937 of "nudity".

The American visitor was traditionally the butt of much humour. In 1910 one disgruntled commentator found them "so mean that it is absolutely unprofitable to have anything to do with them". Many came to know the area through their war service and when in 1950 US Travel Agency heads visited Cambridge they saw "vast potentiality".

Some of that potential was realised in 1951 when the Festival of Britain saw the establishment of an Information Bureau as part of the central Library. That year two undergraduates started to organise University tours three times a day attracting 100 people a week whilst many others showed themselves round using the little guide by Ruth Mellanby which had been published the previous year.

By 1964 it was felt that more tourists would be welcomed by traders and the residents would benefit from more entertainment during the quiet summer months; but those who did come complained that it was spoilt by parking difficulties!

As Cambridge has boomed as a tourist centre so the principal colleges experience more and more pressure, especially during the examination period, and have closed their gates to control the constant flow of visitors. Yet in the hard commercial world they have also promoted the use of their buildings for Conferences, rented rooms to the Language Schools that have multiplied in recent years and started charging admission.

In 1971 I organised a display in the Guildhall devoted to the historical development of Tourism. In opening it, the Mayor said "It is not the policy of the City Council to attract more visitors to Cambridge". He said so whilst standing in front of a photographic display just commissioned by the City Council to do precisely that!

Stories from a year –1972

The solution to the eternal parking problem did not survive the removal of the Austin 7 van in 1958. But the concept of cars above houses was that year approved not in Senate House Hill but in the prophetically named Park Street. Elsewhere homes in Doric and Gothic streets were demolished to make space for more motors and multi-storeys were proposed for Donkeys Common and King Street.

Others wanted parking meters, park and ride and underground car parks on Parker's Piece and Lion Yard.

Thus was the stage set and throughout the 1960's most of the alternative ideas were recycled.

Some action came in 1963 with the opening of Cambridge's first multi-storey, dwarfing Cambridge's last thatched cottage near Park Street but a proposed underground loop road from Emmanuel Road to Jesus Lane was quickly buried and Parker's Piece again rejected.

Then in 1964 came the first parking meters. The charges of 1/-(5p) an hour would "produce a profit of £10,000 a year and they would pay for themselves within three" (in fact by 1972 they had earned £101,000 and cost £145,000 in administration). Their immediate impact was to clear the streets, with long queues for car parks which were already full; traffic conditions were described as frightful and some traders reported a 78% dip in their takings.

Double yellow lines began to appear in March 1965, plans were drawn and debated and somebody suggested Parker's Piece again. Shoppers switched to the Fitzroy Street area where parking was easier and where the talk of redevelopment seemed as unlikely as anything actually happening in Lion Yard. Yet in the centre things were changing though not for the better. In 1969 parking meter charges were doubled and one of the long established parking spots was closed as cars were banned from Market Hill. That Christmas the chaos was such that police had to invoke emergency powers in an attempt to clear streets clogged solid by jammed cars.

Worse was to follow next year when another central parking area became home for builders' vans rather than shoppers' cars. At long last work had started on the Lion Yard scheme after over 20 years of debate and despite a last minute hitch when University dons objected to the proposed design.

Envisaged in the Holford Report of the 1950s at a cost of £160,000, it would now come to over £700,000. And while Holford had wanted 400 cars it would now take 550. Completion was only two years away and in the meantime the Queen Anne Terrace car park and Elizabeth Bridge were due in 1971 and there was talk of pedestrianisation, a Western Relief Road, a Northern bypass and even 100 more meters

Lion yard car park finally opened in July 1972. It was designed for shoppers, its prices pitched to discourage those who wanted to park their cars longer. Thus whilst parking for the first hour was 5p, with 15p for two, 25p for three and a horrendous 35p for four it would surely be only the richest motorist who would stump up the monumental sum of 75p for a whole days parking!

Stories from a year, 1973 – TO FIND

Stories from a year , 1974

Cleaners, cooks and caretakers shook hands with royalty in December 1974 when the Duchess of Kent formally opened the new YMCA building in Gonville Place, erected at a

cost of over £400,000 to replace the old building swept away for the Lion Yard redevelopment.

That building was not the first meeting place for the Cambridge branch of the Young Men's Christian Association which had come into being in February 1851, just 7 years after the movement's foundation in London. It existed to cultivate the mental talents of the young men of the town and to give it a religious direction. Thus they sought to provide a library of religious books, a Reading Room with religious periodicals, rooms for classes and social religious meetings as well as lectures on all subjects. But to do this it needed space.

The first rooms in Rose Crescent were too dark and hard to get to, the second in Sidney Street were defective in heating and ventilation, little better than the third home, Hobson Place where the landlord wanted to increase the agreed £30 rent. As they were by then £15 in debt things looked bleak indeed.

But the Association had a Committee which included some of the most notable of Cambridge businessmen and by 1866 when they moved yet again, this time to St Edward's Passage, such was the numbers attending lectures and using the library that much larger premises were needed.

At this time there came onto the market a site in Alexandra Street which was in the centre of town beside the Post Office next the central telegraph station surrounded by roads yet away from the noise of traffic. When other businessmen agreed to act as trustees the future was assured.

When the committee, including Mr Foster the banker Mr Bowes the bookseller, Mr Sayle the shopkeeper, Mr Munsey the Jeweller, planned a building they looked for the best architect of the time, Alfred Waterhouse.

The foundation stone was laid by William Fowler, MP in 1870 and it opened 11 months later, at a cost of £5,000. It included a lecture room that would hold 400 people which became known as the Alexandra Hall, playing an important part in the social life of the town.

It was here that in 1908 a Blackpool company first demonstrated "Animated Pictures" and it was soon in regular use, though only for films of a high moral tone. In 1910 it became one of the first three Cambridge buildings licensed under the Cinematograph Act and was the scene of regular shows.

But by February 1914 the rent was six weeks in arrears and the Committee gave them one week's notice to quit. Two new applicants asked to continue its use for the same purpose, but it was not to be. In December that year the Welsh Division marched into Cambridge and the YMCA was the one place ready to receive such invaders. For the next five years the Alexandra Hall was devoted to meeting the needs of the troops, with recreation rooms, canteen and concerts.

The process was repeated in 1939 but the work extended to the civilians evacuated to Cambridge to escape the London bombing. Nor were the troops manning the lonely searchlight and anti-aircraft stations overlooked with a Tea Car soon employed. Mobile canteens were at the Railway Station to welcome the troops returning from Dunkirk beaches and soon even the Alexandra street premises were full, men overflowing on to the pavement outside and the Tea Car supplementing the canteen. Later American troops and Italian prisoners of war came to know and appreciate the facilities.

Post-war the YMCA developed its community role once more until the needs of big business became paramount and the site was needed for redevelopment. Hence the new building

with its community rooms and study, bedrooms mainly let to non University students and business trainees that received its Royal opening in 1974

Stories from a year 1975

Beer drinkers mourned the demolition of the "Bun Shop" on St. Andrews Hill in 1975 but beyond the rebuilding of the Lion Yard area a "Red Cow" was reborn.

Bitter comments have been exchanged over pints about the loss of a favourite drinking haunt. Three of the most famous central public houses were the "Wrestlers Inn", Petty Cury which was demolished 1888, to be followed by the "Falcon Inn" nearby & in 1910 by the "Hoop Hotel", Bridge Street. This latter had been acquired by one Charles Dixon just so he could do away with the licence since he felt it was 'blasting & blighting lives of young men that went to it'.

This was part of a great period of Temperance activity occasioned by proposed changes in the Licensing regulations & in 1911 considerable number of public houses closed. Not content, with this the Cambridge Licencing Reform committee petitioned for closure of more in certain areas of town. Several pubs closed following the Great War. They included the "True Blue" in 1919 & in 1924 the Black Swan" in Guildhall Street was converted to Fisher House.

The 1930's saw the closure of the "Grapes Inn" in Castle Street, the famous "Three Tuns" where it was rumoured Dick Turpin had lodged, the "Bell" in Peas Hill - demolished for the rebuilding of the Guildhall - and "one of the best known hostelries amongst older generations of country folk", the "Carriers Arms" in St Tibbs Row.

But the decade also saw new pubs such as the "Milton Arms" and the "British Queen" on Histon Road opened to cater for the expanding town. In 1959 the "Weathervane" became the first new pub to be built & opened since the War, it was quickly followed by others on the new Arbury estate, "Carlton Arms" & "Snow Cat". The 1960s saw the opening of the "Racehorse", "Queen Edith" & "Plough and Harrow" for more new areas.

In the old areas rebuilding found the "Free Press" standing alone in an area of demolition, one of 239 licenced houses to be found in 1962 whilst the "Man on the Moon", Norfolk St opened, replacing a pub demolished on East Rd.

Losses included "Angel", Market Hill (1962), "Pelican", East Rd (1967), "Criterion", Market Passage (1968) to be followed shortly by the "House of Commons", "Wheatsheaf", Castle Hill & the "Rhadegund", King St. whilst protestors were by now fighting to keep the "Milton Arms" open.

The licenced trade were worried by the decision in 1967 to grant a licence to supermarkets to sell drinks and by the 1978 decision to grant Christ's college a full beer licence for its college bar; previously they had operated under Vice Chancellor's wine licence which felt not to cover beer or spirits. They also felt that wine bars would make city pubs redundant. Yet others mourned the passing of Millers Wine parlour on Kings Parade in 1972 though it reopened as "Shades" in 1974.

Closures continued in the 1970s including the "Britannia", "Old English Gentleman", "Brewers Arms" & "King William IV" on Newmarket Rd but the 'Real Ale' movement became active, organising Beer Festivals and in 1976 reopening the "Salisbury Arms" which had closed three years previously.

More recently the "British Queen" briefly became "Bumpers" - a "fun pub" and the "Racehorse" changed to "Hoofers" with flashing lights and loud music. But nobody will

reopen the "Bun Shop"; it remains just a fond memory for many older drinkers and an odd name for the rest.

Stories from a year 1976

Waiting for water was the memory during the 11 month drought of 1976

Hobson's Brook dried up for possibly the first time and in various parts of the country the water tap did little but gurgle and gasp as supplies ran out.

The hardship was temporary but gave an insight into life just a few years ago for in 1945 an official county council report showed that less than half of the rural homes had piped water, the others had to work for every drop of water at the pump. Often this meant a considerable walk, one in five households were over 100 yards away from a pump, and on arrival there might be a queue.

On the other hand the luxury of a pump opposite your front door could also be a handicap as from six o'clock in the morning onwards there was an almost incessant squeaking and rattling as people waited for water. Sometimes the man of the house on his way to work would fill the family water cart and leave it covered for the children to fetch later. Others who could not afford such a luxury would waddle home carrying the heavy pails swinging from the hooks at the ends of chains from broad wooden yokes.

People had their own theories about pumping; some pushed the handle down to its lowest point and leant on it, forcing the water out by a series of short downwards thrusts. Others let it rise to the highest point and then jerked it down to nose level, both hands clasping over the handle.

Whichever way it was a puffing business after a few minutes. It took fourteen full strokes to fill an average size bucket at Lt Eversden, recorded E.M. Barraud, who could judge it to the half inch even in complete darkness. Not that she went to the pump after dark, except in an emergency only amateurs or natives afflicted with town visitors given to endless ablutions went to the pump at night

Cambridge itself had enjoyed the luxury of piped water since the monks laid a pipe in 1325 from the Madingley Road, whilst the Conduit named after Hobson the carrier had begun in 1610. The Victorians had passed an Act of Parliament in 1853 which authorised the establishment of works to supply the inhabitants of the University and Borough of Cambridge with water. Additional supplies were obtained from a pumping station at Fulbourn which opened in 1891 but in 1907 these were found to be contaminated with sewage from the Asylum.

Country folk well knew the difficulties of pure water; in 1889 a newspaper editorial reported one village's water as "covered with a green slimy substance and full of living creatures; to add to its high flavour most of the liquids from the adjoining farmyard closets and pig sties are drained into it".

That year residents of Fen Ditton spent £105.14.7 sinking a new well following several outbreaks of fever. In 1910 the County Medical Officer of Health surveyed the public water supply in several of his villages; Croxton well was polluted and was not worth spending money on, five wells at Willingham were also contaminated but there was no better supply

available. In the Swavesey area there had been frequent blockages in the public supply and the County were negotiating with the East Hunts Water Company who had installed large pumps at Bourn in 1892.

Drought in 1859 had dried up virtually all the wells at Linton the greatest scarcity the old men could ever remember whilst in 1921 as temperatures rose to 136 degrees the Littleport water supply gave out and lorries had to be brought in from Ely, men women and children queuing for water at a half penny a bucket.

In view of all that the problems of 1976 and 1983 when water workers strikes once more brought stand pipes into the streets were of little concern. Miss Barraud felt in 1945 that pumping was a sociable business; in just half an hour you could see almost everybody, hear all the news and more than all the scandal, sentiments not echoed by those who learned the hard way that water from the tap can be a luxury.

Stories from a year 1977...

June 1977 was Jubilee month; Cambridgeshire went red, white & blue with people reported as dressing, decorating, drinking, planting, buying selling and even eating anything that stays still long enough to have a Union Jack printed on it. Everything that is except the official Cambridge Jubilee Year souvenir books, even at half price some thousand copies were left. Nor did everybody join in the spirit of Jubilee as the original bill of £500 for street decorations soared to £988 because of the cost of replacing vandalised bunting.

The planning for it all had of course taken some months; Stapleford was not alone in starting its deliberations in October the year before. They like many others were having to contemplate just what sort of events ought to be organised and, again like many others, decided to include Jubilee sports, decorated vehicles and a Street party for the youngsters, with other celebrations for the not so young, who could actually remember the Coronation in 1953 and even the previous Silver Jubilee way back in 1935.

Cambridge itself sought inspiration from even further back, basing its programme of sports on Midsummer Common on the rustic sports that were themselves revived for Queen Victoria's coronation. Supermarket Trolley races had been omitted from that earlier celebration but were included now along with more traditional fireworks, bands and parades

"J" stood, it was said for "Jollity, Joy and Jubilation". Almost inevitably it also stood for "Juveniles", the children's day, to be remembered in years to come as "the day I went to the street party and the sandwiches got soggy and the crisps got soggy"; in fact "all the food was soggy so we did not eat it". The inside story of the Cambridge Jubilee was published by children from Kings Hedges School in the July 1977 issue of their magazine "Rooftops".^ _

Some of the pupils watched the Queen on the telly; there in the golden chariot was the lady "nobody hates, because she is nice to everyone and everything ... she even cares for the insects which is very nice of her".

But there were other things to do besides watching telly. Street parties had been arranged, at Crathern Way 300 people came, but the weather was unkind. "It was raining and we had some nice food and first of all we went to the Magic Man and then we had the food. It was still raining so we went to the community centre to have our food. All of the food was soggy so we did not eat it". But others had no such scruples "I had two jam tarts and four slices of bread and we had two cakes."^ _

Then there was the Carnival: "it was quite fun and was very exciting". "I was a bear in the carnival. I did a dance; it was scary", "and then the dragon came, scaly back, fiery mouth, then the St George came to the rescue, throwing spears and thrusting swords, then the dragon goes and in comes Robin Hood playing games with his Merry men in the woods". "My mask had a nose like a pig. My brother thought I was a pig when I went by him. When I came home I had a meringue cake with a cherry and a cup of tea". "I was a prince on a float. The floats were lorries decorated with flowers and flags... on the float it was very cold. Every time we went round a corner we nearly fell off". I did not like it one bit because it was freezing cold"

But not all children could play all day: "I got up and I did the washing up, the wiping up and putting away. Then I did the dusting, swept the carpet, then I had a wash. After that I had my breakfast". "I took a Jubilee cake up to an old lady for her tea and I pushed an old lady in the procession and we all got a flag and a red, white and blue lolly"

Food and fun meant thirst. For most it was a glass of orange squash, for others "a drink of coke and a drink of punch and I did not get drunk". But for at least one eleven year old "my mum got us some cider to drink and some cakes as well. I got drunk and I was sick so I went to bed. Next day I was a little bit better and I really enjoyed it".

And so did thousands of others throughout the county and throughout the country in celebration of a Jubilee like no other, and yet like all others.

Stories from a year, 1978
CWN 19.12.89

It was near Christmas 1978 that a remarkable cross section of the Cambridge community gathered in the church of St Mary the Less for a funeral service for a well-known Cambridge personality.

There was a former Dean of Jesus College, a police superintendent, booksellers, shopkeepers, a solicitor, market traders, college staff. They heard an address from the Rev James Owen and they sang hymns. Then they exchanged reminiscences about the man whose service they were attending, paid tribute to his memory and went away.

A regular occurrence in a town like Cambridge perhaps. A distinguished academic, or leading businessman had died it might be thought. But that service was not for this sort of personality, but for a man of no fixed address, who had some 113 convictions, mainly on drinking charges, and who was known to the congregation of 50 as the shabby old man with a beard who sat and drank in the city centre.

Some friends of Trevor Hughes, who'd died at the age of 66 after a heart attack, had not wished to see his death go unmarked and unnoticed by a community which had come to notice him, and some even to love him, in all his years in Cambridge. He was, said some, a personality in an age of conformity. He was, said others, an awkward and difficult old drunkard who cursed and swore at those who passed by as he half, lay propped up against the base of the old fountain in the Market Hill.

He was one of the large community who traditionally made their way to the University town as they tramped the country. In the 1800s a network of Casual Ward was set up between 14 and 20 miles apart where the tramps were given supper and a bed and then worked for 2 hours before leaving to continue their journey. At Cambridge it was reported in 1909 that sometimes all provision for tramps at the workhouse was full and in 1927 with vagrancy soaring after the Great War 117 had been accommodated one night in premises suitable for 60 in the Mill Road workhouse. Two years later a new Casual ward was built at Union Lane Chesterton the

most up-to-date in the country. It had spring mattresses and showers hot and cold water and an expensive electric fumigator holding 80 blankets at a time. The new facility proved popular and numbers increased to 80 a day; extensions had to be added in order to cope. But after a decade it was accepted that the casuals were merely using the wards as a hotel. Numbers had doubled and many strong and healthy men refused the work that was readily available at the time and the Government closed down the wards. With the closure of the workhouse the problem of the homeless did not go away. The Salvation Army White Ribbon Hostel and the Church Army dormitories in Willow Walk were supplemented in 1968 when the Simon Community opened a former pub in East Road as a shelter for misfit dossers and alcoholics where they could live without being institutionalised. But they soon found that the policy of mixing drinkers and non-drinkers was not working and that public hostility was growing. Today in Lion Yard shoppers loaded with Christmas spirits are accosted as they make their way back to their cars whilst young carol singers collecting money for charity see first hand some of the problems they are attempting to alleviate.

Meanwhile the old Mill Road workhouse - where Christmas day had always been made one for its inmates to remember is now starting its new role as a caring home for the elderly sheltered between its walls from the cold of an outdoor night and the discomfort of a Market Hill

Stories from a year by Mike Petty 1979

February was the traditional month for student eccentricity to be given free rein. Thus when Saturday shoppers on the first day of Rag Week saw the damp grass of Parker's Piece covered with prayer mats, heard kneeling students reciting from the Koran as they faced towards Mecca, and watched their procession through the streets they well might wonder whether this was just another money raising stunt.

But this was for real a political demonstration by Iranian students calling for a blessing on the efforts of the Ayatollah Khomeini to overthrow what they described as an "unjust, irresponsible, inhuman and cruel regime" of the Shah of Persia.

It had been 11.30 on the 28th June 1873 when news of the Shah of Persia's imminent arrival was received at Cambridge Guildhall.

Immediately the civic machine swung into action. The town council was hastily convened and the Bull Hotel told to lay on suitable refreshments. Soup and meat, fish and fowl, heaps of patisserie, geles and crèmes, soufflés and cakes were quickly produced.

Horses and vehicles were ordered, including an open carriage drawn by two of the best greys with postillion outriders. Shops shut and bunting appeared from nowhere. Buglers summoned members of the Rifle Volunteers to provide a guard of honour.

The University Vice Chancellor had been informed and immediately he too had acted gathering together such of his distinguished colleagues as were available on that June day. College silver was brought out of store lest the Shah need more refreshment than the Bull could provide.

In just one and a half hours all was ready. The Mayor and Corporation journeyed to the station past windows already packed with people waiting to glimpse such a distinguished entourage. There together with University, the military band and an expectant crowd of 1,500 people they awaited the arrival of the 1.10 special from Crewe.

It was all something of a shock to the Stationmaster who had not been appraised of the visit. Had he known the platform would have been spruced up and he would have worn his best

suit. Slowly everybody became aware that something was wrong. The Shah had arrived at Dover some weeks earlier and was staying at Buckingham Palace where a special telegraph line had been placed at his disposal so he could have direct communication with his wives in Teheran. Perhaps there was a crisis at home in the desert.

Then they realised the telegraph had appeared on the hallmaster's table at the Guildhall: it had not come over the wires: it was all a hoax and even the Mayor joined in the general laughter at the clever ruse that had drawn so many dignitaries to the station on a fools errand.

The visit that never was passed into folklore.

Then in March 1965 the rumour started again only this time he was supposed to be arriving by a Heron of the Queen's flight at Marshall's airport. Quite what his itinerary was nobody really knew - perhaps a stroll along the Backs, a visit to King's and Trinity, and then round off the stay with a pint of beer and game of darts at the Queen's Head, Newton. Some believed it and a crowd of a hundred waited outside King's chapel. Others did not including the Sunday lunchtime regulars in the village pub. But this time it was as real as the thirty pound boost to the pile of pennies being collected to improve the Village hall testify

Stories from a year 1980

In February 1980 headlines proclaimed that a fight was on to save St Clements church, Parishioners were forming an action group to try and stop the church being made redundant.

Their action followed a Diocesan report which recommended merger with other churches as a way of coping with the changing pattern of life in central Cambridge. As the town expanded new churches had been constructed to serve the new communities - St Barnabas, St Philip and in New Cherry Hinton a meeting was held in 1891 which led to the consecration of the nave and chancel of St John's church, although it was to be 1929 before it was completed. St George's off Milton Road was consecrated in 1938 and as post-war housing development increased with it came more churches. Sometimes the plans did not work out. A new church district was created from the parishes of St Andrew the Less and Fen Ditton in 1947 only to be dissolved in 1956, although the name St Stephens was used for the church dedicated in 1962, one of five announced by the Bishop of Ely in 1955. One of these was the Nicholas Ferrar Memorial Church on the Arbury Estate whose foundation stone was laid by Princess Margaret in 1957, and she returned in 1976 to attend a service to celebrate its completion.

However the growth of population which meant new churches were needed was matched by declining congregations elsewhere. In 1958 a Diocesan report recommended that six churches should be declared redundant, including St Michael, St Botolph and St Clement. St Michael's was reconstructed and opened in its new form in 1966. St Peter's which closed 1971 and All Saints amalgamated with Holy Sepulchre in 1973 were both taken over by the Redundant Churches Fund.

But others launched spirited resistance. The parishioners of St. Andrew the Great opposed the proposals, shared their building with the Greek Orthodox Church but finally closed in 1984, although the future of the church building is still subject of debate. The ousted Greek congregation turned to St Clement's who like other congregations were also faced with the expense of maintaining the fabric of the church. It had been erected around 1200 to replace an original wooden building but by 1567 the original west tower was ruinous and taken down. The present tower was paid for from the estate of the antiquarian William Cole who appointed James Essex, one of his executors to do the work. But Essex died soon after Cole and it was not until 1821 that it was built, and then in the wrong place - Cole had wanted it to be erected over the graves of his sisters and not on the street. The new tower was topped by a steeple but by 1928 this was in a dangerous condition and was removed, An appeal for £120,000 was

launched in 1984 although one correspondent considered that the building should be left to fall into decay and that as a ruin it would perform a valuable public amenity - far better as a wilderness garden than as one of the least attractive Cambridge ecclesiastical buildings.

But many others disagreed and so the religious community continues with their own style of traditional worship following the, rituals of the Holy Catholic & Apostolic Church of England with its incense and bells, embroidered surplices and servers with candles in a building that in one form or another has served for over 800 years.

Stories from a year 1981

In March 1981 a new name emerged for an old problem with the announcement that the shopping development centred on the Fitzroy Street area of Cambridge was to be called The Grafton Centre.

It was named after Augustus Henry Fitzroy, the third Duke of Grafton. The Duke had been educated at Peterhouse and became Chancellor of the University in 1768. He had died in 1811 and his name had already been taken for the street that was at that time starting to grow in the open fields of Barnwell that had been inclosed in 1811. Then the straggling buildings in Blucher Row had become Fitzroy Street. Adjacent to it were two streets commemorating a famous carrier and mayor who had a large house on Newmarket Road, James Burleigh.

The area that grew around these streets formed a compact little township separated from the historic centre by a ring of grass – Christ's Pieces and New Square - the latter elegantly laid out with houses between 1825 and 1854. Separated physically from the University centre with its shops serving University needs the local residents found their local needs met in the locality with small-scale shops offering cheaper goods.

Some pointed out that Fitzroy Street was the hardest street in the town to get to - there were Gates at either end and a Cart(w)right in the middle - a punning allusion to the names of shop owners. There was also the Moon and the Starr (more shop names) and when asked about the Sun to complete the heavenly trio young Percy Moon would say - I'm the son - my dad keeps the shop.

Writing in 1976 the late Percy North remembered people like Elijah Tarrant whose delicious ice cream was very popular during Midsummer Fair, Whiteheads the fruiter, Jim Stokes the bakers and a tall building built as a jam factory for Sturton the grocer. One general store was kept by Mr. Austin who could be seen daily taking small quantities of coal on a sack barrow to his many customers - few people could afford to buy a hundredweight at a time although the price was only 1/-. There was a clothes shop owned by Whiteleys where payment could be made "a tanner a week" and a small shop where coffee was sold at half-penny a cup, making it a welcome meeting place for many of the unemployed.

The area was never rich and in winter the former Shakespeare Brewery was opened as a soup kitchen supplying a basin of soup and slice of bread for a penny to the out-of-work with tickets available from grocers for others at twice the price.

There were various other welfare groups including a Home of Mercy "for girls who had taken the wrong path" who were employed at laundry work and attended services at Christ Church where there were special pews for them - and a special gateway from the home into the churchyard so there was no need to go through the street.

But into the area of small scale shopping came enterprising businessmen, one of whom was William Heffer who opened in Fitzroy Street in July 1872 as a stationer and newsagent. Soon he began adding books, mainly for Sunday and day school prizes, expanding into adjacent

premises and opened a sub post-office. But in the 1890s to attract custom from the "other" Cambridge he hit on the idea of offering dons and undergraduates a discount of 25% on their cash purchase of books - matching a similar offer from London publishers. Other Cambridge booksellers were vehement in their opposition and tried to cut off Heffer's supplies from the publishers. In this they failed and had to allow the same discounts to their own customers. But now all shops were competing equally Heffer no longer had the means of enticing buyers into the long walk to his shop. His move from Fitzroy Street into Petty Cury to be nearer the established shopping area was an early indication that the attractions of the Fitzroy Street area were not enough in themselves to secure a viable business

Stories from a Year – 1982

1990 08 30

Midwife to the atomic monster

THE news of an explosion of the first Atom bomb at Hiroshima made headlines around the world in August, 1945.

As first stories of the effect of that bomb came through so Cambridge scientists celebrated the research that had made it possible. The routine research conducted at the Cavendish Laboratory had been led by men who had worked with the late Lord Rutherford whose work on radioactivity had led to the discovery of the nucleus the minute body at the centre of the atom in which enormous energy is imprisoned.

The work of these scientists was one of the great secrets of the war and the men engaged in it pledged to complete and absolute secrecy. Only after the bomb had exploded could it be made known that four members of the Technical Committee had close associations with Cambridge, as had the man who directed the work on the atom bomb. Prof Oppenheimer. As the second bomb devastated Nagasaki and some of the details of destruction became known so local people waited for Japanese capitulation and peace — but also wondered whether Cambridge had been midwife to a monster that might destroy all mankind.

Debate over the role of Cambridge in conflict was nothing new. During the Great War the University's scientific departments were engaged in research with the Cavendish investigating methods of signalling to and from the trenches and working ways of detecting submarines and the Chemical Laboratories developing the new poison gases and inventing the gas mask.

In 1937 other Cambridge scientists constructed the Government's recommended "gas proof rooms" in college buildings and semi-detached houses and analysed the effectiveness of the gas masks that had been produced, voicing particular concern about their use with very young children.

In 1951 as Civil Defence authorities laid their plans to protect Cambridge from the result of a nuclear attack the presence of American bases was causing grave concern. Seven years later it came very close to home with the establishment of a Thor missile base at Mepal in 1957 leading to protest marches.

In the event that base survived the Cuba crisis of 1962 by only a year but CND "Spies for Peace" directed public attention to other, more secret, evidence of preparation for nuclear war.

The peace movement was given additional boost with the announcement in 1980 that Cruise missiles would be based at Molesworth and by January 1st 1982 a peace camp had been established there.

Meanwhile city and county authorities were engaged in their own nuclear dispute. While one issued leaflets stating that there would be no defence against nuclear weapons the others held exercises on how they would cope with any emergency, civil or military. Once more the scientist entered the public arena with claims that in the event of a nuclear exchange nearly 500,000 people would die with Cambridge suffering 97 per cent casualties.

Whatever the rights and wrongs, facts and figures, a grim reminder of the reality of war was received in the city in November, 1982. This was when the Mayor was presented with a fragment of roof tile dug up by the children from that first Japanese city to be devastated by the weapon that was born in Cambridge

Stories from a year 1983

In 1983 a building in a backwater sold for over £1,000,000 and County Hall passed into history.

It was in Hobson Street that in 1914 the fledgling County Council had opened its first purpose built headquarters. It had not been their first choice but the Town Council had refused to let them back into the buildings facing Market Hill which once had served as the site for both county and borough administration, the Guildhall being tucked away behind the older Shire House. When in 1842 new Assize Courts had opened on Castle Hill the Town Council expanded into the now vacant front building, glad of the extra space. But then in 1888 a massive reorganisation of local government established County Councils giving them new powers and responsibilities.

The new administration found Castle Hill too far out of the town, somewhere else was needed for council meetings and office staff. The officials were installed in rooms scattered throughout the town centre and formal Council Meetings were held in the Guildhall. For a while peace prevailed. Soon however the two councils found themselves at loggerheads; Cambridge wanted to expand its area, to take in Chesterton and parts of Coton, Trumpington, Cherry Hinton and Fen Ditton; the County objected. As violent debates echoed around the Council chamber so the relations between the two hit rock bottom. This was no time for a joint building operation though both desperately needed new offices. So in 1912 the old Hobson Street Methodist Chapel was bought as the site for the new County Hall; it opened two years later to the chagrin of the Town whose own plans for Guildhall rebuilding had been blocked by Ratepayers from the newly assimilated Chesterton area.

Now new battles erupted for expanded Cambridge felt itself large enough to be allowed to run all its own affairs and not have to pay rates to the upstart County Council. Once more they won the debate though this time their plans were defeated by tactical voting in Parliament in 1914. By 1928 the County Council were finding themselves once more strapped for space. Eyes turned to Castle Hill where the old Gaol, whose last prisoners had moved out in 1916, was being used as a store for the Public Record Office. Thousands flocked to visit the Condemned Cell in 1930 before demolition started, the bricks being reused for the new Shire Hall that opened on the site in 1932.

The Town Council were furious yet new offices for the County whilst they were stuck in their old building. This time they would rebuild but where? A report which recommended abandoning the central area for a site on Parkside was finally rejected. The inevitable opposition that once more erupted was dismissed. Buildings on Peas Hill were pulled down and new offices put up, then the old Shire House was demolished and the present Guildhall erected. The join between the two stages can be seen to this day.

On Castle Hill the old Assize Courts finally vanished in 1953 but plans for additional offices on the site were defeated. Instead a new storey was added on the existing Shire Hall and as paperwork increased both county and city bought or built new accommodation for their expanding workforce. Meanwhile in Hobson Street other councils and officials were continuing to provide valuable services to their communities without attracting headlines. When the sale of County Hall was announced few remembered the building, let alone the battles that had been fought from there in the early years of the County Council.

Stories from a year 1984

In 1984 a little boy called Ben hit the headlines. Two years old he was already living on borrowed time and would certainly die without a liver transplant. Nobody had performed such surgery on a child so young but it could be done - provided a donor liver could be found.

In desperation the mother picked up the telephone and called "That's Life" and within hours help - in the form of a television film crew - was on its way. What happened next was recounted in the BBC book "Ben; the story of Ben Hardwick" which was published in 1985. It tells how next morning the programme office was as chaotic as usual with plans for the following show. A balloon manufacturer was offering a giant inflatable vicar to fly over a church, a con man they had been tracking for six months had been arrested and there was the next round of street interviews to arrange. Programme presenter Esther Rantzen was concerned about the Ben story; "How does Ben look" she asked, "Gorgeous" was the reply. As the resulting book records; "That is the main hurdle crossed. If Ben looks appealing, the point of the story will come home with even more impact".

Stories of illness and its cure have always had an appeal beyond the merely medical. When Elizabeth Woodcock of Impington was discovered having survived her eight days being buried in the snow in 1799 the same issue of the newspaper contained an advertisement for a portrait of the poor lady and for the book which her doctor was intending to publish on the subject. In 1855 the gentry and clergy in the vicinity of Stapleford had flocked to the home of Sarah Carter, dubbed the "Sleeping Beauty", who had been confined to her bed for thirty years and once slept for seventeen weeks. Her mother "has been frequently offered large sums of money by strangers for a personal view of the deceased; but this her mother refused".

Those who could cure were people to be venerated. One such was Dr. Brodnum who visited Cambridge in 1790 and produced testimonials to his powers, William Royston, shoemaker of Green Street, had been afflicted with scurvy and unable to sit on a chair, the son of Mr. Cheeswright, a Littleport shopkeeper had been in a decline for some time. Mr. Clark of Wilburton had lost the use of both his legs entirely - all had been cured by the great man as each would testify. Others claimed to make the deaf hear and the blind see.

Meanwhile legitimate medical men were investigating new techniques. A convicted murderer was cut down from the gallows at Cambridge castle and taken to the University chemical lecture rooms where he was subjected to electrical shocks to try and test such treatments could simulate breathing. A detailed report appeared in the Cambridge Chronicle for August 13th 1819 which went on to record how hundreds of spectators had taken advantage of the opportunity to view the body in the room in which the experiments had taken place.

Generally however developments were taking place away from the public gaze. But the resulting triumphs were heralded - hole in the heart operations, the first kidney graft and liver transplants. But new developments encountered new problems and those faced with the choice between high-tech, high-cost medicine and the needs of the very young or very old had unenviable decisions to make. Public funding for a body scanner at Addenbrooke's in 1981 showed what could be achieved with the support of the public.

But no money could buy a kid a liver, perhaps a television appeal could show that a lost young life could allow another young life to continue. And so it proved, within weeks a donor had been found. Millions followed Ben's progress. Then, when the story seemed to have passed its peak a member of the TV team glimpsed the headlines on a Cambridge Evening Newsvendors board. "Liver baby Ben dies". Away from television lights a life had faded away but the hope it represented would live on.

Stories from a year, 1985

"Katrina and the Waves" made musical history in 1985 by becoming the first Cambridge based pop group to achieve a Top-10 hit with their single "Walking on Sunshine". That year also saw the first Cambridge Rock competition, as the town came to grips with the music its youngsters wanted to hear. It followed years when the fear of excessive noise had outweighed Councilor's appreciation of the sound with concerts in the Corn Exchange and on Midsummer Common called off for fear of excessive decibels.

However the complaint of the new fangled music is not only a problem of the 1980s. In 1908 people were complaining that "the gramophone nuisance of a fine evening is quite appalling", although by 1914 there was considerable demand for records of the latest dance fad - the Tango. The 1920s saw a series of concerts organised by Millers Music shop, the thirties a number of bands, including Stirlingaires - formed by employees of Marshall's and Shorts - and Percy Cowell who opened the great new entertainment venue, the Dorothy cafe in 1931, to be succeeded by Reg Cottage in 1949.

Dancing at the Dorothy became a popular pastime, though the Rex Ballroom was another popular venue, organising a jitterbug competition during the dark days of 1943, Guildhall dances were sedate affairs until the coming of the new Rock 'n' Roll music when jiving was banned in 1956 after complaints that youngsters were even jiving to waltzes. Ever quick to respond the Rex Ballroom announced it would allow rock and roll sessions and the Kinema showed the film magistrates had wanted banned - "Rock around the clock", going on next year, 1958, to install a juke box.

Then came the great period of pop music in Cambridge as the travelling groups made the Regal cinema one of their bases, Cliff Richard in 1959 attracted vast crowds who blocked Regent Street. He returned next year as did Adam Faith attracting this review from the newspaper correspondent ; "the show was deplorably uninteresting, but the audience gave a magnificent performance" - referring to the crowds of screaming teenagers sparsely mixed with incredulous and slightly-dazed parents. Not content just to listen a group of students organised a 25 hour Jive session, aiming for a world record for non-stop dancing. In 1961 the groups were back. The appearance of the Ted Heath dance band at the Dorothy could not compete in media attention with the drama as Billy Fury was forced to cut short his concert owing to a throat infection and collapsed next day, being rushed to Addenbrooke's hospital for treatment. It did not prevent his return the following year along with Cliff, Adam and Phil Everley.

Then in 1963 came a "four man rock group with weird hairstyles as a gimmick who sang and played their current hits 'Love me Do' and 'Please Please Me'. Although accompanied by Chris Montez, Tommy Roe, Debbie Lee and the Viscounts the show was "not the best Cambridge audiences had seen", but for many of the fans who queued to see the Beatles it was a -night to remember. They returned in November under a police escort, smuggled in a Black Maria into the Downing Site laboratories. The queue for the Regal cinema venue started at 10.30. the Red Cross had dozens of men waiting for fainting and hysterical fans as

4,000 packed to see their idols, though any sounds they made were drowned by the screams of the audience. By comparison the Rolling Stones or P.J. Proby (whose show in 1965 was dropped because of his smutty act) were small beer.

Now with the Junction, a new centre for pop music, perhaps the great days might return. Though one will probably never see such block-busting touring shows as those of the mid 1960s when there were so many stars appearing one night that many had to change in the University Arms Hotel and run across the road to the stage.

Stories from a year 1986, by Mike Petty

American planes above Cambridgeshire countryside can convey mixed emotions.

In 1945 the sound of the Flying Fortresses were as much a part of the Cambridge war effort as the pilots and crew who made the town their centre for rest and recuperation between flights from the bases in the surrounding countryside.

The "National Geographic Magazine" of September 1936 had conveyed to its American readership something of the atmosphere of Cambridge where dons lectured in academic dress, Newnham undergradettes played cricket with long skirts reaching below the tops of their pads and fit young men having breakfasted on rare steak attempted to bump each other in boats on the river.

The colour photographs revealed ancient courts where students lived in former Convent buildings and the "smooth Cam's silent waters reflect a golden willow tree before palace-like Clare College". That river ran beside prosaic Jesus lock "dressed up with a gay flower bed" whilst a "barefoot girl punts picnickers up the Cam to bathing places near Grantchester" whose picturesque beauty had been preserved by their countrymen: "When it was proposed to build an express highway across the pastoral meadows between Cambridge and Grantchester a few years ago, an American Trust Fund purchased the construction rights and thus preserved the rural retreat".

Such a place was worth fighting for and five years later other American visitors were discovering Cambridge for themselves. Local people were urged to help make them feel at home: they were here for the duration of the war, with no chance of home leave, some of them were shy. Residents were urged to invite them home for tea but not to invite the whole street in to view the Americans.

In 1942 the University instituted a professorship in American History, intended to explain the USA to undergraduates. Frank Dobie of the University of Texas at Austin, took up the appointment. His first impression of Emmanuel College of John Harvard was distinctly chilly, even in September rooms were cold and coal scarce. But soon the warmth of his welcome made up for that.

He presented his passport to the police station and received his identity card. He obtained food coupons and surrendered them to the college buttery. In return he would get an ounce of butter, an ounce of olemargarine, and a small amount of sugar which would be placed by his breakfast place each morning along with his monthly ration of a pint of jam or marmalade. More formality attended other meals with diners in gowns, Latin grace and waiter service to be followed in the Combination room with port wine, coffee and only then tobacco.

His experiences were recorded in the April 1946 edition of the "National Geographic" but by then other Americans had themselves gained first hand experience of Cambridge life through the courses organised for them at "Bull College" the Bull Hotel, base of the American Red Cross, whilst they waited repatriation.

Many more have followed in their footsteps through Summer Schools organised by the University Extra Mural Board combining a study vacation with the opportunity to become part of the Cambridge academic community, living and dining in college unlike the large numbers of independent travellers for whom the city is a brief pause on their itinerary.

But the threat of war interrupted the American migration in 1986 after American jets from local bases had made their raids on Libya. Thoughts on how to restrict numbers from causing chaos turned to how to mitigate the financial disaster caused by their absence. Hotels reported mass cancellations and British tourist authorities mounted a publicity campaign to win back the faint hearted Americans.

Part of that package was an expenses paid trip for travel writers who would be shown the sights that had entranced early scribes, although perhaps "Main Street" in Trumpington might no longer have quite the impact it had fifty years before when green gas lamps were still in use, and "cottages with thickly thatched dormer windows suggest prim old ladies in poke bonnets". Nevertheless it worked.

Next year the headlines were once more of fears of saturation and restriction and the impact of American jets this time landing thousands more visitors at nearby Stansted airport

Mike Petty Stories from a year- 1987

In March 1987 they admitted what had always been known that cycles dominate Cambridge traffic when the street narrowing in the central area that had started the previous August was confirmed. With no room for motor vehicles to overtake bicycles would regulate the speed of progress.

But the speed of cycles themselves were once the source of concern as a correspondent in 1904 recorded. "A few years ago the bicycle was looked upon by pedestrians as a real terror and accidents were frequent. Those that grew up with the machine now simply regard it as one of the ordinary dangers but still watch out for the "wheeler" who comes scorching by at the phenomenal speed of 20mph".

By then Cambridge should have been used to the things there was a record that as early as 1847 somebody in Cambridge had a giant tricycle with a 12 foot wheelbase whilst one man claimed to have ridden the first bike in the town in 1863. Robert Taylor of Soham was said to be one of the pioneers of the machine. When about 18years old he had built a tricycle that could be propelled by the rider. Later he came upon a woodcut published in the "Illustrated London News" which depicted a man riding on two wheels. Local folk laughed at the idea but the young man persisted. He made two very light wheels of wood with wooden spokes and an iron rim. Pieces of old iron were fashioned into the main frame the front fork alone weighing ten pounds. It was complete in 1868 and two years later he rode it to London where, it was said, it created a sensation. John Howes also claimed to have built a boneshaker in 1868 after seeing one in the Paris Exhibition before going on to build their own "Granta" cycles.

In 1931 W.J. Taylor wrote of an early machine that he had hired from Messrs Dean Bros of East Road at the rate of 1d an hour in the early 1870s. He went on to recall a road race from Oxford to Cambridge in 1877 which caused immense excitement and led to the formation of

the Bicycle Union which assisted in the drafting of the Highways Amendment Act of 1879 with byelaws relating to bicyclists.

Various rules were made to govern the machines. In 1904 they were allowed to ride on various paths over the commons, by 1908 the council were considering banning them from Senate House Passage but when the first one way restrictions were introduced in Market Street and Petty Cury in 1925 there was one category of traffic that could go against the flow as they have done legally or illegally ever since

Cyclists complained of motorists and were seeking their own cycleways in 1913

As pneumatic tyres were developed so they suffered other problems in 1906 one particular cat was reported to be adept at puncturing them as people biked past and in 1910 the flints put on the road to provide footholds for horses during snow were also complained of for similar reasons

Machines were expensive a second-hand machine sold for 35/- (1.75) in 1910 and various firms aped Dean's idea of hiring them out. One such was Herbert Robinson who by 1911 were doing good business hiring to undergraduates, and demonstrated good business sense or good luck when in 1938 they took delivery of 500 machines just before a bus strike.

Bicycle thieves were soon on the scene with a professional gang being detected shipping stolen bikes to London by train in 1910 and having a drastic effect on employment since even then it was claimed that house prices were so high that ordinary folk had to live far from the centre and needed the machines to get to work. Although necessary they were also a nuisance. "Pavements are full of parked machines whilst college courts are empty" .A quote not from the editorials of March 1990 but from the Cambridge Daily News of 5th March 1910! It went on to say "it will be 20 or 30 years before the problem is solved" perhaps a trifle optimistic

Stories from a year 1988

Itinerant traders and musicians are part of the Cambridge scene that receives mixed reaction. Shopkeepers with high overheads express annoyance when street vendors set up a Pitch outside, their premises selling, a similar commodity. In 1973 ice cream sellers were being criticised for extortionate prices – 4 single ices cost 50p. from one stall whereas a super-large cone on Newmarket racecourse was 15p. compared to 9p in central Cambridge. The prices were considered outrageous, since the introduction of zero-rated VAT meant that prices should have gone with a choc bar now down to 5p.

The noise of the vendors prompted complaints in 1911 when hot-cross sellers were crying their wares at 5.30 a.m. though this nuisance had abated by 1915. The call "Hot-cross buns, one a penny, two a penny, hot cross buns" was no longer applicable since price rises had meant there were no halfpenny buns to be had. The vendors, would, said one correspondent, go the same way as the muffin man – and few would mourn their parting. Nighttimes could be disturb by the "trotter man" selling his wares well into the dark and the sound of the newspaper vendor's cry is said to have even found its way into Kings College chapel and been echoed on the organ by Charles Stanford.

Some traders were "characters" who attracted public support. The death in 1910 of George Randell a blind man who lived on Honey Hill and sold matches at street corners was remarked upon - not least because he was so tall that his coffin had to be made seven feet long.

But it is perhaps the street musician who provokes the most mixed reaction with complaints of a constant procession of them in Mill Road in 1922. Part of the architects brief for the Lion Yard redevelopment was that it should become a place of entertainment for shoppers and, since its opening, it has attracted a wide range of buskers. Many are of the screech and yell variety with little or no talent whose only ability is to discourage window shopping and encourage a turnover of shop assistants whose life is made miserable by their limited and oft repeated repertoire. Occasionally however crowds of shoppers will stop in their tracks to applaud the talents of the musicians performing.

Two Cambridge lads made a reputation for themselves by playing classical music in the streets in 1949 and the formula was repeated in 1975 by Dag Ingram and Michael Copley, students at Churchill college who within a year were attracting crowds of 200 to their performances in Petty Cury whilst even more were soon queuing to watch them in concert halls around the world. Their success was anticipated by Gerry Bol, a one man band who himself has featured on television, both for his musicianship and for his arrest in 1978 on charges of obstruction during a crackdown on itinerant traders.

The Council's concern for the cleanliness of foodsellers stalls, for the smell and litter that may be generated, and for the increasing numbers of vendors led to constant debate and correspondence culminating in the licensing of a number of pitches which came into force in March 1988. Two months later -there was a new face on the music scene as Jeremy Sams replaced Dag Ingram in the duo which started its career on the streets of central Cambridge and spread the reputation of Cambridge Busking worldwide.

Stories of a Year 1989

In March 1989 central Cambridge is undergoing great change.

There is demolition and rebuilding on Market Hill, involving the loss of a central cinema. There are plans for a new central superstore and a revamped Market. The incessant debate on parking continues and there are suggestions to redevelop at Parkside.

Can there have ever been a period like it? The answer is simply yes March 1930.

There was said the paper, "the usual rebuilding activity in the centre of town". It centred on precisely the same site as today, with work in progress on building the Victoria Cinema that has been recently demolished. New vistas of Holy Trinity church were being opened, not least from Petty Cury where much of the north side was being knocked down to make way for a new superstore Boots.

That development continued in Sidney Street and soon shoppers would be looking across the road to more building as that side was itself redeveloped for Woolworths and, shortly, Marks and Spencer. Even the traditional Market was the subject of debate. Then, as now, there were plans to revamp it. Plans were canvassed to move the stalls into the Corn Exchange and so release more space for parking in the town centre.

Whilst motorists were still getting used to the changes wrought by the creation of the New Square car park other plans were already being debated that would severely curtail central traffic in July it was to be announced that six colleges were to ban undergraduate cars and motorbikes.

Then, as now, Councillors were casting their eyes towards Parkside seeing it as a suitable site for redevelopment traffic considerations making it seem the best place to put the new Guildhall because of congestion in the centre.

But that was all in 1930. It was the start of a decade of change that left residents bemoaning the loss of old Cambridge as the townscape disappeared before their eyes. It ended with war a war whose headlines once more fill the pages of the Cambridge papers.

“History Revisited”

by
Mike Petty

with other early articles published in the
Cambridge Evening/Weekly News

19th May 1984 to 31st July 1986

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1986 07 31

1984 05 19 Sardinia answers our road problems - Michael Petty, May 1984

CAGLIARI, capital of Sardinia, has an answer to Cambridge's traffic problems; the roads have a bus and taxi lane which is used by pedestrians, the cars park on the pavements, completely blocking them.

Cars are everywhere, in vast dumps of scrap vehicles which dominate the approaches from the airport, in narrow streets just wide enough to drive down — provided there are no pedestrians.

The central port area is a bustle of lorries and liners bound for Palermo and Naples. Through it had come most of the exhibits for an immense trade fair where electronic gadgets and heavy machinery mingled with Hong Kong plastic toys and Sardinian leather united by music from the large fairground attached.

One could wander for hours, revelling in the atmosphere and bustle, but it is only a temporary attraction and without it the town must assume an atmosphere similar to Ely on a wet Tuesday afternoon.

The Via Roma fronts the docks and is a palm-lined arcaded street with pavement cafes and tourist shops. Behind it a wide street stretches uphill towards the old town whose skyline is far more African than European.

Suddenly one is in an area of narrow lanes and poverty; the guidebooks claim that beyond the shuttered windows there is comparative luxury, I saw only peeling walls, lines of washing and people — widows dressed completely in black and children playing in the streets.

Piazzas afford panoramic views over rooftops, then back again into sunless alleyways, through gates guarded by portcullis erected in 1307 as part of a defence against the invaders who have periodically ravaged the country.

Then another square, this one absolutely and completely packed with people processing to the cathedral where today their minister was making a much-awaited return following illness; invisible today the beautiful interior with its carvings and colour, instead flash-bulbs explode from the pulpits as the packed congregation applaud their pastor.

Elsewhere more noise — of car horns blaring in celebration of a wedding, or an invisible brass band playing a selection of Beatles music from somewhere below the magnificent San Remy Bastion, a magical place for a Sunday afternoon in spring.

In the interior, past the flat lands which surround Cagliari and up into the fringe of the mountains, life is much different; donkeys are more common than cars or tourist coaches and old men watch the world go by from the shadier sides of their village square.

The Giara de Gesturi is a high plateau yet somewhat reminiscent of Wicken Fen, marshy in places, covered with scrub and the home of a rare breed of wild horses and wild boar. The area is dotted with Nuragic remains, fortified houses built some 2,000 years ago, and later we visit the site of an excavation high on a hill-top above Villanovaforru to see the painstaking piecing together of literally every scrap of pottery found there, and most impressive of all a magnificent archaeological museum in the centre of a village probably no bigger than Teversham.

1984 06 30 History Revisited – Horseheath witch, June 1984

Rodney Tibbs is on holiday this week, so we asked librarian MIKE PETTY to dip into the Cambridgeshire Collection. He came up with this story of 20th century witchcraft at Horseheath, near Haverhill

The story of Horseheath's potent 20th century witch

THERE is a spot on the road which leads from Horseheath to Horseheath Green which, even after heavy rain, is almost instantly dry. Horseheath people know the reason why — that is the spot where "Daddy Witch" is buried.

An ancient bony creature half-clothed in rags, she lived in a hut in Garret's Close and, when she died, was buried in the middle of the road opposite the sheep-pond. It is the heat from her body that keeps the road dry.

Daddy Witch was no medieval monster — she lived in the nineteenth century. She was the earliest witch the village people could remember in 1915.

This was when a Horseheath woman, Catherine Parsons, sat down to record notes on the village's witches in 1915 — less than 70 years ago. In a talk she gave to the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, she spoke on witchcraft that existed in the village at that time.

"In this village we have ghosts as real as ever they were, superstition is rife, the wise woman is fresh in our memory, we have our folklore, interesting customs and cures for almost every ill," she told them.

"The parishioners tell you here always were witches and here always will be — the difference between a witch and an ordinary woman is that if the latter wishes you misfortune her wish has no effect but the witch is in league with the devil — she has the power to do evil."

Superstitious people ascribed various powers to the wise woman and generally went out of their way to stay in her good books. When one lady admired some turnips growing in his field, a farmer sent her several of the best; girls in service who returned to Horseheath for their holidays often left the witch a few pence before leaving — but you could also be bewitched by accepting a gift from her.

Once an old lady sent some fine currants that she had grown in her garden to a Horseheath girl staying in London but the girl did not eat them, fearing she might be bewitched. People believed they were safe provided the witch did not possess anything belonging to them — but could you be sure she had not picked up a piece of your broken crockery or taken a sprig from your garden hedge? That would be enough to give her power.

Witches were extortioners and their craft remunerative. Whenever anything went wrong on Church Farm the tenant would send the witch five shillings, believing her to be up to her tricks. A poor woman whose bread would not rise likewise paid for its release. A witch could cast a spell on our coal so that it would not burn and of course she could influence animals. Horses would stop dead in their tracks and only move after she had spoken to them. Pigs would go off their feed. She could send swarms of fleas to pester you and prevent cows giving milk.

But you could fight back — it was believed that there was a very close link between the witch and the thing bewitched. A farmer who beat his cow on the head when it mysteriously stopped producing milk was implored by his man not to hit her any more because he believed the witch would feel the blows and send other troubles. "So if I get a gun and shoot the cow I shall kill the witch an' all," he said.

To protect themselves against witchcraft, Horseheath folk in 1915 believed there was any easy way: "You just go to the village shop and buy a ha'penny worth of salt without saying 'please for it; or you can put a piece of steel under your door mat — for a witch cannot cross steel. Putting a knife under the chair will stop the witch from sitting down if she does come to your house.

"Mother had a brood of young and they were bewitched and covered with vermin. They just lay on their backs, kicked up their little feet and were dying fast — she sent to the shop for an ounce of new pins and stuck them in one of the dead ducks; then she made a good fire and at midnight without telling anybody what she was going to do, she put the ducks right into the middle of the fire and afore the duck had been burning 10 minutes, the witch came screaming to her door, making the most terrible noises for the pain caused by the pins in the burning duck had entered the witch — in the morning the rest of the ducks were cured.

"You can get a pint and a half glass bottle, half fill it with water, put in a lock of hair from the noddle of your neck, also an ounce of new pins, heads downwards, some rusty nails from an old shoe and some parings of your finger and toe nails. Then cork the bottle and put it on the fire at midnight when you're quite alone and boil it until that bursts — but you must not speak whatever happens. The witch will come outside screaming and ranting — and sometimes you just can't keep quiet; soon as you make a sound before the bottle bursts that ain't no good," said Catherine Parsons.

To make a contract with a witch the devil usually appeared to the person in the shape of an animal such as a rat, mouse or toad — "Perhaps this is why if either a toad or newt is found in a house at Horseheath, the creature must at once be put upon the fire, or the inmates of the house will have bad luck."

Once recruited, the witch became possessed of imps or spirits which live upon her body and assist her — unless they were given plenty of work to do they became a terrible torment to their owner.

The Horseheath witch had five to find work for — their names Bonnie, Blue Cap, Red Cap, Jupiter and Venus. One woman spotted one on top of a box in the chimney corner — "it looked something like a mouse with very large eyes and a tail only two inches long — as soon as it was spotted it scrambled away up the chimney to report what it had seen to the witch — you cannot keep anything secret from her and her imps."

Sometimes they tried to burn the imps — that happened at West Wickham: "They put them in a well-heated brick oven but they screamed so loud that they had to be taken out and were

returned to the witch — and she was covered with burns but the imps weren't marked — eventually they were put in her coffin and buried with her."

1984 07 07 - Bowd - History Revisited

Misery of life on the land, July 1984

Cambridgeshire Collection librarian MIKE PETTY takes another story from the county's past.

THE misery, penury and unhappiness of the working class in the last century has never been better illustrated than by James Bowd of Swavesey. His appalling life was recalled as he sat down at his table and wrote in September 1889. This is his story:

"I James Bowd have now reached to my 66th anniversary day and being unable to go out to labour I was sitting at home alone and my mind was taken back to the early stages of my life; I have been lame for 59 years and I can assure you it has been a great hinderance to me in my labour; I was born in the year 1823, September 27 in Swavesey; before I was seven years of age I was taken with scarlet fever and at the same time a great swelling in my throat and a white swelling on my knee which is the cause of my lameness.

"I well remember not being able to move any part of my frame but my left hand. I could just raise that but I had no strength any higher than my wrist. My doctor was a very aus-tere man he used to come and frighten me so that I dreaded to see him come, he would turn the clothes down and pull me about as if he had got a block of wood or piece of iron to handle that had no life in them. I remember him coming one day and asking my mother for a basin, he took his knife out of his pocket and came to me — I was so frightened I thought he was going to cut my throat and that should die; he cut the swelling that was on my throat and I felt a little easier from that but the fever had not abated, I was still as helpless as ever. Then he ordered leeches to be laid on me ...

But now his parents' patience with the doctor had come to an end and they borrowed a horse and cart to take the boy to Cambridge to a Doctor Zachary. "And when he saw me he said they must set their affections on this child; he ordered me to be put in a hot bath morning and night and I was to take my medicine while I was in the bath. My mother used to put the water in a washtrough and roll my shirt up under my armholes.

"This medicine was to be 10 drops in half teacupful of cold water and one time some of the medicine was spilt on my shirt and it burned all the fore part of my shirt out in a very short time and so you may guess it was not very pleasant to taste."

The boy recovered from the scarlet fever, and as his strength increased he was able to play his part in the work of the farm; at 16 years of age he was appointed head horse-keeper to Mr Dodson — "I thought how young I was to be in the place "of head horsekeeper for it was reckoned to be the first step in agricultural labour."

In 1849, aged 24, James Bowd married — "as regards our household stuff we had but very little, true I had a bed and I had a very good Family Bible but I had but very little money — must I say only three shillings — not much to start life, was it."

They lived with his parents for a while and had their first child, a girl. "But my wife had a very hard time of it we had to call the doctor in, he said he would not give a farthing for her life if it had been an hour later but by the Blessing of Almighty she began to get better."

They found a home of their own — "only two rooms and no yard or garden and the blacksmith's hammer and tongs on one side of us at four o'clock in the morning and the cobbler's hammer and lapstone on the other side till nine or 10 at night — not too much solid joy and lasting peace there."

About 1850 James Bowd began to tire of looking after horses, for one thing he needed more money, for the other it was too much walking. "Sometimes after a long day's work drilling I did not know how to get my lame leg off the ground to put it forward to take a step."

In 1852 they had a second child, another girl: "And she was such a good and quiet creature we used to say she was too good for this world, and we thought that the Lord had only lent her to us for a short time and as we thought and said so it proved to be, for she only lived one year and two weeks."

Their first son, Reuben, was born in 1855. "I was still working for Mr Dodson and the haytime came on and most of the hay was got up, and I fell off the ladder and broke my collarbone, I was six weeks before I could do any more work — then I thought I would try to see if I could get a harvest by thatching."

He got some jobs in Swavesey, then his wife went to St Ives market to meet a Mr Saberton, who farmed in Wilburton fen, and arranged for James to work there. However, on his return to Swavesey, he found work hard to find and had to struggle to support his family. When in December 1857 he was offered work at Aldreth he jumped at the opportunity: "He told me I should attend" to stock in the yard and to milk and he should want me to stack and thatch and go out with a letting out compass drill."

But this meant that he had to travel miles from home and find and pay for his own lodgings, and in February "We was burned out of house and home — we just managed to get our bed linen and bed out — the besteads were burnt, the people worked well to get out what they could but what was broke and what was burnt was a great loss to me — I had learned to know that I was bad off and I had got a very bad situation and very bad master."

When the time came to leave, James found himself in debt to his employer to the sum of £4. In September 1858 they returned to Swavesey and took lodgings at the Old Black Horse Inn. "But we was not done with Old Billy Prime the rat catcher — for that was the name he went by and he was a bad master and a dangerous man." He was taken to court in Ely and ordered to pay his debt at the rate of 4 shillings a month.

But he neglected to do so and the bailiffs were sent in. His wife borrowed the money as an advance on her wages as a cleaner in Swavesey and that debt was paid, but times continued hard and prices were very dear.

Local bakers refused supply bread — "then we began with Mr J. Crane, Fenstanton, and we soon had a very large bill with him as flour was £3 per sack."

They had a second son "but he only lived two years and two weeks" and died on June 11, 1861. Two years later came another son, James. "I was out of work. On a Plough Monday morning I went down the lane to Mr Frederick Carter and asked him to me a job, he did give me a job for some few days and as the winter was working through work began to be on the stir and he soon put me on again — regular."

The story ends abruptly, the last few pages having been torn from the book. However family sources indicate that James Bowd later obtained a post managing a small farm at Prickwillow for a London gentleman; he returned to Swavesey and became totally blind before dying, about 1895, aged 72.

1984 07 21 Casting light on early days of photography
July 1984

TODAY photography is very much part of everyday life either in newspapers, magazines or in the family album. In its early days, however, attitudes needed adjustment.

Fox Talbot, the photographic pioneer, was amazed that the time taken to photograph an entire library was exactly the same as the time taken to photograph one book! Also the camera, unlike a kindly artist, could prove merciless in portraiture.

As the "Cambridge Chronicle" pointed out in August 1844 photography is no flatterer. It shows every wrinkle and every stray hair is plainly marked; the paper was welcoming the arrival of an establishment in St Mary's Passage, Cambridge, where "Beard's patent daguerreotype or photographic portraits were now taken daily (solely by the action of light) and surely these would be more perfect when the plate is acted up in the clear atmosphere of Cambridge than in the pea-soup affair which Londoners breathe."

This was apparently the start of photography in Cambridge and soon the familiar names appear —Farren, Nichols, Squires, Hills and Saunders. In January 1870 Mr Stearn would supply six full-length album portraits for 4/6d cash, or 6/- if booked, and as early as April 1859 G. Beal, chemist, of 25 Sidney Street, was selling photographic preparations at London prices.

But these developments were not of course confined to Cambridge. Mr Sarony's American photographic portrait rooms found business in Wisbech so brisk just after harvest in 1854 that he had to delay his visit to Cambridge. In fact it was not until December 1854 that his "two remarkably neat houses on wheels" arrived at the entrance to Parker's Piece. His portraits, the "Chronicle" judged, were equal to those produced at Metropolitan establishments and there was certainly nothing more startlingly lifelike than his Stereoscopic pictures.

Sometimes, however, these itinerants were not welcome. Ely Board of Health, 1864, discussed the removal of a certain obstruction in the shape of a photographer's booth from the Market Hill. Not only were they of unsightly appearance, they also had "a tendency to injure the trade of the town and ought not be tolerated, the wants of Ely being well supplied by two resident photographers." One of these, Mr Cooke, of Market Street, lost his studio together with all its contents when the wood and glass structure mysteriously caught fire in January 1870.

In 1856 Mr Murray, a photographic artist, stayed at the Six Bells Inn, Fulbourn for several weeks, being patronised by both rich and poor. The same year the celebrated American photographic operator, W. H. Staples favoured Soham with a visit and perhaps created an impression. Certainly within a few years a local man, Henry Pendle, had set up as photographer and travelled around the village feasts although this was not without problems, at Little Downham in 1864 he had his booth damaged, but generally such practitioners were welcome.

In February 1859 Mr Monson extended the technical advances to produce a map of Cambridge, detailed enough to show lanes and byways which have of course changed greatly over the intervening years and photographs which actually show what the village or streets looked like when the camera shutter was clicked.

Some are amongst the most fascinating of the stock in the Cambridge-shire Collection. In fact last year the negatives taken by Nichols of such central areas as Petty Cury and Market

Hill some 120 years ago were acquired. His pictures were appreciated at the time — in 1867 his interior photographs of Chesterton church could be bought as souvenirs, but also call attention to the dilapidated state — dirty whitewash, ugly pews, broken-down forms which it was hoped to remedy and restore.

But photographs do not have to be old to be important. Don't throw old snapshots, negatives or slides away as "junk." They will be of interest to somebody, someday. Pop them in a parcel and leave them at your local library, or post them to me at the Cambridgeshire Collection, Lion Yard, Cambridge, and I'll find a home for them.

1984 12 08 - Jack Hobbs, legend of Cambridge cricket
CWN article 2

MIKE PETTY looks at the career of one of Cambridge's post famous sons and a cricketing master: John Berry Hobbs

JACK HOBBS played football for Cambridge Liberals during the winter months but as soon as April came he could be found, although surrounded by soccer matches, practising his true love, cricket.

The sport was literally in his blood for his father was a cricket professional on the ground staff at Fenner's and had taken his first child, John Berry Hobbs, as a babe in arms to witness a match between the University and the Australians. The young lad's excitement had been such that one of the visiting team had commented "Better make a cricketer of that kid, old man." And so it proved.

It was at Jesus College that Jack developed his natural abilities, playing on a gravel pitch in front of the servants' quarters, the wicket a tennis post, the ball a tennis ball and his bat a cricket stump. It was here, too, that he batted in his first match when, aged 10, he joined with Jesus College choir-boys in a game.

The choirboys of St Matthew's Church made him the captain of their eleven when they took on the choristers of Trinity College and Jack hit his highest score to date, three runs. But he continued to watch the skills of the undergraduates in the nets at Jesus College and soon achieved an innings of 90 runs, ended only by a disputed lbw decision which prompted the paper to report it as 90 not out, an achievement that caused his father much delight.

By now he could be found on Parker's Piece practising before school — having woken at 6 am and spent half-an-hour walking there. He returned when the schoolday was finished and all day during the summer holidays.

Jack Hobbs probably paid more for his cricket than anybody else, since the charge for a match on a prepared pitch was one shilling (5p), each player paying one penny, except the captain who had to pay twopence. Jack was often the captain.

Having left the St Matthew's Church choir eleven he founded a team known as the Ivy Cricket Club and then joined those Cambridge Liberals (playing cricket as well as football). The year 1901 was the turning point in his career when both the Liberals and the Ainsworth clubs — with whom he had connections via a Bible class — wanted him in their side for the needle-match between them. In the event they tossed for his services, Ainsworth won and Jack notched up his first century.

Jack had a cricketer hero and used to walk to the public library to see his triumphs reported in national newspapers. When Cambridge cricketer Tom Hayward took his hundred wickets in

one season of first class cricket young Master Hobbs was delighted; when he found himself facing Tom's bowling in a charity match and survived to make 26 not-out he was excited beyond measure.

There could be no doubt: Jack wanted to earn his living at the game, if only by working as a groundsman like his dad. In 1902 he achieved his first professional engagement at Bedford Grammar School — coaching schoolboys at the nets. John Hobbs senior died shortly afterwards, but not before he had seen his son make a fee of 10 shillings and a score of 119 in his first professional match on Royston Heath.

It was as the newspaper reported "a long and highly meritorious innings." It was just one of very many — 197 centuries in first-class cricket alone.

The career of John Berry Hobbs progressed from strength to strength; he played for England between 1907 and 1930 and for Surrey from leaving Cambridge in 1905 until his retirement in 1935. In 1924 he published "My Cricket Memories," a copy of which is housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection. It is a tangible reminder of a local lad who made good and overlooks an area he loved and which he described as "probably the finest and most famous public cricket ground in the world."

c.38 : cricket

1984 12 28

Master with the Willow

Ely Weekly News, Friday, December 28, 1984

ROBERT Carpenter was as famous in his day as Geoff Boycott or Ian Botham are now. He made his reputation with that great cricketing county, Cambridgeshire, being one of a famous quartet of Hayward, Tarrant and Smith — four of the very finest cricketers in the world.

This was the world of the 1860s when Robert Carpenter was known internationally, having been a member of the first English cricket team to play overseas, one of the 12 men' picked for the long journey to America in September, 1859. He followed this four years later with a trip to Australia and New Zealand.

Cricket then was not the well-organised sport it is today. Wickets were rudimentary, grounds were common and such could often contain 10 good batsmen and two first-class bowlers as well as a sufficiency of resolute fieldsmen.

In such circumstances Carpenter batted for nine hours to make 121 runs at a match at Ballarat, New Zealand in 1863 before making the seven-week sea voyage home.

Robert Carpenter was born on November 18, 1830, in Mill Road, Cambridge, then an undeveloped area on the outskirts of the town and separated from it by that great nursery of good cricket, Parker's Piece. His early promise on that ground was evident when as a boy he amassed more runs than the entire team of 11 opponents.

His first professional appearance was at Godmanchester in 1854 and four years later, aged 28, he was chosen for the United All-England Eleven who played Eighteen of Christ College

Oxford. His score of 38 earned him selection for the next match when United played an All-England Eleven at Lords.

From then on a place in first class matches was always open to him and the cricket record books record his scores — 97 at Lords in 1859, 119 at the Oval the following year, 100 for his county Cambridgeshire, against Surrey and so on. In total over a period of 22 years he played 766 innings against the best bowling that England could produce — an impressive record. Praise came from one of his contemporaries: "I think I never saw a man to punish a slow bowler as Carpenter was. He would go down the wicket and hit the ball like a horse kicking."

Another who knew him well was W. G. Grace, who commented that "the bowler had all his work cut out to get Carpenter's wicket, whatever the state of the ground — shooting or bumping balls were confidently met. Batsman after batsman was beaten on a kicking wicket but he remained, keeping the straight ones down, punishing the loose balls and breaking the hearts of many a twenty-two who saw victory slipping out of their grasp owing to his patience and coolness."

After 1876, aged 46, Carpenter, having lost his comrades Hayward and Tarrant and with Cambridgeshire no longer a major cricketing force, turned to umpiring, continuing in that role for over 20 years.

In 1897 A. W. Spratt produced a short account of the career of this distinguished Cambridge sportsman, which the Cambridgeshire Collection acquired at publication and retains to this day. Its intention was to urge others to make some small provision for the old age of this great cricketer who finally died in July, 1901, at his house in Mill Road, having returned from umpiring a match in Liverpool two days previously. The "Cambridge Graphic" devoted nearly two pages of its issue of July 20, 1901, to an appreciation and obituary of one of the really great batsmen of his time.

c.38 : cricket

1985 02 07

Gleanings from an old notebook

CWN 1985 02 07

THE Cambridgeshire Collection receives material every day but the small black note-book headed "Cambridge Gleanings" was presented in 1879.

The donor was C.M. Wilson, but who compiled it is a mystery as it comprises newspaper snippets which range in date from 1678 and 1862.

The cuttings cover many topics but in particular reflect the difficulties and dangers which afflicted travellers in those distant days. The language of the reporters is as interesting as the stories they recount...

1678:

"John Todd was Robbed by three Highwaymen, between Kentford and Newmarket ... on the 23rd day of April last, of a black pacing Gelding, shod of his hinder feet with interfering shoes. The one a lusty portly man, with a coloured castor hat, mounted upon a bay Gelding, about 14 hands, his hind-feet white. The second a lusty young man, appalled in black, with a light-coloured Riding Coat, a brown Periwig, mounted upon a brown silver-haired Gelding, a white Star on his forehead. The third a low thick man, with a new gray cloth Coat, his hair brown, mounted on a black Gelding, with some silver hairs on his forehead. Whoever can discover the aforesaid persons, or give intelligence of the Gelding taken away, let them repair

to Mr John Todd Haberdasher of Hats in St Edmondsbury, or to Mr Gervase Locks Haberdasher of Hats upon London bridge, and they shall be well rewarded."

The mere business of travel could be dangerous:

1721:

"On Friday last an unfor-tunate Accident happen'd at Barlow in the Road to Cambridge: As one Mr James Eaton, a young Gentleman, Student in Physick, was riding through that Town on a full Gallop, his Horse pitching on his Head threw him forward, and then tumbling over his Body with his whole Weight, bruised him so violently that he vomited great Quantities of Blood; and tho' several Means very proper in that Case were made use, yet he expired in a few Hours after."

Inclement weather added to the difficulties.

1762:

"The heavy rain which fell on Sunday, Monday, and early on Tuesday morning last caused the greatest flood in these parts that has been known for upwards of 60 years ... It carried away part of the bridge at Hauxton-Mills; and en-dangered the lives of many in passing the different roads that lead to this town, and prevented the post from arriving here till Wednesday which should have come in on Tuesday noon, and the stages of Tuesday did not arrive here till Wednesday noon. The post-boy, in passing a water at Buntingford, was thrown down, and narrowly escaped being drowned by hanging on some brickwork of the bridge; the horse was drowned, and with very great difficulty the mail re-covered."

Even when the journey had come to an end there were still potential disasters:

1813:

"Last week, as the Stam-ford coach was turning into the Blue Boar gateway, at Cambridge, heavily laden with boxes, one of them fell upon the Rev Mr Bonney, Fellow of Clare Hall, and materially injured him. During the confusion which ensued a box belonging to one of the passengers was thrown off the top of the coach, and broken to pieces. The contents were scat-tered about the yard, and among them was a pocket-book containing £300 in Bank of England notes, which has not since been heard of."

1985 02 21

CWN article 4

AMONG the invita-tions the Cambridge-shire Collection has received recently was one to a party on Parker's Piece which the organisers claimed "will transfix future ages with astonish-ment."

But it has largely been forgotten, overshadowed by a greater celebration for the Coronation of Queen Vic-toria 24 years later. For this party was held on July 12, 1814, to com-memorate victory over Napoleon — though history was to show that Napoleon was in fact not yet beaten.

When the news broke in Cambridge on June 27, 1814, that a treaty had been signed in Paris between France and the Allies — Britain, Germany and Russia — the town celebrated, the Mayor and Corporation breakfasted at Town Hall and proceeded "in grand procession with an excellent band of music" around the town, reading the procla-mation at various points.

Shops and colleges illuminated their premises - Mr Deighton, bookseller, decorated four of his win-dows - the left hand depicting "Peace and Plenty," the two middle ones a soldier and a sailor "Returned from War" and the other a shepherd watching sheep, with a dis-tant view of

ships sailing, the motto "Peace and Commerce." Elsewhere, the Duke of Wellington, Britannia, Nelson and John Bull were depicted.

When a real hero, the Prussian General Blucher, visited Cambridge - the man who had entered Paris - his carriage was drawn into town by numerous inhabitants. It was conveyed across the Market Hill and even carried down the steps into the Great Court of Trinity College, where he was to dine at a superb banquet along with 500 guests of great literary and political status.

Many of the leading figures of the town dined together at the Red Lion Inn and agreed that the poorer classes too should be able to participate in the general celebrations. The Mayor called a public meeting at which it was unanimously agreed to give a public dinner on Parker's Piece for those who wished to partake of it and a subscription was set up to raise £1,000 to defray expenses.

Committees were set up to make the arrangements: 5,388lb of beef, 5,820 penny loaves, 485lb of Gloucester cheese and much more was needed for the guests; tables had to be borrowed, table cloths supplied, along with 480 salt saucers. A bandstand was constructed in the middle, crowned with the Union Flag, while below it flew, submissively, the standard captured from the American frigate Chesapeake.

To keep gatecrashers away — and more than 15,000 spectators were expected — rope fences were constructed through which nobody could pass unless they had a ticket (which were specially designed by R. B. Harraden, the famous Cambridge artist).

The tables were decorated with banners, streamers waved in the wind as the 6,000 guests sat down to their fare of beef and plum puddings. While they ate - and the crowds watched hungrily - a balloon rose majestically and the orchestra played. Afterwards the lady snuff-takers enjoyed the half a peck supplied and the men turned to their pipes - 1,728 of them, with 52lb of tobacco. All agreed it had been a good day.

Apart from three: a gentleman and his lady were somewhat upset when their gig overturned into a ditch near Midsummer Common. They were rescued from a muddy grave by the bystanders. Although the lady's frock was ruined, her blushes were saved by a university gentleman who lent her his gown.

More serious was an accident to one of the guests who fell in the crush and broke his leg, leaving a wife and family without any income; a subscription was opened and two rounds of beef and half a cheese were sent to tide them over. The rest of the food was distributed to the aged and infirm and to the prisoners in the County Gaol on Castle Hill.

The day concluded with rustic sports on Midsummer Common that included a "Jingle match" for a hat value 15 shillings, donkey races, a "smoking match"; some chased a pig with a soaped tail, others dipped in a pail of water for an eel while six chimney-sweeps in their working clothes dipped in a bowl of flour for a shilling, the one who found it receiving a prize of seven shillings.

Thus ended the Cambridge peace celebration of June 12, 1814. By March the following year Bonaparte had escaped from Elba and was back in Paris. Blucher was forced to join forces with the Duke of Wellington to fight the Battle of Waterloo, at which 30,000 were killed and more than 58,000 wounded. It was to be July 15, 1815, before Napoleon finally surrendered and over 170 years before I got my invitation

c.02 : 1815 # c.45.3

1985 02 28

When beer was only a penny a pint .

Prices have changed somewhat over the past 75 years. In 1910 Bailey and Tebbutt's sparkling bottle beer was 2½ d (1p) a pint, wallpaper 1½d a roll, a set of false teeth could cost £1, while a top London Civil Servant earned the amazing salary of £1,800 per annum.

Some prices have re-mained static — a dog licence was 7s 6d (37½ p) whilst, incredibly, others have even dropped, for in those days you would have paid 1d for your copy of the "Cambridgeshire Weekly News" with its guaranteed largest circulation of all Cambridgeshire papers.

Insurance was free: £200 would be paid by the Ocean, Accident and Guarantee Corporation should any-body be killed on railway train, tramcar, omnibus or steamboat provided they had signed the policy printed on page 58 of "Westrope's Year Book, Almanack, Diary and Local Guide" for 1910.

This was published in Cottenham and provided information for 15 villages in the area. It listed the councillors, gave times of church services and details of travel arrangements for both J. Blunt and G. H. Merchant would convey passengers and parcels on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays through to Cam-bridge for a shilling (5p) return.

Advertisements show that Cottenham folk could get most of their necessities in the village — glycerine grease from Todd's stores, cherry cider from George Wolfe, mineral water manufacturers; tea from Hazels "who knows the peculiarities of the water" and can advise on the best; Harold Bell would frame your pictures, Mr Lucchesi mend your clock and G. H. Whitehead built your "Senior Wrangler" cycle.

Westrope packed his directory with a wealth of interesting articles about the area past and present. He recorded the opening on August 19th 1909 of the new organ at Willingham Tabernacle - powered by a petrol engine; he bemoaned the problems of "crooked Histon" which was "notor-ious for its many corners" and whose residents had refused to install street lights despite the new gas main being laid right through the village.

Oakington was much more advanced and a flying machine was actually being constructed there in a "mysterious barn," in October 1909 the "Grose-Feary No 2 All British Monoplane" had been ex-hibited in a marquee when a great many onlookers had flocked to the village to marvel and stare.

Some of the articles go back to the distant past, recalling the "Wonderful Willingham Boy" who had rapidly grown to manhood and been exhibited throughout the kingdom because of his size and strength before dying aged five years and 10 months in 1745. Elsewhere five pages were devoted to a compli-cated dispute over manorial rights in Cottenham in 1596 and the possibility that Belsars Hall, near Rampton, might have been the base at which William the Con-queror made his attack on Hereward the Wake and his men on the Isle of Ely way back in 1072.

But the main interest lies in the contemporary news. Cottenham was expanding slowly — two handsome villas here, four cottages there; two public houses had closed — the "Lord Nelson" and the "Lamb" but the "White Horse" was soon to re-open following renovation. Apart from an epidemic of whooping cough the village was healthy, perhaps due to the new horse brush now used for sweeping the streets.

Of course there were im-provements which ought to be made — a light railway, a motor omnibus service to Cambridge, a bridge at Twenty Pence, cheaper gas, better drainage and

sewerage. But at least some of the streets were lit by gas during the winter months, and the parish council had repaved part of the High Street. The inhabitants, Westrope noted, are generally "of a thrifty nature and one would have to travel a great distance to find another place with the same population (2,400 people) in such a prosperous condition."

The Cambridge Collection holds several editions Westrope's directories but would welcome the opportunity to acquire more which we can preserve others to make use of.

1985 04 04

How Guilden Morden learned the sad fate of the ship Cataraqui

DURING the early years of Queen Victoria's reign, Cambridgeshire was a depressed area. Haddenham, the newspaper reported, "was rapidly falling into obscurity," 50 acres of good arable land could find no buyers, small tradesmen were facing bankruptcy, cottages and small tenements were daily becoming unoccupied and gangs of unemployed labourers wandered around the village.

Such was the poverty and distress that people were increasingly opting to leave their native soils and seek their fortune overseas. The journey they faced was long and hazardous and it was often many years before those left behind learned of their fate. Sadly this was not the case at Guilden Morden in 1845.

Amos and Fanny Pierce and their seven children joined William and Sarah Izard, the Smith family and Thomas Pettengell, his wife and child = 23 in all – en route to their new lives. They left Liverpool on board the emigrant ship Cataraqui on April 20 along with 346 fellow passengers and set sail for Melbourne, Australia. They sailed south all through May, June and July and in August were almost there.

On Saturday night, August 3, the ship hove to because of a gale which had abated sufficiently for progress to be resumed at 3 am. At half past four on the Sunday morning, "it being quite dark and raining hard, blowing a fearful gale and the sea running mountains high," the ship struck a reef on the west coast of King's Island at the entrance to the Bass Straits.

Four feet of water flooded the hold and the hundreds of emigrants below deck struggled to get out, but the ladders gave way in the buffeting and the crew and fellow passengers laboured to pull them up bodily until 300 were huddled on a deck which was constantly swept by the sea breaking over it.

Thirty minutes later the ship careered right over on to her side and those still below drowned. The others clung to anything they could find and waited for daylight. As it became brighter, they could see the bodies of their travelling companions bobbing around them in the water and now only 200 people were left. They could see the shore but had no hope of reaching it through the raging storm.

All day they hung to the wreck while the sea broke over them, each wave washing somebody away. At 4 pm the ship began to break up and within the hour just 70 were left crowded on the forecabin. All night the winds raged and the rain pelted down, some lost their hold and fell overboard, others drowned where they were lashed.

As day broke for the second time, only 30 were alive and the remorseless waves smashed more of the wreck into matchwood. Thomas Guthrie, the chief mate, watched as the captain made a valiant attempt to reach the shore but was forced back and ended up clinging to the bows with 18 or 20 dead bodies around him, until he too slipped away.

Eventually Thomas could take it no more and in desperation seized a plank under his arm and leaped into the water, where by some miracle he was carried over the reef and on to the shore.

Others followed — able seamen Roberts, Jones, Miller, Simpson, Robinson and Johnson, apprentice William Blackstock and one emigrant, Solomon Brown.

Of the Cambridgeshire contingent there was no living sign, although bodies arrived regularly and were buried in the sand. Of the 423 souls who set out from Liverpool, only nine survived.

Thomas and his companions were rescued some five weeks later and landed at Hobson Bay on September 13, 1845, where they told of their horrendous experiences.

The news was reprinted in one newspaper after another and it was not until the "Cambridge Chronicle" of February 7, 1846, that the relatives and friends in Guilden Morden learned that Thomas, Amos, Fanny, William and Sarah and the others had failed in their attempt to make a new life for themselves.

EMIGRATION

1985 05 16

Soham in the 1840s

William Playford was concerned about what Soham people were reading in 1847. So he decided to do something about it by publishing his own "Playford's Soham Magazine and Friendly Monitor."

Each month it included articles on natural history around the world such as boa constrictors or pet snakes in the forests of Java. It contained a miscellany section ... "in the stillness of the night a steam vessel announces its approach by the sound of the splashing of its paddles when 15 miles from harbour."

The children's page gave facts worth remembering: "the 14th January is on average the coldest day of the year... the first railway coach was from Stockton to Darlington with one horse, 12 miles in one hour and a quarter ... the National Debt is £800 million."

There were many articles on morality and fervent opposition to "Popery." In Ireland "you find wretchedness and want, insubordination and dissatisfaction pervading almost every circle — the minister of peace burned in the public streets amidst the shouts of a priest-ridden people"

His correspondents expressed disquiet about their own town at the time, incendiarism was rife "seven tenements and three farm yards consumed and if some decisive and effectual steps are not taken every thatched building in the place will be destroyed": it was high time policemen were employed — a sentiment the editor endorsed "there is not a respectable inhabitant who does not feel that the condition of our streets, particularly on Sunday evenings, is in the highest degree disgraceful."

Times were hard and while one urged new arrangements for poor relief to discourage working men from squandering their money in public houses others proffered tips on how they could cope.

A regular feature was entitled "Economical hints" and was written by a Lady to her female servant about to get married; her message was clear "all waste is sin and I wish to enforce

economy in the most minute article." Tidiness was of the essence, there should be "no litter, no dirty corner or drawer and especially in the bed room where one should shake out singly every article of bed clothes over the back of a chair and leave it whilst kindling the fire; never omit mopping under the bed every morning and removing every particle of dust as quickly as it collects."

Economise over food, even pork, the cheapest meat since many families kept their own pigs: "bones will digest over and over again when placed in an iron pan with a little water and left to simmer . . . they produce a soup more nutritious than could possibly be imagined."

Her hints went further: "Collect all bones, fat and scraps that you would otherwise throw away, put them in a pan, cover with water and let simmer all evening and all night; in the morning when the soup is cold remove all the fat from it, this you may use to fry pancakes or potatoes. Drain the soup from the dregs at the bottom, add a teacup full of pease in a bag, a little onion, pepper and mint and boil well together. If it is not as good as you could wish add a spoonful of made mustard and serve with nice crisp toast."

She was under little doubt: "Your husband when returning cold and hungry from his day's work, if he finds this quite ready on his arrival, will probably make it suffice for his supper with the addition of a little bread and cheese. What a pleasure to think that by a little management you have saved the expense of one meal of animal food

Should the marriage survive the food then children were to be expected "When an infant is newly-born, you should never omit giving it a teaspoonful of castor oil; it prevents many complaints that they are subject to. In case of measles, chicken-pock etc.... a small quantity of weak onion tea often assists. As agues are so prevalent here, the most frugal and ready remedy is the snuff of a candle. You may mix it with a little honey, treacle or some other sweet that may disguise it and you need not tell your patient what it is"! She had remedies for other things too, from weak eyes a mixture of sugar and lead, water and laudanum — but does point out that sugar of lead is a very strong poison.

With its mixture of morality, facts worth remembering and many other similar features "Playfords Soham Magazine and Friendly Monitor" is among the less consulted items in the Cambridgeshire Collection. But it does offer an interesting insight into a community over 138 years ago which one correspondent hoped would soon be brought "into direct communication with civilised society."

1985 06 20

When boys work was in street or chimney, by Mike Petty

UNEMPLOYMENT is not a problem peculiar to the 1980s as Margaret Neville Keynes emphasised when in 1911 she produced her report entitled "The problem of boy labour in Cambridge"

She analysed the 437 boys who left school between July 1908 and July 1910 and found the majority went into unskilled work — eight as butchers' boys, 19 newspaper boys who "can fairly easily earn from three to seven shillings a week in the evenings" but "there is little inducement when they leave school for them to take regular all-day work for lower wages than they have earned in the evenings alone" and they tended to loaf about during the day. Telegraph boys on the other hand were fairly treated — "the boys have not long hours, they learn to be smart, obedient and orderly. They have compulsory evening classes which are very popular and if there is no permanent opening for them they are dismissed before they are too old to take up other work."

The most popular job was errand boy which claimed 167 of the school-leavers. It was a job which offered working hours from eight in the morning to eight at night with just one half-holiday a week - though not in term time and this left the youngsters too tired to go to evening classes.

The problem was however, that one day the employer told him that he had really outgrown the work and that a younger boy was coming to take his place, then at the age of 17 or 18 they found themselves out of work with no training.

"They become labourers ... or they enter the Army" - and of course three years later, just as these school-leavers were the right age, there was a considerable demand for soldiers in the slaughter of the Great War.

One category that does not feature in Margaret Neville's jobs surveys was chimney boys - but they would have been far too old at 13½ to undertake such work anyway, as a Government report of 1819 emphasised.

"Little boys for small flues" was the phrase in the cards left at the door by itinerant chimney sweepers - for flues less than 9 inches square needed small children to climb them, children aged from five to six years old who still needed to climb keeping their arms straight up, for if they brought them down they got jammed in the chimney; some were so narrow that should the child's shirt get rumpled as he climbed then this was enough to trap him in the blackness of the sooty chimney, forcing his master to cut him out.

Even when chimneys were wider the climbing boys — and girls — rubbed their knees and elbows raw, soot got on their eyes and they developed cancers, though as a doctor testified these were not "altogether fatal unless they will not submit to the operation — they have such a dread of the operation they will not submit to it ... without the operation it is death.

Often chimneys had to be climbed during the few hours of the day when fires were not needed, the children having to arrive outside the servants' door at 4 o'clock on a winter's morning and waiting for admission, shivering on the doorstep for perhaps half-an-hour.

More worrying, however was when a large party had been invited to dinner and the kitchen chimney caught fire an hour before it was time to serve; "all eyes are turned upon the sable consolation of the master chimney sweeper and up into the midst of the burning chimney is sent one of the miserable little infants of the brush. There is a positive prohibition of the practice in one of the Acts of Parliament but what matter Acts of Parliament when the pleasures of genteel people are concerned, or what is a toasted child compared to the agonies of the mistress of the house."

Certain children were kept in readiness for such an emergency — sometimes even they could not cope and been forced to call out. "It is so hot I cannot go any further" at which the master would heave a pail of water down from above, drenching the child in a mixture of water and burning soot and then often "because I could not do it I was taken home and well hid with a brush by the journeyman."

The poor, blackened, burnt and often crippled children did have some break from their employment as the testimony elicited: "Is it generally the custom that many masters are also nightmen" "Yes I forgot that circumstance, which is very grievous. I have been tied around the middle and let down several privies for the purpose of fetching watches and such things; it is generally the practice to take the smallest boy, to let him through the hole, without taking up the seat..."

In many ways the children Margaret Keynes surveyed 100 years later who were experiencing the horror of trench warfare had the easier life.

c.32.1

1985 07 25

When the lights went out all over the fens

AS the Burwell woman made her way upstairs to bed at 9.40 on an August evening in 1916 she was un-aware that her movements were being watched from the street by a professional peeping Tom. What he saw resulted in her 65-year-old husband being fined £2 at Newmarket court.

For six minutes the light from her candle had been clearly visible and if PC Frank Rawlinson could see it then so could an enemy Zeppelin.

Cambridgeshire in 1916 was acutely aware of the danger from airship bombing. In May Wicken feast had been a less than usually bright affair as stallkeepers had needed to make do without lights, whilst ever-efficient Little Downham (where rumours insisted that anti-aircraft guns had been installed) could claim in January that so effective was their blackout that one could walk down the village street without seeing a light stronger than a glimmer.

Ely had made preparations in event of air-raid. The Volunteer Training Corps had given instruction in first aid, Messrs Halls brewery had stretchers and Mrs Chase of The Palace had put aside 12 beds for casualties. The police would give warning of impending attack. By then there had already been a raid on Eastern England when in January the War Office confirmed that six or seven airships had passed over and according to Luther Brooks' "An old fenman remembers" some of the 220 bombs had fallen in Isleham Fen. But of this there is no record in the local newspaper, though the Urban Council was told that one man had actually gone out with a lantern looking for the Zeppelins.

There is no doubt of a later raid when on August 1, 1916, a raider was heard approaching just after midnight, the faint buzz from its silencers attracting the attention of the local stationmaster who could make out the shape of the Zeppelin high in the starry sky. Helplessly he watched as an incendiary bomb fell on the edge of a ditch setting fire to the dry grass and allowing the enemy crew to select their target. Half a minute later two high explosive bombs exploded simultaneously and two more incendiaries followed before the airship moved off north east.

News of the attack spread like wildfire, people flocked to view the devastation and attracted a London newspaper correspondent to describe the scene. this way to the 'Zep' pits. Admission threepence. Proceeds for the hospital and the farmer's crops," said the policeman directing the enormous queue who filed through the farm gate where the farmer's wife sat counting the money and allowing the more favoured visitors to examine the top of one of the bombs which she had discovered. The damage comprised two holes in a potato field, each just deep enough for children to play hide and seek in. But the residents suffered more inconvenience since the hoards of thirsty visitors had drained the last drop of beer from the local pub and forced it to close its doors.

The few brief paragraphs ignore the impact of such an attack on an isolated community which affected the lives of fenland folk to whom the explosions that rocked their cottages and brought the tin baths in the wash-house crashing to the floor were a terrifying glimpse of the horror being experienced by loved ones overseas. They would never forget the night they

were involved in a conflict that filled the local paper with heart-breaking lists of dead, wounded and missing neighbours, sons and husbands — week after week after week. Despite all this careless women still showed lights at their bedroom windows and their husbands had to pay the consequences.

The official order — as displayed on local posters

POLICE NOTICE.

CONTROL OF LIGHTING IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

Under Orders from the War Office NO LIGHTS SHALL BE VISIBLE from any House or Building or in Streets from 5 p.m. to 7.30 a.m., from To-day, till further orders.

c.45.5

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1985 08 15

Intricate intrigues of the Victorian political arena

CAMBRIDGE in the 1840s was a marginal constituency. Often political arguments were not enough to ensure success and both parties resorted to other means of encouraging voters —by bribery.

In 1839 the member of Parliament was deprived of his seat following an enquiry and when in 1843 Fitzroy Kelly polled just 95 more votes than his opponent, Richard Foster, the allegations of "bribery" were again raised.

A parliamentary committee was appointed to investigate and unravelled various tales of corruption and malpractice which shed some light on the Victorian political system. William Smithers had certainly been given £13 1s 9d, when he refused to vote until the money due to him for refreshments provided at the previous election had been paid. Defence lawyers tried to blacken his character — was it not true that he had been convicted of bigamy in 1830 and fined 1s, and had he not married yet again and was now living with a fourth woman? Yes, it was true but this did not make the bribery any less serious, the committee agreed and found the case proved.

Thomas Hurley claimed that Samuel Long had told him: "If you like to vote for Mr Kelly I will take care you do have some money and if you like I will give you some now," holding out several sovereigns and offering one on account. But Hurley had declined to take it and had voted for Foster — the suspicion was that he had been a spy for the other side.

The case of William Wilderspin was less straightforward; he was a shoemaker in Burleigh Street and owed £7 10s in rent to his landlord, a supporter of Richard Foster. He explained his predicament to Mr Kelly himself — he dare not vote in opposition to his landlord's feelings whilst he was so indebted to him, Kelly promised to sort things out. Thus on the day before the election Wilderspin went along to the Old English Gentleman in Barnwell. The derelict pub had been opened up, furniture, candles and other equipment taken in and four rooms made usable.

One of these upstairs was for the use of the University gentlemen who formed a part of the Watch committee — their job was to patrol the streets and keep watch for members of the other party who might be bribing voters and this they did in cap and gown, carrying short thick sticks and wearing false moustachios and whiskers. When not on the street they enjoyed quantities of wine, brandy and gin which were consumed until the early hours of the morning.

William, however, had business in the small room occupied by Dr Southey, a prominent surgeon, who promised that the rent would be taken care of, provided he cast his vote for

Fitzroy Kelly. On the morning of the election Wilderspin again returned to the Old English Gentleman to see Southey. He arrived there at seven o'clock but the doctor did not appear; fortified with a glass of sherry — the first he had had in 10 years — he refused the offer of a carriage to the polling place and elected to walk, escorted by other members of the committee. He paused for a glass of brandy in a private house, then moved on to the Elephant and Castle for a glass of ale but then decided not to vote until the afternoon.

Later he returned to the Elephant seeking Dr Southey, again he was unsuccessful but was definitely assured that provided he voted the rent would be paid. At this he made his way to Parker's Piece where the hustings were erected.

The hustings comprised a platform from which the candidates could address the voters and behind it seven polling booths, one for each ward. It was not however a secret ballot and following the election a poll book would be published which clearly showed for whom each elector had cast his vote.

William approached the polling clerk to declare his support for Mr Kelly and obtain the ticket on which would be entered his polling number — department G, number 924. He watched the clerk fill in the details but also noticed somebody hand a card to the official. This marked the end of his hopes for the small card indicated an objection to his vote — perhaps one of the watchmen for the other candidate had noticed his discussions with Fitzroy Kelly's supporters — and he was taken to the Mayor's booth nearby where he would be made to swear on oath that he had accepted no bribe.

Fortunately before the oath could be administered four o'clock struck and the poll was closed. The poll book records the letters "B.O" indicating that he was sent to take the oath, there is no mark in either the Kelly or the Foster column since the vote was never placed. The committee deliberated whether bribery had occurred in this case, by 4 votes to 3 they decided it had not. William never got his money and when he came before the inquiry he was still behind in his rent - though part had been paid off with money earned by his wife taking in laundry. After the long deliberations and having asked thousands of questions the committee agreed that Kelly had in fact been duly elected — but it was a split decision, -4 votes to 3.

c.33.3 : 1843

1985 09 12

JOHN BROWN'S schooldays started in Barnwell and ended in Cambridge; by the time he was ten years old he was ahead of his classmates in book-learning and mischief, and then disaster struck.

His father died, leaving the family butcher's business to an uncle who bankrupted it within two years. John, his mother and the five other children were penniless.

Other butchers rallied around and allowed them to become 'drovers' to earn a few pence. In those days, 1808, the stock-market was held in St Ives and John and his brother Bill needed to be on the road by three o'clock on the Monday morning to walk the 13 miles and be ready to mark the sheep purchased by the various butchers, some with red ochre, some with tar, before herding them into paddocks just outside the town.

When the entire drove was assembled the boys trudged the road to Cambridge with the 300 or 400 sheep, trying to keep them from running into adjacent fields, and eventually arriving, numb with cold, at 9 o'clock. Next day the flock was divided into constituent parts and delivered to the individual butchers in Cambridge and surrounding villages.

It was not a job on which to base a career and John sought an apprenticeship as a shoemaker. Sadly he chose a bad master and although he proved himself most proficient in his trade he suffered from poor accommodation in a garret said to be haunted and was beaten several times. Once he struck back and found himself in prison.

Eventually they parted and the boy went to London to seek his fortune. He obtained work as a shoemaker, went to sea, acted on the London stage and one day while walking down the Strand chanced into a Billiard parlour. Never having seen the game he went in and watched the match in progress. He also witnessed the game of Pool, studied it closely and then tried his hand.

Years later when he returned to Cambridge he took up the position of licensee of the Fort St George public house on Midsummer Common, building up trade to some £10 to £12 a day. In his spare moments he practised his billiard strokes on the bagatelle table which was among the attractions of the pub. It was not to last, one thing led to another and again he became penniless.

Once more he deserted Cambridge, once more he returned. This time he bought an old wooden billiards table and began to give instruction. Success prompted him to expand, he made his own slate table, chiselling and grinding the surface by hand until it was ready.

At first he hoped to limit his clientele to respectable tradesmen but they had no time to attend and failure again loomed. Salvation came in the shape of a group of "elite" young men from Trinity College enraptured with - not billiards - but pool.

That evening he made half-a-guinea, he had not taken so much money for months. He now catered exclusively for members of the University and business boomed, his tables, rooms and appointments were acknowledged to be the best in town, his customers were of the very first order.

Then the University authorities decided to prohibit their students from playing billiards and pool but John had been beaten so often he decided to fight back.

Warning bells were hidden throughout the playing rooms, lookouts placed by the doors; whenever the Proctor was sighted whistles were blown, the bells rang and the players fled through a secret window. At the same time the gas light was turned off at the mains and the official found only a blackened and deserted room. Frustrated by all this the University officials became desperate, sneaking up on one of the lookouts in an attempt to prevent him raising the alarm.

A tussle ensued, the lookout was struck, the University man was taken to court and fined 20/-. After other incidents the University capitulated, billiards were permitted, John Brown went from strength to strength.

By 1858 he owned two public rooms in Ram Yard for pool and billiards together with seven private billiards rooms and a racket-court. He was master of the largest establishment of its kind in the provinces, second only to one in London. When aged 63 he sat down to write his autobiography entitled "Sixty years gleanings from life's harvest" the Barnwell boy could feel content with his lot.

1985 10 10

Silver Street Toll

JAMES Ratcliffe had been a dealer in earthenware back in the 1790s and he had always paid the fee whenever he was caught by the toll-collector, although sometimes he went to Cambridge early and came out late so that he got away without payment. He later became a toll-collector himself. Then there was the old widow woman, Mrs Morris, who did the job in 1760, she walked along with a stick who put the money in a hob!;r which she always carried.

William Royston was a carrier at Hardwick as his father had been before him. As a lad he remembered going to Mr Beale's at Cambridge to deliver corn for milling or to collect coal, sometimes they went over the Small Bridges and down Silver Street, sometimes not, but if they were spotted they always paid the toll and had their waggon marked with chalk — a different colour each day. Of course if they came in empty — or had arranged the load so that the collector could not see it above the side of the cart — they were not charged.

For as long as people could remember Cambridge Corporation had demanded a toll of 2d for every loaded waggon that came into town, if it was unloaded there was another 2d charge and if it took a fresh load that was 2d more.

If the carrier refused to pay then his goods were distrained — Mr Beales had lost six halters at different times as since October 1824 he had refused to pay the tolls — they were a "grievous tax upon the industrious people who bring provisions to the town to supply the necessities of its inhabitants."

In justification for the charge the Corporation claimed that it needed the money to pay for the up-keep of the streets and bridges. There had been a bridge at Silver Street for centuries and in the old days there used to be a hermit who took tolls and repaired the bridge and history recorded that when he died in 1494 the Corporation had had to make the bridge passable again so quickly had it deteriorated. They rebuilt it in 1648 and were always being forced to pay out for repairs.

However, others pointed out that, as a result of an Act of Parliament in 1788, these responsibilities had been transferred to a new body, the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners who were authorised to levy taxes for road repair. Why then should people pay twice, and what were the Corporation spending their toll-money on anyway?

Was the £700 spent on the town's prison or prosecuting wrong-doers? No, for that came from the High Constable's rate which also paid for the expenses of the Aldermen who undertook duties at the Petty Sessions. Did the money go to subsidise the poor, the disabled soldiers or sailors that were always present? No, for that too came out from other rates.

Weston Hatfield, editor of the Cambridge Independent Press, was convinced that he knew where the money was going — "on scenes of riot and gluttony, on feasts monthly, annual and occasional on every pretext, on midnight orgies" for councillors. It was an example of the corruption of the Corporation in 1824 just part of the sad state of affairs at that time.

So, in 1824, Messrs Beales and Company refused to pay the tolls and were taken to court. The trial involved extensive readings from ancient documents dating back to the Domesday Book; charters and statutes were quoted, legal arguments raised.

The hearing lasted for a day and a hair, by the end of which, the Lord Chief Justice "was so inaudible from exhaustion" that he could scarcely be heard as he summed up the case. The jury had no doubts: the case was found in Beales' favour, the Corporation had no right to the tolls they had collected for so many years.

Two more cases followed, the Corporation won the second but lost the decider and its income was halved. No longer would Cambridge carriers need to fear the toll collector with his "harsh

passively-compelling visage, uncharged with any feeling whatsoever save the stern resolve to withstand passage until the sum was paid."

In Cambridge at least the streets were free — until the advent of the Traffic War-den.

1985 11 28

John Denson

IN Godmanchester nearly half the labourers were dependent on the poor relief in 1829, no wonder the parish had to find over £2,000 that year.

Payment was based on the price of bread, a single man should have four loaves a week, a married man with four children was allowed 12. But even when a man was in work his wages of 20s (£1) in 1812 would buy only nine loaves and the parish poor rate would have to pay the extra 6s 3d (37p) to bring him up to subsistence level.

Expenditure on poor relief nationwide had doubled over 20 years. Without money the poor could not afford to buy — pork meat had to be priced down from 10s 6d (52p) to 4s 6d (22p) per stone before it could be sold, manufacturers found themselves without a mar-~~ket~~.

John Denson, of Waterbeach, had his thoughts on the cause and its remedy which he published in let-~~ters~~ to the "Cambridge Chronicle" newspaper and reprinted in 1830 under the title "A peasant's voice to landowners on the best means of benefiting agri-cultural labourers." Part of the problem was the declining standards of farmers. What would their ancestors — who really were farmers — have said if they could see the farm-house full of servants with bells to "summon Betty to light the parlour fire, clean the bright stove, to brush the carpet, to shine your Honour's and Master Jackey Jackenape's boots ... to see you with your tea-urn and at dinner with your finger glasses, trifle dishes. How prodigiously the old ladies would stare, and well they might. I have seen a modern farmer's wife run away from the sight of her own cows; and had she happened to encounter one of her hus-band's old sows with its pigs ... she would have gone into hysterics..."

The modern farmers spent more on dinner and wine on market day than would keep a labourer's family for a week. And while the farmers were drinking port wine for-tified with brandy many a labourer was drinking water out of a ditch or stagnant pond.

With more and more big farms the labourer had to work too far from home to go back for a hot meal; nor was he now allowed firing to cook in the field. In the old days he boarded with the farmer during harvest and was allowed two loads of straw to litter his pigs and heat the oven and was allowed to use the farm cart to take home firing. Now all that was finished, along with the traditional harvest home supper at the big house.

Previously too his wife would be allowed to glean not only wheat but also barley, beans and peas which helped to keep a pig or pay shoemakers bills, now all that was fed to the farmers own hogs.

Part of the problem too was modern machinery. Horse-ploughing might be quicker than hand cultivation but could not produce the same crops and as for the "infernal" threshing machine why "had it not been for this not one man here would not be out of employ, now one machine does as much work in three days as would em-~~ploy~~ a man throughout the winter."

Nor was it as good as the old flail, since when the flail was used the straw was turned out at the barn door to be browsed over by cattle, thus converting a portion of the straw to animal

food with the rest making excellent manure for the land. Now the straw was thrown into a large heap "comparatively worthless."

With no work to be done on the farm the men had to work for the parish, digging gravel for repairing roads. If they were not needed they had to trudge four miles to the principal farm to see if there was a job and have their name taken "lest they meet with some little job and thereby defraud the parish."

By treating a man with such suspicion you under-mined his pride "treat him as a rascal and you take the surest way to make him one," was a common observation. When a man had to apply for relief "he became degraded in his own eyes."

John Denson urged that each man be given access to half an acre of land that he could work and produce his own food. Today village allotments still supplement many families' diets. One wonders whether other remedies for current problems might be found in the writings of a self-confessed Cambridge-shire 'Peasant' of 150 years ago.

1985 - Jack Hobbs, legend of Cambridge cricket

MIKE PETTY looks at the career of one of Cambridge's post famous sons and a cricketing master: John Berry Hobbs

JACK HOBBS played football for Cambridge Liberals during the winter months but as soon as April came he could be found, although surrounded by soccer matches, practising his true love, cricket.

The sport was literally in his blood for his father was a cricket professional on the ground staff at Fenner's and had taken his first child, John Berry Hobbs, as a babe in arms to witness a match between the University and the Australians. The young lad's excitement had been such that one of the visiting team had commented "Better make a cricketer of that kid, old man." And so it proved.

It was at Jesus College that Jack developed his natural abilities, playing on a gravel pitch in front of the servants' quarters, the wicket a tennis post, the ball a tennis ball and his bat a cricket stump. It was here, too, that he batted in his first match when, aged 10, he joined with Jesus College choir-boys in a game.

The choirboys of St Matthew's Church made him the captain of their eleven when they took on the choristers of Trinity College and Jack hit his highest score to date, three runs. But he continued to watch the skills of the under-graduates in the nets at Jesus College and soon achieved an innings of 90 runs, ended only by a disputed lbw decision which prompted the paper to report it as 90 not out, an achievement that caused his father much delight.

By now he could be found on Parker's Piece practising before school — having woken at 6 am and spent half-an-hour walking there. He returned when the schoolday was finished and all day during the summer holidays.

Jack Hobbs probably paid more for his cricket than anybody else, since the charge for a match on a prepared pitch was one shilling (5p), each player paying one penny, except the captain who had to pay twopence. Jack was often the captain.

Having left the St Matthew's Church choir eleven he founded a team known as the Ivy Cricket Club and then joined those Cambridge Liberals (playing cricket as well as football). The year 1901 was the turning point in his career when both the Liberals and the Ainsworth clubs — with whom he had connections via a Bible class — wanted him in their side for the needle-

match between them. In the event they tossed for his services, Ainsworth won and Jack notched up his first century.

Jack had a cricketer hero and used to walk to the public library to see his triumphs reported in national newspapers. When Cambridge cricketer Tom Hayward took his hundred wickets in one season of first class cricket young Master Hobbs was delighted; when he found himself facing Tom's bowling in a charity match and survived to make 26 not-out he was excited beyond measure.

There could be no doubt: Jack wanted to earn his living at the game, if only by working as a groundsman like his dad. In 1902 he achieved his first professional engagement at Bedford Grammar School — coaching schoolboys at the nets. John Hobbs senior died shortly afterwards, but not before he had seen his son make a fee of 10 shillings and a score of 119 in his first professional match on Royston Heath.

It was as the newspaper reported "a long and highly meritorious innings." It was just one of very many— 197 centuries in first-class cricket alone.

The career of John Berry Hobbs progressed from strength to strength; he played for England between 1907 and 1930 and for Surrey from leaving Cambridge in 1905 until his retirement in 1935. In 1924 he published "My Cricket Memories," a copy of which is housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection. It is a tangible reminder of a local lad who made good and overlooks an area he loved and which he described as "probably the finest and most famous public cricket ground in the world."

c.38 : cricket

1986 03 27 – James Smith

JAMES Smith was a bit of a lad in his younger days. He was good at ploughing - he won first prize in the boys' class, but his passion was dancing and he frequently was out from early eve till early morning, making his way back to the small cottage in Narrow Lane Histon, just as the sun was rising.

But he did not care for Sunday School. He was strong-willed and not studious and the weekly trip to the Wesleyan Church was something of a bind, though he was to remember the various preachers he heard, including the famous Charles Spurgeon of Waterbeach.

However, it was in a room belonging to the Rose and Crown that he first heard Jacob Wisbey, who was preaching there as at the time the Baptist congregation had no chapel and what James heard changed his life, bringing him with pickaxe and shovel to help to clear the site on which the chapel was to be built and leading him to be baptised on Christmas Day, 1858.

The next year George Apthorpe invited the young man to leave the land and join him in his grocer's shop in Cambridge. James did his last harvest for Farmer Batterson and made the move. George Apthorpe was secretary of the Village Preachers' Association and soon his new assistant joined him as he travelled round the area conducting services in local chapels. Before long James was preaching himself and in January, 1862, he found himself in the Congregational Chapel at Reach delivering an address which left many of the congregation in tears.

While he travelled back to Cambridge many stayed behind struck by what the young man had said. They returned the following evening and at Newmarket the next day the word reached the ears of Edward Ball of Burwell — "we had that young man James Smith preaching at our chapel on Sunday evening and I never saw people like it before. Last night the chapel was

full, and such a meet-ing! People were crying out and seeking for mercy. You must come over this weekend." That night many stayed on after the meeting and did not disband until two o'clock in the morning.

Edward Ball was im-pressed by what he heard of the new preacher and, when the people of Burwell decided to hold Sunday services in their British School, it was to James Smith that they looked for a minister. At first he declined, claiming that he had but few sermons, certainly not enough for the three-month session they wanted, but he was persuaded to change his mind and stayed nine months. At the outset many sneered, some even com-posed a song about them and paid a man to go through the village and sing it but, despite this, the congregation swelled, meetings continued well past mid-night and public baptisms were held in the river.

Four hundred and fifty people attended the public meeting held when James left Burwell to be trained for the ministry at Spurgeon's College in London. There he found difficul-ties, for he was no academic and was more at home in the pulpit than behind a desk studying Greek or Latin. To one used to fresh country air, the London fogs proved troublesome and he was forced to break his studies to return home for convalescence. There he met his future bride, although wedding plans had to be changed at the last minute as through an oversight they found they could not be married in the Histon chapel but had to transfer the service to Cottenham.

When he was appointed to minister at the Baptist chapel in Red Hill they to-gether learned the difficul-ties of building both a con-gregation and a new build-ing, and while the former were of good voice the acoustics of the chapel with an unpleasant echo made preaching difficult. After seven years they returned, in 1871, to Cam-bridgeshire to take charge of the second richest con-gregation in the county, that of Haddenham. It was one of the happiest — and yet the saddest — periods of his life.

The people were friendly and generous, the old chapel was frequently packed, the atmosphere becoming very close and hot, uncomfortable to preacher and people. Smith was concerned that the posts supporting the gallery were very thin — "I was afraid it might break down, and my wife was underneath." Those fears proved groundless but it was at this time that his mother died.

He travelled round to neighbouring chapels, always welcomed by Baptist friends — Camps, Sneesby, Everett, Yarrow and Few — before returning back to their nice comfortable Manse. Yet the view from the window looked over the adjacent nonconformist cemetery, there was no escape from reminder of death, and it was in that cemetery that James left his daughter Catherine, who died aged just eight years old from diphtheria. The minister was heart-broken — "I felt as if I could leap into the grave and bring her back again." He was to lose a second child, Minnie, in his next ministry at Leeds, whose smoke and noise and climate did not endear itself and where the new chapel blew down twice during construction. He stayed five years before moving down to Tunbridge Wells, where he ministered until his health gave way under the con-stant pressure of his work.

Gout, paralysis, bronchitis and pneumonia combining to reunite James with his two daughters in February, 1897. A tribute to the Histon boy was written by Mr T. Bell of Chesterton and Charles Spurgeon, his inspiration and teacher, contributed the preface. It remains a reminder of one man's con-tribution to Baptist worship in Cambridgeshire.

c.82.05

1986 04 24

Samuel Newton's Diary

GUNFIRE echoed from the roof of King's College chapel in 1660 as the soldiers stationed there saluted the news of the proclamation of King Charles II. Samuel Newton jotted it down on a scrap of paper which he kept in his diary. It was his first entry in a journal that was to span over 50 years during which he witnessed many traumatic events.

He recorded gunfire again in June 1665 but this time it was the distant boom of canon as British and Dutch fleets battled off Harwich and he must have wondered if any of the men taken by press gang from Cambridge two months before had been involved. Some 80 had gone, including John Sparkes, the baker's son.

Samuel made his mark in Cambridge politics, becoming a councillor, Alderman and Mayor. As such he took part in much civic ceremonial, proclaimed Midsummer Fair and joined the Mayor and other councillors in the official trip from Mill Pool where they chartered three boats with nets to fish the river up as far as Bullen's. This must have been a potentially hazardous trip and he notes that official gowns were not worn, nor was the Mace carried with them. It was in the same stretch of water that one Alderman later lost his son, who drowned himself after being cheated out of £100 by a London gamester at a game of dice in the Red Heart inn, Petty Cury.

Samuel Newton was part of the official party who met various visiting dignitaries; he met the Duke of Tuscany in 1669, a young Dutch Prince a well countenanced man, a smooth and smeeger face and a handsome head of hayre of his own who paid a fleeting visit in 1670. He would have liked to have stayed longer as "he had a minde to see this Towne but his business was such as would permitt but a short stay." So reads the note about a certain William of Orange, whom Samuel was to meet again later.

In the meantime he met King Charles II and although the monarch did not get out of his coach when Mr Mayor Newton met him on Christ's Pieces in 1671 he did accept from Samuel's hands the gift of "100 twenty shilling peeces of broad gold in a crimson coullered velvet pouch" and commented approvingly of Hobson's conduit which "ran Claret wine when his Majestie passed by."

On February 7th, 1685 came news that the King was dead, James II was immediately proclaimed in eight places around Cambridge, Samuel himself reading the official proclamation, the Town Clerk repeating it more audibly.

James' support for Roman Catholicism was to prompt much disquiet and in December 1688 some people ransacked Cambridge for several nights, seeking Papists and arms, but all this was seen as only a foretaste of what was to come when news that a mob of from 5 to 6,000 Irishmen had "burnt Bedford and cutt all their throats there and they were coming on for Cambridge." Panic ensued.

"It being a rayny and darke night candles alight were sett upp in all windowes next the streetes and it was said that they were coming in at the Castle end, others said they were come in and cutting of throats, soe that the scare for the present was very great and very dismall" But it was all just rumour and calm eventually prevailed.

James was forced to abdicate and the young Prince William of Orange that Samuel had welcomed in 1670 was proclaimed king. Once more Samuel Newton was in the official party that waited on Christ's Pieces for the visit of their Sovereign in October 1689 though this time the present they had to offer was poor compared to the purse that had been handed to King Charles II.

The Corporation had sent their man down to London for a gift of a bason and ewer and had scraped together £50 for him to spend; in the event he could only find one worth £33, yet this was received well enough before the official party escorted the Royal coach to Trinity College where he dined before visiting King's College chapel and leaving again for Newmarket.

Samuel continued his diary until 1717, he was to see the death of King William, meet Queen Anne and hear the proclamation of King George I before he died aged 90 and was buried in St Edward's church.

The diary was published in 1890 and remains a fascinating record of civic life in Cambridge and events in the surrounding area.

1986 06 01 Singing the charms of Louth

AS holiday traffic jammed the motorways we headed off into the unknown.

Via Parson Drove (last home of the woad mills whose dye turned natives a frightening blue), through Gedney Hill and Holbeach Drove, wondering all the while where the traffic had gone to, then discovering it suddenly at Boston only to lose it again before Fishtoft.

On towards Grimsby, pausing to gather breath and gaze in wonder at the violent ascent beyond Scamblersby, and the excitement of Cadwell Park racing circuit on the approach to which motorbikes easily outnumbered family saloons, though neither were obtrusive.

With the spire of Louth Church beckoning it was time to turn off the main roads and down the private drive which led to the golf course and adjacent County House Hotel.

Had there been any hassle in the journey it would have immediately evaporated in an atmosphere of calm, in the well-padded lounge and magnificent conservatory whose outside tables looked south over rolling countryside with not a house in sight.

It was countryside waiting to be explored, especially with a beautiful village just a stroll away on the edge of which was an attractive ford and a most attractive thatched pub. But this was a Bank Holiday weekend. Though there places to sit there was no food as the kitchens were unable to cope with the waiting list — a situation echoed in the next pub, where staff waited for the butcher we saw gossiping to a customer a few houses down. By the time we had retraced our footsteps the queue had melted away and the wait was worthwhile.

Finally unpacked we discovered to our horror a new sports and swimming complex, unexpected when trunks were left behind. In Louth courteous shopkeepers combined to ensure the oversight was remedied.

Courtesy and friendliness dominated our impressions of our neighbours in Lincolnshire. People with time to talk and a willingness to do so. To describe the events of a wartime night when dozens of incendiary bombs had destroyed the elegant mansion in the rebuilt wing of which we now temporarily resided — the result not of enemy action but of a returning bomber jettisoning its cargo before landing at one of the adjacent airfields.

By chance, a day or two later, I sat beside one who had flown and fought from that very strip. I sang the charms of Louth which he could not echo. Who would choose to visit a dreary landscape full of flat fields of sugar beet. I protested that it had been a green and lambing landscape — it must be just a change in agriculture. And the rolling hills of these Lincolnshire

wolds, so reminiscent of more distant Downs or Dales, were they the result of more misplaced bombs or some magic woven by Lincolnshire folk. If so it worked,

Kenwick Park Hotel, Louth, where we stayed, is part of the Best Western Hotels group and offers breaks throughout the year.

1986 06 06

Rev William Cole

THE Rev William Cole was house-hunting. He had taken the living at Bletchley but now his time there was nearly up and he hankered to move back to Cambridge-shire.

He already had some properties there in the form of a farmhouse at Frog Hall, Haddenham. But in February 1767 this had been flooded when the river breached at Over and his servant who had visited it three months later reported the land was still awash with water two feet deep. No, Haddenham might suit frogs but a clergyman needed better accommodation.

William had kept in touch with houses by scanning the "Cambridge Chronicle" weekly and had numerous friends whose help he could call upon when seeking suitable properties. The Rev Masters of Landbeach informed him of houses at Waterbeach, Gamlingay or Girton, or there was a house and land on the market at Duxford for £250. Cole wrote to Mr Huddleston of Sawston Hall for further details. The message came back that the house was ruinous. However, there were properties in Shelford or Ickleton and the White Hart Inn at Ely was being converted into a gentleman's house.

Faced with so much advice William decided to see for himself, but it was not until Monday, June 15, 1767 that he set off — only to find the stagecoach overbooked and had to hire a private post chaise as far as London. Here he bought himself a new coach for £50 and in this finally arrived at Sawston at two o'clock on the Wednesday afternoon. Huddleston guided him around the properties but they were not at all suitable

Cole moved on to visit Mr Masters at Landbeach and together they went to look at the vicarage at Waterbeach. He found it "extremely small, inconvenient and wretched" but thought it would suit him well. His friend urged him against it, but William was adamant. The price was right, he could have the care of the church and hire some other land for £6, coals and firing was cheap and his beloved Cambridge near. His mind was made up and he returned to Bletchley to make arrangements for moving.

The heavy goods would go by water. Two carts would take them to Bedford where Mr Thead would take them down the Ouse to Earith, then on to the Old West River, down to the Cam and up to Waterbeach. But by the time they arrived Cole had agreed on a different house. "Much more convenient and with stables." Masters had told him and Cole took his word.

On Tuesday, August 11 he set off in his coach with a full load of china plates. The journey was tiring, his horse was ill and had to be rested frequently. It was eight the following evening when he got to Landbeach and next morning before he glimpsed his new property. He was horrified. It "was much out of repair and a shocking place." The kitchen needed tiling, a wall had to be built, partitions installed, decorating to be done ... when the deal fell through Cole was relieved and made arrangements for work to begin on his original choice, the Vicarage.

Back he went to Bletchley. Back he came on November 20 to find the house still incomplete. He moved in on December 1 amid much muddle, often having to journey to Cambridge for odds and ends of material. He squabbled with Masters, who was quick to tell him he had always said Cole should never have bought the place anyway.

By Christmas he was writing to his friends in Buckinghamshire. His bedroom was still "filled up with boxes, clothes and all sorts of litter for the two or three others had neither doors nor ceilings when I came, not even a staircase to get up to the garrets, though I had been made to believe that every thing was ready for me."

He had other problems: "I have a sort of hall where I cannot sit with the door shut because of the smook, which is also the case of every room in the house." He was constantly "running out of the smoky parlour for fresh air into the hall,"

What was worse "the grief of grief is yet behind: the Parish swarms with Methodists: my 2 neighbours on each side of me are such, and opposite to me the same: and indeed, look which way I will, the same heresy stares me in the Face. It is probable I shall make no long Stay and where I heartily wish I had never set foot ... these are penances due for my sins and I hope they will be accepted as such."

But despite it all Cole still loved Cambridgeshire^ ... "Wild Fowl such as Ducks, Teal. Snipes etc are here in their element and perfection: and Fish of every sort of the River kind I never tasted better..."

He endured his penance for two years, then moved — more happily — to Milton where he died in December 1782 having secured his place as the county's greatest historian.

1986 07 31
John O'Donoghue

It was 1943 and John O'Donoghue was a foreigner in a strange land.

Like others he had been made to strip and bathe before being led like cattle to a canteen where they were given mugs of evil-tasting tea and terrible, sour meat pies. Some said they contained jackdaw-meat and John believed them.

By the time his train finally lurched into the station he had been heartily sick and on arrival at the camp while others had reported to the police, he was fit for nothing but to collapse on his bunk and stare at the corrugated iron roof of the Nissen hut until sleep overcame him.

Next morning as he ate the few pieces of bacon and sausage that were all the ration afforded he tried to make some sense of the babble of voices around him, all speaking the same language but in accents that varied from Scottish and Welsh to the almost incomprehensible Cockney as well as the more familiar Irish brogue such as his own.

For John had left County Kerry not to fight for his country but to earn enough to save himself starving in a workhouse at home. Now he was here, just a few miles from Cambridge, to work on the airfield they were constructing across the Witchford fields.

The transport took them into Ely and then out along the Cambridge road to the gates of the camp where in hard frost and thickening fog they waited to be assigned to their tasks. John was allotted to the gang working the giant cement mixer, shovelling stones and sand into the machine until his arms ached and he felt fit to drop. This was no work for a 43-year-old. Nor did he find pushing the heavy barrow piled high with concrete across narrow planks over deep and wide ditches any more to his liking, and when he tried carrying the bags of cement dust it got into his eyes as it did into every scratch on his hands. By the end of three days he had had enough and said so in no uncertain manner. He was transferred to a gang of bricklayers but was not prepared to be bullied by the small foreman there and stalked off again.

Surely somewhere in the mass of equipment that stretched across the site there must be some-thing suitable for one such as he. Fortune smiled on him. He was offered a post in the canteen, cleaning ranges, lighting fires, fill-ing the big urns with water, dusting and sweeping. At lunch time he helped to serve the plates of food. Afterwards he had his fill from what was left.

It would have been an ideal world were it not for Miss Bossy-Boots — a local girl — who objected to his friends visiting the kitchen while encouraging others who were in a position to supply her with fully-fashioned stockings.

In truth John found the locals most reserved. They would not respond to his Irish chat. Children ran indoors when he passed. It would have been most lonely were it not for the group of his cousins who were quartered just across the fen working on Mepal airfield, and for the friendship he struck up with a local boy — an educated lad who attended Soham Grammar School.

For was not John him-self an educated man? He journeyed to Cambridge to look at the colleges and stop undergraduates on the streets for a discus-sion, and he attended the King's School in Ely. Or rather he visited it twice. Once he was merely wandering round when he spotted an open door and, at the top of the stairs, a classroom with books — and John loved books. One caught his eye. It was 'The Pilgrim's Pro-gress' and was illustrated with nice, coloured pic-tures; for a while he read then noticed the piano in the corner and taking a seat played, with one hand, "The wearing of the green," a sort of musical protest against the strange ways of Fenland folk. Later he returned to the same room, pushed open the door and was amazed when a class of boys rose to their feet as he walked in.

"What a show of honour for a mere Irish peasant," he mused. The headmaster whose class he had interrupted was however quite ada-mant — John should really not be wandering around the school, he must leave. John wrote to apologise. A reply invited him for a chat, as a result of which he was allowed to borrow the book he had set his heart on reading.

Further books came following a bike ride to March to visit the county librarian at her home, and there were more to be seen in the Ely bookshop. John was especially in-terested in geography. He bought a map to show where Witchford was, he asked directions and de-tails from passers-by, and he received a visit from the constabulary anxious to discover just why such a one as he was making all the inquiries about the location of newly con-structed airfields in wartime Britain.

When his ability to write resulted in a transfer from the kitchen to the camp office John was delighted. He was less pleased when he found that he had to add up columns of figures, and still sadder when he found himself outside again labouring. He was one of a large gang sweeping the newly constructed runways, singing songs of old Ire-land while the large Lancaster bombers were flying in to take their places in the big black hangars that he had helped to construct, when the announcement came that his labour was no longer required.

The officious staff at the Ely Labour Exchange had nothing at all suitable for an Irish labourer, yet if he went home there would be nothing to do except work in the bogs, digging peat to replace the coal that was no longer available.

Rumour had it that there was work at Handley Page's factory at Cricklewood, so with not too much regret John O'Donoghue once more boarded the train at Ely station, got his last glimpse of Cambridge as he passed through and went off to seek his for-tune elsewhere.

Our Time articles

Our Time – those added in italics

Our Time No.1: April 2004

Mike PETTY – Cambridge before the grand designs – LION YARD, ALEXANDRA ST
c.44.6

Our Time No.1: April 2004

Mike PETTY – When a semi cost less than £15,000 – c.06

Our Time No.2 : May 2004

Mike PETTY – FITZROY STREET # c.44.6

Our Time No.2 : May 2004

Mike PETTY – Glimpses of life – places visited for talks

Our Time No.3: June 2004

Mike PETTY – KING'S PARADE & KING ST # c.44.6

Our Time No.3: June 2004

Mike PETTY – Changing face of the fenland – STRETHAM ENGINE

Our TimeNo.4 : July 2004

Mike PETTY – CHERRY HINTON ROAD # c.44.6

Our TimeNo.4 : July 2004

Mike PETTY – WINDMILLS

Our Time Our Time No.5 : August 2004

Mike PETTY – CASTLE STREET # c.44.6

Our Time Our Time No.5 : August 2004

Mike PETTY – Lights – rural cinemas # c.76.9

Our Time No.6 : September 2004

Mike PETTY – ST ANDREW'S STREET

Our Time No.7 : October 2004

Mike PETTY – The Monks pipe and HOBSON's choice # c.24.2 # CONDUIT

Our TimeNo.8 : November 2004

Mike PETTY – BRIDGE STREET

Our TimeNo.8 : November 2004

Mike PETTY – Grand designs, new beginnings shopping – c.27.2

Our Time No.9 : November 2004

Mike PETTY – Past POPPY days – ARMISTICE Sunday celebrations # RAG

Our Time No.9 : November 2004

Mike PETTY – Remember, remember – GUY FAWKES # BONFIRE # RAG

Our Time No.10 : December 2004

Mike PETTY – Without the trimmings – wartime CHRISTMASSES

Our Time No.11 : January 2005

Mike PETTY – WHEELER STREET

Our Time No.11 : January 2005

Mike PETTY – MELBOURN

Our Time No.12 : February 2005

Mike PETTY – GLOUCESTER STREET

Our Time No.12 : February 2005

Mike PETTY – What's in a name – DUKE of GLOUCESTER, Chancellor and FLOODS
1947 visit # c.12.5

Our Time No.13 : March 2005

Mike PETTY – FLOODS 1937 & 1947 # c.12.5

Our Time No.13 : March 2005

Mike PETTY – City life in the frame – Arthur NICHOLLS # c.65.5

Our Time No.14 : April 2005

Mike PETTY – COLDHAMS LANE

Our Time No.14 : April 2005

Mike PETTY – CIVIC RESTAURANT # c.27.4

Our Time No 15: May 2005 – HAVE NO COPY OF MAGAZINE

Mike Petty – VE & VJ in Cambridgeshire # c.45.7

Our Time No 15: May 2005 – HAVE NO COPY OF MAGAZINE

Mike Petty – Grafton Centre

Our Time No.16: June 2005

Mike PETTY – MOCK FUNERALS # c.39

Our Time No.17 : July 2005

Mike PETTY – RIVER CAM to Baitsbite

Our Time No.18 : August 2005

Mike PETTY – Water under the bridge: CAM from BAITS BITE to OLD WEST

Our Time No.18 : August 2005

Mike PETTY – Behind the façade – SIDNEY STREET

Our Time No.19 : September 2005

Mike PETTY – TRINITY STREET

Our Time No.19 : September 2005

Mike PETTY – RIVER OLD WEST

Our Time No 20 : October 2005

Mike PETTY – PEAS HILL

Our Time No.19 : September 2005

Mike PETTY – RIVER GREAT OUSE to Ely

Our Time 2004 01

Postcard discovery not black and white – Mike Petty

James Gillham from ... [james@jgphotos.co.uk] has some across some old negatives, dating back to the 1960s which provide something of a mystery. There are three separate boxes, one labelled 'Rowell – Exning', another just 'Godmanchester' and the third 'Rev Ruston – Cambridge'

The first contains envelopes of 6x4 inch negatives and prints initialled LRC. They show Landwade Road, St Martin's Close, the Church, Oxford Street and Glanelly Old People's Home, all in Exning. They were produced as postcards, but it is hard to believe they enjoyed great commercial success. [SCAN NEGS OF ST MARTIN'S CLOSE AND GLANELLY OLD PEOPLES HOME]

The Godmanchester box has rather more negatives of the church, Causeway, War Memorial, Cambridge Street, Post Street, Black Bull and River, amongst others. Many have the initials LRB followed by a number [SCAN NEGS OF THE BLACK BULL, POST STREET AND COMPOSITE 'GREETINGS' CARD]

The Cambridge box contains negatives of Holy Sepulchre Church, together with some postcard-sized prints. The envelopes containing the negatives are stamped 'E.A. Sweetman & Sons Ltd, 'Sunshine Works', Tunbridge Wells, Kent' but there is correspondence from the Revd C.M. Ruston of Jesus Lane, Cambridge dated 8th September 1965. addressed to the Automatic Photo Printing Company. From this it seems that the Company is to produce postcard from the negatives: "please go ahead and print 1000 for the moment, as soon as possible. When the new season for visitors is a bit nearer I shall be able to order this card and another". A bit later the Rev Ruston says: "It will be best if you keep the negatives from which you work". [SCAN OF TWO VIEWS OF HOLY SEPULCHRE]

Another loose envelope has the heading 'Automatic Photo Printing Co.Ltd, The Photo Trade Printers and Finishers', Walton, Peterborough' which might suggest that the two firms were linked.

Does any of this ring any bell with you, or do the pictures themselves jog special memories of the place you called home?

James doesn't want the pictures to be dumped and is planning to deposit them in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Lion Yard Library

Our Time 2004 01
Wheeler Street, by Mike Petty

Wheeler Street is not one of Cambridge's most distinguished thoroughfares but it houses two of the City's most important buildings. One is the magnificent domed room originally constructed as the home for the Free Library which houses the Tourist Bureau. [SCAN LIBRARY INTERIOR 1930S, NOW TOURIST BUREAU]. It was nearly destroyed in 1904 by a serious fire that devastated the adjacent corn merchants premises on Peas Hill, its dome peering above the burnt-out rafters. [SCAN PEAS 1 – PEAS HILL FOLLOWING FIRE 1904]The wrecked buildings were removed, together with the premises of Mr Meech the tobacconist and Mr Hills' printshop, and replaced by offices later used as a children's' library and newspaper reading room before they moved to the new Central Library in Lion Yard. [SCAN T2017 – WHEELER STREET 1950S]

In Victorian times it was a bustling street; every Saturday the area was a vast outdoor display. Mr Johnson, the cooper put out his hogshead, pipes, tubs and casks on the pavement opposite the shop for sale. In Parson's Court – or Ann's Yard as was then called –Mr Summer a cabinet maker displayed tables, chairs and furniture, Mr Clayton hung fish outside his shop, together with hares and rabbits on sticks and there were vendors of sweetmeats and walnuts with trays hung around their necks. [SCAN 6923 – PARSONS COURT, WHEELER STREET 1875]

But it was not an place to linger for at one end were the fish sellers on Peas Hill, about 20 stalls some half on the road and half on the pavement. There were other commodities too – earthenware, corn and shoes - but the main thing was the fish of all sorts, from sea and fen. And added to the smell of fish was the stench from piles of bullock and calf skins collected from the butchers and piled up in a heap in Butcher Row until there were enough to be carted away to Thomas Evans works at Sawston. People complained to the Council who said nothing could be done, as it was part of the Market.

The sale of corn had always been an important part of the local economy and until 1842 was conducted between Market Street and Rose Crescent. But then a purpose-built Corn Exchange had been constructed on the corner of Downing Street and what was once called Slaughter House Lane, now Corn Exchange Street.

Seven years later the Market Hill area was devastated by a fire and when the ashes had cooled the debate began on how best to make use of this new opportunity to redevelop the commercial centre of the town. The present Market Square is one result of the deliberation. A second consequence was more slowly realised and necessitated much debate & argument before in 1876 a New Corn Exchange was opened in Wheeler Street.

The question as to what was to be done with the Old building occupied many minds. For a while it was used as an indoor market the Cambridge Arcade - then Ernie Hayward, an enterprising local concert promoter, converted it into a variety music hall and enjoyed considerable success. But the long frost between December 1894 and March 1895 was its downfall. The cold weather prompted another enterprising businessman, Mr Bartholomew, to install floodlights so people could skate on a specially flooded area of Grantchester Meadows through the hours of darkness. This combination of a popular pastime and the novelty of floodlighting caught the imagination of those patrons who ought to have been flocking into the Arcade Music Hall. Even the prospect of a Marie Lloyd concert was insufficient attraction and the theatre closed shortly before the thaw came. From 1895 to 1914 it was used as a cycle repair shop, subsequently it became one of the many garages which have now disappeared from central Cambridge. Then in January 1951 came demolition. The site was more useful for car parking than the old, listed, building until in January 1989 work started on the construction of a new Hotel complex in its place. [SCAN 6817 THE OLD CORN EXCHANGE, DOWNING STREET]

Meanwhile the New Corn Exchange had also seen a change in fortunes. It had started controversially, with legal appeals to the House of Lords over the council's authority to construct it, then there had been a competition for its design with various architects submitting proposals to be evaluated by Alfred Waterhouse, himself responsible for many college buildings. Once Richard Reynolds Rowe's design was agreed then the construction began, clearing away a large area of the town centre and changing Wheeler Street forever. [FIND LIBRARY PIC OF NEW CORN EXCHANGE]

The new building started life tumultuously in November 1875 with what has become known as the 'Death Riots'. The unfortunately-named John Death, then Mayor of Cambridge, was also owner of a livery stable. As he drove in his robes and chain to open the new Corn Exchange various undergraduates called out "Whoa Mayor", but he carried on to do his civic duty.

Then two days later an inaugural concert was held, arranged by the Cambridge Musical Society. The building was packed, with the seats reserved for dignitaries and members of the University being separated from the masses by a barricade. But when the Mayor and Corporation attempted to reach them they were jostled and had to force their way through.

During the singing of the National Anthem certain undergraduates began to yell and stamp and before long the concert was interrupted again. Twice the Mayor appealed to the students to keep order, but to no avail. Women fainted, children screamed and many of those standing rushed the barrier and pushed people out of their seats. Goaded to anger the Mayor sent for a body of police to keep order and seven arrests were made. This led the undergraduates to attempt to "rescue" their colleagues and some of the police were roughly handled. Under such circumstances the concert had to be abandoned.

The next day undergraduates burnt effigies of the Mayor, crying “Death! ... Death!” and after the arrested men were heavily fined a mob marched on the Mayor’s house, which stood on the site of the present Wesley church. Here police were able to prevent the house being broken into, though stones smashed the windows and the situation seemed out of control.

Then onto the scene strode “Black Morgan”, tutor of Jesus College, a popular figure in the University. As the crowds parted before him he climbed on a wall and addressed the crowds. “You young scoundrels, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves frightening a lot of old women out of their wits”. He told the multitude that he would be quite blind for five minutes, but no longer and during that period the crowd dispersed with three cheers for the Tutor of Jesus. No further action was taken by proctor or police.

In the New Corn Exchange corn merchants and farmers conducting their business were soon joined by a statue of Jonas Webb, a renowned breeder of sheep, which was moved from the Market Hill. [SCAN 5327 CORN MERCHANTS 1920S, SCAN 8561 – CORN MERCHANTS, SCAN 8574 – JONAS WEBB, AS DRAWN BY LEWIS TODD 1950S] But they did not have the building to themselves

From the turn of the century both cycle manufacturers and makers of motor cycles and motor cars found its space invaluable and it here that Hon C.S. Rolls first rode a motor cycle before going on to found his car company. By 1903 the Cambridge Corn Exchange exhibition of cycles and motors had become an annual event. The paper commented: “Motors and motor cycles are as yet in their infancy and each year sees great strides taken towards perfection. There are on view some fine, up-to-date specimens of motor cars”. Later motor shows saw vehicles approaching modern standards [SCAN 7375 A MOTOR SHOW C1905, SCAN T2333 A MOTOR SHOW 1965]

There were other trade shows such as the Industrial Trades Exhibition of Household Requirements in July 1926 where Messrs Robert Sayle displayed armchairs and luxurious baby carriages and Miller & Sons had pianos and gramophones. Then in 1948 Pye of Cambridge gave the world’s first demonstration of closed-circuit television before coming back to the building to install television sets to allow the lucky few to watch the Coronation

But it was also a sporting venue with wrestling in 1898 between the Middleweight Champion of England and the champion of Bulgaria – a match nobody will now remember. But in June 1978 it was ‘Giant Haystacks’ who towered above every other wrestler in the British ring at 6ft 11in and 32 stone who stepped into the Corn Exchange ring to pit his strength against Mike Marino. “The bout looked over when Haystacks body-slammed Marino to the canvas and, with a contemptuous glance, headed for the dressing room. But incredibly Marino managed to stagger to his feet before the count ended and Haystacks could not lumber back into the ring in time”, the News reported. [FIND NEWS PIC OF WRESTLING]

Ju Jitsu arrived in 1922 when Harry Hunter of Broadstairs, England's greatest exponent, and Mr W. Saddington, a local expert in the art gave a demonstration. Various throws and locks were shown but the one which interested the audience was that of throwing and rendering an opponent unconscious in a few seconds, before instantly reviving him by Katsu, the Japanese method of restoration. Rather more peaceful were the table-tennis tournaments, held for the first time in 1902 [SCAN 7075 TABLE TENNIS 1962]and continued throughout the century, whilst roller skaters flocked there in the 1960s. [SCAN ROLLER – ROLLER SKATERS OCTOBER 1974]

The Corn Exchange was also a place for political meetings. Winston Churchill addressed a gathering of undergraduates in 1939, [SCAN T97 – WINSTON CHURCHILL IN CORN EXCHANGE] Harold Wilson was heckled in April 1975 but overcame the building’s notorious acoustics to win a standing ovation from almost 1,000 people. His main topic was

the Common Market. He then went through a list of election promises and while harassed by the hecklers, who had paid 15p to get into the meeting, spelled out how each promise had been fulfilled.

When politics gave way to war it was here that Home Guard's rifles were assembled and it became a canteen and social centre for thousands of Servicemen and women, during the dark days of war.

In happier time the Campaign for Real Ale made it the venue for several of their beer festivals, it was home to boy scout rallies [SCAN T2542 BOY SCOUT MEETING INSIDE CORN EXCHANGE c.1920] old people's teas, bingo sessions and celebrations of all sorts. [FIND NEWS PHOTO OF BEER FESTIVAL]

It could also be converted into a dance hall. This was an expensive undertaking as the News commented in 1904: "Few realise the lavish expenditure on the May Balls held in Cambridge Corn Exchange. After the corn merchants have vacated the building on the Saturday evening a small army of workmen take possession. They labour until midnight when the advent of the Sabbath and the strict rules governing municipal buildings shut them out for 24 hours. With the first hour of Monday morning they re-enter and by eight that evening the place is transformed into an artistic ballroom through which not a vestige of the prosaic Corn Exchange is seen. What of the cost? There is not less than £2,000 worth of goods in the ball room; add to that the cost of utilising the Guildhall as a supper room and include the china and plates for the supper and you have a total of some thousands of pounds to provide our moneyed visitors with an evening's entertainment". [PERHAPS FIND PIC OF BALL] Sometimes a bridge was built to link the Exchange to the Guildhall. [SCAN 6840 – CAPTIONED PICTURE OF TESTING STRENGTH OF A BRIDGE ACROSS WHEELER STREET LINKING THE CORN EXCHANGE AND THE GUILDHALL]

But the building was home too to music. Classical concerts and rock bands each performed in its cavernous interior though there were problems in 1974 when both the Drifters and the Ronettes failed to turn up for concert dates, disappointing thousands of fans. When The Stranglers appeared in 1977 it was the fans like Rat Rancid, with his mate Garry Gangrene, from King's Lynn who attracted the attention of the reports. "Here were some punks that looked every bit as vile as the ones we've all read about. They were horrible. I think it was the safety pins through the cheeks that made me feel slightly sick, but it may just have been the chains through their noses. They snarled and leered while my colleague, Mike Manni, took their pictures. Then Rat put down his can of Party Seven and scribbled his address. Could we send some prints. "To Rat Rancid", I asked. "Oh, no", he gasped. "My mum wouldn't like that".

Publicans were alarmed by the prospect of trouble. In 1978 one complained "It was absolutely dreadful: all the London trains were full of punk rockers coming to Cambridge because all the other towns have banned them. They spit and strip on stage". [PERHAPS NEWS PHOTOS OF CONCERT]

The Corn Exchange was home to a variety of events, but it was by no means an ideal venue for anything. After a £8,000 new corn market was established in 1966 thoughts turned with greater emphasis on just what to do with it. Throughout the 1970s the search was on for a source of funding to allow the transformation of the old building into a concert hall of potentially international stature. Mayor Jack Warren started negotiations with oil sheikhs and millionaire recluse David Robinson, who having funded a new college was now looking to make a contribution towards the city itself. But he found the Corn Exchange too ugly and the cost too high. Mecca became involved for a while, but things move at a leisurely pace in Cambridge. Finally in November 1986 the Corn Exchange Concert Hall actually opened and the building itself started a new phase in its most varied career. [FIND MODERN PICTURE AFTER CONVERSION]

If you have memories of either Corn Exchange write to Mike Petty at Our Time

Our Time 2004 04

When a semi cost less than £15,000 by Mike Petty

THE SAME OLD NEWS

The trouble with Cambridge is that houses prices are so expensive that ordinary folk can't afford to live here – they need to move out into the surrounding countryside. That's why there are so many bicycles – people have to bike in to their work. That's what they said in September 1910

But one doesn't have to go back that far.

Cambridge house prices in the Romsey Town area have rocketed over the last 15 years, soaring up 530% PER CENT, the News reported in July 1977. Back in 1962 a terraced house off Mill Road, two up, two down would have cost about £1,350. It was now a massive £8,500.

But it really depended on where you bought. If you had invested £3,000 in a three-bedroomed semi in Perne Road back in 1962 your property would only have risen to £14,000

Pauline Hunt analysed the problem in the News of 21st July 1977. : “The sudden jump in house prices at the beginning of the 1970s meant that the small artisan terraced houses were the only ones within the financial reach of a great number of young couples buying their first home. So an area which had previously had a largely elderly population suddenly saw an influx of young people.”

And ‘green issues’ also featured: more and more people had rejected the car and wanted to be within walking distance of the city centre. Streets on the edge of the Kite area such as Willow Walk, Earl Street and Victoria Street were increasingly becoming sought after.

More central area such as Portugal Place had seen prices tripling to £30,000. But there were some problems about the Riverside area where the Gasworks dominated the view and a house on the edge of the Cam could be had for around £10,000

But before you get too dewy-eyed about the good old days, just try and remember what you were earning in those distant days of 27 years ago.

Do you have memories of struggling to get on the housing ladder, or is it only today's generation that have problems affording homes?

[COPY PROPERTY AD PRICES FROM THE NEWS OLD FILES FOR JULY 1977 IN LION YARD LIBRARY]

“OUR TIME” 2004 04

Cambridge before the grand design – Mike Petty

With the impending Grand Arcade development the area of central Cambridge between Petty Cury and Downing Street is poised to undergo yet another transformation.

When I started work in Cambridge in the mid 1960s the south side of Petty Cury was not an olde-worlde area of quaint architecture. It was a warren of somewhat decrepit small lanes such as Alexandra Street, Falcon Yard, St Tibbs Row and Post Office Terrace which had been largely rebuilt during Victorian times.

But it also featured a number of buildings erected by the one-time Cambridge Borough Surveyor, Richard Rowe.

They included the Young Men's Christian Association that I never entered – did you? It opened in 1871 and included a lecture room known as the Alexandra Hall that showed some of the first 'animated pictures' seen in Cambridge and later hosted dances. It was replaced by a new building opening in 1974

There was the massive Vicar's Buildings built in 1871 to house the very poor squeezed out of their homes by slum clearance and college expansion. But these 'model dwellings' were too expensive for ordinary folk and instead part of the building became a printing works. Did you use their services, or even work there?

It was Rowe too who designed the Corn Exchange though by the 1960s it had long since ceased to have an agricultural role and the statue of Babraham farmer Jonas Webb instead looked down on youngsters roller skating. As I worked in the Reference Library across Wheeler Street the studious calm would often be shattered by pop groups winding up their amplifiers in preparation for an evening concert. I never attended any of these either.

Nor did I patronise the Red Cow, another example of Rowe's skills; it was scheduled to be ripped down but was reprieved and rebuilt at the last moment so as to soften the impact of the new Lion Yard redevelopment.

There was no such reprieve for the buildings that lined Corn Exchange Street. I did once dare to enter the Masonic Hall and take an out-of-focus snap of its ornate ceiling. This was one of a series of photographs that I would take in the morning before the library opened, trying to capture something of the area that was due to be razed. These I added to the mass of other illustrations stored in the little, windowless room that housed the Library's collection of Cambridge material.

Occasionally I saw other people doing the same thing, and as the years passed several of those pictures were handed in to the Cambridgeshire Collection when it moved to a new department on the third floor of the Lion Yard Library. Sometimes it seemed that we must almost have been standing on the same corner at the same time!

But of course there were professional photographers with proper cameras who were also recording the scene. Their pictures appeared in the Cambridge News as it was in those days - and are still filed in the archives of the CEN at Milton.

This selection were taken on 7th March 1972; some will be familiar, others have not before been published.

Perhaps the one that will cause the most puzzlement is the one that shows Sketchley's the cleaners. It really is the corner of Petty Cury and Guildhall Place and if you study the line of buildings going down the street you will spot the gap where the Lion Hotel has already been demolished, a forerunner of the total clearance that was soon to follow.

If any of this rings a bell, then let me know.

And if you too took your Kodak down St Tibbs Row and have black and white snaps, or – better still – colour slides, of how Cambridge used to be in the 60s or 70s then take this opportunity to share them with the rest of us. Who knows I might be on one of them!

PETTY CURY SCANS CAPTIONS

149868

Looking down Petty Cury from the corner of Guildhall Street, March 1972. Heffers had already moved their bookshop to Trinity Street and the Lion Hotel had been demolished. The street was to close to traffic in February 1972 but reopened at the end of the month until closing once again in June, this time for the last time.

149870

Petty Cury from the corner of Sidney Street. The Civic Restaurant supplied a good, basic, inexpensive meal for people like impoverished librarians on the late-shift in the Reference Library at the back of the Guildhall. It closed at the end of March

149865

Looking down Post Office Terrace towards the YMCA. The studios on the left had been home to generations of photographers since Victorian times. The most famous were Ramsey and Muspratt, whose portraits of the great, good, infamous and ordinary folk of Cambridge included the spies, Burgess, Philby and Mclean. Their negatives, together with thousands of glass plates taken since the 1860s are amongst the material housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library where copies can still be ordered.

149866

Post Office Terrace looking towards Bradwell's Court showing the Alley Boutique that together with the nearby Pussycat Boutique introduced Carnaby Street fashions to Cambridge

149876

Alexandra Street, looking from the corner of the YMCA towards Petty Cury. This area was redeveloped in 1870 at at one time housed the Bell Telephone Company's offices, centre left. One of the finest Edwardian buildings in Cambridge it was to be razed to the ground in June, three months after these pictures were taken. By co-incidence a more modern telephone exchange was constructed in Post Office Terrance in 1957.

149872

Alexandra Street from Petty Cury. Mr Cook the greengrocer was to spread his wares out into the street for only a few more weeks before he and the others who traded from this lane just off Petty Cury – the Hangchow Restaurant and Heneky's Wine Bar amongst them – were to close for the last time.

Our Time 2004 05 - Fitzroy Street –

Our Time April 2004

Fitzroy Street, by Mike Petty

Fitzroy Street in the 1960s was very different from the thriving shopping area it now is.

Forty years ago the News sent Erica Dimock to chat to the shopkeepers and householders in Fitzroy Street. She found it an area in the process of regaining some of its former importance. Parking and traffic difficulties in the town centre and the building of modern stores was attracting many people to its shopping centre.

“In the past it was a rather poor shopping area with many of the stores dealing in cheap, imported goods. But in recent years the situation has changed and most of the traders take great pride in what they have to sell.” she reported.

A modern range of shops including a branch of Miller’s music shop, Woolworth’s, Freeman Hardy and Willis’ shoe shop, Cramphorn’s the corn merchant and even a Chinese restaurant had moved in. It included a Fine Fare supermarket with a Food Fare just across the road and although some traders felt they were spoiling the atmosphere of the street others welcomed the new approach as being in keeping with modern trends. Yet others felt it would be better to erase the whole area and redevelop it all at one time. [PIC SUP 0158 598 – THE NEW SHOPS WHICH SOME THOUGHT WERE ‘SPOILING THE ATMOSPHERE’]

The main shopping area was dominated by the old established shop of Laurie and McConnal. Their original building had been razed to the ground in a great fire in 1903 but undaunted by the tragedy a new store was soon being constructed. As the century progressed the firm expanded into neighbouring premises until by 1964 it dominated the north side of the street. The shop sold everything from clothing to furnishing, fabric, hardware, china and gardening implements and then employed some 130 people. Were you one of them?

Topping the roofline was a bandstand from which Christmas shoppers were entertained with carols played by members of a brass band. Robert Austin, president of the Brass Band Association, was among them and recalled: “The view was a very busy market place in those days, with shops open until nine, 10 and 11 p.m. on Saturdays. Each side of the street was lined with costers’ barrows and both footpaths and the whole roadway chock a block with pedestrians. The sight of hundreds of white faces staring up at the bandstand was one really worth seeing” [PIC SUP 0158 608 – LOOKING DOWN FITZROY STREET TOWARDS NEW SQUARE]

Then during the summer customers could take advantage of a roof garden. Mr Austin recalled: “It was most pleasant up there. Teas and ices were served to patrons ensconced in deck or cane chairs at small tables surmounted by large striped parasols. Tubs of flowers dotted the roof and there was a really wonderful view of Cambridge and the surrounding country”. [SCAN OF VIEW FROM ROOF]

On the corner of Fair Street was Peaks Furnishers, a family business that had started in Fitzroy Street in 1936 and by then had another shop in the newly-opened Bradwell’s Court. Another family business was that of Claude Scott which was set up in 1957 to specialise in motor cycles and scooter spares and equipment but then expanded to motor cars.

Nearer East Road was A.C. Lovelock, a fruiterer who had traded in the street since the 1920s and knew first hand the problems of the area: “At one time it was very busy but then with the development of the centre of Cambridge much of our trade out here declined. Now things are

just beginning to improve again, largely due to the erection of the new shops such as Woolworth's and the Fine Fare supermarket".

An older-established shop, W. Thompson, household furnishing store on the corner of City Road was alongside a brand new one, Michael Collins, a fabric and carpeting shop specialising in slightly unusual designs that would appeal to young people. "I am amazed by the different kinds of people who come shopping here", he told Erica. Were you one? [PIC SUP 0158 605 – THOMPSON'S STORE ON CORNER OF CITY ROAD WITH EDEN BAPTIST CHAPEL – WHICH STILL STANDS AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE GRAFTON CENTRE]

Elsewhere Boots the chemists and Page's cake shop were either side of Frederick Hopkins' wet, dry and fried fish shop, founded by his father in 1899, and as proof of the prosperity of the area the Westminster Bank had erected a modern new bank. [PIC SUP 0158 606 – MR F.C. HOPKINS WHO FOLLOWED IN HIS FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS WHEN HE TOOK A FISH SHOP IN FIRZROY STREET]

But just a little further along, after the junction with Burleigh Street, the atmosphere of the street changed. Here the street was narrower, and the dates of much of the buildings more apparent. Many had already been demolished in readiness for a general redevelopment of the area, which was not in the event to come for another 20 years. "Meanwhile, this interim state gives the east end of the street a depressing uncared-for appearance which local residents are tolerating with surprising cheerfulness. But there are not many people living in Fitzroy Street now. Rows of cottages have been taken down and few can call themselves neighbours", Erica commented. "Those who remain say they would not like to live anywhere else, 'It's the whole atmosphere and feeling of the place. We've always lived here and always want to' [PIC SUP 0158 603 – THE CORNER OF FIZROY STREET AND NELSON STRTEET, LOOKING TOWARDS EAST ROAD. PIC SUP 0158 602 – THE DERELICT EAST ROAD END OF FITZROY STREET]

One reminder of the street's humble origins was the old Working Men's Club and Institute on the corner of East Road but the dairy that used to stand on the corner of Wellington Street had gone. The Old English Gentleman public house had kept up to date with wallpaper bearing the faces and signature of The Beatles and a juke box playing their music attracted a considerable number of people from all over Cambridge to its weekend music evenings. Many of the other pubs in the area had already closed and the only competition was the Ancient Druids, a short distance away. But trade there was slow: "There is nothing for people to come here for", the landlord complained. [PIC SUP 0158 607 – OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN LOOKING BACK TOWARDS THE BUSTLING PART OF THE STREET. PIC SUP 0158 595 – MR H. HIGGS, LICENSEE OF THE OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN, CHATS WITH A CUSTOMER – NOTE THE BEATLES WALLPAPER]

Between the two pubs was the agricultural and horticultural engineering business of Choppen and Company, selling lawn mowers and hedge cutters in an area devoid of either. [PIC SUP 0158 604 – CHOPPENS SOLD LAWN MOWERS BUT THE ONLY GREENERY WAS WEEDS ON DERELICT SITES]

Opposite lived Ted Whitehead, a member of the well-known family of wholesale and retail fruiterers and nearby Mr G.A. Gilbert had run his butcher's business since the 1920s. He was unique in Cambridge in that cattle were still brought alive to his premises and killed in a private slaughterhouse at the rear of the shop, so that his customers could always be sure their meat was absolutely fresh. Nearby Mr H. Bull's farm shop had been for many years supplied from a family firm at Waterbeach whilst Naylor's green grocery was once a well-known local bacon shop. [PIC SUP 0158 596 – MR G.A. GILBERT AND HIS SON SERVING CUSTOMERS IN THEIR BUTCHERS SHOP]

It was not only meat that was fresh; there was Legge's bakers' shop where the cakes were home-made and further along T. Page specialised in homemade pastries and confectionery; both had traded for more than a century.

But perhaps the shop best remembered in the top end of the street was Mrs Verlander's hardware and grocery shop, well known for the copper kettle hanging outside. They pioneered a form of the trading stamps – which were all the rage in 1964 – by giving away coupons with the soap they sold which could be exchanged for free gifts. "People tend to forget this stretch of Fitzroy Street exists", she lamented but Mr L.J. Wright who had a green grocery shop nearby put it another way: "The area is being knocked flat so there are no local customers left to pop in each day and do their shopping" [PIC SUP 0158 597 – MRS VERLANDER OUTSIDE HER LITTLE KETTLE HARDWARE SHOP. PIC SUP 0158 600 – MRS VERLANDER INSIDE HER SHOP WITH A LITTLE KETTLE]

The debate on the redevelopment of the Fitzroy Street area was to drag on and on while councils debated and people protested. In the end the new Grafton Centre was opened by the Queen in 1984.

[PICS SUP 0158 592 & 593 SHOW LATER PROTESTS, 1977]

PIC SUP 0158 599 – LOOKING UP FITZROY STREET

PIC SUP 0158 594 - LOOKING DOWN FITZROY STREET FROM CORNER OF EDEN STREET

Peter Hall from Histon writes:

My wife has just bought the second issue of Our Time and I was fascinated to read the article on Fitzroy Street in the 1960's. I thought that you might find some of the following of interest by going back it bit further in time.:

I was born in 1929 at the Fitzroy Arms where my grandparents Reuben and Kate Elsdon became tenants in 1914. They were assisted by my parents Wally and Nellie Hall who joined them after the general strike in 1926. Then after the death of Kate in 1936 and Reuben in 1947 Wally and Nellie took on the tenancy until they retired in 1954.

The Fitzroy, with it's large clubroom was home to a number of clubs including The Albion Fishing Club, The Preservation Fishing Society, The Ancient Order of Foresters, The Royal Antedeluvian Order of Buffaloes and The Home Guard Rifle Club, later to be known as The Gogs Rifle Club.

Amongst the shops on the north side of Fitzroy Street were Peaks, Frank Suttle the tailor who also had a factory in Eden Street. During the war they made thousands of military badges, stripes etc.for all of the armed forces.

Then came more of Peaks shops, then Lauries and Sturtons which in time changed to Pauley's. This was the forerunner of Willow Wholesale for whom I worked as a paint rep in the early 60's. Next came Pages where (before the war) children would queue early on a Monday morning to buy buns and cakes left over from Saturday. Then there was Freddie Hopkins, Boots, Dewhurst & Norman Bradley, pawnbroker.

Horrie Bull's Farm Shop was next and then a derelict shop burnt down in the mid thirties but never rebuilt. It was followed by Henry's grocers, Misses Suttle's tobacconist shop, Pauline's dress shop and then Charlie Still an old fashioned real grocer (oh the smell of cured ham and roasting coffee!!) and Annie Tarrant in her sweet shop next to a dairy cum cafe cum green grocer and on to the Post Office before getting to Morley's. Yet another pawnbroker, two in about 50 yards. Does that say something about the times?

After James Street was there a tailors shop on the corner, Miss Lisle's haberdashery and toy shop gold mine and then the Christchurch Hall. Here the Boys Brigade used to blow their cheeks out ready for the church parade on Sunday and we Life Boys played indoor hockey twice a week.

On the opposite corner of Christchurch Street was Elliot and Langford cobblers of high quality and then sundry houses and odd shops to the top end of Fitzroy Street. They included Bill Biggs dairy on the corner of Wellington-Street whose horse would plod the round and stop outside every customers house without a word from Bill.

On the south side of Fitzroy Street, starting with Baker's sweet shop alongside the misses Woodhouse who ran a residential transport cafe for lorry drivers who parked overnight on New Square. They were two of the smallest little ladies you could imagine but the lorry drivers knew who was boss! Freeman Hardy & Willis, Alec Lovelock greengrocer and then Myers sweetshop. That closed at the start of the war and became the firewatching post for Fitzroy Street; after the war it was the first shop of Sid Pauly before he was bought out by George Peak and Willow Wholesale.

Next was Rossendale & Clamp newsagent, followed by Mr Mathews barber and then Tylers shoeshop. Then Timothy White & Taylor the chemist, a dress shop, Home & Colonial & the shop formerly Peaks on the corner of Eden Street. On the opposite corner was International Stores and then came The Fitzroy Arms, Williamson Carpets and then W. Thompson furnishers.

The Eden Chapel adjoined the Co-op shoe repair shop which was next to H. Legge baker (I can smell it now). It was followed by a little lock-up shop, a greengrocer with G.P. Hawkins (ahhh those sticky Chelsea buns yum yum) shop on the corner of Gold Street whilst on the opposite corner stood Verlanders with its permanent smell of paraffin and Jack Cartwright the barber.

Further along this stretch stood Gilbert the butcher, The Ancient Druids, Choppins, Whitehead the greengrocer and The Old English Gentleman which was run by Charlie Smith a tall slim man who always wore a wing collar & bow tie.

Beyond Nelson Street were mainly houses with one sort of general store just before East Road and that by and large was what Fitzroy was about up to the end of the war. Sorry to have been so long-winded but perhaps you'll find something of interest in all of these ramblings

Our Time 2004 05

Have projector, will travel by Mike Petty

Each week I head off to give a talk to this group or that, here or there, as I have done for some 30 or more years.

One of the benefits of such a nomadic life is being able to visit villages or communities in different parts of Cambridge; another is talking and listening to the people who attend the meetings. I always like to make my talk a little bit personal for the places I'm at - and what better way than via 'Our Time'.

Early April sees me further out than usual, with trips to Great Barton near Bury St Edmunds one week and Peterborough the next, both anxious to learn something about the fens and

particular the floods of 1947. Cambridge also suffered during the rapid thaw that followed weeks of hard frosts and packed snow, though I have yet to see many pictures of the resulting flooding. My favourite is that of a line of parked cars along Newnham Road, but are there others. Then later I'm off to Yaxley near Peterborough where the Doctors' Group Practice has run an 'Age Well' project in their village for over 11 years where some of their older and early retired patients can have the opportunity to come together and keep their minds active. Once more it's the 1947 floods! [SCAN OF FLOODED CARS NEWNHAM ROAD CAMBRIDGE 1947 - SCAN OF FLOODED HOUSE AT HADDENHAM 1947, SCAN OF HEADLINES MARCH 1947]

Stuntney Social Club is the venue for a talk on 'Vanishing Cambridgeshire' on Thursday 8th April, which will give an opportunity to show a picture of a member of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society at work on their Cambridgeshire Photographic Survey in 1933. The photographer is James Henry Bullock who was their most prolific contributor, going out in his motor car – seen under the shade of the tree – around the county. This snap of him at work, was taken by another contributor, Dr William Mortlock Palmer, and is housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library. But the picture that Bullock actually took is amongst the glass lantern slides at the County Record Office, Shire Hall. His eye was caught by an ancient notice warning vagrants that they were liable to arrest on sight. It has now gone, but are there other interesting signs on display elsewhere in the county? [SCANS OF BULLOCK AND VAGRANT NOTICE – 10194 & 84.809]

The Waddelow Society is a group of people dedicated to the history of their family name. Each year they organise get-togethers and on Easter Monday they are returning to the ancestral village of Lt Downham where they meet in the room that houses the community library, now being run by villagers with the assistance of the County Library service. Lt Downham is a community that believes in working to enhance its facilities and in August 1976 they were awarded the accolade of 'Best Kept Village in Cambridgeshire'. At the unveiling Lord Fairhaven said he had been impressed by the work of councillors, voluntary helpers and individual householders whilst most of the gardens were immaculate and a blaze of colour. [SCAN OF BEST KEPT VILLAGE PRESENTATION AUGUST 1976 – 59.56 OR 59.57]

Nearer home on 14th April the Royal Air Force Association are meeting at the Joint Ex-Servicemens' Club off Barnwell Road. The subject is Inter-War Cambridge and this is particularly relevant to this area since it was then that a ring road was planned around east side of Cambridge. The road was actually lined out, but postwar planners changed their minds and abandoned it. A News photograph of September 1964 shows Barnwell Road petering out into a grassy track with the cement works in the background. Then they changed their minds again and the road was built through to Coldham's Lane [SCAN OF BARNWELL ROAD 1964 – 70.02 OR 95.64]

Swavesey & District History Society are a most active group of enthusiasts who hold monthly meetings at the Village College. On 20th April they want me to talk about the River Cam, though at present the village seems more concerned about the proposed new guide bus route planned along the line of the Cambridge to St Ives railway which might ruin the tranquillity of the area. In previous years people had other things to talk about, as the News reported: Swavesey had a first class sensation on Monday night. It is not used to such novelties. It appears Swavesey has a widow. Nothing strange about that. But this was a fascinating widow. Her husband is scarcely cold in his newly-made grave before he is superseded. This is the story which bought out the inhabitants in hundreds into the main street to celebrate the widow on Monday evening. From eight o'clock until eleven the rattle of tin cans, the whistling and shouting, hooting and yelling, and a tuning of various other musical and unmusical instruments, filled the air in this usually quiet village. Whether these noisy attentions of the

neighbours will do any real good is open to question. The date - June 1898 [SCAN OF SWAVESEY RAILWAY LINE, STATION AND CHURCH - 86.1389; PERHAPS PIX FROM NEWS FILES]

Two trips to the Arbury follow in quick succession with talks to the Arbury Manor Royal British Legion on the afternoon of the 21st – Fen life in the 1800s – and then Grovebury Ladies Club for a talk about, what they call “your work as a well known Cambridge historian and journalist”! There’s so much going on in the area that it is hard to realise just how isolated some of the new residents felt when they moved in to the new houses off Campkin Road back in the 1970s [PICTURE OF CAMPKIN ROAD OR ARBURY ROAD FROM NEWS FILES]

Add in the regular ‘Fenland History, sources and resources’ meetings at Ely Library on Friday mornings and it looks like an interesting month. Hopefully somebody will tell me something to write about.

Our Time 2004 06

King’s Parade & King Street, by Mike Petty

On the face of it there’s not much similarity between two of Cambridge’s most important central streets, King’s Parade and King Street.

King’s Parade is a wide thoroughfare, dominated on one side by some of the finest architecture in the world and on the other by a range of small shops selling an eclectic mix of goods. It has been photographed by thousands of visitors over the last century and for the most part the pictures taken in 1904 are virtually the same as those taken in more recent times. Today scaffolding wreaths the front of the shops whilst renovation takes place, yet when it is removed the view will once more appear very little changed from that photographed in 1887 at the time of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee celebrations.

But King Street residents were equally patriotic; they too decorated their street, but if one of those Victorians could return today they would have some difficulty recognising it. Then it had a charm and quaintness, and was home to dozens of families as well as a range of shops and numerous pubs. Now much of it has disappeared under less attractive architecture.

When Erica Dimock surveyed King Street for one of her ‘Down Your Street’ articles in March of 1963 she commented on the alterations that had even then transformed the area. She chatted to Robert Dent, a locksmith continuing the business established by his grandfather 70 years before, cutting between six and seven thousand keys each year. He recalled many changes that had taken place in his time, including bakehouses which had been replaced by for the new showroom for H.W. Peak’s furniture shop.

Peaks had been in King Street since 1906, when they dealt mainly in secondhand furniture, but now offered the newest designs in furniture, floorcoverings and electrical appliances. They had expanded into what had once been Captain Cooper’s Royal Military Riding School, in its day one of the best equipped in the country. Here a few pounds laid out in lessons could save many nasty falls, and hundreds of pounds in surgeon’s fees and horseflesh. Relics of the riding school, decaying stables and looseboxes could still be seen in the early 1980s.

King Street in the ‘60s was also home to some of the most modern of technical innovations with the firm of Metals Research Ltd working on materials for rockets for NASA, the

American Space Administration from their unprepossessing premises. The firm had developed in close conjunction with the University, many of whose scientists acted as consultants or were shareholders.

Another academic link between two streets was the 'King Street Run'. It was a tradition – but like many traditions its origins were obscure. The event involved drinking eight pints of beer in two hours, one in each of eight different pubs. Originally King Street had enough pubs of its own such as the Champion of the Thames, Rhadegund, the Earl Grey and Yorkshire Grey, the Royal Arms and the Boot. But as numbers declined, and others declined to take part, the organisers needed to look further afield for landlords willing to support the event and the run was changed to allow one pint in four pubs and two pints in two.

Perhaps the beer was stronger, or the students had not undergone the necessary training, for landlord after landlord objected to the mess unruly contestants left behind them. As well as achieving a hangover, those who completed the course were entitled wear a coveted blue tie embroidered with a crown and tankard though a letter P was added for each time an entrant was obliged to use the toilet or was sick.

One man who knew more than most about ties was Peter Blake who owned a shop unique in Cambridge devoted to ties and cravats. He had more than 2,000 in stock in March 1963, and reported that most of his customers demanded the square-ended versions, though 20 per cent preferred the conventional wide tie and just five per cent the fashionable slim style. Some of his best customers were girls seeking something to wear with the striped shirts they had borrowed from the men. They preferred plain colours – in fact the old school tie was quite out of fashion. Surprisingly the shop was located in the Street, not amongst the bespoke tailors of King's Parade

There it was gowns that predominated, these being the distinctive uniform of members of the academic community that had to be worn after dark by undergraduates upon pain of being 'progged' by the University Proctor and his traditionally fleet-footed 'bulldogs'. Today such items of academic dress are exhibited in shop windows but seldom glimpsed in the street, their compulsory wearing having been abolished in 1965. But on formal occasions King's Parade becomes full of begowned figures making their way to a ceremony in the Senate House.

Both streets have in their time been dominated by traffic. King Street was a main thoroughfare for vehicles coming along the busy Newmarket Road. Vehicles of all sorts trundled through to Hobson Street or Sussex Street en route to the town centre. The traffic along King's Parade was even heavier. It seems hard now to realise that this was for many years a major through route, vehicles driving down Bridge Street, along Trinity and St John's Streets before continuing along the Parade towards Trumpington, whilst more came the other way, swinging right to get to the Market Hill. All this ceased on a foggy morning in February 1975 when signs were erected and a policeman stationed near the entrance to Trinity Street to enforce the restrictions.

King's College itself had been worried about parking back in the 1920s. When the heavy railings along the front of the College were removed in 1927 they sought assurances that the town council would not promptly claim the land for car parking; the low brick wall was erected in 1932.

But in 1963 King Street was benefiting by free all-day parking by the roadside, though there were worries that the proposed introduction of parking meters would drive shoppers away.

The University had been concerned about the impact of public transport in 1880 and opposed the laying of lines down the Parade for the horse-drawn trams back. Then when motor buses became common they offloaded their passengers opposite the Senate House until the opening

of the Drummer Street bus station in 1925. But King Street had its own bus operator, Percival Motors whose coaches catered for tours to places such as the Isle of Man, Blackpool or even Oxford.

But the two streets have shared the darker side of life; both have been involved in murder. In King Street in 1921 the victim was sweetshop owner Alice Lawn who was found battered to death on the back stairs of her house in Milton's Walk. An itinerant French Polisher was arrested and sent for trial; over the four days of the trial there were long queues for copies of the Cambridge Daily News that carried reports of the proceedings, but in the event he was found not guilty and the murder never solved. But the man acquitted is reported to have taken to wearing a placard stating 'I am the Cambridge murderer' and later returned to the scene of the crime, swearing that he would kill those who had given evidence against him

The other case was even more sensational. It involved a King's College undergraduate back in 1930. The young man was always eccentric, had a reputation for being clever and was reading history. He also played the drums in a jazz band and had hired a grand piano which he kept in his room. He wasn't rich or famous, he hadn't been to Eton, and he didn't have the finance to maintain the lifestyle he adopted. He wore garish sweaters and plus-fours, claimed to be a Russian prince and ran up debts.

He also stole a pistol, teamed up with a friend from Fitzwilliam, changed his name and spent the merry month of May touring Cambridgeshire pubs in a secondhand car. When the money ran out they traded the car for a motorbike and set off for London where they found excitement, glamour and company in the flat of a girl named Madge. She worked in a nightclub, had a heart of gold and seemed used to strange young men popping in for a while. By the end of the weekend she knew these two were different. They obviously had money problems and had written to Cambridge for clothes they could pawn. They also had guns.

When they went to collect the parcel of clothes they found two men waiting who invited the runaways to return to Cambridge. Their escorts were fellow undergrads - after all there was nothing that a little chat could not sort out.

As luck would have it the King's man met his tutor in Trumpington Street. The two strolled off to sort things out over a glass of sherry in rooms in the Gibbs building beside the Chapel. A third figure followed. During their friendly chat a knock came at the door. The plain-clothed policeman had just started to read out his warrant when the first of five shots rang out, hitting him in the shoulder.

When the gunfire ceased the Police had a murdered colleague to bury with full honours, the College a famous explorer to mourn and the University was in the headlines for all the wrong reasons.

Both streets have seen major rebuilding but in different centuries. King's Parade was once a narrow street with houses obscuring the view of King's College chapel. They are shown on one of the oldest Cambridge maps dating from the 1590s and survived almost to the Victorian age. Then they were ripped down and replaced by an elegant screen which in its turn was fenced off with heavy railings. This is the vista snapped by so many visitors. Then in the 1860s the old buildings of Gonville and Caius were replaced with others in a design that many still consider more appropriate for a railway station than a college

Yet King Street have had less happy experience with college buildings. When in the 1960s Christ's College replaced quaint, domestic style dwellings fronting the Street with a modern accommodation block it was attacked for its architectural inhumanity, ruining the environment and being out of character in a street that once had characters in abundance.

Today King Street is a mixture of the old and new, providing homes far nicer than those in the cul-de-sacs that characterised the area. But although they were cramped, dark and lacked the amenities now considered essential they provided generations of folk with a place to live in the heart of the town, something that very few can say of King's Parade, Cambridge's showpiece street

Our Time, 2004 06

June 2004

Cambridgeshire Windmills by Mike Petty –

The news that Bourn windmill, one of the oldest surviving post mills in the country has reopened after a two-year renovation project would have pleased three windmill enthusiasts of 80 years ago.

“Windmills are disappearing so fast that in many parts of the country they are a forgotten race. Some day antiquarians will be examining and digging in mounds, having quite forgotten that they were the mounds of old windmills made to raise them a little above the surrounding land.” Henry Hughes told members of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society in November 1928

Together with J.H. Bullock and Rex Wailes he set about making a record of the windmills then existing throughout Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely. It was not an encouraging task for such enthusiasts. They found the oldest mill at Bourn had been out of commission for some six years, its sails having been smashed in a gale in 1925, finishing its working life. But fears that it would be lost were dispelled when it was acquired by the Cambridge Preservation Society who have continued to preserve it. [SCAN OF BOURN MILL 1928 PLUS MODERN PIC 169682 OF ROBERT BURGIN CHAIRMAN OF THE CAMBRIDGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY AND FIONA CHESTERTON OF THE HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND OR SIMILAR – CWN 12 MAY 2004]

French's Mill off Victoria Road in Cambridge was still standing, though without sails, [FRENCH'S MILL 1930s] as was the tower of the windmill in Hurst Park Avenue which was finally demolished in 1957. [HURST PARK CUTTING], But there was no sign of the mill at King's Hedges, near Milton which had been sketched in the 1850s [KINGS HEDGES MILL 1856]. The mill at Long Road Trumpington had also disappeared though Miss Moore, the daughter of the last miller told them it had been built in 1812, with part of the works coming from an old mill which had then recently been pulled down near Barrington. It had stopped working in the spring of 1887 and a year later was sold to John Peile, the Master of Christ's College. He tried to let it but failing to do so had it pulled down. Photographer R.L. Lord snapped it in its prime [TRUMPINGTON 1880s]

A number were still working though their number grew less every year. The long irregular hours needed to make the most of windy weather and the long spells of enforced idleness were a great difficulty without some auxiliary power. Some millers, however, were still making wheat flour including Mr Lawrence of Stretham, who then kept quite a good business going. The mill at Stretham lost its sails during the Second World War when it was taken over by the Royal Observer Corps as a look-out post. Although within recent years the sails have been put back, the machinery has gone for ever. [STRETHAM COLOUR 1930s]

Mills faced a variety of dangers. If the corn ran out the friction of the millstones made the stones very hot, sometimes causing fires. A windmill with the sails burning at night was one of the most terrifying of all sights, Hughes reported, adding that many Fordham people still

remembered the sight of their mill burning. The mill on the Isleham Road was rebuilt after the fire in 1877 and survived until 1950 [FORDHAM MILL 1931]. They also needed specialist repairs and the Antiquarians took a series showing the Soham firm of Hunts millwrights at work [HUNTS]

Drainage mill used to be a very familiar sight in the fens, and the Cambridge Antiquarians took a picture of a group of small mills either side of the River Lark deep in Soham fen in 1914. Recently Jim Ames from Soham told me how his grandmother used to live in one of these mills and often could not leave through one of the mill doors, for the cap revolved according to the direction of the wind and she might be hit by a sail. [SOHAM MILLS 1914]. There was a large mill at Soham mere, belonging to the Cambridgeshire County Council with the old type of tail beam and old types of sail. "Long may they be preserved by the bodies that own them" Hughes exhorted. Sadly it was not to be. By 1947 the mill was thought to be dangerous and the Council felt that the only answer lay in demolition. Enthusiasts protested at the loss of this rare survival of a drainage mill but to no avail - it was just too rickety. So the demolition men moved in to pull it over with a tractor. They failed. Undaunted they returned with gunpowder. They failed. So in the end eight charges of gelignite had to be used to topple the "dangerous" structure. [SOHAM 1929]. Ironically just eight years later another drainage mill, much younger, much less impressive and in a much worse state, was re-built and erected just next door at Wicken Fen, where it is lauded as the last of the fenland wind drainage mills.

The News files has pictures of several Cambridgeshire mills which supplement those taken by the Cambridge Antiquarians, whose files are deposited in the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard Library alongside many other photographs taken by enthusiasts over the years.

Some Cambridgeshire mills

Fulbourn mill was built in 1808 and ground animal feed until it was damaged by a storm in July 1933. The Cambridge Chronicle reported: "Fulbourn windmill has been struck by lightning and is in danger of demolition. In a recent storm the mill was split from top to bottom on one side. Its sails were also damaged and it is likely that it will have to be dismantled. The steps leading into the mill were shattered but a man standing only a foot away had a miraculous escape from injury. The mill was evidently struck twice, and heavy iron bolts were thrown 30 yards. It is one of the finest examples of Dutch work and with three sets of stones is one of the most powerful windmills in England. Mr Mapey has spent a considerable sum in keeping the mill in repair and the Cambridge Preservation Society has been anxious that it should be preserved". The mill ceased to work in 1937 and remained derelict until restored by Fulbourn Windmill Society between 1974 and 1987. [FULBOURN EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR, 1930S]

Haddenham windmill was causing concern 50 years ago. There were worries that the mill, a landmark in the fens, would become a dangerous structure if not repaired soon. It was scheduled as an historic building but the Ministry would not make a grant to aid its preservation. Experts estimated it would then cost about £2,000 to put it into a sound condition. It was still in poor condition in 1965 when the News pictured Mr John Lawrance, then 81, who had owned the windmill for more than 60 years. [HADDENHAM 1965]. The News returned again in March 1995 when four sails were lifted into place completing the restoration of the main structure of the mill though there was plenty to be done to restore the mill to full working order. The old machinery was seized and rusted, millstones had to be repaired and the old brake wheel replaced. [HADDENHAM 1995]

Madingley windmill was one that disappeared and came back again! The tenant, Mr Charles French, was in bed one July night in 1909 when he heard the mill creaking ominously under the weight of the millstones and it collapsed. The great oak timbers were so shattered as to make restoration impossible. [MADINGLEY COLOUR c1909] But in 1935 came the news that a new mill would be erected on the site: The purchase of a post mill at Ellington, five miles from Huntingdon, completed a six years' search by Mr Ambrose Harding the Squire of Madingley. Workmen were engaged in dismantling the mill, calling for great care, as it is essential that none of the timbers were harmed. New foundations were being dug on the site of the old mill at Madingley and the process of reassembling Ellington undertaken. This was not the first move that the mill has made. From its original site it was transported across several fields to a spot where its sails might better catch the wind. [MADINGLEY MILL FROM NEWS FILES – OR TAKE MODERN VIEW]

Six Mile Bottom mill on Bungalow Hill is another mill that had moved. It was probably built on Mill Moor in Burrough Green and was moved to Westley Bottom in Westley Waterless sometime between 1796 and 1810. When the Great Chesterford to Newmarket railway was built in 1846, the mill was moved to its present position because it stood in the path of the railway. In 1879 the mill was damaged by lightning. It ceased to work in the 1920 's and steadily deteriorated until restoration work in 1983. [SIX MILE BOTTOM c1956]

Swaffham Prior is one village that has two mills. In 1928 Rex Wailes noted: "One mill is out of action and rapidly decaying. The other is still working but seldom repaired". The second mill finally ceased to work in 1946. By the 1960s they were both derelict and without sails but were restored shortly afterwards and their sails renewed. One was brought back into use and the other converted into a house. [SWAFFHAM PRIOR 1928]

West Wratting mill has probably the most romantic tale. In 1932 Philippa Burrell bought the windmill for £600 - including a cottage, granary and 20 acres of good farming land. High & isolated she found it a little paradise – and promptly left to study in Paris! She returned in 1934 when she wrote plays and learned about planting and pruning – and all the while the windmill was watching her with its broken sails, cap all out, windows rotten and rain going in. It was an unwelcoming part of the property, and one she used to hide in when the bailiffs called. A millwright gave her an estimate of £100 for repair and to raise the money she studied cookery books and made date cakes which she sold from an old pram on Cambridge market, a picture of the mill fixed to the side. It was an immediate sensation and soon she was selling teas to the hundreds of people who journeyed to see the mill, sitting contentedly on rustic tables in the orchard. After two seasons however she closed the business as the mill was restored. It was not the end of the story; she wrote a play 'The wind and the mill' which was performed by the Festival Theatre Company in the fields around the windmill in June 1935. [WEST WRATTING CUTTING]

Our Time 2004 07 - Cherry Hinton Road by Mike Petty –

Cherry Hinton Road extends for one and a half miles in a virtually straight line between Hills Road and the former village of Cherry Hinton. At the start of the 1900s it was virtually fields all the way but things had changed by February 1964 when the News sent its columnist Erica

Dimock 'Down your street' to report on what she found. Her report paints a picture of the people and shops of that time, many of which have now passed away

Dominating the corner with Hills Road was the Cattle Market where each Monday farmers came to buy and sell their stock at one of the biggest and best venues of its type in the region. Claude Kirkup, its former manager, recalled that when he first started over 30 years before there were only about four farmers with motor vehicles, the others brought their stock in horse-drawn vehicles or drove their livestock along the road. [SHEEP ON SALE AT CATTLE MARKET, 1960s]

But it was the general Bank Holiday markets that saw the site really heaving with thousands of people looking for bargains as stalls packed the area. [STOCKINGS ON SALE AT CATTLE MARKET 1968].

Back in 1964 planners were considering the future of the site: there was even talk of a cinema but the plans were met with opposition and nothing came of them. Now, 60 years later, the area has been comprehensively redeveloped with a new cinema and bowling alley amongst the leisure facilities shortly to open together with a restaurant, hotel and car park adjoining the Junction, Cambridge's popular venue for young people. [FIND PICTURE OF THE JUNCTION]

It is now a busy road but older residents could remember it as a country lane running between fields of corn bright with the purple of the saffron crocus. George Bowyer, then 84 years old recalled: "Cherry Hinton Road was just a cart track between high hedges and deep ditches" and remembered the transformation bought about by the development of the Rock Estate which started in 1885. Date stones on many of the terraces indicate that most of the building took place before 1910.

Then came two periods of expansion of the Cambridge boundaries. In 1912 the land between Rathmore Road and Perne Road was brought into the borough to be followed in 1934 by an even larger extension and housing rapidly grew in the open fields towards the little village of Cherry Hinton. [CHERRY HINTON ROAD IN 1920S WITH CAR AND OPEN TOP BUS]

But it was not all rural tranquillity. One early business was the Swiss Laundry that started at the turn of the century and operated a 24-hour dry-cleaning service, with four vans collecting washing from University colleges. [SCAN 0161.090].

Just behind their premises were others occupied by a glue and chemical works, that had previously been workshops of the Doe family who traded for many years in hide and skins, trimming and grading them before selling them for tanning. They bought bones and fat from butchers throughout the region to be sorted at their premises before being sent out to soap manufactures.

Further down the road in 1964 were the premises of E.A. Blows, a sanitary and hot water engineer who combined plumbing with a lawn mower repair service. He could remember when the fields adjacent to the present Perne Road had been filled with tents as soldiers of Kitchener's army assemble for training in the early months of the Great War. Later the site was pressed into use again, this time for a military hospital. But not all the locals welcomed these latter 'heroes' for they were men suffering from Venereal Diseases. [HORSE-DRAWN AMBULANCES ON CHERRY HINTON ROAD DURING WW1]

Earlier in 1914 the same site had become a makeshift airfield where French pilot Gustav Hamel gave an exhibition of looping the loop in his aeroplane and attracted spectators from miles around. [BI-PLANE IN FIELD]

Refreshment was available at The Rock public house kept in February 1964 by a professional footballer, John Gavin, who had played for a variety of clubs, including Spurs, Norwich, Watford, Crystal Palace, Cambridge City and Newmarket. The pub provided live music at weekends with an electric organ and drums attracting passing trade. Nearby the Constitutional and Rathmore clubs also provided places where people could meet for a social drink and discussion and both had a membership of about 500 people.

This end of the road offered a wide variety of shops and services ranging from off-licences to the Co-op, from drapers to fishmongers, butchers, newsagents and sweetshops. [SCAN 0161.084 – NB NOT SURE OF THE NAME OF THE SHOP]

The oldest-established were that of Dave Halls, a boot and shoe repairer and A & A Mears, fishmongers who could boast that many of those who went to the shop when it had first opened 40 years earlier had remained loyal customers. Nearby was probably the city's oldest hairdresser, W.L. Asbury, then 75 years old, who had started his ladies hairdressing salon back in 1932.

Further along the road towards Cherry Hinton were the workshops and piano showrooms of Ken Stevens, the musical instrument dealer. Here pianos were taken for cleaning and reconditioning, some being in such a bad condition that they had to be taken to pieces. All in all it was an area with numerous goods and services many of which had been in business for 30 years and more.

As the road continues towards the former village of Cherry Hinton so the development becomes more recent. At the start of the 1960s the appearance of the Perne Road junction had been completely changed by the erection of a garage and shops at what was then known as 'Adkins Corner'. The supermarket had opened in 1963 and was the largest of their string of shops in a chain that had begun as a family butcher's. [SCAN 0161.092 – ADKINS SHOP 1964]

Nearby King and Harper had opened a service station in March of 1963 as the basis for its motor cycle and scooter centre. It also boasted what was then Cambridge's only self-service car wash with long queues building up at weekends to make use of the facilities at half-a-crown a time. [SCAN 0161.094 – CAR WASH, 1964]

Other companies in the area included Crystal Structures, scientific consultants and instrument makers which had been founded in 1947 and was one of the very few firms then to have a woman as managing director – Mrs Nora Wooster. Nearby were the head offices of William Sindall the building contractors then employing 1,200 people. They had moved from Gloucester Street some five years earlier and managing director, H.D. Ridgeon had just sold farmland surrounding his house at Ventress Farm just along the road for building purposes. [SCAN 0161.085 – STONEMASON AT WORK AT SINDALLS]

New companies were becoming established in the early 1960s: Danish Bacon had just increased their distribution facilities and installed the very latest machines for smoking bacon with a kitchen in which several hundred hams were cooked each week. [SCAN 0161.095 – SIDES OF MEAT]. Newey and Eyre electrical wholesalers were just moving in to buildings formerly occupied by H.B. Holttum, the horticultural engineers and nearby was Baywood Chemicals whose products were used for weed control with one of the most important being Metasystox for virus on sugar beet.

But by the time Dan Jackson surveyed the street again for the Cambridge Weekly News in January 1988 many of the heavy industries which dominated the road had been replaced by blocks of flats and private houses with industrial parks tucked away behind them.

Such development increases the number of cars but Cambridgeshire Motors had been in the area since 1927 with one depot servicing and repairing all types of Ford commercial vehicles and tractors and their main motor showroom back on the corner of Hills Road. [SCAN OF GARAGE ON CORNER WITH HILLS ROAD].

Adding to the traffic in 1964 were the lorries of the Cambridge branch of British Road Services that had been established on a site used during the war by the Ministry of Transport as a depot for vehicles which might be needed in the event of an invasion. [SCAN 0161.089 – GOODS BEING LOADED AT BRS DEPOT 1964].

Lime Tree farm, opposite the B.R.S. site had been run by generations of the Coe family and for some 200 years its fields and orchards had provided local shops and colleges with fruit and vegetables. It had a small shop that had opened as a café during the Second World War offering cups of tea to the lorry drivers who arrived at the transport centre opposite.

There were more military memories surrounding Cherry Hinton Hall, just down the road, that had been used during the war for training firemen. It was home to a nursery school run by Miss Littlehales that by 1964 still had a long waiting list for places and also housed a maternity and child warfare clinic. [SCAN 0161.093 – CHILDREN AT NURSERY SCHOOL CHERRY HINTON HALL, 1964]

In its grounds were cultivated plants and flowers for the city's parks and roundabouts (remember when Cambridge had roundabouts?) and since 1965 – a year after Erica Dimock's survey - it has become home to the Cambridge Folk Festival, its grounds resounding to a different sort of music than that which entertains the youngsters at the other end of Cherry Hinton Road [SCAN OF FOLK FESTIVAL 1965 – OR FIND OTHER PHOTOS OF FOLK FESTIVAL]

Our Time 2004 08

STREET LIGHTS - 1949 by Mike Petty –

In January 1949 motorists at Trumpington experienced a warm glow, the shadows that had been blighting their lives disappeared at least in part when sodium lighting was introduced as an experiment on the stretch of road between Brooklands Avenue and Bentley Road.

Twelve 140-watt bulbs dramatically improved their night time visibility providing six times more light than the old fittings and at cheaper cost. By 1952 the Council had decided to install 400 of the new lights in a crash programme and the following year Cambridge could boast that it was one of the first cities in the country to be lit entirely by sodium.

Sometimes brighter lights caused dangers in 1911 complaints had been aired that the new gas lights on Barnwell Bridge were too powerful and were dazzling motorists. Generally however they were appreciated.

New lights were welcomed in one village: "The traffic through Sawston has increased considerably of late years" commented the Cambridge Chronicle. "The one continuous street, in the bends and narrow parts, where the inhabitants are their thickest, has been dangerous to drive through during the dark evenings of winter" a common statement, except that it was written in November 1882.

It was 1836 when the streets of Ely were lighted with coal gas for the first time; the lamps were "well made and placed upon elegant painted cast iron pillars" and the inhabitants well pleased with the result. Swavesey had followed suit in February 1886 with Willingham limping behind in 1891, whilst at Fulbourn in January 1893 a public supper was held at the Six Bells Inn to celebrate the completion of the lighting of their village by oil lamps following a successful experiment the previous year. The parish debates all took much time.

In 1893 Cherry Hinton were anxiously scanning the various Acts of Parliament to see which one was best suited to their circumstances. Such had been the recent expansion that unless they were careful the old part of the village would end up paying for the lighting of the newly developed Rock and Cavendish estates. They were also debating the type of light – oil or gas or perhaps they should form their own company to generate electricity, at a cost of about £4,000.

It was a familiar debate for Cambridge where in 1757 people were quite convinced that better lighting would increase fights between groups who then groped their way past each other unrecognised in the dark. However an Act of Parliament of 1788 empowered the better lighting of the town, new lamps were installed and lit for the first time on a September evening that year. Oil lamps gave way to gas and in 1840 a contract was signed with the Cambridge Gas Light Company for the installation of 350 lamps. The first lamp post was installed outside the Newmarket Road works and others followed throughout the central area.

The lamp posts themselves were often the subject of motor accidents or high spirits, with inebriated undergraduates often shinnying up them to light their cigarettes from the gas flame. During rag time it became the norm to put out the light. The answer to this was to wrap the posts in greasy rags to prevent people climbing them – though it was soon realised that such greasy rags could easily be set alight – a much better sport!

During both World Wars the lights were extinguished and a reflective strip painted on the posts to prevent people walking into them in the black out. However it was on VJ night in 1945 that the most prominent street light became a casualty of the celebrations. The large light on Parker's Piece had been erected in 1894 at a cost of £39 and when repaired and redesigned in 1946 became the first fluorescent light in the country. It was repainted in 1973 and now adds a touch of brightness to the Cambridge scene by both day and night.

SCANS

7126 – Town v gown fight under the street lights, 1820

7962 – street lights on Ely Market Hill 1845

86.1229 – Sawston High Street showing street lights, 1880s

86.5741 - Fulbourn showing street lights c1900

8905 – installing street lights at Lt Downham

109.17 – undergraduate caught lighting his cigarette on gas light

110.04 – Regent Street transformed with the coming of sodium lights, October 1955

Our Time 2004 08

Castle Street by Mike Petty

Castle Street has seen some of the most dramatic events in Cambridge history even since the days when early settlers decided to make their home on its rising slopes overlooking the winding river Cam. The Romans raised a camp there, the Normans reinforced it, Cromwell

added fortifications and it was strengthened even further during the Second World War just in case another invader came.

Now the present occupiers, Cambridgeshire County Council, are worrying about the number of visitors clambering up the castle hill not to storm its offices but to gaze at the view from the summit of the mound. The prospect has been depicted by engravers for over 200 years who have used their artistic abilities to enhance the panorama. [SCAN 9051 – VIEW FROM CASTLE HILL c1830 - SCAN 10112 VIEW LOOKING TO CASTLE STREET 1937]

The remains of an ancient castle gatehouse erected by King Edward I in the 1280's survived until the early 1800s. It had been built to strengthen the earlier fortifications of William the Conqueror, erected when he was attempting to suppress Hereward the Wake and his rebels on the Island of Ely. There had been walls all around the castle, but they were pulled down over the years and the stone reused in the building of various colleges and churches.. [SCAN 1327 - VIEW DOWN CASTLE HILL c1800 – TAKE MODERN VIEW]

The castle was strengthened during the Civil War when the University supported King Charles and the town backed Oliver Cromwell. He put in banks and ditches and garrisoned it with troops. Tradesmen in the area expecting to prosper by additional custom were disappointed for many of the men were nearly starving, with only tatty coats & shoes and often never paid for the goods they supplied. Then when the war was nearly over in 1646 the defences were demolished and the soldiers and their horses sent to Ireland. The castle carried on being used for the assizes. In one case in 1665 one robber was pressed to death – he was about an hour dying – because he refused to plead guilty or not guilty when charged. Another man was put in the pillory and two more were hanged. [SCAN OF CASTLE FROM MAP OF 1574]

The gallows used to stand in the moat in front of the castle but this was filled up in 1802 when the whole area was lowered to build a new gaol designed by John Howard the prison reformer. [SCAN 667 – COLOUR VIEW OF GAOL WITH CASTLE MOUND AND REMAINS OF CASTLE GATEHOUSE c1810]

Public hangings were then conducted from the gateway of the new County Gaol attracting crowds who came to watch the spectacle and buy souvenirs of the occasion. They continued to be held, though no longer in public until 1913. [SCAN OF HANDBILL OF HANGING]

The gaol continued in use until 1916 after which it housed Government records while debate raged about the future of the site. In 1930 its forbidding doors were thrown open to the public and 8,000 people queued for a chance to enter the condemned cell before the fittings and fixtures were sold off – the gallows fetching just under £5 – and the building demolished. Elderly residents still recall their visit to the gaol or growing up in the shadow of the prison walls. [SCAN 22447 – GAOL FROM CASTLE HILL 1930]

But another old structure remained. In 1842 a new Assize Court was built of brick and stone in the Italian style, It had an imposing portico supported on columns and its roof was dominated by large figures. By 1952 the whole of the building was found to be unsafe and liable to collapse at any time. Dry rot had been attacking the floors and spread up the walls and plaster and into the roof. The damage was irreparable. Nor was it much use as a Court House as three prisoners had escaped by removing an iron grill over a window and running off. Its demolition sparked great controversy, with the city council feeling the façade should be preserved and resited elsewhere. [SCAN 6828 ASSIZE COURTS – NOW THE GRASS AREA IN FRONT OF THE COUNCILLORS' CAR PARK]

On the site of the gaol rose a new Shire Hall, replacing offices in Hobson Street. It opened without ceremony in 1932 and was soon found to be too small, with plans for an extra storey on top being announced in 1958. Since then its area of administration has expanded, taking in the former Isle of Ely in 1964 and embracing Huntingdonshire and Peterborough ten years later. So too has its office space which, together with extensive commercial developments now extends to Victoria Road wiping Gloucester Street off the map. [SCAN 8929 – RECEPTION ON LAWN IN FRONT OF SHIRE HALL OR 9859 – COUNTY COUNCIL ‘AT HOME’ 1962 WITH CASTLE MOUND IN BACKGROUND]

Redevelopment has also transformed the west side of Castle Street. It was just 25 years ago that a massive new office block finally arose from what had been for some years the biggest hole in the city. It was to have been the site for a high-class De Vere Hotel, then it was to become shops, petrol station, a bank and maisonettes but the plans had been rejected.. [FIND PICTURE OF DE VERE HOTEL – PERHAPS NEG 750.79]

Across Mount Pleasant the Foundation of Edward Storey have made a much more successful addition to their historic Almshouses site providing self-contained accommodation for a number of ladies, many of whom have wonderful memories of the area. It is a part of Cambridge that has been transformed within recent years. At the beginning of the 1900 it was a very depressed area of poor-quality houses. Yet when the slums were cleared and new homes built then the former residents could not afford the new rents and were forced to move away. More recently many of the other properties in nearby Shelley Row and Albion Row have been rebuilt or renovated. [SCAN 10440 SHELLEY ROW 1937 – TAKE MODERN EQUIVALENT]

Even in the 1970s many of the other properties were in poor condition; when Professor John Stevens bought two properties in Bells Court they had both preservation and demolition orders on them at the same time. [SCAN 10094 – BELL COURT 1937]

Kettles Yard comprised a large and crowded court of 26 houses stretching back to Honey Hill that were condemned and pulled down before the Second World War. The two largest were converted to form Kettles Yard art gallery. [FIND KETTLE’S YARD ART GALLERY pic]

The spiritual welfare of its residents was served by a number of churches and chapels of which St Peter’s Church is the smallest; it was founded shortly after the Conquest at about the time William was constructing his castle. It had to be underpinned in 1932 to stop it falling down and was declared redundant in 1958. It is now cared for by The Churches Conservation Trust. [SCAN 10439 - ST PETER’S CHURCH FROM KETTLES YARD 1937]

St Giles’ on the corner of Chesterton Lane was an even older foundation dating back to Saxon times was rebuilt in 1875 while Castle Street Methodist Church originally started in a small cottage on the site in 1821. The present chapel was built 1914 and continues to attract large congregations whose plans to rebuild are currently being debated. [SCAN 9861 OLD ST GILES CHURCH 1875 – TAKE MODERN COMPARISON]

Several pubs have served other needs. The most famous was the Three Tuns Inn, also known as Waymans Inn. It was here – just across the road from the castle - that the highwayman Dick Turpin used to sleep when visiting Cambridge and it was from here that Elizabeth Woodcock started her journey home to Impington in 1799 when she became buried in snow for eight days. The pub fell into disrepair but was renovated in the 1930s. Despite all the work magistrates refused to renew its licence. The County Arms was built as a replacement and the Three Tuns was demolished in August 1936. [SCAN 611558 THREE TUNS AFTER RENOVATION – BUT IT WAS DEMOLISHED ANYWAY – TAKE MODERN EQUIVALENT OF COUNTY ARMS]

Another was the White Horse Inn on the corner of Castle Street. It dated from the 16th century and contained many original features, although an overhanging upper storey was removed in 1932 as it had been clipped numerous times by passing buses and lorries. The pub closed in 1934 and was threatened with demolition for road widening. However thanks to the support of many influential people it reopened as a Folk Museum in 1936. It is now undergoing renovation with a new extension being constructed in the former yard where horses were once stabled. [SCAN 10113 – VIEW FROM MAGDALENE STREET 1937 SHOWING NEWLY-OPENED FOLK MUSEUM – NOTE HORSEMAN - PERHAPS MODERN COMPARISON?]

Today Castle Street carries comparatively little traffic but there are two tangible reminders of its present importance on the transport scene. One is a stone on the wall of one of the buildings stating ‘The Godmanchester Turnpike Road ends here’ – although the original tollhouse actually stood at the junction with Histon Road. [TAKE MODERN VIEW OF THE SIGN]

The second are the traffic lights; they were the first to be installed in Cambridge in 1929 and caused considerable controversy. The cost of a policeman on point duty was about £400 a year and the signals, with purchase, would be about £200 with about £25 a year maintenance and repairs. But some councillors disagreed; Coun Stubbs described it as ‘robot policemen’. He did not see how traffic could be controlled as well as by human means: “I can see myself telling it to mind its own business”. It was at the wrong place, being at the bottom of a steep hill; it would be better at the East Road – Mill Road crossing. Nevertheless they were installed and, according to some, failed in their primary purpose. For it took twice as many police as previously. One to sort out the accidents that resulted, with motorists not understanding the changing lights. The other to control the crowds who flocked to watch the new ‘illuminations’.

Today Castle Street is probably more peaceful than throughout most of its history. It no longer shudders under the weight of heavy lorries and although crowds still sometimes assemble outside the Shire Hall they are no longer gathering for a public execution – though perhaps it feels that way to councillors facing unpopular decisions.

Our Time 2004 09

ST ANDREWS STREET, by Mike Petty

St Andrew’s Street was one of the oldest approaches to Cambridge, the Roman Via Devana from Colchester to Chester. As a major thoroughfare it carried a great deal of traffic though its progress was checked by a gate near St Andrew the Great church where the road crossed the Kings Ditch – about where the present barricade stops the traffic.

Kings Ditch was a 13th-century man-made defensive work that stretched from the River at Quayside, under the present Sidney Sussex College, down Hobson Street, across Lion Yard and down Mill Lane to the river. It soon became less of a defence than a nuisance, becoming a good place to dump rubbish or the remains of animals killed by the butchers who had their businesses in Slaughter House Lane, the present Corn Exchange Street. In the 1600s efforts were made to divert a stream of water into the ditch to clean it out and some of the water from Hobson’s Conduit flowed along one side of St Andrew’s Street, as it still does down Trumpington Street. By 1952 people were complaining that it had had its day: “It makes the street narrower, especially when cars are parked and buses are forced close to the kerb. I saw a quart of water splashed into the lap of an infant in a small go-cart when a bus went past Stanley Woolston’s shop at a smart walking pace and its mother was unable to manoeuvre out of the bus’s bow wave. I’ll wager she would like to see the tap turned off“ wrote Mr O.C. Cox

St Andrew's Street starts in the south with the imposing frontage of the former Police and Fire Station, erected in 1901 to replace a building which had become infamous in the annals of Cambridge: the Spinning House. This had once been a workhouse, endowed by the carrier Thomas Hobson to provide accommodation and work for the decent unemployed as well as a place of correction for rogues. By the mid 1800s it was divided in two, one part serving as a police station the other being used by the University as their private prison for prostitutes. It soon attracted adverse attention: stories spread about the conditions in which the women were kept and how quite innocent young ladies were wrongly imprisoned and held without any trial. Not all the inmates accepted their imprisonment quietly, one managed to escape to her parent's house at Dullingham where she was arrested on a charge of gaol-breaking. But this meant the case had to be tried in court; it attracted wide attention, questions were asked in Parliament and the Home Secretary intervened. Matters came to a head in 1894 when a girl called Daisy Hopkins was arrested and this time the case was held in public. Because of a legal technicality Daisy had to be acquitted and she sued the University for damages. Once more it made headline news which prompted the University to surrender their powers over prostitutes to the police.

The old building was demolished to great rejoicing as the Cambridge Daily News reported in April 1899: "The days of the Cambridge Spinning House are numbered. It is to be pulled down in order that a house of detention after the best approved modern ideas may arise on its site. There is no more stirring chapter in the history of modern Cambridge than that which this forbidding looking building in St Andrew's Street recalls. It speaks of many things which the Cambridge of today is glad to forget. It is an ugly monument of an ugly feud between the authorities of the University and town. The feud is dead: would that the razing to the ground of the Spinning House were sufficient to efface all memory of it" [SCAN 19982 SPINNING HOUSE 1875]

The Police Station & Fire Station was constructed to house a force of 200 men. Its Renaissance style front, groined ceilings and mosaic floors won it warm architectural praise while modern speaking tubes together with a basement room for drying clothes and making coffee placed it in the forefront of police development nationally. James Sutton and Charles Smith were best able to testify to some of its other facilities for they were the first to sample the cells, one for stealing walnuts, the other for drunkenness. It also provided a home for the Fire Brigade with three permanent salaried firemen on duty, one during the day, and two during the night. They had a double call bell to the stables of the Lion Hotel where there were two horses in readiness to be called out for the fire tender. A steam fire engine was bought in 1906 with a motor engine in 1920. The building continued to serve until the present Parkside station was opened in 1965.

Then architects turned their attention to the next building in the Street: the old St Andrew's Street Baptist Chapel. "The Chapel is not exactly a thing of beauty and the removal of the present front in favour of one of greater architectural beauty will be a welcome contribution to the aesthetics of Cambridge", said the Cambridge Daily News in March 1901. Others agreed: "It has often excited the curiosity of strangers and not a little ridicule has been bestowed upon those who have worshipped in such a prison-like building. Even Charles Spurgeon described it as suitable for private executions". Work commenced in May 1903 with a bottle placed under the foundation stone containing a plan of the church, a programme of the day's ceremony and a copy of the Cambridge Daily News. It was formally dedicated the following January attracting praise: "The exterior of the building is captivating, the interior is beautiful and the structural arrangements for the comfort of the congregation well considered".

Nestling alongside the Chapel was one of Cambridge's oldest inns, 'Ye Olde Castel Hotel'. It stood on the site of the medieval Rudds Hostel, said to be the place where the meeting was held to establish Emmanuel College across the street. It was a gem of a place - a mass of

gables and windows, higgledy-piggledy construction and with an aura of hospitality seeming to permeate from it. Inside was a staircase whose every step seemed to tell tales of those who had trod that way before, its ancient oriel window gave a glimpse into the gardens of Emmanuel college while lively conversation emanated from the Smoking Room. It offered a fine table with fine food finely prepared. In 1904 W.O Tristram described a dinner of turkey complemented by the sausages for which Cambridge was famous followed by baked apples and cream, washed down with a wine of twice the quality and half the price one would expect to find in grander establishments. Sadly it is there no longer; the old building was destroyed by fire in 1934. [SCAN 9597 - STREET FROM CASTLE INN TO POLICE STATION IN 1911 AND/OR SCAN 6207 COLOUR VIEW C1905 TAKE MODERN VIEW]

The Regal Cinema opened on part of the site three years later; it was the most up-to-date in Cambridge and one of the largest in East Anglia, seating 2,000 people. During the 1960s many of the now-legendary pop groups performed live on its stage, including the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Adam Faith and Cliff Richard. It doubled the number of screens in 1972, before succumbing to the demand for newer and bigger cinemas though films continue to be shown at the Arts Picture House in part of the building. The rest has been converted into one of the newer and bigger pubs that now cater for far more people than ever patronised the Castle supplying a wide range of food as well as drink.

Nearby the Varsity Restaurant was visited by a food critic in 1975: "The Varsity restaurant is not the place to go if you are fussy in demanding smart décor. But it does offer good wholesome food at extremely low prices. We saw one elderly gentleman complaining that his carafe of wine (£1.10 a half litre) was too cold. The obliging waiter held it in front of an electric convector fire to bring it to a more acceptable temperature. It was little more than a gesture, as the fire was not plugged in. We ate a three-course meal, with wine, and the bill for two was £3.25"

For those who were fussy about what they ate and drank from Barrett's supplied a fine range of fine glass and china; for those who wanted fine linen there was the Belfast established in 1905 with bedding and quilts produced at its own factory in Southend. Its sales attracted crowds: "About 200 cups of tea were served to bargain hunters as they queued waiting for the opening of the Belfast Linen Store's January sale. The queue started to form along St Andrew's Street soon after 5 a.m. and the long, chilly vigil was relieved by a welcome cup of piping hot tea at about 8 o'clock. It was dispensed from a van supplied by Hobb's Pavilion, Parker's Piece. First bargains to go were quilt sets slashed from 12 to four guineas, spring interior mattresses reduced to £3 19s. and pillow cases at 1s. each" the News reported in January 1953

For those people who wanted to keep in the height of fashion Vogue and Modiste were near neighbours. Both had opened in the 1930s and both were run by members of the Harris family. Vogue specialised in clothes from 12 leading fashion houses in London. In 1953 they sold an afternoon dress of pure silk dress to be worn in Westminster Abbey on Coronation Day at a price of 65 guineas. "We are absolutely thrilled, it is a great honour", said Mr M. Harris, the proprietor adding they had also sold three evening gowns to be worn at Coronation balls in London. [SCAN OF CROWDS OUTSIDE VOGUE SALE 1963]

Any activities in this part of St Andrew's Street could be monitored by the reporters of the Cambridge Daily News who had their offices across the road from 1888 to 1962. They were on hand to report the various surprise visits of members of the Royal family to Stanley Woolston's antiques shop which attracted large crowds of spectators. But the biggest surprise was in 1934 when Queen Mary arrived, not in a limousine but in an ordinary private car. The Royal vehicle had broken down and passing motorist, Percy Titmous had stopped to offer her a lift!

Alongside the Cambridge Daily News was the New Theatre established by William Beales Redfern on the site of a skating rink. It opened in 1896 with a performance of Hamlet intended to signify that this new enterprise was a serious form of entertainment at a time when the University still had powers to licence theatres and traditionally did not allow them to operate during term time. Redfern took stringent action against undergraduates who disrupted performances, ordering the house lights to be put up and the young men expelled, but then found that they stopped coming to his theatre. As the century progressed the theatre alternated stage shows with variety entertainments and films before closing in March 1956. The building was demolished 1960 and block offices erected on the site. [SCAN 9851 NEW THEATRE AND CDN BUILDING c1960 TAKE MODERN VIEW MODERN OFFICES]

Emmanuel College was founded in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I to prepare men for the church; it became a principal centre for Protestantism and in the religious upheavals of the 1630s many of its students emigrated to America including John Harvard, benefactor of Harvard University. The St Andrew's Street frontage was rebuilt in 1770, previous its main entrance had been in Emmanuel Street. In an early example of road planning Cambridge Town Council held discussions with the College in 1900 about closing Emmanuel Street and constructing a new road further north to relieve traffic congestion. The College demolished houses on the north side of the street and built a new wing only for the Council to change its mind. Instead they paid for an underpass linking the still-separated areas of college.

In 1949 work started on the demolition of property at the junction of Emmanuel Street in order to widen the junction with St Andrew's Street. It was followed by plans for the erection of new offices and shops including car parking either in an underground garage or on the roof. The resultant development was hailed as a successful piece of town planning sufficiently modern to introduce a mid 20th-century element but not so outrageously contemporary to look incongruous.

But to make space for the new development old buildings had to be swept away. They included Rance's Folly, a mansion built in 1850s by Alderman Henry Rance with several lifts, a ballroom, four bathrooms, central heating and a swimming pool. It was even said that guests played tennis on the roof of the house. Sadly the Alderman, twice mayor, practically ruined himself in the process. [SCAN RANCES FOLLY – TAKE MODERN VIEW LOOKING N FROM EMMANUEL STREET]

More buildings were lost with the creation of Bradwell's Court, Cambridge's first shopping arcade which opened in 1960. It was a joint venture between two colleges - Jesus and Christ's and provided a continuous covered walkway from Drummer Street bus station to the city centre with 20 new shops and showrooms. It was designed by the Cambridge architects, Hughes and Bicknell who took special care that the scheme harmonised with the adjoining college buildings. Now it has been condemned as '1960s tat' and there are plans to redevelop it once more, perhaps re-opening Christ's Lane alongside.

Christ's College was founded as God's House near Clare College but had to move when King Henry VI wanted that site and was renamed when Henry VII granted them a new charter and named his mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort as its foundress. It has a most decorative gateway similar to that of another of Lady Margaret's foundations, St John's. [SCAN 8883 – CHRISTS COLLEGE ON RIGHT, c1900 TAKE MODERN VIEW]

Opposite stands the church of St Andrew the Great, a building dating back to 1842 but containing a memorial to Captain James Cook relocated from the previous church on the site. It was thoroughly renovated in June 1904: the congregation sat within spotless walls, under a roof which afforded no resting place for the busy manufacturer of webs and in an atmosphere suggestive of spring cleaning. The dignified furniture shines anew, the walls are nicely painted and distempered, the windows (coloured and plain) admit the full quota of light. Gas

has given way to electric light and there is a sermon switch which will turn off the current from two-thirds of the lights, the News reported. But congregations declined and for a while the church was officially declared redundant with proposals for it to be made into shops or a civic restaurant as part of the redevelopment for the Lion Yard shopping area which opened in 1974. Now there are plans for yet further change with a Grand Arcade destined to link Lion Yard with Downing Street.

The new development will see a new store for what is regularly named as Cambridge's favourite shop. Robert Sayle opened a shop in 1840 selling linen drapery, silk mercery, hosiery, haberdashery and straw bonnets. It had style: in the 1920s senior saleswomen and women buyers wore long silk or satin gowns, often with a train to give added dignity; men wore black suits with frock coats for seniors, stiff white collars and cuffs to shirts and black ties. Directors, shopwalkers and senior buyers used to wear shining top hats as they moved round the store. Then, as now, shopworkers had problems finding accommodation so Sayles established a hostel in the upper storeys of building with a reading room with daily and weekly newspapers. Back in 1922 Mr Chaplin a veteran governing director reminisced how in the 'good old days' things had been very different. Business hours used to be much longer, they had no Bank Holidays and no half-holidays except one and that was Flower Show day when they closed at four o'clock. "Men could do a good deal more work then than many of us can do today", he commented. What would he have said about modern shopping trends which continue to move towards seven-day, open-all-hours trading once more. [SCAN 9935 CEN PHOTO OF SAYLES 1970s – TAKE MODERN VIEW]

But history has a habit of repeating itself. Once the Post Office stood on the corner of Post Office Terrace, then it was relocated to the corner of Petty Cury before moving to its present site in 1934.

And redevelopment too has a habit of repeating itself as the buildings at the junction with Downing Street show. The Bird Bolt Inn had stood on the site for hundreds of years until the site was acquired by the Norwich Union Insurance Society who in 1907 erected a modern imposing new building for the new century. But by 1972 what had once been the last word in prestige office layout was condemned as wasteful of space both for heating and lighting as well as working and permission was obtained for its demolition. In its place arose a modern new block of shops and offices which are themselves to change yet again for the new Grand Arcade. [SCAN 6806 BIRD BOLT HOTEL, 8884 NORWICH UNION BUILDING, TAKE CURRENT PHOTO, FIND IMPRESSION OF GRAND ARCADE PLAN]

But one thing does seem to be clear - the days of traffic congestion have gone forever. No longer will the News report a solicitor's plea: "I feel it is only a matter of time before every motorist in Cambridge comes to court because he is forced to leave his car somewhere. The parking situation is a nightmare". He was appearing on behalf of a motorist summoned for causing a motor car to wait in St Andrew's Street for longer than the permitted 15 minutes. The date: 1950. [SCAN 9572 TRAFFIC CONDITIONS 1950]

That was in the good old days when you could actually drive down St Andrew's Street and park beside the road as you did your shopping. Perhaps you remember them?

Our Time 2004 10

The strange story of the Monks' Pipe and Hobson's River, by Mike Petty

Cambridge owes its existence to the river that embraces it and the bridge that spanned it. It supplied the town with a defence, with a major trading artery, with a sewer and a source of water for everyday life.

But you would not really want to drink it.

Before the coming of the colleges Cambridge was already home to a number of religious houses. One of these was a Franciscan Friary on the site of the present Sidney Sussex College in Sidney Street. The monks were some way from the river but they needed something to drink.

They first laid a stone channel to bring water from the fields out at Barnwell but this soon proved inadequate. So in 1325 they decided to construct a pipeline to bring a supply of clean drinking water from a place called Bradrusshe on the Madingley Road. Here a number of springs come to the surface which they channelled to a conduit head. Their small oblong building constructed of large blocks of stone still stands in the corner of a garden behind a house in Conduit Head Road. [TAKE PICTURE OF CONDUIT HEAD – NEED TO PHONE Lady Sylvia Lachmann, Conduit Head, 36 Conduit Head Road – 354433 AS IT'S APPROACHED THROUGH HER GARDEN]

The monks negotiated with seventeen different owners to buy up a long strip of land, two feet wide and over 5,500 feet long and dug a trench through the fields, crossing the river near Garret Hostel Island before continuing down a street called King's Childer Lane to their friary.

In it they laid lead pipes to carry the water to their home. Whenever the aqueduct required repair they dug up the ground above it, making great openings in the streets and lanes to the annoyance of travellers. It was a mighty undertaking but it was worth it for they had water which they shared with the townsfolk. For more than a century all was well.

However in 1209 following disturbances in Oxford, scholars had started to arrive in Cambridge and soon began to build colleges so they could live and work together.

One of these was King's Hall, on the site of part of the present Trinity College. As it expanded in 1433 so it took in King's Childer Lane and the pipe that had ran down the lane now crossed the centre of their new court. Scholars also need water so they asked permission to take some out of the pipe, it would not affect the Friars, they claimed, and should the pipe break under their ground the college would repair it.

But the Friars were unhappy with the idea and the disputes that followed had finally to be resolved by seeking the judgement of the King. The result was unsurprising: the college got their water and when Henry VIII abolished the friary in 1538 he granted the watercourse in its entirety to Trinity College.

The scholars used the water in their college kitchen but in 1601 the College decided to invest some money on an ornate stone fountain employing the skills of the finest craftsmen to carve various beasts to decorate it. When King James I visited the college in 1615 it was repaired and repainted to be ready for his admiration. But the fountain was poorly constructed and extensive repairs were needed in 1661-2 and 1672-3; despite these in 1716 it had to be completely rebuilt by Robert Gumbold; the work took 25 weeks and cost £183 13s. 6.

The old fountain was sketched by David Loggan for his *Cantabrigia Depicta* issued in 1688. Comparison with the existing structure shows that the original octagonal base used to have four steps instead of the present three. The crowns of the arches were ornamented with lions' heads instead of human faces while the lion on the summit had a metal crown and tongue and bore a weathercock. The whole structure was painted, probably for preservation of stonework, with some gilt decorations. Most importantly it had taps for water on all eight sides instead of only one as at present. [SCANS OF LOGGAN DRAWING OF FOUNTAIN 1688 AND

ACKERMANN COLOUR PRINT OF 1814; PERHAPS TAKE MODERN PICTURE IF NOT ONE IN LIBRARY]

Despite the rebuild another repair was needed 50 years later which was nearly as extensive as the previous one. The steps had to be replaced in 1821 and in the 1840s all the pipes were repaired and renewed.

But the fountain was more than an ornament. In 1656 the college ordered the porter to make sure the pipes ran constantly and to keep watch on any college servant who tried to sell the water to townsfolk. Despite this by 1713 many Cambridge people were reported to be using its excellent water for making tea and today there is a public tap outside the Great Gate – but with a notice warning the water is not to be used for drinking. [TAKE MODERN PICTURE OF THE TAP ON LEFT OF TRINITY COLLEGE GREAT GATE]

Hobson's Conduit

The absence of clean drinking water came to prominence in 1574 while Cambridge was enduring one of several recurring bouts of plague. Andrew Perne, Master of Peterhouse and Vice Chancellor of the University had no doubts as to the reason: "Our synnes is the principle cause; the other, as I conjecture, is the corruption of the King's Ditch"

The King's Ditch was an open watercourse that ran round the eastern side of Cambridge, starting at the Cam near Quayside, continuing across the Franciscan Friar's site, down the present Hobson Street, across the current Lion Yard and along Mill Lane back to the river. It had been conceived as a defence by Henry III back in 1267 but soon became more of an open sewer.

Perne suggested that Vicar's Brook, a natural stream running from the south of Cambridge, should be diverted to flow into the ditch so as to flush it out. But the scheme was put on the back burner. The idea was revived in 1607 by James Montagu, master of Sidney Sussex College, inheritors of the Friar's site. They were by then finding the stinking ditch across their gardens to be particularly offensive. It was so bad he was prepared to give 100 marks of his own money to get the work started.

A consortium of both University and townspeople was put together in a scheme for their common good. The plan was to construct a three-mile watercourse to bring water from a series of natural springs at Nine Wells in the parish of Gt Shelford. They would use the natural watercourse of the Vicar's Brook as a base but then divert the water down a one-mile long man-made canal and along the middle of Trumpington Street to the gateway of Pembroke College where it would flow into the King's Ditch. [COLOUR PRINT OF WATER FLOWING DOWN EACH SIDE OF STREET NEAR PEMBROKE COLLEGE 1814]

After all their efforts it seems the new water had little effect. Within a few years the King's Ditch was being filled in and by 1810 had virtually disappeared from the map altogether. But the pure water was too good to waste. A Conduit Head was constructed at the corner of Lensfield Road where the main watercourse terminated in an artificial pond. Some water continued down Trumpington Street though in the 1790s it was diverted from the centre of the road to runnels on either side. [COLOUR PICTURES IN NEWS FILES 'CAMBRIDGE. HOBSONS CONDUIT']

Two other underground channels were added. One branch was constructed in 1631 along Lensfield Road, Regent Terrace and St. Andrew's Street before splitting into two runs. One fed ponds at Emmanuel College before continuing under the present Drummer Street to Christ's where it provided water for the college swimming pool. Another continued down St.

Andrew's Street where the water flow along either side of the road before finally going underground near the corner of Hobson Street – part of the original King's Ditch.

An earlier spur had been laid in 1614 to bring water to the town centre. It ran down Tennis Court Road (where it was later diverted to serve the laundry of Addenbrooke's Hospital), then over the corner of a field owned by Thomas Hobson (now the University Downing Site), across St Andrews Hill to Guildhall Place and finally Market Hill.

Here a conduit was erected by Henry King and Nathaniel Cradock. The cost was to be met jointly by the University and Town but by 1620 many of the townsfolk had not paid their share, leaving the men out of pocket to the tune of about £100. They complained to the King who wrote to the Vice Chancellor and Mayor urging them to ensure proper steps were taken to defray the costs and keep the works in good repair.

Ten years later both Town and Gown mourned the death of one of Cambridge's greatest characters, Thomas Hobson. He had succeeded to his father's carriers business conveying goods and letters to and from London before recognising the potential of hiring horses to the many undergraduates who would otherwise have the expense of maintaining their own animals. His insistence that the animals were taken out in rotation – you took the next one in line or none at all – brought the phrase 'Hobson's Choice' into the language. But in Cambridge he was equally famous for two endowments. The first was the establishment of a workhouse where the poor could earn a living through spinning yarn. But it was his second that ensured his immortality. [SCAN OF HOBSON]

In his will in 1631 he specified that the income from several acres of land at 'Swinescroft' should be used to maintain the Conduit. But Hobson also added another £10 so that the top of the conduit might be made half a yard higher, or more if it might be conveniently done. This addition transformed the appearance of the original relatively plain conduit and an inscription in his memory was added to it. This was his only memorial stone, there being none to mark his burial place in the chancel of St Bene't's church. But it ensured that his name would be linked not only to the fountain but to the whole scheme, whilst those who actually carried it into fruition are largely forgotten. [SCAN OF PRINT OF CONDUIT ON MARKET HILL 1838]

Indeed when a memorial was finally erected at the source of the water at Nine Wells in 1861 one of the names of the actual benefactors was misspelled. Along with Andrew Perne, James Montagu, Thomas Chaplin, Stephen Perse, Joseph Merrill – and Hobson – was that of Edward Potts, actually Potto, a butcher who had been one of those who had supervised the building of the conduit. [SCAN OF MONUMENT AT NINE WELLS, ANOTHER IN CEN LIBRARY 'CAMBRIDGE. HOBSON'S STREAM']

The Market Hill conduit was further embellished following the restoration of King Charles II to the throne. The Civil War had been a difficult time in Cambridge with the town supporting Parliament whilst the University and Colleges had favoured the Royal cause. With the King returned the town council thought it prudent to demonstrate their loyalty and in 1661 ordered the Royal arms to be added to the conduit. Ten years later the King visited Cambridge and as he passed the Conduit, which was made to run red with claret wine, he expressed himself well pleased with it. It was something that had been seen ten years earlier for his coronation and was to be repeated for the visits of King William III in 1689 and Queen Anne in 1705

But by the 1830s the Conduit was often out of order and incapable of supplying the needs of the inhabitants. There was no actual shortage of water – streams of it ran away in different directions - but the Conduit itself would not even drip. The old leaden pipes were corroded and were replaced by iron pipes to restore the supply.

For nearly 200 years the Conduit stood on the corner of the Market, witnessing the daily activities at the stalls which were arranged in front of the Guildhall and in four lines from Petty Cury to Market Street. Between them and Great St Mary's church were a block of shops with a narrow lane, Pump Lane, separating them from others that backed up to the churchyard. [COLOUR VIEW OF MARKET SHOWING CONDUIT, 1830S]

But then in September 1849 fire broke out in a drapers shop and flames spread rapidly from one building to another; their colour changing as the chemicals at Orridge's chemist caught fire to be followed by the paints at Modens and then the newly-laid gas main fractured. There was a grave danger it would leap Pump Lane to the church beyond. The call went out for the various fire engines; the first to arrive made their way to the water supply - Hobson's conduit. But the railings were locked and they had to find the man with the key to open it up, then they squabbled as to who should have rights to the water while a chain of people ferried buckets of water hand to hand from the river. By hard work - and much luck - the morning found only part of the centre razed to the ground, though many other properties were badly damaged. [SCAN OF ROWLANDSON PRINT OF MARKET HILL BEFORE FIRE SHOWING HOUSES ON RIGHT AND CONDUIT IN BACKGROUND]

Faced with the devastation of the town centre the town council was forced to consider come action. As men began to clear away the rubble so a seemingly endless round of debates, discussions, arguments and negotiations began. The council finally decided to pull down the remaining properties and construct a new larger Market Square. Pump Lane disappeared, Great St Mary's church gained extra ground, St Mary's Passage was widened, the site levelled and the Hill disappeared [COLOUR PRINT OF MARKET SQUARE AFTER FIRE]

It was not the end of the debate: the old Hobson's Conduit now on the corner of the new Square was considered too antiquated a structure in those forward-looking times. For Cambridge now had a new source of water with the establishment of the Cambridge University and Town Waterworks Company. Various designs were suggested but the preferred scheme was for an ornate fountain under a high stone canopy right in the centre. But the design was not appreciated by all: the Athenaeum commented "the new structure is a failure; it appears short and clumsy and the gables and pinnacles have a dwarfish appearance ..." [COLOUR PRINT OF THE NEW FOUNTAIN DESIGN].

The work was put out to tender – but nobody wanted the job. Things stagnated; people complained of bungling and delays. A correspondent to the Cambridge Chronicle of 8th September 1855 lamented: "it is currently reported that the Town Council intended to erect the new Conduit out of the stones of Sebastopol ... and they are waiting for its capture to get the supply of granite".

Next week Sebastopol fell to the British and French besieging armies in the Crimean war – noted for the charge of the Light Brigade the year previously. Crowds flocked on to Market Square, fireworks were let off and squibs and rockets bounced about for several hours. Work started in earnest next week on preparing the site and the building of the Fountain itself commenced during the winter weather of November and December. It was soon obvious that something was wrong; by May 1856 the new masonry had already become loose "and unless something be immediately done it is evident that the top of the conduit will speedily tumble down"

The criticisms were justified; just as with the original Trinity Fountain the workmanship was poor and the stone soon started to decay. By 1953 the ornate canopy was in a dangerous condition; it would cost £2,000 to repair and was just not worth the expense of restoration. [SCAN OF ARTICLE ON BEHEADING 1953]

Some of the crumbling stone figures, including that of Thomas Hobson, were taken to the Folk Museum for preservation. In their century on the Market Hill they witnessed coronations, celebrations, undergraduate rags and war. The stately structure had endeared itself to generations of market goers but now it was removed, leaving just the base and

fountain head. This itself is no longer fed by water from the conduit, the link having been severed during the construction of Lion Yard. [TAKE MODERN PICTURE OF MARKET HILL FOUNTAIN]

But what was to happen to the old Hobson's Conduit? Alderman Foster Finch, sometime Mayor of Cambridge, agitated for somewhere to put it and launched a collection ensure its repair. By July 1856 it was in its new position at the head of the watercourse that formerly fed it and its reopening was witnessed by a gathering of its supporters. [PHOTO OF CEREMONY AT LENSFIELD ROAD]. An inscription was added to the Conduit to celebrate the munificence of Thomas Hobson, further ensuring his posterity. [PHOTO OF STONE MASON RECARVING SOME OF THE DECORATIONS OF THE CONDUIT - (DATE UNCERTAIN)]

As the replacement fountain in the centre of the Market Hill has decayed so from time to time plans have been produced for something else to replace it; there have even been proposals for a new fountain. Some people have suggested once more reinstating Hobson's Conduit in the centre of the city. Perhaps one day, as envisaged by a poet back in 1856,

“... the glory of my fame
Will shine upon the Market Hill again”

The Fountain Society will be holding their Annual Conference at St Catharine's College, Cambridge on 11th and 12th September 2004 when Mike Petty will be lecturing on 'Hobson's Conduit and other Cambridge water features'

DETAILS OF THE FOUNTAIN SOCIETY FROM PETER KNOWLSON – 01306 883874 – knowlsonpm@cix.co.uk

Our Time 2004 10

Bridge Street, by Mike Petty

Cambridge's Bridge Street is one that has changed dramatically within living memory, though some parts would be familiar to the passengers who once arrived by stagecoach at one of the great Cambridge inns, the Hoop Hotel. It was mentioned by the poet William Wordsworth in 'The Prelude, a record of his life in Cambridge from 1789 to 1791:

Onward we drove beneath the Castle; caught
While crossing Magdalene Bridge, a glimpse of Cam;
And at the Hoop alighted, famous Inn.

The Hoop was built in about 1729 and amongst those who found shelter within its walls was one of the most famous of Cambridge characters. Jemmy Gordon combined great learning with a great propensity to drink, a memory that could recall the slightest transgressions of the most important folk and a mouth that had no hesitation in sharing them with the world. No wonder constables and magistrates preferred to ignore him. Jemmy lived not in the hotel itself but in the stables at the back until one night, returning drunk as usual, he lost his footing on the ladder that led to his loft and broke his shoulder. Today ancient oaths and declamations can still be heard in the area – but now they come from the stage of the ADC which has replaced the inn's private theatre. Fittingly the Hoop had a dramatic end; it was bought by

man anxious to close it down since he felt it was blighting the careers of too many undergraduates. Then when renovations were taking place in 1910 workmen found a human skeleton concealed beneath the wall of the wine cellar. Now the upper rooms have been transformed again by Trinity College to provide accommodation for its students. [SCAN 7938 - BILL FROM HOOP HOTEL 1829; PHOTO OF STREET IN 1960s; TAKE MODERN EQUIVALENT]

Across the road were a number of shops including Gallyons the gunsmiths whose technicians had a tendency to adjust the sights of their bespoke sporting rifles by aiming at the ladies in the jewellers shop opposite. It closed in 1982 after 198 years in Cambridge. Nearby Thomas Stearn the photographer specialised in University sporting pictures. During the Second World War they moved their processing department to Brighouse near Leeds from which a large number of glass plate negatives taken at that time were retrieved by the Cambridgeshire Collection in Lion Yard library. Sadly these are the only negatives that seem to have survived, thousands of others being dumped after the firm closed in the 1970s. The move was prompted by the bombing raids on Cambridge one of which in 1942 sent shrapnel flying through the air and scarring the walls of Whewell's Court opposite the junction with Jesus Lane. [TAKE MODERN VIEW FROM JESUS LANE LOOKING AT BUILDINGS ON LEFT HAND SIDE]

The force of the blast was taken by the Union Society building just behind the Round Church. This is the University's debating chamber and was patched up in time to become a base from which Generals Montgomery and Eisenhower planned part of the D-Day invasion of 1944. [SCAN 10116 VIEW FROM ST JOHN'S COLLEGE CHAPEL SHOWING UNION SOCIETY & ROUND CHURCH 1938] Fortunately Holy Sepulchre church – the Round Church – escaped largely undamaged, its Norman building continuing to attract visitors as it has for centuries. [SCAN T719 - COLOUR PRINT OF ROUND CHURCH c1840]

It was not enemy bombers but Cambridge planners who were responsible for the most dramatic changes in Bridge Street. As the town sought to cope with the increase in motor traffic after the First World War it was obvious that something needed to be done. The solution seemed obvious; widen the main road into the town centre by demolishing the old buildings alongside it. This solution also accorded with St John's College's plans for addition facilities and the die was cast. [COLOUR SCAN 7370 C1905 - SCAN 10436 STREET WITH TRAFFIC LIGHTS 1937 - TAKE MODERN EQUIVALENT].

Some antiquarians bemoaned the disappearance of some of the older buildings, in particular the former Old Red Lion which Dick Turpin is said to have frequented. But they could not be allowed to stand in the way of progress and the site was cleared to be replaced by St John's college music school and student rooms. The demolition saw the end of several old yards which had provided homes for generations of residents but Warren's Yard and Sussum's Yard, one of whose premises included a fine carved oak mantelpiece that had once graced St John's Combination Room passed largely unrecorded into the history books. [SCAN 10437 FRONT OF THE DEMOLISHED PROPERTIES]

The similar old, out of date and worn-out 16th-century buildings across the road near the corner with Round Church Street survived in their run-down state until the Second World War was over. But by 1967 they were just a decayed shell and plans were announced to replace them with a supermarket. Although these were rejected, so too were recommendations that the structure be preserved. "The sooner we get the bulldozers in, the better" said one councillor. Various proposals were put forward for the crumbling buildings to be pulled down for a shopping, parking and residential complex but these brought protests from the Cambridge Preservation Society. Finally they were declared of Historic Interest and not to be demolished. It was agreed that there could be redevelopment, but it must retain the historic frontage. In August 1975 scaffolding went up around the surviving facades as behind

mechanical diggers began excavating foundations for an office complex that would be built, almost unseen, at the back. Today it is hailed as one of the successes of modern architecture, and has won a Civic Trust award. Yet the pictures in the News files reveal just how run-down they had become and how nearly the city lost one of its architectural gems. [SCAN T724 OR PIC FROM LIBRARY OF OLD FRONTAGE, TAKE MODERN EQUIVALENT]

If conservationists feel like a drink to celebrate then they have several pubs to chose from. The Mitre serves Benskin's beer at 48p a pint – or at least it did back in February 1981! Between it and The Baron of Beef next door were twelve houses in Blackamoor Head Yard. Some were damaged when in 1933 one of the fiercest fires in Cambridge for years raged through the site partially destroying the Baron, which had been rebuilt only the year before at a cost of between £4,000 and £5,000. [PHOTO OF MITRE 1990]

Something of the atmosphere of old Cambridge can be found in streets around St Clement's Church. But pictures showing Norman Bradley's pawnbrokers shops on the corner of Thompson's Lane is a reminder that not everybody could or can afford the expense of life in central Cambridge. In the 1920s old ladies used to take in their corsets on Monday mornings only to retrieve them the next Friday ready for church on Sunday – something that no longer happens (presumably)!. [SCAN T524 SHOWING CORNER THOMPSONS LANE c1905] [SCAN 8998 OF PRINT OF ST CLEMENTS CHURCH IN 1830S – TAKE MODERN VIEW]

But looking along Quayside from Magdalene Bridge it is hard to recall just how much this area has changed in the last few years. This was the hard-working port area where barges unloaded wood, breweries produced beer and an electricity generating station chimney spewed smoke into the atmosphere. Its transformation into the cosmopolitan riverside area of today is a reminder that not everything was better in the 'good old days' ["A GLIMPSE OF CAM" - SCAN 9110 OF QUAYSIDE AND SNOW 1963 – TAKE MODERN EQUIVALENT]

Our Time 2004 11

Grand designs, new beginnings by Mike Petty

Shopping in Cambridge city centre has entered a new phase with the closure of Robert Sayle's store in St Andrew's Street. Now another famous name that has served generations of Cambridge folk, and is regularly cited as the city's favourite shop, has become just a memory, like Eaden Lilley, Joshua Taylor and even Woolworths.

Robert Sayle had opened his store in St Andrews Street back in March 1840 with a stock consisting of linen drapery, silk mercery, hosiery, haberdashery and straw bonnets. Then he was in competition with Mr William Eaden Lilley who sold drapery, floor coverings and soft furnishings from a small shop in Market Street. They were joined by a third store that of Joshua Taylor who had set up in Ely before moving to Sidney Street Cambridge in 1860, expanding into Market Street in 1900; their stock consisted of working men's clothing, smocks, cord knee breeches and moleskin trousers. Each store developed and expanded despite the difficulties of trading in a town where shops existed to serve the University and virtually closed down at the end of term.

After the Great War came a period of massive expansion in Cambridge shopping. Old buildings in Sidney Street were ripped down to make way for a new Boots development on one side, with Sainsbury's followed by Woolworths and Marks and Spencer on the other. The arrival of such large stores attracted shoppers into the centre of Cambridge, their numbers swelled by the creation of a new large bus station in Drummer Street.

Meanwhile another shopping revolution had been taking place in the Fitzroy Street, Burleigh Street area where numerous small shops existed to serve the resident community. In 1883 Laurie & McConnell opened a shop in Fitzroy Street; they suffered a disastrous fire in 1903 but rebuilt a magnificent new store which they expanded along the street as the century developed. The shop sold everything from clothing to furnishing, fabric, hardware, china and gardening implements. They were joined by the Co-operative Society who moved into new premises in Burleigh Street in 1900 and together they attracted shoppers from around the region, as well as from the town centre.

But by the 1950s planners were concerned about the viability of the Cambridge shopping scene and plans were canvassed for a new shopping development – but was it to be in the Fitzroy Street or Petty Cury areas? The decision was finally made in favour of the town centre and ancient buildings and lanes were ripped down for the Lion Yard precinct which opened in 1974. It brought more nationally-known names into Cambridge as well as providing space for local fashion shops such as the Alley Boutique, Cambridge's answer to Carnaby Street, but many complained that the rents were too high at a period when the three Rs – rents, rates and recession took their toll. Many of the older-established firms such as Bacons the tobacconists, Pigotts tools, Barretts china and numerous tailors closed or moved away to be replaced by more national stores or Building Societies.

But the planners had not finished; now one centre was complete they turned their eyes on the East Road area as well where many of the properties were in poor condition. For years the arguments raged as both Laurie and McConnell and the Co-op expanded and modernised. In 1974 the plans envisaged a new store for the John Lewis organisation, parent group of Robert Sayle. But nothing was clear and with no firm plans the area deteriorated, parking restrictions were introduced and finally Laurie could wait no longer. In 1977 they announced their closure blaming indecision over the Kite redevelopment. Almost immediately plans for the Grafton centre were confirmed.

In recent years the Grafton has been expanded and concern has been voiced again about the viability of the city centre shopping where both Eaden Lilley and Joshua Taylor have moved away. Now in a new leap of faith there is to be more new development, a Grand Arcade to span the area from Lion Yard to Downing Street. But to make space the old Robert Sayle store has to go. They have found a new temporary home – on the site of the old Co-op building in Burleigh Street – from which they will return to their original place in the heart of central Cambridge. It will not be the same shop, it may not be the same name, but the spirit of Robert Sayle is due to return to its ancestral home.

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Our Time 2004 12

Poppy Day in Cambridge by Mike Petty

On Armistice Sunday throughout Cambridgeshire men and women who have now grown old will prepare to commemorate once more those who did not. They will make their way to a church or chapel to remember again those people who to many are just names. Then will come the procession to a war memorial to lay their wreaths of poppies.

The old soldiers will not be alone; they will be joined by younger folk who have grown up in times of comparative peace. But could the young be trusted to observe the occasion in the right manner – this was the question being asked in the 1920s.

For some years after the end of the Great War Cambridge authorities refused to allow the British Legion to arrange a collection on behalf of Earl Haig's appeal for distressed men and the devastated areas. It was felt to be too dangerous.

Undergraduate 'rags' had become too boisterous, especially those around Bonfire Night. November had become a public nuisance, policemen were continually attacked and to hold a Poppy Day collection that month would be asking for trouble. It could too easily become the occasion for unseemly behaviour between the undergraduates and the poppy sellers.

Armistice Day, 1921, was the 'Great Gun Day'. During the night of November 10th a band of Gonville and Caius College men removed one of the German guns then displayed at Jesus College. They slid it onto a trolley and through a section of railings before dragging it down Victoria Avenue, Chesterton Lane and Bridge Street into the court of Gonville and Caius college where it was found next morning.

Then a few days later the Cambridge newspapers carried a letter from a member of Caius College. It was from Colonel F. Stratton the Chairman of the Cambridge branch of the British Legion. He reported that together with an undergraduate society he had approached the police, the Watch Committee and the Vice Chancellor of the University to ask permission to organise a Poppy Day collection. This had been agreed and the first collection would be held on Saturday 26th November 1921. They had also suggested that next year this collection should be organised entirely by undergraduates who would take full responsibility that there would be no incidents. In another extraordinary act of faith this too had been allowed.

But there was another, more important, event in the pipeline. And it was one almost ruined by the non-appearance of an undergraduate – though it was not his fault.

In September 1920 a meeting of the Cambridgeshire Joint War Memorial Committee had agreed the erection of a memorial statue at the corner of Station Road, Cambridge.

A Canadian sculptor, Tait McKenzie was commissioned. He suggested the figure of a private soldier in full kit, striding along bareheaded, helmet in hand. A German helmet would be strung on his back as a trophy, partly concealed by a laurel wreath carelessly flung over his rifle barrel. In his hand he would hold a rose while another rose thrown to him had fallen to the ground. His head would be turned to the side, his expression alert and happy, and his lips slightly parted as if he had recognised an old friend in the crowd. As he glanced over his shoulder he would look down Station Road from which he left for the war. But now he would be at peace, for the statue was of The Homecoming.

McKenzie needed a model and found one in a Christ's College undergraduate, Kenneth Hamilton.

The sculptor worked feverishly trying to get the design just as he wanted it. In his studios at the University of Pennsylvania he was working constantly, inviting artist friends to comment and criticise. At last he was ready. The mould for the statue was complete, it just need to be shipped to England.

The day for the memorial's unveiling had been set for July 3rd 1922. The Duke of York, who was in Cambridge to open the Royal Show at Trumpington, would perform the ceremony. The plinth was erected, the crowds anticipated.

But there was a problem. The boat carrying the statue delayed and could not be there in time. The Committee was faced with a dilemma. They could not unveil a statue that was not there – or could they. They decided on a subterfuge. A plaster cast of the statue was erected and painted to look like bronze. Then they prayed that it would not rain – for that might dissolve the paint - and that the wind would not blow and the covering canvas rub out essential details. But it rained and blew. However nobody noticed and in the presence of thousands of people The Homecoming was unveiled.

Then ten days later a lorry drew up with the proper figure. The copy was taken down and for a while Cambridge had two war memorials – though not identical, for the sculptor had made slight changes once he'd seen the figure in place.

Four months later the first Poppy Day Rag came into being when on 15th November 1922 a circus of weird animals emerged from the yard of the Castle Hotel in St Andrew's Street. They included a costermonger's cart, an elephant, a jester and Tishy the kangaroo who curtsied for every penny thrown. The circus was a screamingly funny affair and brought everyone to doorways, windows and, in some cases, roof tops. The procession was in Downing Street when the signal for the two minutes Armistice silence was heard and immediately the procession pulled up. The two minutes over the pandemonium started as suddenly as it had ceased. They toured the town with a police escort and raised £120 13s. It was hailed as a rag that everybody could enjoy; it did no harm to anybody and above all it aided "Poppy Day" to the sum of £123 13s.

It was to be fore runner for many more. Next year the paper reported that the red poppy of Remembrance was everywhere in Cambridge. Every buttonhole, every bicycle, and every motor car bore visible tribute to those who died that England might live. Everywhere there were busy undergraduates smiling and pushing their business and selling red silk poppies in aid of the Earl Haig's Fund for ex-servicemen and their dependants. The rags continued with parades and decorated floats until the 1960s. But then some colleges began to boycott the event and people became less tolerant of flour bombs, rotten tomatoes, water pistols and eggs. In 1967 the 'Poppy Day' rag was held for the last time. Although the rag was revived in 1969 it was held in February, not November and the link with Poppy Day was broken.

Collections however continue to be made and the number of poppies visible in the streets on the approach to Armistice Day proves that our appreciation of the sacrifices made by those who fought and died – as well as those who returned to rebuild their lives – is not forgotten.

And as the old soldiers stand proudly at the Cambridge war memorial on the corner of Station Road the face of a Cambridge undergraduate will be looking down on them.

TWO SCANS OF CROWDS AT UNVEILING OF THE CAMBRIDGE MEMORIAL,
SCAN OF MEMORIAL
THERE ARE OTHER PIX IN LIBRARY

Our Time 2004 12

Bonfire night in Cambridge by Mike Petty

The Government clampdown on fireworks has been welcomed by those of us who no longer appreciate the bangs and whizzes in what now seems late into the night. Yet such efforts to restrain exuberant youths have been going on far before any of us were born – and in the days when we were young things were much more exciting than now.

Cambridge newspapers have been reporting the same things for year after year as these summaries will show

1786

Bonfire Night was celebrated in the usual manner with squibs, crackers, rioting and mischief to the personal injury of many and the great danger of the inhabitants in general. We wish housekeepers would unite with magistrates to suppress this dangerous nuisance and as caution every person who makes or sells any squibs, crackers, serpents or other fireworks is liable to a penalty of £5.

1791

In Norwich a man was fined £1 for throwing squibs in their Market Place and another to one month's hard labour in the bridewell for throwing fire balls. A few such examples in Cambridge would be of public utility

1808

A young man detected throwing squibs on Cambridge market hill was made to offer the donation of one guinea to Addenbrooke's Hospital or be prosecuted

1810

Following an accident at a house where fireworks were sold the magistrates have determined to suppress the unlawful practice of letting off fireworks

1816

Constables were stationed to enforce this ruling but many people assembled on Parker's Piece and Midsummer Green. Two boys were so much hurt it is expected they will lose their sight.

1838

Five youths and one girl who were charged with disorderly conduct and exciting the mob to riot on the night of November 5th were admonished and discharged

1859

It had seemed that the regular manifestations of detestation of of popery and popish plots - by punching each other's heads and blacking each other's eyes - was dying and only exercised by a few shop boys and Barnwell brats following in the wake of a half-dozen gownsmen or kicking a policeman or two. But on Saturday last a party of freshman opened the ball by walking arm-in-arm along the principle streets with defiant expressions on their countenances and their sleeves turned up as if ready for battle. Being Saturday night there was a large number of country lads in town and the boys of Barnwell and other 'scum' - as dirty a mob as one would choose to set eyes on - were soon at the heels of the gownsmen. At first feelings were expressed in groaning or shouting; when the 'gown' turned round the 'cads' ran away shouting 'town'. But soon some Barnwellians of larger growth - whose objects was probably plunder rather than pounding - joined the mob. Skirmishes occurred; sticks were used by both parties & stones thrown by younger boys hit heads of both sides as well as neighbouring windowpanes. The most serious affray was in St John's street where an undergraduate had his arm broken and an innocent passer-by - a Sunday-school teacher - was attacked and taken to hospital. By 10 pm most of the gown party had been sent home by the Proctors but roughs continued to prowl the streets attacking any undergraduate they came across. Police were called and a printer's apprentice was taken to the police station, his companions following throwing stones upon his captors. A large body of policemen were on duty and exerted themselves as much as possible in keeping order. [COLOUR SCAN 'BATTLE' – NB NOT THIS INCIDENT]

1860

No one can doubt that the discontinuance of such observance will do any harm. This year there was no absurd demonstration of foul fighting and cowardice. Undergraduates have come to the conclusion they have something better to do than senselessly parade the streets followed by hooting Barnwell roughs and this year abstained from exciting the mischievous propensities of the hobbledehoy population by appearing in any numbers. Boys had crackers & squibs to themselves. One or two started a fire on Market Hill but it was put out by police.

Even then things were not what they once had been:

The Guy of former years was a figure dressed in modern but seedy clothes, supported on the back of a donkey by some partner of his saddless seat, his arms outstretched to denote the intensity of the torture he had undergone, his gloved hands bearing brimstone matches spread out fanwise to show his diabolical intent; his face red and apoplectic with no nose to speak of, eyes fixed and expressionless complexion highlighted by a large white frill and gigantic paper collar. The Cambridge guy this year was a hollow mockery, attired in a top coat of green paper copiously bedecked with spangles somewhat like a Chinese mandarin and borne on a stretcher. [SCAN 7901- A GUY OF 1933 VINTAGE]

1898

Saturday was a typical "fifth" in Cambridge. Faithfully following the precedent set in former years a number of Varsity men and townspeople assembled in the market place, which for three hours or so was crowded with excitable and pugilistically-inclined youths, representing Town and Gown. The Gown, driven from pillar to post by the howling mob, appeared to be greatly terrified, and despite the vigilance of the police, of whom a large number were told off for special duty, the celebration was not entirely free from violence. Neither town nor gown missed many opportunities of displaying their physical prowess and many are the reports circulated as to the results of the pugilistic

1899

Almost as soon as it was dark a large number of youths made their way to Cambridge Market Hill which was in a short time alive to the crackling and bangings of the smaller fireworks. The 'Varsity', after hall time, joined the townspeople and from eight to eleven there was a roaring, rushing crowd of several hundreds about the hill and neighbouring streets. Certain of the townsmen who had begun the day not to wisely by profusely drinking were responsible for the greater part of the disorder and were seized and marched off by the ever-vigilant gentlemen in blue. [SCAN 9662 – BONFIRE – NOT THIS INCIDENT]

1911

There was a violent battle for the bridge by Jesus Lock. Five PCs successfully resisted the attacks of 300 undergraduates and 'town rowdies'. Stones were thrown. PC Johnson was knocked out and PC Tillet had both heels of his boots torn off. The crowd showed traces of a saving grace for after an appeal by the local superintendent they turned on the stone throwers [SCAN BRIDGE – THIS INCIDENT]

1912

Nov 5th fell on Sunday and it was hoped it would put an end to the bedlam. But gownsmen rioted with equal vigour on both the 4th and 6th. Some raggers surmounted the fence into Newnham college grounds, pulled up the hockey goalposts and prepared a bonfire. The noise they made aroused the College and several of the lady dons and students came out and ran towards the revellers. But police arrived before the Amazons had chance to wreak their revenge. A young gentleman of Trinity college surmounted a human pyramid to reach one of the bracket lamps in Trinity Street. A charge of mounted policemen dispersed the pyramid

and the young man remained hanging in mid air until weariness forced him to drop into the midst of a dozen constables waiting below. A 'rescue' cry echoed round Trinity and the gallants did their best but a second charge of mounted police dispersed them. The solitary but unabashed young gentleman was conveyed to the cells under the escort of ten constables on foot with a dozen mounted police strongly protecting the rear and flanks. Their trials plus tribulations were valued next day at a mere one-pound fine [SCAN 7065 – ARREST – NOT THIS INCIDENT]

1913

Cambridge railway station attacked and the platforms flowed white with the upturned churns of the night milk train [SCAN 'STATION' – THIS IS THIS EVENT]

During the blackout of the Great War the tradition was suspended

1915

Cambridge streets were darkened on bonfire night, with strict police supervision - which brought forth some protest by those who have no experience of a Zeppelin raid and the serious catastrophe of being under a rain of bombs from the clouds. In one East Anglian town just to strike a match in the streets was an offence but here in Cambridge there was much abuse of flashlights in the streets after dark - which was asking for trouble

The 1920s' were relatively calm

1922

A lamp-boy from Thoday street, Cambridge was summoned for throwing a firework on Senate House-hill on 4th November and fined one shilling. Ten shillings was the fine imposed upon an undergraduate of Trinity College for a similar offence on Market-hill. Defendant said he did not know they were arresting people for letting fireworks off, or else he would not have been fool enough to do so in front of half the police force. An undergraduate of Corpus Christi who was fined 10s. stated that he came on to the square and saw a lot of police loafing about so he thought he would like to throw some fireworks

1923

Cambridge would be disappointed indeed if the Fifth of November failed to produce a rag of some sort. Last night's effort was, to say the least of it, feeble and was sustained for the most part by such residents of the town as come out for excitement on such occasions, and a handful of very callow freshmen. Fireworks there were in plenty, but the old spirit was lacking. Had it not been for the mounted police and the proctors, the market square would have been its usual desolate self soon after 9.30 pm. It was noticeable that as soon as the mounted police left the crowd decreased by 50 per cent.

During the Second World War the explosions were for real; afterwards it started again

1947

In spite of the fact that there are even fewer fireworks about this year than last, we shall doubtless hear quite a few bangs to-night, organised by those boys whose hours of patient waiting have been rewarded by securing a few of the precious squibs, spinning wheels, golden rain and other varieties which delight both the eye and the ear. The shortage is due to a combination of three things - shortage of paper, labour and fuel, paper being possibly the primary one. The Board of Trade have issued an appeal to the public not to use waste paper and cardboard for November the Fifth bonfires as it goes to make packaging for exports and ceiling boards for new houses

The appeal had little effect

Six undergraduates and two RAF men were arrested during the usual Guy Fawkes Night scenes in the centre of Cambridge last night. From 7.30 crowds grew steadily on Market Hill. Fireworks were discharged freely and the din reached its peak between eight and half-past. Members of the University who earlier had been outnumbered by more than ten to one were out in force by nine o'clock. Several minor scuffles occurred about this time, and the first of several policemen's helmets disappeared. Proctors and their "bulldogs" early kept undergraduates on the move. After that the crowd gradually thinned away, and by 1.15 there were only groups here and there

But the most destructive November 5th was that of 1948. Bonfire damage worse than enemy action during war said the headline in *Varsity*, the student magazine

By 7pm a big crowd on Market Square was joined by undergraduate men and women wearing gowns for the first time on bonfire night. Lamp standards had been bound with greasy tape to prevent climbers extinguishing the lights – but were themselves set on fire. By 10.30 all lamps had been dealt with and people turned attention to other targets. There were efforts to uproot Belisha beacons and one was pushed through a shop window.

Scores of fireworks and smoke bombs were thrown – some down the underground toilets. Rockets were aimed at the Guildhall clock. The interior of the Senate House was severely damaged by an explosive charge and 70 panes of glass broken. The priceless medieval glass of King's College Chapel narrowly escaped destruction and three motor vehicles were damaged and four constables and at least four civilians were injured. There were eight arrests – five of them undergraduates and 10 people were taken to Addenbrooke's Hospital [SCAN OF VARSITY HEADLINES]

1949

The quietest Guy Fawkes night "rag" long-service Cambridge police officers could remember passed off without even a street lamp being extinguished – another 'within living memory' record. A crowd gathered on the Market Square by 7pm and fireworks were thrown. A police car, which arrived on the scene, radioed for reinforcements. They shepherded the crowd off the square. After that police posted at the entrances to the square prevented people entering the area. Early in the evening a few rotten eggs were thrown, and a smoke bomb exploded in the Sidney Street area. These incidents, and the intermittent throwing of fireworks, constituted about the only 'excitement' of the evening, though there was an occasion when a 'bulldog' pursued a man at full speed in front of the Guildhall.

1950

Although four arrests – three townsmen and one undergraduate – were made, Guy Fawkes night this year was about the quietest since the war. Undergraduates are not as lively as in years past. The reason for the lack of activity on their part was probably the fact that they had been warned verbally by their tutors. Just to make sure seven watchful Proctors with their top-hatted 'bulldogs' maintained a constant patrol of the main streets

Violence flared at the end of the decade:

1959

This was heralded 'the roughest fifth for 20 years' with a pitched barrage of squibs and bangers descending on the crowds. As more and more people came onto Market Hill preliminary skirmishes quickly developed into war on all fronts. Youths poured oil on the water in the fountain and then set it ablaze, the heat was felt by bystanders on the Victoria Cinema pavement. After an hour's bombardment the square was blanketed under a thick pall of sulphurous smoke into which more and more people groped their way. Nearly everyone

was caught at one time or another by a squib, many people's clothes were scorched and burnt and several people injured.

Given such horrendous acts the police and university authorities took steps to control the situation, with students being banned from the centre of the city – a ban which was also extended to members of the armed forces.

1962

Police urged people to stay away from the city centre on Guy Fawkes night and the Vice Chancellor announced he had banned all students from the main streets from 7pm till midnight to prevent disturbances which have resulted in injuries to by-standers and passers-by. Groups of policemen equipped with walkie talkie radio sets patrolled the streets and 'moved-on' and groups of people found on corners and in the main streets. It was the quietest for many years.

By 1973 things had become distinctly civilised:

6,000 people turned out to support the second firework spectacular presented by Cambridge Round Table at Cambridge United's Football ground. Hundreds of children were amongst the spectators to watch the £400 firework display. A variety of set pieces, most of which largely featured Catherine wheels won plenty of admiration. Bonfire night in Cambridge was one of the quietest for many years. The Fire Brigade had only one call - and that was a false alarm [FIND MODERN COLOUR PICTURES]

It was an example that has been followed and now thousands flock to organised fireworks spectacles rather than pitched battles in the streets. But way back in 1928 undergraduates had anticipated this possibility with a cartoon in the 'Granta' showing the first squib being lit on Market Hill by the Senior Proctor in front of a cordon of police. It was inconceivable then but today would surprise nobody! [SCAN OF PROCTOR]

The old bonfire nights were 'fun' for some, but terrifying for others. Judi Pollard (nee Moore) recalled: "Living most of our childhood in Sidney Street I remember my father used to take us to a friend's house in Chesterton to share their celebrations. But inevitably we would return home to find Sidney Street blocked off by the police to avoid the Market Square crowd rampaging. On one such occasion my mother, who had stayed in the flat, was bombarded by fireworks being thrown up against our windows. I can remember when in my teens my boyfriend and I crammed on to Market Hill with a few hundred others. Somebody let off something – probably home made – because it was the loudest bang I'd ever heard and the ground actually shook. As a finale to that evening we were then pelted with bags of flour by the people residing in flats over the Milk Bar and other premises on that side of the Square"

But should anybody feel tempted to recreate the madness of past times it might be worth recalling that: "Any person who casts or fires a squib, cracker, serpent or other firework in the public street shall forfeit 20/- or be committed to the House of Correction to hard labour for one month." And when that rule was made in 1786, twenty shillings was a great deal of money!

Our Time 2004 12

Cambridgeshire Wartime Christmases 1939-1945 by Mike Petty

Mike Petty looks back some of the stories of Christmases of the Second World War

1939

War had been declared in September after Germany had invaded Poland; troops had been mobilised and thousands of children evacuated from London and other cities thought liable to be bombed

That December at the time when people's thoughts would normally have been turning to Christmas there were other things to think about such as digging trenches in case of bombing raids and coping with over-enthusiastic special constables on blackout duty. If Father Christmas came this year he'd better dim Rudolph's red nose

The weather was depressing: the sight of birds frozen to trees was not unusual, roads were impassable & trains arrived days, not hours, late. The struggle to keep warm dominated daily life. Knitting had become a major activity producing comforts such as scarves and mittens, gloves and helmets for loved ones in the forces.

In villages parcels were being prepared to sent to for serving men; at Swavesey they contained a Christmas cake, puddings, woolly comforts, chocolates, sweets & tobacco

The problems of war had been brought into focus on November 20th when instructions had been issued to register at a shop for bacon, ham, sugar & butter. Turkeys were scarce so it was mutton pies and Christmas pudding where grated apples or carrots, chopped prunes and dried elderberries replaced dried fruit. Mincemeat became scarce & although it was not yet rationed one shop restricted customers voluntarily to three prunes, four dates, 12 raisins and one ounce of sultanas.

Music shops optimistically suggested buying a piano to raise the blackout gloom & various games like Monopoly, Kan-u-go and jigsaws were being promoted as a way to counter the 'tiresome' current affairs. But Murketts of Huntingdon Toyland had dolls' prams from 6/9 (34p), pedal cars from 5/9 (29p), shove halfpenny boards and train sets

Wirelesses were very widely advertised - wireless would bring friends & relatives closer together – and in Cambridge Millers' radio sale meant that a GEC radiogram could be bought for 10gns. It was worth it to hear the broadcast of the Kings College carol service, where candles still burned, despite the blackout - but with dark blank spaces among the rich glory of the stained glass showing where some of the windows had been removed for safety's sake. The outstanding event of the festive season was the King's Christmas broadcast.

Christmas was more solemn than usual. In countless homes the traditional joy and gaiety was tempered by the absence of one or more members of the family. But men of the searchlight units in different parts of Huntingdonshire left their isolated posts on Christmas day to visit the towns where dinners and been arranged with entertainment at the George Hotel, Huntingdon & smaller gatherings in Ramsey & St Neots.

Then there were those who were spending the Christmas in hospitals or institutions. Evacuees from London hospitals outnumbered Cambridge cases almost two to one at Mill Road Infirmary where about 150 people enjoyed the decorated wards, the Salvation army band and roast beef for dinner. At Wisbech there were 180 in the Poor Law Institution where the Mayor and Farther Christmas attended at dinner time. In the Huntingdon Institution 114 inmates shared turkey & pork following by puddings and beer, and each received a present worth 2/7 (13p); but when the Mayor returned to his own home he found it had been ransacked. The Mayoress' hats had been placed on ornaments in the bedrooms, a bottle of whisky emptied and left decorated with a sprig of holly. Somebody evidently had enjoyed a merry time in his absence!

And then there were the evacuees. Although many had travelled back to London for the holiday many others were catered for locally and the Isle of Ely had 7,000 guests in the form of evacuated London schoolchildren spending their first Christmas away from parents and friends. But Santa Claus' address book proved to be a comprehensive volume and contained information of the whereabouts of the thousands of young folk who had left their town addresses and moved into country homes.

1940

By Christmas 1940 France had fallen with the remnants of our army evacuated from Dunkirk & the Home Guard prepared for invasion. Although the Battle of Britain had been won bombing raids had hit Cambridgeshire

Things were not 'as usual' this year as many curtailed festivities to continue the war effort.

Wisbech was happy but quiet and more restrained than normal with many men absent from home. The Corn Exchange was requisitioned for communal feeding as rationing had begun to bite and many families' store cupboards were bare. Bacon, ham & butter were at rate of four ounces per week, eggs were scarce, onions had all but vanished it was an offence to feed birds. Thos Peatling on the Old Market still had some wines but had been hit very hard by depleted transport facilities and budget increases – those of September 1939, April and July 1940 had all added taxes on wine. However you could still get some bargains - Empire wines from Australia at 4/6 (23p) a bottle, Empire brandy at 17/6 (88p) Johncup Scotch whisky a 16/- (80p) or South African sherry, 6/- (30p) But water was more precious than ever and drinkers were urged to use less and not waste a drop.

As for gifts: 'If you must give an Xmas gift - give something practical and British', people were urged. Aldiss of Rose Crescent – 'The brightest shop in Cambridge' - advertised that current stocks were tax free but replacements would be more expensive and have Purchase Tax added. Other shops had blow football for 1/5 (7p), British baby dolls from 2/3 to 9/11 (11p to 49p) and mini clockwork toys, some with electric lights and batteries - including a Vauxhall cabriolet at 1/3

In many places the concern was for the evacuees and others worse off than ourselves. It was no easy task arranging Christmas parties but hard also to dampen the spirit of the season so some activities were arranged with parties in schoolrooms. At Godmanchester £14 had been received from London authorities to be spent on parties for the evacuated children, though some parties – such as that for the Tottenham kids – had to be held over to New Year.

The spirit of Christmas was maintained in the hospitals and institutions though the decorations were less lavish than usual. Addenbrooke's children's ward was in quarantine but Father Christmas arrived anyway and the doors of the Mill Road Infirmary were firmly closed on the war. Although the 146 inmates of St Neots Institution would have only a skeleton of a Christmas even so turkey, beer, sweets and tobacco were on the Christmas day menu together with a concert. The council had voted to open cinemas on Sundays from December to March following a request from the military authorities; the churches had objected but what had churches done for the soldiers? Sundays - and Christmas - marked just part of the utter loneliness of a soldier's life and the only alternative to the cinema was the pub.

In Huntingdon the mayor had appealed for funds for brightening the Christmases of the local men now serving and through many whist drives and dances he was able to send a postal order for 7/6 to all serving men from the town.

But the finest Christmas Box ever was just a card bearing with words "With Love" that was received by Mr & Mrs Lewis of Field Terrace, Ramsey. It had come from their son Owen, a

Hurricane pilot in the RAF who had been reported missing on June 9th. For six months the parents had agonised over his possible fate, all hope had been abandoned - until the card arrived just before Christmas!

1941

Air raids had continued and Germany had continued its push into Russia. Then in December Japan launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbour pitchforking America into the war.

"If Christmas stands for peace on earth how can we keep it when the whole world is engulfed in warfare, countless homes lie shattered, homeless refugees stalk the world and children keep their gas masks handy lest they be choked to death by adults!"

The privations of the year were even worse than expected. The December papers proclaimed "Goodbye to assorted chocolates", the icing of cakes was already illegal and cheese chops and cheese hot pot was being suggested as festive fare. Chivers of Histon cautioned that not many jellies will be available this Christmas so when your grocer has some please let children and invalids have first choice. There will be plenty for everybody when victory is won. There was a revival in trade for wildfowl to replace turkeys with oyster catchers selling at 2/- (10p) a bird, though a Huntingdon man stole five cockerels and was jailed for six months

In spite of restrictions and the grim realities of the third wartime Xmas Wisbech folk contrived to keep the immortal spirit alive. There were far more familiar faces missing, far more men and women away in the services and thoughts of them were uppermost in people's hearts.

A Christmas message was received from London: Christmas is the children's time, it is then more than any other time that every boy and girl wants to be at home with mother and father and taking part with them in the festivities. But London is no place for them. I know many parents during the lulls in bombing have been strongly tempted to bring their boys and girls home from the county - some have rashly done so. This is foolhardy, who knows when Hitler's air attacks will strike into your London homes

Presents were a problem everywhere with production controlled by the Board of Trade. But at Wimpole each child got an apple, bag of raisins and a bun whilst every Gamlingay child received a most valuable present - an egg

The Women's Voluntary Service organised dances with Ken Dale on his accordion providing the music and the two Victory girls - Valerie & Vera. There were dances somewhere in Cambridge almost every night (except Christmas Day); with Percy Cowell & Reg Cottage's band at the Dorothy and Josephine with her Gypsy Orchestra at Guildhall

Church services were held as usual though even here the pressures of war were being aired. At the United Free Church service on Christmas morning the minister referred to a world of force and hatred, of feelings that the only hope of future peace is the extermination of every German man, woman & child. He went on to attributing the fall of France to the extensive drunkenness of the French army and complained that now our Government intended to introduce drink into the canteens of the ATS, WRNS & WAAF

1942

By Christmas the Japanese had captured Singapore and hundreds of men of the Cambridgeshire Regiment had disappeared into captivity. But Montgomery's Eighth Army had beaten Rommel at the Battle of El Alamein, giving a much-needed success to celebrate/

This fourth wartime Christmas resembled an obstacle race with shops bare of delicacies. It would be a quiet Christmas - probably the quietest ever known. But by now we had got used to life short of saucepans & cups - the latter so rare that many railway refreshment rooms refused to serve those who did not bring their own. It was difficult getting clothes cleaned or getting anything repaired; utility furniture was all that was available, bedding so short that it only available to the bombed out and newly weds. Soap had gone on ration, petrol for cars and motorcycles cancelled, stocking were extremely scarce, shoes almost unobtainable; it became illegal to make bedspreads or tablecloths & ice cream manufacture was banned

There was controversy about whether Cambridge shops should close at 1pm on Christmas Eve - with most people working from 7.45am to 5pm and with only hour lunchtime there was difficulty enough getting to the shops anyway. Not surprisingly therefore there were few Christmas advertisements - except for useful gifts - overalls, pinnerettes, handkerchiefs (a good idea - four presents for one coupon) - or spend the money on war savings.

But the Government propaganda was upbeat: It will take more than Hitler to stop the British housewife from setting a festive table. There were no special foods but a few tricks would make all the difference: stuffed flanks of beef may take the place of turkey, a little cold tea may be used to darken the complexion of Christmas cake or pudding

St Neots institution had pork from its own pig on Christmas Day. Others too had festive fare - but roast beef, not turkeys. At the WVS club service visitors of both sexes literally lined up in a solid queue from door to canteen and during Christmas afternoon there was an invitation party for 150 troops followed in the evening by a professional cabaret show and a dance

Although it was an austerity Christmas people were in good heart, with the United Nations at last taking the offensive on several fronts. And there were new playmates. The Americans servicemen had arrived and in Christmas week received a present of a bit of America in England when they accepted the keys of the American Red Cross club at the Priory, Huntingdon. It would provide them with a place where they could create an atmosphere as nearly like that of home as possible.

But in many houses there was sad news. Corporal Woodhouse was now known to have been killed in fighting on western front in 1940; two years of waiting and hoping had come to nothing. Then news came through that Captain Lord De Ramsey was a PoW in Japanese hands; he had been with an artillery brigade, which had arrived at Singapore just before the capitulation and had not been heard of since. What had happened to the others?

1943

The tide of war seemed to be beginning to change. The Russians had repulsed the Germans on the Eastern Front. North Africa had been cleared and the Allied armies were pushing into Italy. The bouncing bomb had destroyed German dams and on Christmas Eve came news that General Dwight D. Eisenhower had been appointed Supreme Commander of Allied Forces with General Bernard Montgomery as his Field Commander.

This Christmas topped all others in the difficulties which had to be surmounted to make it 'merry'. The search for the Christmas dinner in the first place had been like the pursuit of a will-o-the-wisp, for never had the turkey - or even the humble goose, duck or chicken - been

such a rare bird. Many householders sat down to an ordinary joint of beef or mutton, or possibly even a tin of Spam. Meanwhile nuts, crystallised fruits, tangerines, dates, figs and all the other tempting etceteras must remain merely a tender memory.

Another whole chapter could be written on the great Christmas drought, 1943. The landlord who can fill the flowing bowl this year was likely to be trampled to death in the rush of thirsty citizens

Shopping this Christmas has been little short of a nightmare, what with the acute shortages of supplies, depleted staffs (still further attenuated by the ravages of flu) and the problems of smuggling presents home when no wrapping paper is allowed. It has indeed been a case of 'he who hesitates is lost' for unless one gabbed a likely gift at first sight it was ten to one it would have vanished a second or so later!

Whilst every effort was made to provide a Christmas for those in institutions it was most difficult - even paper decorations were in very short supply. But at Addenbrookes two Christmas Day babies received a set of clothes from Dr Wolf & every baby in the ward got present due to generosity of other patients

There was however a new source of Christmas cheer - the Americans. They gave three parties in the Huntingdon area, two on Christmas eve, one on the Day itself. The men had been saving their sweet rations for several months to give to the children, whilst, it was rumoured, there would be Father Christmas and even Ice Cream

An Anglo-American services party was broadcast to America from Cambridge. There were 150 US servicemen & similar number of British women's services. Music was provided by the Thunderbolts Band on a stage alongside which was a Christmas tree with lights, flags of Allied nations and bunches of mistletoe. These were a trap for the unwary, but not - so far as we could see - used! (or so they reported to the folks back home). After a message from the Mayor there was a programme of music with singers from America & the Cambridge Amateur Operatic Society choir followed by impromptu messages from floor

For some other folk the best Christmas cheer came when letters arrived from Japanese PoW camps - from men who at the time they wrote them were still alive. Lance Corporal James Frist was in no 2 PoW camp, Thailand as was Corporal Pitsch & Corporal Feavour. Private Hewerdine was amongst 20,000 prisoners in camp near Moulmein and from Cambridge came news of the Turkentine brothers, Private Cullum of Darwin Drive and Sapper Howard of Gwydir Street. He had last been heard of in February 1942 following fall of Singapore. There were hopes and belief than 1943 would see the last wartime Christmas and that 1944 was going to be an unhappy year for their Japanese captors

1944

The year had seen the start of the fightback with troops landed in France on D-Day pushing their way across Europe. But it was by no means over yet.

Christmas bells are ringing again over a blood-stained, war-weary world - last years high hopes of victory have not been fulfilled; we need renewed courage and determination. For whilst victories were more frequent than defeats and blackouts was half-lighting, hardships continued and the winter was bitter.

In spite of thick fog and unpleasant weather on Christmas Eve at Sawston the tradition of singing carols at the Village College proved as popular as ever while at Ickleton the Congregational & Methodist churches united for their carol service. Arrington held its

Christmas party for children with Americans in attendance, at Gamlingay there was the usual party with iced cakes – though the production of iced cakes was illegal and had been since early in the war - and Fulbourn Home Guard gave a supper for 350

Alice Reynolds & her Variety Highlights show entertained at the WVS services club on Christmas Day before moving on to an American camp. The dressing rooms caught fire but the show carried on regardless & a collection reimbursed the young lady whose clothes were burnt.

There were parties for evacuees, some music and dancing and hospitals, canteens & clubs made great effort to preserve the spirit of Yuletide. At Cambridge the YMCA gave a party for 200 service men & women, there was a Mayoral dinner at Falcon club with goose, roast potatoes & home-made punch and the Mayor ended up wearing paper hat.

There were true gingerbread men to fill children's stockings and Christmas cake would look twice as festive with a coating of icing. But it all seemed really very sad and depressing with reminders everywhere of the empty places at family fireside. At Wisbech the Mayor summarised the thoughts of thousands when he said that peace and the return of the boys and girls of Wisbech is the predominant desire in the hearts of us all

1945

By Christmas it was all over; Germany had capitulated, the Atom bombs dropped on Japan. The first peacetime Christmas was celebrated with perhaps a little more of the old pre-war spirit - but it was mainly celebrated privately. It was essentially a time of thankful reunion with sons, daughters and husbands returning from the services for their first Christmas after many years. Where there was no reunion this essentially family festival was still tinged with thankfulness and a general anticipation of future homecomings from near and far prevailed everywhere.

Customers at the shops were more considerate and patient but there was still no abundance of good things. Quality not quantity was predominant in poultry stocks but it was only available to registered customers and anybody ordering late was unfortunate. Wines and spirits were in short supply but owing to certain reserves being held over for the holiday perhaps more people were lucky - though demand still exceeded supply

There was an International Christmas party at Cambridge Technical College involving students from West Africa, China, Yugoslavia, Austria and England. Huntingdon YMCA closed over Christmas now that so many servicemen had left & a last Christmas party was given by Americans at Bull Hotel Cambridge for children with Punch & Judy, conjuring, chewing gum and candy.

Still came news of soldiers like Driver Stanley Cooper, Royal Engineers, from Leverington, now known to have died in a Japanese Prison Camp. Not all the returning servicemen were at home. At Mill Road hospital where ex Prisoners-of-War from the Cambridgeshire Regiment were undergoing treatment there was a Christmas Day breakfast of ham & omelettes. It was followed by a dinner of roast turkey & roast port plus trimmings with Xmas pudding, mince pies & beer, then by a tea of sandwiches, Christmas cake, jellies, oranges, pears - all far distant from their previous Christmas fare in their PoW camps.

As usual Kings College carol service was broadcast, with 2,000 people crowded into building leaving several hundreds more outside. The candlelight scarcely reached vaulted roof but provided most of the light because the windows of the chapel had not yet been replaced. Never had the Christmas message of 'Peace on Earth & Goodwill' been more applicable.

SCANS

CHILDREN ENJOYING A CHRISTMAS PARTY IN MR SIDNEY
WOOLSTENHOLMES' GARAGE AT HILLROW, HADDENHAM, 1939

EVACUEE CHILDREN ARRIVE IN CAMBRIDGE 1939

KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL SHOWING THE BOARDED-UP WINDOWS

ADVERTISEMENT FOR MOUTH ORGANS

NOTICES ABOUT RATIONING AND COUPONS

Our Time 2005 01

Photographs of a changing community – Melbourn, by Mike Petty

Cambridgeshire communities are continuing to change as more and more houses are built in land that was once fields. The new residents look forward to living a peaceful way of life in a traditional English village – without realising that it has been changed forever by the building of their new houses.

Yet villages have always changed. What are now prized as quaint thatched cottages were once old, cramped and inconvenient dwellings that many villagers considered should be razed to the ground to make way for brick-build houses with roofs that did not leak and the benefit of indoor lavatories.

Many places have established History or Preservation Groups anxious to capture some aspect of their community's past often drawing upon the expertise and interest of 'newcomers' to record the 'Good Old Days'. Often they produce booklets, sometimes of reminiscences, sometimes of photographs. Indeed it has almost become a cottage industry in itself.

But few have published as well-produced a volume as that now issued by the Melbourn Village History Group. It has some 240 pages of old snapshots, postcards and photographs dating from the 1860s arranged in a stroll through the village along High Street, diverting down lanes as one comes across them, until the northern end of the village is reached. Several of the pictures have been restored and improved using modern scanning techniques to remove blemishes and correct the exposures of the original photographer.

The pictures are captioned but one picture is worth a hundred words and however much detail is provided one cannot but wish for more. I thought it might be interesting to delve back to some of the stories that have been carried in the back issues of the Cambridge Daily News over the last century and seen whether any of them can be matched up with the photographs in the book.

The cover shows a group of youngsters having fun on a bridge and captures the carefree days of childhood. But who were they? They may not have been locals for in 1897 Melbourn was welcoming children from London as the Cambridge Daily News for August that year reported:

At a meeting of the Royston Board of Guardians the question of London children coming into the country for a holiday and bringing infectious diseases with them was brought under consideration, cases of the kind having occurred in the locality. One case of scarlet fever had broken out at a house on the Moor, Melbourn to which three children had been sent by a holiday fund from Stoke Newington. Another was a case of diphtheria which had occurred at Meldreth at a house where 12 children from Stoke Newington were staying.

[SCAN COVER]

##

Nor were all children angels in those days, as the News reported in June 1899:

At Melbourn three schoolboys were summoned for breaking three panes of glass in the church window. Quite recently no less than 14 panes had been broken. An 11-year old stated he saw the lads shoot at the church window with a catapult. Witness was asked: 'Did you have a shot'. 'Yes, sir'. 'And you missed?' 'No, sir. I broke one'.

The church windows are clearly shown in one of the oldest pictures in the book, taken about 1865 [SCAN CHURCH]

##

It was not only children who were misbehaving, as this story from October 1899 shows:

Three London musicians and a comedian were charged with stealing a bag of potatoes, value four shillings, from a field in Melbourn. John King, roadman, said he saw one of them jump over a hedge, get the bag and place it on a trolley. PC Knight said he saw the prisoners with a piano organ on a trolley and found the potatoes lying on the seat, covered with a rug. He detained two and took them to Royston police station. Afterwards found the others had decamped with the pony in the direction of Baldock but being a cyclist he followed them. When the constable questioned them they claimed they had bought the potatoes from a man in a public house at Long Melford for 1s.6d.

Two of the village's policemen, Sergeant Barrett and Constable Conell are featured on the cover of the book

[SCAN POLICEMEN]

##

In earlier years punishment had been more severe. The Melbourn picture book features a wonderful picture of a group of men outside the Carrier's Arms public house in Dolphin Lane; the compilers believe it shows a farewell celebration for a group who were emigrating c1900, seeking a new life in a New World. But the Cambridge Independent press of October 1936 reported another connection between Melbourn and Australia

One of the last men to be sent to Botany Bay lived in an old cottage at Dolphin Lane, Melbourn, now due for demolition. In the Botany Bay days (1787-1868), a wagonload of convicts, manacled and in chains, passed through Melbourn on their way from an East

Anglian prison to the London docks. One of the prisoners was a Melbourn man. The driver managed to take his wagon and charges past his former home and on hearing some shouting the old couple came to the door and were able to bid their son a tearful and last goodbye

[SCAN EMIGRANTS]

By August 1901 the village was having a problem: its graveyard and cemeteries were too full:

The Local Government Board told Melbourn Rural District Council that the opening of any new burial ground in the parish of Melbourn should be prohibited and burials discontinued forthwith and entirely in the parish churchyard of All Saints' Melbourn, for the protection of the public health. It rested with the Parish Council to take the necessary steps..

The problem was obviously overcome for a picture shows Milly Catley's funeral procession about 1932, with the coffin borne on a flower-bedecked bier [SCAN FUNERAL]

##

It was not only the graveyard that was causing problems in April 1904:

An inquiry was held into the promotion of the Meldreth and Melbourn District Gas and Water Company Bill; it aroused a deal of opposition and at times the exchanges were of a very lively character. The present Gasworks at Melbourn were not up-to-date and with growing demand a new company had been formed who would erect new gasworks in Meldreth; there had been no objection from residents. Water supplies were obtained from the river and wells and a good supply would enhance the value of property. There would be a pumping station near Melbourn Heath Farm and a 200,000-gallon reservoir. The County Council supported the scheme but the Parish and District Councils objected

One of the village's gas street lamps is depicted on the corner of the crossroads [SCAN GAS LAMP]

##

In the early 1900s Nonconformists throughout the country protested against changes in the way religion was to be taught in village schools. Many refused to pay their education rates so the judicial process was put in place and eventually bailiffs seized goods to be auctioned off to meet the money due. Often these sales were disrupted, as the News reported in September 1903

The first sale of goods seized from the passive resisters of St Ives was held near the police station. None of the local auctioneers would accept the office so a Peterborough firm was imported to carry out the sale. The appearance of the auctioneer was the sequel for an uproar of groans, hooting and hissing. The first lot was a Brussels carpet and teapot, then came a sewing machine taken from Mr Money, tailor, to pay his arrears of 9d; this was run up to 30s. at which price it was knocked down to his employer. The sale closed amidst general uproar and the crowd made for the Cromwell Statue for a great demonstration.

Photographs of such sales are rare but the Melbourn book includes two of a sale there in 1905

[SCAN SALE]

##

The book includes a marvellous picture of Abrey's shop in Drury Lane, with Maggie Stanford and her son Edwin and Daisy Abrey. One couple who knew the area well were John Preston Hall and his wife who made the news back in November 1925

There are at least two very happy married couples in Cambridgeshire today. In Melbourn there dwell Mr & Mrs John Preston Hall, who were married 68 years ago. They have lived in the same old-world thatched cottage in Drury Lane for 65 years. He is a working carpenter and at one time there were seven of his people all over 70. In Horningsea are another married couple whose name, curiously enough, is Melbourn, who celebrate their diamond wedding. Mr Melbourn worked on one farm from early boyhood until a few years ago. Hearty congratulations to both couples on their wonderful record
[SCAN SHOP]

##

But in those days there was little money to maintain old cottages. During heavy snow in December 1927 the paper reported: A thatched cottage at Melbourn collapsed about seven o'clock in Sunday evening. The bedroom end of the house fell out, but, happily, Mrs Greig was in the bottom room and escaped injury. She would not move however until the policeman came on Monday morning. She is now living in a cottage just opposite.

Members of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society were concerned about the loss of such ancient cottages and in 1904 started a photographic survey of Cambridgeshire. One of their contributors was Percy Salmon, a professional photographer who retired to live in Melbourn in the 1920s. His photograph of a disappearing landmark was published in the Cambridge Independent press of 23rd July 1927.

In a few days time the old seventh-century Red Lion inn on the Cambridge-Royston road is to be demolished, standing as it does it forms a sort of bottle-neck entrance to the village, which today is said to be very dangerous. The old house dates from the year 1659 and until 1923 was a fully-licensed house, serving as a coaching inn with yards and stables complete. The going of the inn has led some old inhabitants to recall many other one-time taverns which are now private houses. These include the Old Elm Tree, the Tailor's Arms, the Locomotive, Royal Oak – now Howard's bakery, Hoops, Spotted Dog – now Mrs E. Thompson's garage, White Horse & Oak

[SCAN RED LION]

##

But the Antiquarians were not the only people concerned about the loss of our heritage; a regional planning report of 1934 stressed the importance of preserving old cottages and four years later Cambridge Preservation Society started work on cottages at Melbourn; their report for 1939 records what happened:

The cottages were fully reconditioned and brought up to a reasonable standard of comfort and convenience. Each has been supplied with a ventilated foodstore and new cooking range where necessary. The interiors were put in first class order and redecorated throughout; several staircases were replaced. The wash-houses have been rebuilt where necessary, and the coppers put into working order. The whole row was thatched. The centre section which appears to have been an old farmhouse of perhaps the sixteenth century, built round a great central chimney, was for many years divided into two cottages, but has now been restored as one dwelling. It is probable that the rest of the cottages were originally constructed out of the old barns and out-buildings. There can be no doubt that such schemes of reconditioning are a

great help towards the solution of the housing problems in villages. With the sympathetic aid of the Rural District Council cottages can be reconditioned and let at rents within the means not only of the agricultural labourer in work, but of widows & old-age pensioners.

The cottages were restored again in 2004, ensuring this part of the village remains outwardly unchanged though providing the modern facilities now considered essential.

[SCAN SHEEPSHEAD]

##

One of the low-points to village pride came in 1974 when the judges in the Best Kept Village competition relegated them to the bottom spot. But residents hit back:

Melbourn, South Cambridgeshire's worst kept village, is determined to remove that insulting title from its records. But residents have a tough job on their hands because they claim the biggest rubbish culprits are people driving through the village.. The parish council feel the solution to their litter problem will only come when the proposed by-pass is built in a few years time. "When we get the by-pass we shall be a village again", said Mr Aldridge. One of the worst spots is the village green near the traffic lights. Nearly every evening it was crowded with young people who tended to throw Coca-Cola tins and other litter on the green.

The by-pass has now been opened and although traffic levels have not quite returned to those captured by some of the photographs, things are much less congested than previously

[COLOUR SCAN TRAFFIC]

##

Open countryside is nearby for those who enjoy walks in the open air; the book features a view of strollers along Ashwell Street back in 1939. But it was not always a pleasant stroll, as David Waterson reported in June 1977

Ashwell Street is no walk for the timorous. It needs nerves of steel to pass dogs barking and straining at the leash as the lane wends its seven miles between Ashwell and Melbourn. It is always hitting the headlines with stories of its squatters' rights problems, damage to neighbouring property at Litlington and litter, particularly at the Ashwell End. It is easy to understand why this is one of the more "unknown" green lane rambles. Maybe its not risking life and limb, but it comes darned close to it – David Waterson

[SCAN ASHWELL]

##

But all in all Melbourn is a most pleasant village which has preserved not only many of its ancient properties, but the facilities that attract both locals and outsiders. However country life is not just town life without the traffic fumes, as the News commented in March 1978

House-hunters looking to live in the country should be prepared to put up with country life – like flies and farmyard smells, said Coun Ken Turner of Hardwick. "Some people come into villages – they might be called the bed-and-breakfast residents – and the first thing they want to do is do away with the country way of life". Coun John Impey from Melbourn said a chicken farmer had been threatened with enforcement action by the environment department after a complaint about flies. The flies were not from his farm and it seemed unfair that

pressure could be put on a long-established business because someone had decided to build homes nearby

[COLOUR SCAN HIGH STREET]

Whether you are a newcomer, a former villager who has moved away to pastures new, or just somebody interested in the past then “Pictorial Melbourn” makes an ideal addition to your bookshelf. It costs £15 for the first copy and £10 for each subsequent one. If you can get hold of them. For Colin Limming, chairman of Melbourn History Society tells me that when it was launched: “The good burghers of Melbourn were queuing up before we were opened and we had a steady queue almost all of the two days”.

But no collection of photographs can ever be complete, nor can anybody know the full story behind each picture. If you can help make Melbourn’s magnificent record even better then contact Colin Limming on 01763 260072 or e-mail colin.limming@ukonline.co.uk

Then early in 2005 all village households will also receive another book on the History of Melbourn; it will be distributed free of charge thanks to a grant from The Countryside Agency with additional copies on sale for £7.

Our Time 2005 02

Two visits by the Dukes of Gloucester by Mike Petty, February 2005

Though nobody knows for sure I suspect that Cambridge’s Gloucester Street may have been named after William Frederick, Duke of Gloucester. He was a nephew of King George III and the first member of the of the Royal Family ever to attend an English university, as Fellow Commoner of Trinity College.

But there was something else for in 1811 the Duke was elected to the University’s highest position, that of Chancellor – the post now filled by the Duke of Edinburgh.

The installation ceremony was a grand affair, but the weather didn’t play its part. There was a thunderstorm on Friday 28th June 1811 when the Duke arrived in a coach to take lodgings in his old college and prepare for the excitement to come. It did not however prevent crowds turning out to cheer and stare. It was something they were to do several times that weekend.

Next day was the great day. Senior members of the University, distinguished guests and splendidly-dressed ladies arrived in their carriages at the Senate House. Then the official entourage of academics escorted the Duke to his installation through crowded streets of cheering onlookers. An eyewitness recalled: “the crowd huzzared as the Duke walked along, the ladies waving their handkerchiefs from the windows and his Highness replirted to their congratulations by gracious bows and smiles”.

At the steps of the University’s Senate House the Duke was met by Vice-chancellor, who led him inside as a band of music in the gallery struck up the coronation anthem. Then the Vice Chancellor made a speech in English and presented his Highness with the book of University Statutes. Newspaper correspondents recorded: “After this the Vice-Chancellor taking His Highness’s right hand in his own, the Senior Proctor administered the oath; His Highness then was seated in the chair of state and thereby installed”. It was formal but everybody could understand what was being said.

Then the Public Orator delivered another eulogy, but this one in Latin. The Duke's reply was however spoken in his native tongue before it was time for a specially-composed installation ode performed by the band. The ceremonial concluded a grand procession of Yeomen Bedells, Bachelors of Physic, Law and Divinity, Taxors, Proctors, Professors and bishops and who-knows-what marched to Trinity College for a feast back at Trinity College.

By evening the scene had been transformed with an illuminated pavilion in the centre of the grass from which the Duke's band played whilst fireworks fizzled somewhat disappointingly in a drizzling rain. There was more to witness next morning as the Duke attended service at Great St Mary's Church where a large band of musicians played an oratorio by Handel. This was the highlight of the service for the sermon was an attack on Methodists, it was followed by a recitation of a long list of names of those who had been benefactors to the University and an overlong anthem composed by an undergraduate for his degree.

But the University had not finished yet; their new Chancellor had to turn out next morning to confer degrees on various eminent Marquises, Dukes, Bishops and Knights. in the Senate House. Once more the finery was in evidence, once more the streets packed with onlookers but the ceremony was somewhat spoiled when it was realised that some of the wording on the honorary degrees was wrong. It took a considerable amount of whispered debate amongst dons before it could be sorted out to everybody's satisfaction. There was another embarrassing moment when Lord Erksine walked off before the Orator had finished singing his Latin praises.

But if the Duke thought that by the end of the day he had done he was mistaken; he was back again on the Tuesday, dishing out more degrees. Though by now some of the onlookers had started to smirk at some of the ceremonies, like putting a matrimonial ring on the recipient's finger and kissing his cheeks – even the Chancellor could be seen to smile occasionally. Then there were recitations of prize-winning poetry in Greek and Latin.

For some the highlight of the whole event was a balloon ascent by Mr Sadler from Trinity Great Court. Crowds arrived early to be sure of a good view and stood shivering in the drizzling rain – it was July after all – for some time. Once the proceedings started the balloon was up and out of sight within three minutes, lost in the low cloud. Fortunately the weather cleared in time for a grand public breakfast back in Neville's Court, Trinity. There were meats, ices and tastefully arranged fruit, followed by yet more music. This time it was a dance, ladies and their beaux weaving in and out of the avenue of trees along the Backs. Here again things did not quite go as well as the organisers hoped. True the band played well and their lively jigs were just what was required. But the Duke was wandering around and whenever he approached the band they left off their tune mid-beat and struck up with God Save the King, exasperating the dancers and causing many to hiss rather than cheer his Highness.

The Duke knew better than to outstay his already somewhat extended visit; he took to his carriage and departed. Two hours later came another burst of applause leaving some to wonder if he'd changed his mind and come back. But no – the cheering welcomed a true hero, the balloonist himself who had ended his aerial excursion in a field near Stansted and been rushed back to receive the adulation that was truly his.

One way and another Cambridge folk could hardly have been unaware of the visit of the Duke of Gloucester and perhaps they chose to commemorate the occasion by naming one of their meaner streets after him!

SCANS

100.36 – A PROCESSION APPROACHES THE SENATE HOUSE

1806 – NEVILLE'S COURT, TRINITY COLLEGE, SCENE OF MANY OF THE CELEBRATIONS

7420 – INSIDE THE SENATE HOUSE AT THE INSTALLATION OF A CHANCELLOR
(NOT GLOUCESTER BUT HIS SUCCESSOR IN 1835)

9048 – INSIDE THE SENATE HOUSE AT A DEGREE PRESENTATION

9066 – VARIETY OF GOWNS – MANY WERE ON DISPLAY FOR THE VISIT

By contrast a later visit by another Duke of Gloucester was a much tamer affair – though it nearly cost him his life!

This was not a glamorous assignment: there had been a major flood, scores of people were homeless, hundreds of miles of land submerged. Tanks had been in action, there had been acts of heroism to acknowledge; there were hands to be shaken, encouragement to be given. Somebody had to do it and it was the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester who were selected.

It wouldn't be so bad if the location had been a tropical island or a quaint Cornish village – but this was just a lot of muddy fields in the fens at the end of March 1947.

The Duke and Duchess started their tour by a visit to the site of the tank engagement. They took their car to Bluntisham station where they were greeted by the military as they walked across a muddy yard to the waiting train. It was not even a first-class carriage, just third-class tourist. Fortunately the journey was a short one, just half-mile down the track, across a railway bridge over a swollen river and they could disembark. They then transferred to an even more basic mode of transport, a contractor's open trolley running along a light railway. The press pack snapped away but one picture shows W.E. Doran, the River Board Engineer, with his hands together as if in prayer. When asked why he replied that he had the Duke and Duchess on a line of trolleys held together with string and he was praying that the string did not break.

The string held and the Royal party could see for themselves how a line of Buffalo amphibious tanks had been manoeuvred into place to form a box around a 90-foot gap in the bank of the Great Ouse river. Although not watertight it had provided enough of a seal to allow an army of soldiers, German prisoners and fenmen to rebuild the earthen wall and stop yet more water flooding across the low-lying fenland alongside. After a few minutes of inspecting and encouraging it was back on the trolley to the carriage, back to the station and the limousine that the Duke himself drove off to their next inspection point.

Their route took them through Ely to Littleport and then on to the hamlet of Ten Mile Bank. Few folk there could ever have thought that they would ever be visited by a real Royal, even if it was the Duke of Gloucester. Some found him not the most approachable of dignitaries, though it would not be appropriate to say so. Instead they commented on how nice the Duchess was!

Here it was time for another mode of transport, this time one of the amphibious army DUKWs that would take them for a cruise along the River Wissey so they could thank the army of men shovelling mud on the banks. Once more it was a mixture of military and civilians, though the fenmen had little doubt who was doing the most work. For the soldiers had not apparently appreciated just how hard shovelling mud was, nor how they could not shovel mud if they did not have a shovel! The first tool to drop from frozen fingers could well have been an accident but others quickly followed and some do say that the bank was made up more of discarded spades than earth!

As the DUKW approached the breach in the bank that had allowed water to surge across towards Southery, smashing through a road and sweeping away a house, disaster struck. For some reason – some say mechanical failure, others blame the driver – the engine of the craft cut out. Without power the royal party were being sucked towards the gap in the bank through which water was still rushing powerfully. Once more it was time for prayer as two of the

aristocracy were swept towards the breach and death by drowning in the muddy water. Photographs show the look of concern as their fate seemed sealed. But soldiers plunged into the river to take a rope out to the stricken craft and man-power succeeded where motor-power could not; the craft was towed to the bank.

It was something that would have dominated the headlines, but it was hushed up. A photographer who captured the dramatic scenes was ordered to destroy his negatives, but one creased snap survived as proof. The visit concluded, the Duke and Duchess headed off back to civilisation, away from the muck of the flooded fen.

So what had caused the floods that devastated large areas of fenland in this surely unparalleled disaster? For that you will need to wait for the next issue of 'Our Time'!

CREDIT – THE REMARKABLE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE DUEK AND DUCHESS WERE TAKEN BY WALTER MARTIN LANE, AN AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER FROM ELY

SCANS

ROYAL SYM – NEWSPAPER REPORT OF THEIR VISIT

9339 – THE ROYAL PARTY ARRIVE AT BLUNTISHAM STATION

9341 – THE ROYAL PARTY NEARING THE TRAIN

9350 – NEWSPAPER CUTTING SHOWING THE GLOUCESTERS ON THE TROLLEY HELD TOGETHER WITH STRING

9315 – WHAT THE DUKE SAW – A DAM MADE OF ARMY BUFFALO TANKS IN THE RIVER NEAR BLUNTISHAM

983 – THE GLOUCESTERS ARRIVE AT TEN MILE BANK

102.39 – CONCERN ON THE ROYAL FACES AS THEIR DUKW IS SWEEPED TOWARDS THE BREACH

984 – SOLDIERS WADE IN TO ATTACH A ROPE TO PULL THE DUKW TO SAFETY

9322 – THE DUKE AND DUCHESS ARE PULLED TO SAFETY

Our Time February 2005

Gloucester Street by Mike Petty,.

Gloucester Street has disappeared from the map of Cambridge almost unnoticed. It was a nondescript little lane opening off Castle Street, about where the entrance road to the commercial units behind Shire Hall now runs.

When the Cambridge News sent its reported Erica Dimock to survey it for her 'Down Your Street' series in March 1964 she found that even then it had changed out of all recognition from what it had been only 40 years earlier. And, she speculated, it would shortly change once more. It has, but not in the way she thought. For then there were plans for the erection of new Shire Hall courts and the creation of a new major spine relief road that would cut through the site. Neither of them was to materialise.

Erica found a miscellany of small cottages, factories and wasteland situated in the oldest part of Cambridge. It had become a built-up residential street around 1800 and street directories dating back to the 1840s indicate that it was already a very closely populated area with several terraces of cottages leading off, earning it the nickname of "the warren."

She recorded various stories which had been passed down about the 'goings on' in Gloucester Street in years gone by when its notoriety was common talk throughout the town. One concerned a laundress who had certain clairvoyant powers which were so remarkable that local inhabitants were convinced she was a witch. One day - so the story goes - two men were on their way to consult her when one remarked to the other, 'I wonder what the old . . . will tell us'. On their arrival the old lady greeted them with the words 'You've been wondering what the old... will tell you,' whereupon the two men were so disconcerted that they immediately took their leave.

There certainly was a laundress in Gloucester Street in 1897 for she was charged with keeping a woman at work for more than 14 hours. Annie Sindell told the Court that she had started work at 9.30 am Friday and not finished until ten past six the next morning. She never agreed to work all night but the laundress would have the work done. She had been allowed a break of an hour and a quarter for meals. Her day was supposed to be of 12 hours, less meal times, and for that she got 1s.3d. and the overtime pay was a penny an hour. The laundress was fined 7s.6d. and costs.

Spalding's Cambridge Street Directory for 1898 lists Mrs Martha Nichols as a laundress in Bell and Son's builders' Yard on the north side of Gloucester Street. Her neighbours included Arthur Stonebridge a bricklayer, Frederick Bell a painter and Samuel Mortlock a bricklayer. There is no knowing if they were concerned with the street brawls and screams and shouts which lasted night and day which were very frequent in an area in which the closeness of the houses, and the density of the population were so conducive.

But it was also an area of compassion for in May 1926 the Gloucester Street workshop for disabled soldiers in Cambridge was opened by Princess Mary. By 1927 there were eight men working there, each suffering from the loss of arms or legs or the effects of gas. They made baskets and re-upholstered chairs, or knitted silk stockings, jumpers and ties. The workshop could never be a paying concern but did good work in enabling the men to earn sufficient money to keep them off the dole. Two of the old soldiers, Mr H.A. Hagger and Mr F.C. Fuller met the Queen and Duchess of York when they attended an exhibition and sale of their goods in London. The Queen bought a pair of heather-mixture socks and a waste paper basket, the Duchess a fancy rush stool remarking "It will do for Princess Elizabeth for the nursery". Their stock was quickly sold and by the time the Prince of Wales visited they had nothing left to sell him.

By 1964 the workshops were long forgotten but there were other commercial establishments in Gloucester Street. Three were individual but closely associated companies, the Tansley Typewriter Company, the British Rebuilt Typewriter Company and the Brittan Manufacturing Company. Tansley had been started in 1923 and had made several moves on around Cambridge before settling in Gloucester Street in 1934. It supplied and serviced all kinds of typewriters. One employee was Mrs Sylvia Howell (nee Bavester) of Landbeach who worked there during the war doing a lot of different jobs on the floor. In her time there were only about six girls, the rest of them boys and men. John Simmons was one of them; he'd started working there as a lad in the 1930s helping to rebuild typewriters. This involved dismantling then re-enameilling the bodies, replating the shiny bits, regrinding the platens (rubber rollers) and replacing worn letters or springs. He recalled that the company also went round the area servicing typewriters and adding machines.

The second company - British Rebuilt Typewriters - were concerned with rebuilding the machines for sale throughout the world. While the Brittan Manufacturing Company made repetition lathes. Many of the employees had remained there since arriving as apprentices straight from school and the firm offered good opportunities for boys interested in precision engineering.

Just opposite was a path leading to the printing works of R. I. Severs Ltd. It had been started by Mr Severs early in the century and was based in Hobson Street before moving to Gloucester Street in 1928. But another move was on the horizon with plans to transfer the printing works to a new factory in King Hedges Road. They were general jobbing printers who undertake almost anything from wedding stationery and theatre programmes to magazines, books of a specialised nature and a wide variety of orders from local firms and colleges.

One very large area at the end of Gloucester Street was then occupied by M. Dickerson (Contractors) Ltd. The firm who had two associated companies, Teversham Corner Garage and the Land beach Sand and Gravel Company, had been founded by Mr. Dickerson of Manygates, Hills Road 33 years before and had grown considerably since then.

Another company based in the Street were Radio and Television Services the service organisation of the Pye-Ekco Group who were concerned with repairs to radio, television and record-playing equipment. They kept 32,000 different spare parts on the premises and something like 2,000 parcels containing spare parts were sent to retail shops throughout the country each day. They also had a team of 17 salesmen were also out selling parts. This company was also looking to move out shortly.

There had already been a considerable change as Sindalls, the building firm had moved their administrative premises to Cherry Hinton Road. Their old offices now housed the County Council's Welfare and Weights and Measures Departments together with the offices of the County Library.

In those days both County and City had their own library services with the County's main lending library in a prefabricated building alongside the castle mound. Here too change was in the air for the Cambridgeshire County Library service which had started in the 1920s was about to be amalgamated with that of the Isle of Ely as part of the Local Government Reorganisation that was to be implemented the following month. In addition to a range of branch libraries they were planning introduce a completely new mobile library which would tour 90 of those villages which were then without book lending facilities. It would call at regular fortnightly intervals, carrying a stock of 3,000 books on a wide range of interests from gardening and crafts to history, travel and biography as well as novels. These would be issued free of charge on a family membership ticket allowing one member of the family to borrow or the rest of the family as well as themselves.

Erica explored the intricacies of weights and measures department and the way they ensured their own weights were accurate. Nearby the Welfare Department did all they could to help the aged to remain in their own homes for as long as possible but also had a duty to provide temporary accommodation for the homeless.

This was an issue that was to affect many of the private residents in the Gloucester Street area as more and more of the cottages were demolished as part of a slum clearance scheme.

Among those who had lived in Gloucester Street for more than 30 years were Mr. and Mrs. Newman at No. 11 and Mrs. Gedge at No.2. She found finds the street very convenient for the town and the shops round the corner on Histon Road and in Castle Street. Nearby were Mr. and Mrs. Barry Smith. They lived in a house owned by the Cambridge City Football Club that was previously occupied by former City manager, Mr. Oscar Hold. He had built up a very fine City team, which, with four replacements, went on to take the Southern League championship under his successor, player-manager Frank Cruickshank.

Another resident was Vic Newman, who, with his wife, Rose, had acted as an air raid warden during the war. He remembered what it had been in the 1930s with a building firm called

Bell, an orchard and a Mission Hall the outstanding features among the rows of terraced cottages. Vic had recently retired after 36 years as a college 'gyp' at Clare and was planning to move. Although he would be sorry to leave Gloucester Street it was not quite as good as it used to be when he had more neighbours.

Soon all the houses would be gone and the names of those who had once lived in this area forgotten. But something more important that has dropped out of the history books is why it was called 'Gloucester Street' in the first place?

SANDRA IS SCANNING PHOTOS THAT APPEARED IN THE CEN ARTICLE 12 MAR 1964. They include:

Gloucester Street looking towards Castle Hill

A mechanic repairing a typewriter at the Tansley Typewriter Company

A view of the component department at Radio and Television Services Ltd

Operating a cylinder printing machine in the works of R.I. Severs Ltd.

There are others which I will need to study to see what they show.

SCAN OF GLOUCESTER TERRACE ALSO IN 1960S

SCAN OF AERIAL VIEW OVER SITE WITH SHIRE HALL ON LEFT; GLOUCESTER STREET IS THE ROAD ON THE RIGHT OF THE PICTURE; PICTURE TAKEN IN 1970S

PERHAPS TAKE MODERN VIEW OF THE OFFICE BLOCKS.

Our Time 2005 03

: Arthur Nicholls and the one-legged woman, by Mike Petty

Some of the oldest photographs ever taken of Cambridge are now on display in the Lending department of the Central Library in Lion Yard.

They were probably created by a photographer named Arthur Nicholls [SUBS ARTHUR IS NICHOLLS WITH TWO LS] who set up his studio in All Saints Passage just off Trinity Street in about 1864.

Cambridge was an then undergoing radical change with three major building projects under way outside his studio door. Within a short space of time the old All Saints' Church was demolished, Trinity College built Whewell's court and across the road St John's College pulled down and replaced its Chapel.

Arthur Nicholls took his bulky glass-plate camera out into the street to record 'before and after' views of these changes. It may have been this building and the resultant noise and dust which caused him to move to a new studio in Post Office Terrace off St Andrew's Street. From here he continued to photograph Cambridge people and places until he left for the Isle of Wight in 1879 leaving his negatives behind.

Other photographers followed him into the Post Office Terrace studios, names like Valentine Blanchard, Colin Lunn, J. Palmer Clarke and Ramsey and Muspratt, two lady photographers who defied sceptics and succeeded in enhancing the reputation of their predecessors. Each inherited the photographic negatives of those who had gone before and each reproduced some of Arthur's Cambridge streetscapes.

The final custodian of the archive was Peter Lofts who completed the transfer of thousands of old negatives to the Cambridgeshire Collection in Cambridge's Lion Yard Library. Now Peter

has employed the latest digital photographic techniques to offer framed and mounted views of many of what have become classic scenes of old Cambridge.

St Andrews Street looking south

One of the earliest views captures the scene in St Andrew's Street looking south from what is now the entrance to Bradwell's Court. The buildings on the left were swept away 50 years ago for new shops and offices. Now those on the right are due for demolition for another development, the Grand Arcade. The entrance to the studios in Post Office Terrace was under the archway on the right. [SCAN 102.73 TAKE MODERN VIEW FROM JUST BEYOND THE HOARDINGS ROUND BRADWELL'S COURT]

Trumpington Street looking south

Nicholls took two views from the same spot in Trumpington Street. In one he turned his camera south towards the Fitzwilliam Museum with the entrance to Pembroke Street on the left. The transformation in the street has been caused by the erection of Emmanuel Congregational Church designed by James Cubitt which opened in May 1874 at a cost of £13,000 [SCAN 102.74 TAKE MODERN VIEW – See PHOTOCOPY]

Trumpington Street looking north

He then turned to the north, looking down past the junction of Silver Street towards King's College chapel

Sidney Street. The principal differences are in the buildings on the left near King's College chapel where Nicholl's photograph shows a group of buildings which King's College wanted to pull down in the 1830s so that they could complete their new screen. But the owner held out for what the college considered an exorbitant price so it was not until 1871 that it was demolished, transforming this section of King's Parade [SCAN 102.75 TAKE MODERN VIEW – SEE PHOTOCOPY]

Sidney Street looking north

Sidney Street has at first glance changed little over the last century-and-a-half; the projecting clock that marked the premises of Wehrle's watchmakers and jewellers has gone and the rough cobbles have given way to a more modern version. The picture also highlights some of the technical difficulties of photography in the 1860s. In those days shutter speeds were slow and people needed to stand still to ensure a sharp image. The gentlemen standing by the cart are carefully watching the photographer in action but the ladies are far too busy to stop and stare. As a result Nicholls has had to spend time in his darkroom carefully touching up the prints to disguise their moving skirts [SCAN 102.45 TAKE MODERN VIEW – SEE PHOTOCOPY]

Magdalene Street looking north

At first glance Magdalene Street seems to have changed little; the old shops and pubs on the left had side have survived in spite of plans to demolish them for road widening in the 1920s and again in the 1950s. But the change has come on the right hand side where the buildings in the foreground have been demolished to give access to the riverside area of Magdalene College and the tall chimneys that were such a dominant part of the skyline have been demolished, leaving one solitary reminder. Beyond the college old properties were demolished in about 1912 for new college buildings. [SCAN 102.76 TAKE MODERN VIEW – SEE PHOTOCOPY]

Petty Cury looking west

Petty Cury has changed almost out of all recognition. Nicholls set up his camera at the Sidney Street end and looked towards the market, the large building at the end being part of the old Cambridge Guildhall. Most of the shops on the right-hand side were demolished during of the wholesale redevelopment of Cambridge in the 1930s, these being replaced by the Boots development. The buildings on the left include the gables of the Wrestlers Inn, Cambridge's best Jacobean building, its front covered by profuse carvings. It was demolished in 1885, about 25 years after this picture was taken. Further along one can see the shape of a Red Lion at the entrance of the Hotel that gave its name to the scheme which would raze the rest of the buildings for the redevelopment of the 1970s. [SCAN 102.77 TAKE MODERN VIEW LOOKING TO GUILDHALL]

Market Hill looking west from Petty Cury

But of all Nicholl's photographs it is this view of Market Hill that is best known. Great St Mary's church dominates the background above market stalls, gas lights and the bustle of everyday life. But while policeman and sergeant stand still for their picture others bustle through just leaving a fleeting impression.

Peter Lofts has chosen to reproduce the old pictures using the most modern of digital techniques but previous generations of photographers relied on their own skills in the darkroom. One of those was Mrs Pam Ford of Trumpington who writes:

"I am very familiar with the picture of the Market Square. In the 1960's I worked for Lettice Ramsey at the photographers Ramsey and Muspratt in Post Office Terrace. I was employed to make up clients' wedding day albums and to touch up defects in other photographs. The glass negatives were often printed for clients and were labelled 'Old Cambridge'. When the view of the Market Square was ordered I always had to paint a second foot under the long dress of the lady who is behind the policeman so that she wouldn't look one-legged!" [SCAN 102.42 TAKE MODERN VIEW]

Copies of the images can be viewed on Peter Loft's website: www.loftyimages.co.uk and ordered from him at 2 Lamport Close, Market Deeping, Peterborough, PE6 8BU. They cost £25 mounted, £45 framed. They are of course also available in the Cambridgeshire Collection together with hundreds of thousands of other views of the county. .

Our Time 2005 03

March floods, by Mike Petty

March is the month that fenmen probably dread more than any other; for time after time it has been March when the ingenuity and hard work of generations of drainers has been overcome by the force of nature.

The stories of the March of 1937 and 1947 are very similar

1937

The high spring tides coincide with heavy rain. The great sluice at Denver cannot be opened to allow the rivers to empty into the sea and more and more water drains into the fenland river system.

The high river banks are full to the brim and are crumbling and dissolving in the water just as sugar dissolves in tea. Slips occur, the bank slides a bit, but as it threatens to break men rush to bolster it up with clay and sandbags. The banks themselves are already two feet higher because of these lines of sacks but still the water seeps through and strong winds blow sheets of water out from the river and down into the adjoining fen - fen that is itself a sea of mud comparable with the mud of Flanders. "The way feet sink in with a dull sucking noise reminds me of the time when we moved into Passchendale during the war" an old soldier recalls.

The sodden fen means that lorries cannot get near to bring bags - potato bags, sandbags - any sort of bag - and the sodden land itself is unsuitable for filling them. 10,000 bags have been laid in a day and the water is seeping through at the places they placed the bags yesterday afternoon

The men are willing but almost at the end of their tether. Most are now so tired that if some really terrible disaster came along they would hardly be any use at all. Throughout the fen, along the top of river and drain every available man - hundreds of men, wet and weary - watch the water in the river while even more rain penetrates their clothing and the incessant cold wind chills them even more.

There is talk of calling in the army and at Ely a bugler is standing by to sound a "fall in" for volunteers in the event of a major burst. The town criers at Haddenham and Swavesey are appealing for extra men to go to the aid of Willingham, just one of the danger points. The banks have breached at Barway and Lt Thetford and the main A10 is cut by flooding near Stretham - the car loads of undergraduates flocking to help must find another way on to the Isle of Ely.

The BBC broadcasts flood warnings urging people to alert their neighbours without wireless sets to listen for the church bells which will announce the time has come for evacuation.

For many families it is already too later. Their land is under water, their homes are flooded. "We fenland folk can stand a lot. The water has got to be coming over the doorstep before we begin to flit". A horseman tells me that the water has reached his front door... his wife is sweeping it away with a broom.

It is the worst flood for many years - worse than 1928, worse than last year. It is March 1937. "We've got out of scrapes before, and we'll get out of this one" says a fen farmer. He is right.

The floods of March 1937 are now largely forgotten. They were only a minor dampness compared to the devastation that was to follow ten years later.

SCANS

5502 - FENMEN WORKING ON THE BANKS 1937

5503 - FENMEN WORKING ON THE BANKS 1937

567 - SWOLLEN RIVER AT PRICKWILLOW 1937

1947

The high spring tides coincide with a sudden thaw of the heavy snow. The great sluice at Denver cannot be opened to allow the rivers to empty into the sea and more and more water drains into the fenland river system.

The high river banks are full to the brim and are crumbling and dissolving in the water just as sugar dissolves in tea. Slips occur, the bank slides a bit, but as it threatens to break men rush to bolster it up with clay and sandbags ... its the same old story, March 1937 over again but this time worse.

On March 16th 1947 hurricane force winds swept sheets of water over the bank tops and sent the patrolling men scurrying for shelter. Roads were blocked by fallen trees, telephones lines blown down and 190 people evacuated from the Prickwillow area as flooding threatened.

But it was March 17th when the main breaches occurred. One was at Lt Thetford which swamped the main railway line and spread south to close the Wicken road and threaten the main A10 at Stretham Ferry.

The other was out in the fen near Earith where a 50 yard gap had been torn in the river bank and properties at Over and Willingham were flooded. Once released the water flowed east until it was checked by the main Old West river bank alongside which runs the Earith to Willingham road

For a while this held back the flood but as the water level increased so the very bank itself was overtopped and water began to trickle into Hilrow fen.

A wholesale evacuation started, first the tools of their trade farm implements and livestock, then furniture and effects. Behind them came a steady stream of water driving rabbits and rats ahead of it. By nightfall on the 18th much of what in the morning had been fertile fen was a mass of grey water. Houses, farm buildings and stacks stood deserted and marooned whilst families found shelter where they could. Elsewhere the battle continued.

Along the A10 between Littleport and Southery soldiers constructed a sandbag wall using the road as a foundation. They hoped to hold back the water that was roaring through the broken bank of the River Wissey between Hilgay and Denver Sluice. If they could keep it penned to the west of the A10 then the farms and fertile land to the east would be safe. It was a frantic fight against the rising floodwater but by hard work the dam rose high enough to withstand the waves. But nature was not to be beaten. The pent-up water found a weak spot in a culvert underneath the road, as it forced its way through the pressure built up until it blew the road apart as if it had been hit by a bomb. Now released the flood surged through the gap and as it did so it undermined the foundations of a substantial brick-built house that had always been on the wrong side of the road. The owners had put their furniture upstairs but it was no avail as the whole house was washed away.

Back at Earith the water poured unchecked through the broken bank for five days and rose higher and higher, brick by brick, up the flooded houses. Then on the 24th "Operation Neptune" finally sealed the breach by constructing a steel wall of amphibious vehicles around it and allowing more orthodox repair work to start. This was what the Duke of Gloucester was shown on his visit.

Hundreds of pumps were brought in to suck the water off the land and throw it back into the rivers.

As the floods went down and families returned to their shattered homes they were horrified by the sights that confronted them. Ruined shells of houses, stinking mud impregnated walls, scratches on the windowsills were rats had scabbled to keep above the water. Undeterred

they replanted their fields, rebuilt their houses and eventually when the walls had finally dried out made them homes again.

Since then new rivers have been cut, the banks have been strengthened but should nature once more combine wind, waves and water then danger will once more threaten. The fenman can never be complacent, the threat is never ending.

One man, Walter Martin Lane produced a magnificent photograph record of the 1947 floods in the Haddenham and Southery areas; his pictures were shown on cinema screens and published in the Lord Mayor of London's official appeal brochure for victims of the disaster. Later he donated them to the Cambridgeshire Collection in Cambridge's Lion Yard Library where they can be seen. Some have also been used in a two-hour video of the floods compiled by Littleport man, Tony Buckingham, together with moving pictures taken by newsreel cameramen and moving stories of the people involved. The Video entitled 'The winter of '47: a countdown to disaster' costs £20 from local shops and libraries or direct from Tony at www.luckybuckproductions.com. Cambridgeshire Libraries have also reprinted 'The Battle of the Banks', an account of the floods first issued by Ely Rotary Club in 1947.

Mike Petty will be lecturing on fenland flooding at Wilburton on 4th March, Deeping St James on 10th March, Peakirk on 14th & at Ely Library on the 11th & 18th of March, 10.15 to 12 noon. Phone 01353 648106 or e-mail mikepetty@fenhistory.fsnet.co.uk for details.

SCANS

9306 – THE GAUNT REMAINS OF A RUINED HOUSE AT HILROW, HADDENHAM 1947

9307 – WAVES BREAK AGAINST THE SIDE OF A BUNGALOW ON THE HADDENHAM-EARITH ROAD 1937

9308 – RETURNING BY BOAT TO A WRECKED BUNGALOW ON THE HADDENHAM – EARITH ROAD 1947

9328 – WALTER MARTIN LANE ENTITLED THIS VIEW 'BED BUT NO BREAKFAST' – A WRECKED HOUSE ON THE HADDENHAM-EARITH ROAD 1947

9338 – WALTER MARTIN LANE'S PHOTOGRAPHS WERE DISPLAYED TO SHOW PEOPLE WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THEIR HOUSES AND TO RAISE MONEY FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE FLOOD

9385 – THE CAMBRIDGE INDEPENDENT PRESS NEWSPAPER HEADLINE 21ST MARCH 1947

Our Time 2005 04
April 2005

Cambridge Civic Restaurant – Mike Petty

In March 1972 Cambridge lost one of its best-loved restaurants.

It was no three-star Michelin establishment, in fact it was somewhat basic in its cuisine and the atmosphere lacked the discrete candle-lit charm of other more up-market eateries. But it offered good quality food at inexpensive prices to ordinary folk, and what it did it did well.

The Civic Restaurant could trace its roots back to one of the most prestigious dining places in Cambridge – the University Pitt Club in Jesus Lane, now a Pizza Parlour. It occupied one of the most distinctive buildings in the city: the former Roman Baths.

Unlike those at Bath these had no great antiquity. They were built in 1862 to be a superior variety of Turkish Bath where having passed through the steamy stages people would cool off by a plunge into cold water. The enterprise attracted sufficient subscribers to enable the construction of the building on Jesus Lane. It featured an 18th-century-style façade with a small Ionic-columned portico. But once the baths opened they failed to attract enough customers and soon closed.

The distinctive premises were taken by the University Pitt Club. This had been founded in 1835 to honour the name of the former Prime Minister, William Pitt, to uphold the political principles for which he stood, and to ensure the return to parliament of Tory candidates. These objects were combined with the pleasures of dining and the drinking of numerous toasts which ranged from 'Church and State' – drunk to the tune of the Hallelujah Chorus – to 'the immortal memory of Mr Pitt' – drunk in silence. The last toast of the evening, the twenty-first on the list, was 'to our next merry meeting'

In 1843 the President of the club was summoned to appear before a committee of the House of Parliament to answer the charge of bribing voters during the Cambridge election; this was the end of the club's political role, but the dining continued. By the early 1960s it enjoyed an atmosphere of leisured ease with heavy leather chairs and sofas, making it the only comfortable and civilised club in Cambridge. With its air of formality and sartorial elegance it represented the gradually dying social class which once could afford and knew how to live hugely well.

But all of that had changed with the outbreak of the Second World War. In those dark days of rationing there was no place for luxury but there was a great need for a place where workers could obtain sustenance. British Restaurants were opened in Romsey Town, Chesterton and Cherry Hinton but it was the Pitt Club that was selected as the most suitable town-centre venue in 1942. Soon even undergraduates were deserting their college dining rooms to enjoy the fare offered by the two sisters who ran it, the Misses Tallerman. [SCAN 10091 - PITT CLUB PREMISES IN 1939]

After the war the Pitt Club wanted its building back and the Restaurant needed another site. It found it in the old Post Office building on the corner of Petty Cury. This had served as the headquarters of the Air Raid Precautions organisation and the Special Constabulary. Now rooms were adapted at considerable cost. In 1947 its status changed and it became a Civic Restaurant funded from the rates on the understanding that it could remain open as long as it did not run at a loss for three consecutive years. Soon it was actually producing profits for the council coffers. [SCAN 6480 THE SOUTH SIDE OF PETTY CURY FROM SIDNEY STREET SHOWING CIVIC RESTAURANT ON EXTREME LEFT, 1962]

Improvements were made in October 1954 with a new cafeteria counter with anti-sneeze glass, which protected the food from germs, and infra-red lamps that not only heated plates but kept the food warm. There was also a refrigerator top that made its own snow and maintained the salads and ice cream at a low degree.

The restaurant itself was redecorated to improve its ambience as much as possible, and this attracted more customers. By April 1961 its cooks were producing over 1,000 meals each day, Monday to Saturday, either for consumption on the premises or at the Drummer Street Mobile Canteen or Women's Voluntary Service 'Meals-on-wheels' service.

But while a reviewer approved of the good low cost food in 1966, he was less happy with the surroundings. "Every time I go into the main dining room I wonder if I have not wandered into some gloomy relic of Victorian railway architecture. The five foot-square towering columns which support the roof and the antique emergency brass lamp suspended from the

ceiling help to give the cavernous interior of the main dinning room the appearance of a London railway station. It seems wholly out of keeping that with the forward attitude of the city council to modern design they should allow this gastronomic anachronism to continue in the heart of the city.” [SCAN 7951 – CUSTOMERS IN 1968]

I was then a young Librarian at the old Central Library behind the Guildhall and occasionally called in for beans on toast when I was on the late shift in the Reference department. But it was not my regular dining place – I preferred sandwiches in the little Library staff room where I could read old bound issues of ‘Punch’ as I munched.

But big changes were in the air: the old Post Office building, along with everything else on the south side of Petty Cury were due to be demolished for a new Lion Yard Shopping Centre. The end came in April 1972 when the Mayor of Cambridge, Coun Mrs Jean Barker – now Lady [OR IS IT BARONESS – PLEASE CHECK -]Trumpington – made a civic visit to the Civic Restaurant before it finally closed. The staff of about 30 joined her for a farewell cuppa; amongst them was Walter Waller who had been a handyman at the restaurant for 25 years and Nancy Philpott who had been one of the cooks for two decades.

Although the Civic was no more its memory lingered on. The Council had plans for a new restaurant in the church of St Andrew the Great, but estimates for the conversion work were put at £137,000. Then in 1974 they hoped to use the premises of the Lyons Restaurant in Petty Cury but it was sold for a dress shop. Councillors even looked at the possibility of turning the central library buildings in Wheeler Street into a Civic Restaurant after the library had moved to its new building in the Lion Yard. By August 1979 it was the Corn Exchange which became a candidate for conversion; once more it was not to be.

However premises just across Parsons Court have been turned into a ‘Pop In’ centre by Age Concern, providing a sociable meeting place for senior citizens where they can obtain both hot drinks and snacks and share with others memories of the good old days of the Civic Restaurant.

OTHER PHOTOS AS SUPPLIED

Our Time, April 2005 - Coldham’s Lane, by Mike Petty –.

When Sherlock Holmes made his way down Coldham’s Lane in pursuit of the ‘Missing Three Quarter’ he described a quiet grqss-grown lane; it is not a description one would apply today. By 1924 a councillor described it as “A veritable slough and almost impassable. There was an extraordinary amount of traffic and its condition had got to such a pitch that one ratepayer proposed to sow it with potatoes.” [SCAN 2504 – COLDHAM’S LANE 1880]

Then in July 1963 Erica Dimock made her own journey along the Lane for her ‘Down Your Street’ column in the Cambridge News. I have combined some of her observations with other notes to record an account of the history of this most busy of Cambridge roads

“Coldham’s Lane will always retain its distinct town and country characteristics and those living at one end will remain totally different from those at the other”, Erica wrote. For the rural residents of the Cherry Hinton end were separated from their city brothers at the other by the airfield on one side and the cement works on the other.

In those days there was little in the way of amenities: Coldham’s Lane was served by two pubs, the Greyhound and the Rosemary Branch both of which ran darts and sick benefit savings clubs. There were few shops; Erica found the Orchard Stores, a grocery shop and a newsagent. But it did have Rosemary Nurseries in Cherry Hinton which had started in 1933 and specialised in cut flowers, raising 2,500 boxes of bedding plants which they supplied to the colleges.

The only other commercial enterprise as far as the general public was concerned was the Cambridge Automobiles Garage near the Newmarket Road junction who were agents for Morris and Singer cars. Nearby were distribution depots for Goodyear Tyres which stored up to 10,000 tyres of all types and sizes, Armstrong’s wholesale chemists and Cadbury’s and Fry’s the chocolate people.

The railway line across Coldham’s Common was laid out in 1896 to replace an older stretch of track that had run south of Mill Road. [SCAN 7154 DIGGING RAILWAY TRACK] In 1963 it delivered 200 tons of coal each day to sidings owned by the Eastern Gas Board where it was fed by a hopper into a fleet of lorries and taken to the Gas Works on Newmarket Road.

On the Newmarket Road side of the railway line at the turn of the century were the works of the Cambridge Brick Company. Fire broke out in July 1901 and the flames spread rapidly, soon mounting in the air a distance of about a hundred feet. In just over two hours all that remained was the damaged and broken parts of the valuable machinery. Fortunately the conflagration was confined to the corrugated iron roofed wooden building covering the machinery or the entire works could easily scarcely have escaped destruction. When the brickworks closed their deep pit became a rubbish dump and was bought in 1948 by Richard Duce for his scrap metal business. In 1963 Erica described acres of land covered with every kind of scrap metal imaginable, from old cars and lorries to bed irons, cans and weighing machines.

There were other scrap metal businesses nearby. One run by J.W. Galer specialised in machinery dismantling and had recently undertaken the demolition of a four-engine Wellington bomber while L.A. Rich specialised in motor vehicle demolition. His site was described as the ‘graveyard’ of many an old crock or new car which had been involved in an accident. It too had been ravaged by fire in July 1954. Burned stock included 10 cars, 200 wheels complete with tyres, a brick and asbestos carbide storage shed and a paraffin tanker. Luckily no petrol was stored there. Flames leapt up as high as the houses and car batteries exploded as hundreds of people watched the inferno.

Back by the railway another plot was occupied in 1963 by Commercial and Industrial Painters who were engaged in the painting and spraying of caravans. Not far away O.G. Lywood made ‘Car Cruiser’ caravans and other buildings used as mobile television studios or living units for oil prospectors in Libya. The site had previous been used by a laundry and earlier still a nine hole golf course which had opened in 1875.

Near the junction with Brooks Road was the Atlas Stone Company. The works had been completed in November 1903 for the manufacture of artificial paving slabs on the most up-to-date principles. By 1963 some 100 tons of concrete were made each day and used for the construction of such buildings as Churchill College and the new Addenbrooke’s Hospital

But the main industry was cement. There were reminders of the Saxon Works Portland Cement Company, erected in 1900. They had been one of the largest and most modern cement works in the country with railway sidings connected capable of holding three trains of 20 trucks each. The site included eight large cement kilns & an enormous storage building. Work continued by night and day lit by electricity generated at the works. By Erica's visit the Saxon works had gone leaving a lake which the Cambridge University Water Skiing Club shared with the Territorial Army Centre with its miniature rifle ranges, canteens and clubs.

Nearby the giant Norman Cement works was still producing 2,000 tons of concrete each week, employing some 85 people. Their works had been built in 1904, transforming the area: "Extensive new works are rapidly approaching completion and have made a great change in the landscape of Cherry Hinton. The pleasant path through the fields from the end of Mill Road is hardly recognisable now. It has been diverted to make room for a huge collection of buildings from which a new siding leads to the railway line close at hand. These are the Norman Cement Company's works" the News reported that November. By 1963 housewives were complaining that blue shirts were turning white because of the cement dust and the Company had installed new equipment to remedy the problem. Production ceased in 1984 and closed completely three years later. The site now houses a sports complex. [SCAN 7315 – PAINTING OF THE CEMENT WORKS PROBABLY 1920S – NB AM NOT POSITIVE WHICH ONE, PROBABLY THE SAXON – FUDGE CAPTION]

Another local enterprise was Andrew Pink's slaughterhouse. It had opened in July 1901 as the News reported: 'There is now in course of erection a new knackery where some 300 horses can be slaughtered daily at a minimum amount of pain. It stands in an isolated spot and is constructed on the most hygienic principles. In one corner is a large dissecting table and there are two huge coppers for boiling down the carcasses, the remains of which are subsequently sent away by rail. Some distance away is a tank ventilated with a shaft considerably higher than the top of the passenger carriages that may pass on the railway. The possibility of any offensive odour reaching travellers is thus quite obviated and the same care has been exhibited in regard to any unpleasantness that may arise from the boiling operations'. By 1963 it was providing the Blood Transfusion Centre with fresh horse blood and exporting meat to France and Belgium. They had also supplied large quantities of dehydrated meat to Dr Vivian Fuchs' Trans-Antarctic expedition on which the huskies were said to have thrived exceedingly well.

But of all the activities along Coldham's Lane it was what happened on Coldham's Common itself that gave most people concern. John Taylor lives in a cottage that was built in 1857 as a weigh bridge to enable the corporation to keep check on the amount of coprolite – fossilised organic matter which was dug up on the Common. The coprolite did not last forever and council later added two rooms to house the gatekeeper for the Common. She was Elizabeth Layton - her initials were carved into the end wall. She ended up in the Workhouse. [FIND NEWS PICTURE OF WEIGH HOUSE]

But when John first moved a neighbour had asked if he'd seen the ghost yet? Nearly 20 years later he was having some extensions done: "I was levelling the lawn when the fork struck something hard. It turned out to be an oddly coloured stone". He contacted the County Archaeologist who identified part of a 14th century tombstone. It had probably been placed there when stone was cleared from Barnwell Abbey in 1810. But who had been buried under it – and who is the ghost?

During a Great Plague in 1665/6 a Pest House was erected on the Common where 216 people died. Their bodies were loaded on to the plague cart and buried somewhere nearby in 'the dead of night'. Then in 1902 smallpox struck Cambridge and victims were transferred to huts and tents erected in Coldham's Lane. Not all got well as the News of 28th August 1903 makes clear: "During the recent heavy rains the beds in the tents were surrounded by water

and the deaths that have occurred there have been caused by cold and not by smallpox, as reported.”

Other houses were constructed during the depression years of the 1920s and in 1927 the Council were offering to sell houses in Coldham’s Lane for five pounds down & the balance in weekly instalments. Those who could afford to pay such amounts were urged to contact the Treasurer.

Summing up her article in 1963 Erica considered what the future held for Coldham’s Lane and its residents; nobody was sure but it did not seem likely to change very much for a good many years to come, she concluded. How wrong could she be.

A few years later and plans were submitted to build a shopping centre on Mr Duce’s scrapyard. They fell through but in 1968 a development company bought the site for storage warehouses. Four years later they sold it on. In December 1973 a 160-foot high chimney that dominated the area was demolished and a new Coral Park Estate was created on the site.
[SCAN T1718 CLEARING THE SITE]

In 1969 it was the turn of the Co-operative Society to challenge county planning restrictions on the use of former Cadbury warehouse site. They erected the Beehive discount warehouse for bulk sales and then won permission to open it to the public, opening the way for further development.

There was change too on the Atlas Stone Works on the corner with Brooks Road. In 1972 Sainsburys announced plans for a major supermarket development on the site. “We believe that edge of town developments are the thing of the future” they said. The planners were less sure and rejected the scheme but were again overruled by the Government. It opened at the time of a national shortage of sugar in December 1974 and was almost overwhelmed with customers. The car park was filled, and the traffic jams built up to such an extent that the police were called to help to get things moving again.

Now the cement works and brickworks that once dominated the area have gone; the airfield too may soon relocate but whatever the future it is unlikely ever that Coldham’s Lane will ever revert to the quiet grass-grown status Sherlock Holmes explored.

And who was the Mr Coldham after whom the Lane was named – according to the street-names experts there never was one; the name dates back to medieval times and means ‘cold hamlet’.

OTHER SCANS

T2395 – AERIAL VIEW ACROSS NEWMARKET ROAD AND INTO COLDHAM’S LANE 1966]

T10458 – COTTAGES AT THE JUNCTION OF COLDHAM’S LANE AND NEWMARKET ROAD PULLED DOWN FOR ROAD WIDENING 1929

OTHER PICTURES FROM NEWS FILES

PERHAPS TAKE MODERN VIEWS OF NEW ESTATES ETC

Our Time, May 2005

VE AND VJ IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE, by Mike Petty –.

It can be difficult, 60 years on, to differentiate between photographs of the celebrations for VE Day and VJ Day in 1945. It can be difficult too to appreciate just what agony people had to go through between those two celebrations, one to mark Victory in Europe, the second Victory against Japan.

1945 had started badly on the Home Front with a bitter January and February. People had become heartily sick of the war and weary of shortages of every. Rationing was more severe than ever. On the War Front the success of D-Day in June 1944 had been followed by the liberation of Paris. As the months passed Mussolini was killed by Italian partisans and the German army in Italy surrendered. The British Army crossed the Rhine, the Russians reached Berlin, Hitler committed suicide on April 30th and Germany capitulated on May 7th.

News broke in Cambridge during the Monday afternoon and several thousand students assembled on the Market Square; there was singing, dancing and cheering while home-made 'thunder flashes' and cracker-jacks added to the liveliness of the evening and a waste-paper dump in St Mary's Passage became a bonfire.

Tuesday May 8th was proclaimed VE Day and was marked by services of thanksgiving in churches throughout the county.

By now Cambridge streets were decorated with flags and bunting and thronged with thousands of people making their way into the centre. Once the service at Great St Mary's had ended it was time for music and dancing on the market cobbles as the crowds waited for the Mayor to make the official declaration. Then they followed the Cadet and Home Guard bands in a torchlight procession that toured the town en route to Midsummer Common where effigies of Hitler, Himmler and Goebbels were consigned to a bonfire. It was followed by dancing well into the night to the glow of the flames and the light of half-a-dozen searchlight beams which were lowered as the bonfire burned down. At midnight the bands fell silent to be replaced by a deafening cheer for the men still fighting in the Far East..

In Ely Les Oakey recalls that Tom Kempton from the Radio Relay service rigged up loudspeakers on the Market Place and after some initial hesitation dancing took place. It was not until the arrival of the RAF from Witchford and the RAF Hospital, with the co-operation of the Land Army girls from the St Mary's Street hostel, that a spirit of jollity manifested itself. The RAF brought with them a Vickers pistol and cartridges with which they lit up the night sky. A dance was hastily arranged for the Corn Exchange and the public houses soon ran out of beer. Formal commemoration came when 3,000 people formed a vast congregation at the special services of thanksgiving held in the cathedral, preceded and followed by a great parade watched by dense crowds along the streets – blue and khaki, civil defence and nursing services marched under waving flags

Across the county the story was the same. Wisbech went mad: flags and decorated streets and people sang and danced until well into the night, whilst fireworks mysteriously appeared, bonfires blazed and sudden noises and bangs - which would once have given cause for alarm - became commonplace. At St Neots the town echoed to the sound of hammering as men festooned the streets with flags, and two American Military Policemen with white helmets and white spats patrolled the town before the carnival got under way. In St Ives the statue of Oliver Cromwell was decorated with a dustbin lid, at Ramsey a chair was fixed to the church steeple, and a WAAF climbed the war memorial at Huntingdon to put a cigarette in the statue's lips.

Freddie Barrett recorded how at Girton villagers were out early on the morning of VE day hanging flags of all shapes and sizes and bunting made from scraps of coloured material. At mid-day while people assembled for a united service of thanksgiving in the church the air

above them was filled with the roar of heavily-loaded Lancaster bombers. This time they were weighed-down not with bombs but with food to be dropped to Holland where the dikes had been breached and the people were starving. The evening was given over to a children's social with games, dancing and community singing, then as darkness descended a large pile of wood and straw, topped with an effigy of Hitler holding a swastika flag was set alight and flames rose to the height of the church. Fireworks were lit and Captain Game of the Home Guard created loud bangs as people joined hands and danced around the fire. Then they made their way to the Women's Institute Hall for more dancing to music supplied by the Youth Centre radio-gram.

At Comberton there were sports and a fancy dress parade with a free dance at the Village Institute followed by a large bonfire on the cross-roads during which the Police and A.R.P. hut, which consisted mainly of baled straw, was reduced to ashes. Great and Little Abington saw a parade of Home Guard, Red Cross, Women's Land Army, Civil Defence, National Fire Service and Special Constabulary and church services were packed. In Great Shelford the inhabitants of The Crescent organised a programme of games and piles of sandwiches while Mrs Day's piano was installed on the Green to enliven proceedings with lively and popular tunes.

At Newton the cross-roads were floodlit and a large bonfire on the Green was lit by Gordon Rogers, a returned prisoner-of-war, while a loudspeaker relayed dance music to those who preferred dancing in the road to the warmth of the Village Rooms. Over saw a parade of tractors and lorries loaded with people in fancy dress with dancing, sports and a cricket match between ladies and gentlemen.

It was a scene repeated throughout the county in those first days of peace. But celebrations did not end then.

In the weeks that followed more street parties were organised. Jeffrey Barham remembers how in his part of Cambridge committees of parents decided where the parties would be held and which children should go to which party. (If you were lucky, you managed to get to two!). Tables laden with food saved from carefully hoarded rations were set up in the streets which had been decorated with bunting and Union Jacks. There were games and entertainments, both from professionals and amateurs. A usual feature was the fancy dress parade when miniature Betty Grables were whistled at, Hitlers booed and Winston Churchills cheered. A wind-up gramophone was inevitably found to provide music for grown-ups to dance to, long after the children were in bed.

In Fulbourn the children living in School Lane, Cambridge and Shelford Roads were invited to a victory party on June 16th in School Lane which was specially decorated for the occasion. 104 youngsters sat down to a good meal and were afterwards entertained in the Memorial Hall by a comedian, Mr R.F. Crick, of Cambridge. Those children who missed out had their VE tea in the Memorial Hall a few weeks later when 180 sat down to bread and butter, sandwiches, various cakes and ice creams. Later children of all ages took part in races, musical chairs, fancy dress, singing and dancing. The evening ended with a dance for parents until midnight.

But at Fridaybridge near Wisbech they decided not to hold any public celebration of Victory in Europe, though there were thanksgiving services and they did permit themselves a whist drive in conjunction with the nearby Prisoner of War camp.

For as James de Rothchild, the Isle of Ely Member of Parliament remarked: "The men and women of the Eastern counties realise that the war is not yet at an end, when so many of the gallant Cambridgeshire regiment who fought against such odds in the first unequal battles of the East; your husbands, your sons, are still in the foul hands of the Japanese. Let us give

thanks, heartfelt and reverent, for the Victory we have won but let us resolve that we will deal with tyranny in the East as effectually as we have dealt with it in the West”

The Cambridgeshire Regiment had sailed for Singapore in 1941 and had played their part in the final defence of the fortress, impregnable against attack from the sea, indefensible against land attack. Its surrender in the face of overwhelming odds had been one of the low points of the war. They had been taken into captivity and had disappeared. While the rest of the world celebrated Victory in Europe there was still little news of their fate.

The Japanese were battling on but now with the Americans advancing on their homeland, island by island it was Japan's turn to experience the horror of bombing from the air. Raid followed raid with devastating effect. Then on August 6th an Atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, three days later another destroyed Nagasaki. On August 11th Japan surrendered.

The surrender of Japan was announced at midnight on Tuesday 14th August and was received with jubilation.

At Ely while many heard the broadcast at midnight there were many more for whom the first intimation of great tidings came about an hour later. They were awakened by the sounds of singing in the streets by a party of RAF & WRAF personnel to the accompaniment of a drum and cornet with an occasional obligato on door-knockers. They paraded many of the streets of the city and by the time they decided to disband about two o'clock there could have been few people who were not awake.

In Cambridge too most folk were abed when the news of the surrender broke but some did venture into the streets. Undergraduates started a small bonfire on Market Hill but the timely arrival of a police officer ensured that the market stalls themselves survived. Soon 100 people had gathered laughing, cheering and occasionally bursting into song whilst one driver in a sports car drove round and round sounding the V for victory call on his hooter. By breakfast time flags and bunting began to flutter in the streets. Anxious housewives turned out in strength to make sure the larders should be sufficiently stocked over the VJ holiday period. As the morning drew on there were more people about, hundreds grew into thousands as parents carried children shoulder high and the Union Jacks, rosettes and paper hats reappeared. It was VE Day all over again and once more thousands of people converged on Market Hill. At midday the sound of bugles heralded the arrival of the Mayor who made the formal announcement that the war was indeed over. The Railway Band played music of the Great War before marching through crowded streets to Parker's Piece for community singing and fireworks with 10,000 people dancing, pushing and talking despite the drizzle. At nine o'clock they fell silent to hear the King's speech broadcast by loudspeakers followed by the singing of the National Anthem.

Thursday August 16th was proclaimed to be VJ Day. In Cambridge the highlight was a Grand Patriotic Concert in the Guildhall but the customary bonfire was almost a non-event as there seemed to be no scrap timber left over anywhere. However a Mr Marshall managed to acquire some and the Mayor was able to light the kindling at nine o'clock. There then followed another round of street parties, concerts and miscellaneous junketing

At Burwell most houses were decorated but the most outstanding was that of Mr Knights in the High Street whose windows were surrounded with red, white and blue fairy lights. At Gamlingay VJ Day passed off quietly but a programme for children was arranged for later in the week. Gt Wilbraham organised a party for the children of Station Road with blancmanges and an iced Victory cake; it was further enlivened when a clown appeared.

At Fulbourn an impromptu Victory celebration was arranged for the village children when about 200 kiddies enjoyed themselves. There was a fancy dress parade, races and a comic

cricket match between boys and girls. Fireworks added to the excitements and in the evening there was a social with dancing to end the day.

Quy children were treated to a tea with games and races and a bonfire on the cricket field. Kitty Watts described what happened in a letter to her daughter Peggy: "Don Harvey made a wonderful bomb with petrol, gunpowder etc in it and the kiddies got so excited. We called them all away on to the road when they lit the long fuse, but it was a failure, all it did was flare well and plenty of black smoke so they got well teased about their wonderful bomb". Other celebrations followed: "They are having another tea tomorrow, Aut Beat is making jellies, Roff up the top road has sent lots of cake and buns and other people are sending things and quite a lot of money so they seem to be doing something at Quy this time for a change"

But Victory celebrations in many villages were tinged with restraint. The joyous news of the defeat of Japan was tempered with the thought of so many of Cambridgeshire's sons still in Far East prisoner of war camps and relatives were anxious for news of their well-being before celebrating.

In September came news: 35,000 prisoners had been released on Singapore Island alone, others were in camps inland, still more in Saigon. Stories emerged of the grim conditions the Cambridgeshire men had experienced as prisoners and so did the first photographs of strangers, thin, gaunt and haggard almost unrecognisable as sons and husbands.

On October 7th the first batch of Cambridgeshire Regiment men arrived back at Southampton on board the "Corfu". First back to Wisbech was Ronald Wilson of the Royal Norfolk Regiment who made the journey by air. For him there was no civic reception when he arrived just after midnight one Sunday. But crowds thronged the station to give other men a rousing welcome with the Salvation Army band playing; there were cheers - and tears - as boys were hugged and kissed by their overjoyed relatives. It was a scene repeated elsewhere as villages welcomed their own heroes home and began to realise just how many were missing.

On November 11th the men of the Cambridgeshire Regiment were marching again on Remembrance Sunday and silence descended over the county as church clocks struck the 11th hour and the county honoured its dead wherever they'd fallen in whatever conflict.

By the time it came for the final parties of the year – those to celebrate Christmas 1945 - many homes were happier than they had been for several years but others were realising that Christmas would never be the same again

Our Time 2005 05

Grafton Centre by Mike Petty – Our Time, May 2005

Cambridge's Grafton Centre was one of the most controversial shopping developments in the city's history. It was a titanic struggle heralded by a County Planning Report of 1950 and closed by opponents finally conceding defeat amid a welter of construction in May 1981

In the interim there were proposals, counter-proposals, repeated promises of an 'early start', back-pedalling, alternative schemes elsewhere and the emergence of rival developments. Added to this came Government summits, college interventions, inter-council wrangling, critical missives from the Ombudsman and a general smokescreen of doubt.

The major post-war Holford report of 1950 suggested that the historic centre of Cambridge would be unable to meet all the shopping needs of the future and suggested Fitzroy Street as a valuable relief for that increasing pressure. Much of the area consisted of out-dated two-storey cottages with extensive yards and was largely a slum. Redevelopment was due and could be undertaken without the restrictions of historical associations and high land values.

At the same time debate was also raging over proposals for the redevelopment of the area around Petty Cury. The University favoured amenities such as a library, concert hall and art gallery whilst the City Council favoured a large pedestrianised shopping centre. Throughout the 1960s plans and counter-plans were produced until the south side of Petty Cury was demolished to make way for what was hailed as the largest redevelopment scheme since the war, if we omit the blitzed cities.

But the City Council also wanted to redevelop the Fitzroy Street area for shopping and commissioned Lord Llewellyn Davies to prepare a scheme. His report was eventually published four years later and caused uproar in all sectors because of the massive scale of building and development which it proposed. As a result the Council looked for other developers to suggest alternative schemes.

Amongst them was a report by Professor Parry Lewis who concluded that any such scheme would impact on the City Centre and that new commercial development should be on the edge of the city. Even the Cambridge Evening News who had previously criticised planning inaction now urged caution and the debate developed into an acrimonious battle.

In such a climate of uncertainty the Fitzroy Street area was suffering from planning blight. Neither shop owners nor residents were sufficiently confident in the future to undertake repairs to their properties. As walls crumbled, slates slid and windows became broken so businesses shut up shop and families moved out.

The Kite Community Action Group was formed to try and stop the building of a monolithic shopping centre on its doorstep. It felt that any redevelopment should be on the basis of piecemeal reconstruction within the context of the existing structure. They organised marches and fund-raising shows backed by celebrities such as Clive James and Michael Palin. But as debate dragged on and on the area's largest shop, Laurie and McConnal, took the decision to close down in 1977, blaming indecision over the Kite redevelopment. The closure shocked councillors.

Finally a plan put forward by Grosvenor Estates Commercial Development was accepted. It proposed 'a scheme of quality and character sensitively integrated with the neighbourhood shopping and residential areas.' Eventually work began in August 1981.

The new Grafton Centre was opened by the Queen in May 1984. It featured several big shops such as Debenhams and C&A. which previously had no foothold in Cambridge together with a supermarket – Presto – although this closed four years later. Within four years the centre was felt to be already too small and more shops with a huge Warner cinema complex were added. Additional expansion has made it even bigger until today it offers a wide range of big-name shops and attracts thousands of shoppers.

But now in 2005 another large-scale redevelopment is taking place in the City Centre as the Lion Yard is extended with a Grand Arcade. What impact this will have on the Grafton Centre remains to be seen.

PICTURES – NEWS SCANS

ALSO

10286 – FITZROY STREET SHOWING LITTLE KETTLE IN 1939 – CONTRAST WITH THE 1964 PHOTO
CARTOON OF PLANNING INDECISION FROM CEN 13th April 1976

Our Time 2005 06

June 2005

Mock Funerals – by Mike Petty

Funerals are usually sombre affairs; mourners follow the hearse with reverence and the deceased despatched with due dignity

But undergraduates sent down for committing some breach of University discipline were once given a more rousing send off in a tradition known as a Mock Funeral which had little of the solemnity normally associated with such a traumatic event. Cambridge ground to a halt as a motley procession of cabs and carriages made its way to the station for the train that was to take the ‘departed’ away.

Various such ‘funerals’ have been reported over the years.

In February 1899 a young man was convicted by the authorities of Queens’ College for having ‘ragged’ a couple of Freshmen’s rooms and ‘sent down’ for a year. The ‘body’ was carried in an open landau occupied by three young men who wore ‘the trappings of woe’ very lightly. Following were nearly a score of hansom cabs. Before the train left the company whistled the “Dead March” and the lad departed amid ringing cheers.

In March 1904 St John’s College students carried out a mock funeral for an undergraduate who had been ejected from the New Theatre on three occasions in one week for having disrupted the performance. The college authorities had decided he should be ‘sent down’ and his friends organised a procession of eight cabs which filed along the streets at funereal pace to the railway station with undergraduates sitting on the roofs of the vehicles. A halt was made in Sidney Street for a photograph to be taken and another outside the New Theatre to allow the travellers to indicate their disapproval of the management. The scene was also recorded by a local cartoonist, Harry Moden, and issued as a postcard.[SCAN 104.66 – THE MOCK FUNERAL LINING UP OUTSIDE ST JOHN’S COLLEGE; SCAN 52.44 THE PROCESSION AS SEEN BY CARTOONIST HARRY MODEN]

Sometimes the grads went too far and offence was caused in 1910 when the cortege included members of the Cambridge University Officer Training Corps in uniform and with rifles reversed. This was thought to be in bad form since it was soon after the funeral of King Edward VII. Another followed in 1911 when a Trinity Hall undergraduate was sent down for disciplinary offence, this time there were 100 horse & motor vehicles in the procession behind a brass band on a coal wagon. [SCAN 89.17 – THE 1911 MOCK FUNERAL IN HILLS ROAD] Others were held in March 1912 and February 1913 [SCAN 104.63 THE 1913 MOCK FUNERAL IN HILLS ROAD] after which the Vice-Chancellor took steps to suppress them. [SCAN 104.67 A MOCK FUNERAL IN HILLS ROAD – NOT SURE WHICH ONE!]

But it was too good a tradition to be abandoned and when the old horse-drawn tramways went into liquidation in 1914 the final tram was escorted to its depot on East Road by undergraduates in mourning attire chanting a funeral dirge.

The mock funerals lapsed during the years of the Great War but came back with a vengeance in 1920. The atmosphere of the occasion was well captured by a report in the Cambridge Daily News:

“Tears flowed like rivers in the streets of Cambridge. Feeble old gentlemen were washed away. Aged ladies were borne almost as far as the Gogs by the onrushing flood of ‘tears, idle

tears'. A plaintive lament ascended to heaven. Bagpipes droned mournfully; tin whistles shrieked with a despairing note. And in the midst of the mourning the Body was conveyed, under the respectful gaze of the weeping multitude, to the station.

For it was a Mock Funeral – sonorous and dolorous words! A Caius man had met his doom; on Monday he went down – down into darkness, through the gloomy portals of the Cambridge Railway Station.

The news had gone forth, and as the gilded hands of the gilded Guildhall clock drew near the hour of eleven, mysterious streams of undergraduates converged on to the Market Place, and gathered outside Mason's Café. Inside the Café there was a 'certain liveliness'; now and again a 'woman' would look out of the windows, and be greeted with what Walt Whitman would call 'mocking, ironic laughter'.

Then came the Cab, drawn by a small and weary horse, and driven by an imperturbable driver.

The doors were flung open. Forth came the Parson with white ascetic face and eyes staring with pious horror at the shrieking crowd. Forth came the Undertaker, with his staff of office in hand; he ignored the populace. Forth came the Body, borne on a board and covered with a sheet; slowly and sadly it was laid down in the cab. And after that there emerged from the doorway an endless stream of mourners; there were beautiful 'maidens' with dresses cut at the back down to the waist – (what did it matter that leather braces encircled their bare shoulders?). There were ancient women; there were men with beards that a Bolshevik might be proud of. There was a man who wore a tin hat, and who bore a banner with the strange device: 'No flowers, by request'

After the mourners came the choir; multitudes without number! There were Bolsheviks with flutes, men in pyjamas, men wearing coats turned inside out, a maiden or two.

The mourners ascended the cab, and wept copiously over the Corpse. In front of the cab was a procession of uproarious undergraduates; in front of the procession was the surpliced choir, led by the parson and the undertaker. A second choir followed the cab, and after them came 'the common herd, the rabble, the low people'

The bagpipes and the tin whistles and the mouth organs struck up the Dead March and amid scenes of the utmost pathos and most affecting grief the Mock Funeral started.

The parson led the way along Market Street and St Andrew's Street, and the solemnity of his countenance did not change even when the choir struck up 'Yip-i-addy'. Then followed a medley of hymns and comic songs.

But why did that faint sound come from the bottom of the cab? Could the corpse be growing restive?

At the Catholic Church the various dirges were stopped and the parson read the first lesson. Unfolding his hands from beneath his baby's bib (which had the charming inscription, 'My Darling') he opened a Gray's Anatomy, and, casting his eyes to heaven, announced that 'this morning's lesson' was taken 'from the plumph verse to the umpteenth verse'. The procession chanted 'Amen'. His reverence then read (though rudely interrupted by many deep chants of 'Amen') an inspiring and thrilling passage dealing with muscles and ending with the uplifting words: 'And the measurement is one and one-seventh millimetres'.

It was with downcast faces and upcast voices that the procession re-started, and marched along Hills Road. But alas! Too much grief had driven the fair mourner mad, for why did she

stare so saucily at the multitude? And why below her flowing golden locks did there peep that fringe of ginger hair? And why, O why, did the onlookers burst into great sobs (the uninitiated might have thought they were great guffaws) at the sight of the placards borne by the choir: 'Glovemore and Rusher, undertakers', 'R.I.P.', 'Toll for the Brave'?

At the corner of Station Road the second lesson was read by his reverence, whose voice thrilled with simple faith and unclouded belief as he read St Gray's Sermon on the Blood Vessels of the Heart. Then the procession reformed, and with solemn step and slow, and to the accompaniment of the 'Death of Poor Cock Robin', marched to the station.

The choir proceeded on to the platform; the body was borne into the gloomy station, but (perhaps staggered by the ugliness of it) suddenly sat up, and had to be admonished in righteous indignation by the bearers. Surrounded by the swarming crowd of undergraduates, the body was conveyed into the guard's van of a train; the parson read the third lesson (the Epistle on the Lungs); the 'undertaker' climbed on to the top of the train and 'knocked the nails in the coffin' with brooms. Everyone cheered and laughed and sang.

But a horrible suspicion grew on the waiting hundreds of undergraduates. Where was the Corpse? It was not in the guard's van. It had gone.

The undergraduates swarmed through the train, over or through the train standing next to it, and so on to the opposite platform. But the Corpse had gone ...

The multitude rushed out of the station, thirsting for blood. They saw a 'bus; it was instantly covered with undergraduates; they swarmed up the sides and over the front, and hung on in incredible places. The solid tyres of the 'bus were flattened. Then another 'bus coming from the town, turned into Station Yard, even while it was still swinging round it was crammed with festive young men. And after a few of them had been hurled from both the 'buses the drivers drove the rest away.

Meanwhile the Corpse – now very much alive – and the mourners and most of the choir were marching more or less solemnly back towards the Market Place.

The 'buses joined the procession; motors were mingled with the stream of undergraduates – in one of them was a fair mourner – 'Dora' – with 'her' leg over the side. The choir sang with enthusiasm; the bagpipes piped; the undergraduates roared. Policemen solemnly led the procession.

At the Post Office his reverence read another lesson, and a collection was taken for the Corpse. On the Market Hill the fifth lesson was read, his reverence being bombarded with coppers until he took shelter under an umbrella.

The Mock Funeral concluded with the announcement that 'This correspondence must now cease!'

There was a variation on the theme in 1921 when the University authorities were considering whether to award degrees to women. A colossal mock funeral was held for 'The death of the Varsity' with the 'corpse' of 'the last male undergraduate' being borne on a bier surrounded by aged mourners whose long grey beards dragged in the dust.

Then in May 1926 a mock funeral was arranged for two Trinity men who had been sent down for a breach of college discipline. The procession made its way to the college to collect the 'corpses' but on arrival however they found their unfortunate colleagues had made use of their newly-acquired wings and flown. Nothing daunted the party proceeded to the station

headed by a drum-major and a figure in clerical attire. Amongst the occupants of the horse-drawn 'hearse' were two musical geniuses with a banjo and saxophone.

Four years later came another. Once more it was headed by an old horse-drawn landau in which the 'corpse' sat, his face disguised beneath a war-paint of lipstick. He was joined by various persons who were to officiate at the ceremony; beneath top hats, black cloches and wideawakes were suits of grey flannel, blazers and plus-fours. All were garnished in crepe streamers on which hung rhubarb, beer and wine bottles, remains of the 'wake'. At the station the funeral party moved along the platform hilariously singing a dirge and the 'corpse' was installed in a third-class compartment where gifts of fruit and rhubarb were handed solemnly in. [SCAN 104.65 – A MOCK FUNERAL SCENE AT THE CAMBRIDGE RAILWAY STATION (DATE UNCERTAIN)] [SCAN OF REPORT OF FUNERAL MAY 1930]

Another was in 1962 when two undergraduates were sent down for failing their examinations. This time their sports car was pulled through the streets by their mourning colleagues and despite the stir it caused it was reckoned only a poor affair compared to the elaborate ones of the past. [SCAN 104.64 THE 1962 MOCK FUNERAL IN MARKET STREET]

Who knows whether the streets of Cambridge will ever see such sights again?

Our Time 2005 07
River Cam Boat trip

River Cam Boat Trip script, July 2007 by Mike Petty

A boat trip on the River Cam has been a treat for generations of Cambridge folk over the years. What could be nicer than a gentle cruise down the tranquil stream through a peaceful landscape to banish stress and escape from the tragedy that seems to dominate the headlines.

But the River Cam has not always been so peaceful; it has a dark history of drama round every bend.

Jesus Lock

It is hard to visualise picturesque Jesus Green with its sluice, footbridge and lock as a bustling commercial area. But in Victorian times the waterfall was nicknamed 'Niagara' and the original bridge rose high above locks which were busy with boats. The lock was built in 1832 as one of a number that had to be constructed to maintain the essential river trade on which Cambridge depended. There were proposals for Jesus Green to be the start of a new canal down to Bishop Stortford and London. This would save the long journey of goods on seagoing vessels from the Thames around the coast of East Anglia to the port of Kings Lynn where they were offloaded into river-going craft to bring to Cambridge. But the canal was never built and narrowboats that now line the banks did not become part of the Cambridge scene

Barges and boats

For centuries it was barges that brought the necessities of daily life such as coal, timber, bricks, butter, cheese. Much of this was transported through the locks to unload at Quayside while other barges would pass along the Backs to Mill Pool. The barges were pulled by horses

which walked the towpath alongside the river. As time progressed the horses were replaced by steam tugs such as the Cutter and Nancy which continued until the First World War. Another tugboat, the Olga, continued pulling barges up to the gasworks until 1933.

As commercial trade declined the river began to be used for pleasure craft. Some enthusiasts ran their own steamboats while others preferred cabin cruisers. But more people enjoyed river trips on excursion boats. These included the horse-drawn Victoria and Albert and the steam-powered Otter that towed the Otter Hound. But the most famous party-boat was the Viscountess Bury. Launched as a battery-powered vessel in 1888 and patronised by Edward VII, it was bought to Cambridge by H.C.Banham in 1910 where it was fitted with a petrol engine and regularly used for club outings and private festivities. Now she too is just a memory with craft like the Riverboat Georgina continuing the tradition.

Victoria Bridge

Victoria Bridge is a monument to a battle. It was built as a bribe to the people of the rapidly growing New Chesterton to give up their independence and become part of an expanded Cambridge. Suggestions for amalgamation had received a cool response so as a dowry Cambridge suggested a new road bridge avoiding the long trudge to Magdalene Bridge. An Act of Parliament was obtained and in November 1889 the Mayor of Cambridge and Chairman of the Chesterton Local Board jointly laid the foundation stone. By December 1890 it was ready. The opening ceremony was not conducted without a hitch: suspended across the bridge was a bottle of champagne on a ribbon. When the ribbon was cut the champagne was to smash against the parapet to christen the new structure. To everybody embarrassment the bottle failed to break. The bribe also failed and Chesterton retained its independence until 1912. By 1986 the bridge was found to be rusting away and in need of urgent repairs which took as long to complete as the Victorians had taken to build it.

Midsummer Common

The new Victoria Avenue carried traffic across Midsummer Common, destroying the tranquillity of the area. But it was not always tranquil. It is home to one of the best-known fairs in the country & whilst cows and horses regularly graze the common there have been other animals too: "With the big top a blaze of coloured lights, people streamed to Midsummer Common to fill Chipperfields' Circus to capacity. It is the first time any circus has presented such a varied collection of animals, which include camels, llamas, zebras, a giraffe and Indian pythons. The seals balance balls, the poodles rode a pony round the ring and one of the elephants even did a handstand", reporters noted in March 1955.

Some animals are less attractive, as this story from 1904 shows: "Ratting is a form of amusement which dates back to the dim ages; in Cambridge ratting parties are to be seen on Midsummer Common on Sundays. The undergraduate takes a great pride in the sporting qualities of his "dawg's" pedigree, half-bred or mongrel, and certain townees feed this pride by collecting a supply of rats for the alleged sporting dogs to worry. With stout wire cages slung on their backs the dealers await the arrival of undergraduates and then offer rats at a "bob apiece". Rat after rat is released from the cage, given half a dozen yards start, and then the dogs "course" it to its death. The slaughter over the dead rats are piled on the common to fester and rot."

It was not the only hazard people might encounter. In 1929 a dredger was hard at work deepening the Cam and depositing the spoil on the Common. The News how: "A young Cambridge lady in attempting to make a short cut across Midsummer Common became embedded in the half-frozen silt and mud thrown up by the dredger. Another lady went to her assistance and suffered a similar fate. Their frantic signals soon attracted the attention of passers-by; two or three young men waded out to them while others formed a human chain.

The would-be rescuer was extricated with little difficulty but the first lady became more deeply embedded. Eventually a ladder was procured and a rescue effected. Fortunately no bones were broken but she was so badly shaken up by her ordeal that she had to be removed on a hastily-improvised stretcher” [SCAN 6825 – DREDGER AT WORK ON THE CAM 1929]

Boathouses

Beyond the bridge the river is lined with boathouses. Rowing as an undergraduate sport dates back to 1825 when St John's college boat club was established to be followed shortly afterwards by the First Trinity. Soon other colleges joined the fray and the number of boathouses along the stretch of river opposite Midsummer Common increased.

Fort St George

The Fort St George in England has been fortifying residents and visitors for over 500 years; once it stood on its own island and was approached by a bridge across a lock now superseded by that at Jesus Green.

Ferries and Footbridges

Several ferries crossed the river along this stretch; the ferryman turned a handle which engaged a chain that ran across the bed of the river. But once the ferryman had gone off for the night people had to operate it for themselves. The ferry seemed always to be on the wrong side of the river so you had to pull on the slimy chain to bring it to your side of the bank; then sometimes it got stuck midstream. They were the scene of numerous accidents and even drownings. By 1904 residents of the new houses on the De Freville Estate were agitating for footbridges.

In 1913 the Borough council agreed that a bridge was indeed necessary at Ferry Path, though it was another 14 years before it actually opened. William Pauley had operated a ferry here since 1887 and carried an estimated one-and-a-quarter-million passengers. Those waiting to make a last nostalgic crossing were disappointed when the ferry sank just before the new bridge opened.

Further downstream the Cutter ferry was operated by the Dant family. One had the nickname ‘Cuckoo’ as he took to his bed when the cold weather came and would not get up till spring. Children gathered under his window and called ‘Cuckoo’ to make him think that it was time to bestir himself.

In July 1929 it was superseded by a footbridge, known as Pye Bridge - but the design did not appeal to everybody, as a correspondent complained: “At five minutes to eight every morning the instrument workers at Pye’s are hurrying to work from the other side of the river. They curse and groan, trip and stagger under the burden of carrying their bicycles up and down a steep double flight of steps. Sooner or later some panting person carrying a bicycle will fall backwards or pitch into the river. But it is quite as much a death trap for pedestrians: the steps are much too steep”. In 1932 the bridge had to be closed while the approaches were reconstructed and the ferry was brought back into use once more. Now in 2005 a new replacement bridge has been opened which will hopefully ease the situation.

Banham’s Boatyard

There were also boatyards where firms such H.C. Banham constructed the rowing eights used by University and college crews as well as motor cruisers some of which they hired out holidaymakers to explore the fenland waters.

Elizabeth Bridge

Almost as soon as Victoria Bridge had opened agitation started for another one. But while some petitioned for a new crossing others argued against it because of the traffic congestion it would bring to Chesterton. After years of debate Elizabeth Bridge was opened in July 1971, though not without a hitch. This time the official ceremony was performed by the Master of Trinity College, Lord Butler. Once more disaster struck. After the speeches had been delivered he stepped forward to cut the ceremonial ribbon with the gold scissors – only to find that they would not cut! To everybody's embarrassment it took several hacks before the ribbon parted.

Sewage and Gas Works

Once beyond Elizabeth Bridge one is into Riverside, but in the past this was not an area to linger.

By 1864 the Cam was described as 'an elongated cesspool' with sewage flowing into it from the Colleges along the Backs. The stench could be terrible, especially on warm summer afternoons and something had to be done. For the next 30 years the Council talked about it but in 1895 a new sewage pumping station was constructed at Cheddar's Lane. Here all kinds of household refuse were burnt to produce steam which was used to pump the sewage to a farm at Milton Road. This had an immediate impact on the health of Cambridge and because of bad workmanship was said also to have improved the climate. Due to a lack of care when laid the pipes were laid they cracked & water was drawn in from the surrounding soil. It transformed Cambridge from a damp place to dry & healthy one. The problem was that the extra water overloaded the system. It still did not prevent sewage overflowing into the river during heavy storms & in the 1960s local residents took up their carpets & piled furniture upstairs when they went holiday. A new Riverside pumping station was opened in 1968 and major new works put in place to cope with even more demand. The old works now house the Cambridge Museum of Technology.

Gas

Gas arrived in Cambridge in the 1820s a gasworks built beside the river where it could easily be supplied by barge. In 1867 railway sidings were constructed in Coldham's Lane but ammonia produced at the plant continued to be sent by barge to King's Lynn until 1933

The works were not an unmitigated benefit to the area; in January 1870 a large gasholder was blown down in a gale and the gas caught fire. By 1876 there were protests of 'noxious vapours destroying vegetation in the neighbourhood' to which the Gas Company replied that "If it is imagined that the production of Gas can be conducted to yield nothing but pleasant odours, then the complainants are very much mistaken". The complaints would not go away: in June 1951 residents complained of dust from the works. One produced a sugar bag half filled with dust collected in his house in one week. Another said she could not put her children in a pram in the garden because of it. To this a Gas Board official said the works were one of the cleanest in the country. In 1968 North Sea gas arrived and next year the works ceased production after 140 years.

Chesterton

Old Chesterton was once a quaint little village on the edge of Cambridge but it expanded after the inclosure acts opened up the fields to building. It has not always been a peaceful place:

In 1579 the village lads challenged a number of university students to a friendly football match near the church. Just to reassure their opponents that things would stay friendly they arranged for the chief constable of Chesterton, Thomas Parish, to be there. However they also armed themselves with wooden staves which they hid in the church porch. The game started well enough but then somebody started a quarrel. Out came the staves and they walloped into the students, breaking their heads and sending them running through the river in an attempt to get away. When the students turned to the constable and urged him to do his duty and keep the peace he turned to the townsmen and told them to keep up the good work.

Two ferries crossed the river opposite the Green Dragon in Water Street. One was a heavily built craft that could carry horses and cattle across to Stourbridge Common, alongside it a light passenger ferry. In 1909 it charged ½d. for children, 1d. for adults, 4d. for a cart with two wheels and 6d. for a trolley with four wheels. When the river was lowered in October 1920 to allow repairs at Baitsbite lock the two had been placed across the river with planks crossing the gap between them but this was only a temporary expedient. By 1925 it was in a poor condition: "Coun Porter said councillors might not realise what an old crock the ferry over the Cam at Chesterton was. When one went over in rough weather the water had to be bailed out and the sides of the ferry shook. At the time of the fair the ferryman would not risk taking over a crowd of people because it was so dangerous. Children were taking a very great risk in using the ferry and the council taking the greatest risk of all in not taking steps to prevent somebody being drowned. The ferry was obsolete, it should be condemned at once and done away with", the News reported that September. For the next ten years the Council debated until a new bridge finally opened in 1936. The smaller ferry was repositioned near Banham's boatyard and was used by the engineers constructing Elizabeth Bridge

There was another ferry near the Pike and Eel – now called the Penny Ferry

Two Tees Boatyard

At Chesterton the towpath changes sides at a spot called Morley's Holt

Stourbridge Common

The open common was for centuries home to one of the greatest trading fairs in Europe. In the 1700s traders made their way from Venice and Genoa with silks and velvets, Flemish weavers with their linen, Spaniards with their iron, Norwegians with tar and pitch, wines from France, Spain and – sometimes – Greece. All arrived in early September at King's Lynn and journeyed down the Ouse and Cam, whilst from all over England tradesmen with their packhorses and wagons were negotiating the atrocious roads. From Halifax, Leeds and Rochdale came cloth, Birmingham sent iron and brass, Sheffield cutlery, Nottingham and Leicester glass and stockings, Lancashire wool, hops from Surrey and Kent. The fair was laid out in lines with specific commodities in particular areas – a coal fair by the river, leather near the fish hill, a brush row, a cheese row and a cheap side. The main line leading from Newmarket Road to the river was called Garlic Row. There were beer-vendors, food-suppliers and everything necessary to cater for the thousands of people who descended on Cambridge from all around the country. Such was the crush that even London wherrymen brought their boats overland to Cambridge to take people down to the fair. But over the years the trading element of the fair declined leaving just amusements. By 1930 there was only one traction engine and swing boats, by 1931 even they were absent and in 1933 the Mayor was virtually alone when he declared the ghost of the fair open.

There may be other ghosts too: in 1802 people packed into a wooden theatre build as part of the fair when somebody yelled 'Fire' and somebody else turned out the lights. People panicked, some jumped down from the gallery, others tried to scramble over the spiked fence that separated them from the stage, more were trampled in the rush to escape. Several lost

their lives and numerous injured were taken to nearby houses where they sat huddled in blankets awaiting treatment. Suspicion rested on some London pickpockets who took advantage of the confusion to steal purses and other belongings.

Railway bridge

The importance of the River Cam as a commercial route declined after the railway came to Cambridge in 1845. It was carried across the river and onwards to Ely by a trestle bridge whose arches were an obstacle to river users. It was superseded by a low girder bridge in 1870 until April 1930 when crowds descended to witness its replacement by a much larger and stronger bridge. The operation was a spectacular one, commencing at midnight engineers worked in the light of white acetylene flames to cut the steelwork in the centre of the old bridge and remove the track at either end. It was then raised on hydraulic jacks before being removed. Then the new bridge, which had already been erected alongside, was carefully moved into place, the lines reconnected and all was ready for trains to run again.

In the 1930s planners were considering a new ring-road around Cambridge linking Milton and Newmarket Roads which would have crossed the river by a new bridge in this area. The approach ramps were constructed before they changed their minds. But such proposals never go away and other crossings continue to be debated.

Pill Box

Fen Ditton

Fen Ditton church has seen many services since its construction in the 13th-century. But none can have been so bizarre as that of 6th May 1849. Edward Smith, the local fiddler, gardener and sexton had made some libellous remarks about the Rector's wife; she took him to the Ecclesiastical Court who ordered him to apologise in church. Thousands of people made their way to the village to witness this unique event; the pews were packed, people clung to the pillars and even sat on the altar table. Those who could not get in through the doors climbed on to the roof and smashed their way in through the windows. When the service started the rector was constantly interrupted and it was felt better to dispense with the hymns altogether. The arrival of the penitent was greeted with cheers and cat-calls; as he tried to make himself heard hassocks were thrown, the pews smashed and people seized the bell-ropes causing such a violent jangling that it completely drowned the rest of the din. He was then carried out on the shoulders of his friends to the Plough Inn where celebrations continued for the rest of the afternoon.

FEN DITTON Hall. c.1635 possibly built for Thomas Willys incorporating the main range of an early C15 building with upper hall. Barn late C15 or early C16. may have been a merchants' trading hall and warehouse and was originally unheated.

Another barn achieved notoriety in 1930 after it was converted into a dance hall. A policeman told how he looked through the window and observed people inside. Some of the women attending were known to be of an undesirable character and the men mostly members of the University. The girls were dancing by themselves down the centre of the room holding up their dresses; another girl got on top of the piano and danced. Later the University Proctor told how he went to the dance room which was in darkness and by the light of his lamp could see four undergraduates and seven girls. They said they were telling ghost stories.

FEN DITTON GREEN END (West Side) 18/6 No. 7 (Riverside Cottage) II Cottage. Early C14 with C16, C18 and c.1920 additions and alterations. Timber-framed and plastered, painted brick. Long straw thatch and plain tile roofs. Local brick ridge stack. One storey and

attic. Aisled hall of two bays has further two bays to east and demolished bay or cross-wing to south; the arcade plates and unjowled posts survive with evidence of passing braces and one truncated brace in north-west post. Late C16 inserted floors and stack. Single storey extension to west, late C18 or early C19, replaces one bay or cross-wing to the aisled hall. (The brace to north-west post suggests a continuation of the arcade as an internal wall to an enclosed part of the aisle or cross-wing). North elevation; tall gabled facade dormer window with horizontal sliding sashes, two ground floor casement windows and boarded door. Interior details include two inglenook hearths with chamfered mantel beams, and cased and exposed main timbers of aisled hall. Chamfered floor joists to hall.

Plough

The grounds of the Plough are a favourite spot from which to witness the Bumps. The Bumping Races attracted large crowds who walked, cycled or boated down to Fen Ditton to get the best view of the action. It was a major social rather than just sporting event and artists and photographers recorded the fashions. Once racing was done the river was jammed with craft of all types making their way back to Cambridge; excursion boats, rowing boats, canoes each full of excited people.

Poplar Hall Farm which dates from the 1600s. Timber-framed with rendered margins to rough cast panels. Plain tile roof with some C17 crested ridge tiles. Two large red brick ridge stacks with round headed recessed panels. Two storeys and attics. Hall and cross-wing plan with central facade gable. C17 moulded barge boards. Three, three-light attic casement windows. Three, larger first floor casement windows. One ground floor three-light hung sash window to left hand of C18 six-panelled door with moulded wooden architrave and bracketed hood with soffit panels. Two casement windows to right hand. Interior stop-chamfered ceiling beams, C17 closed string oak staircase with splat balusters, and C17 plank doors. R.C.H.M.: East Cambs p. 59, mon. 6.

Motorway Bridge

Motorway Bridge – constructed 1975-76 to carry by-pass; has become a place for crews to paint graffiti on

Biggin Abbey

On the left is Biggin Abbey; this was built as a residence for the Bishop of Ely in the 1200s and was used to entertain royalty including King Henry III, Edward I and II. The present building dates back to the 1300s. A small attic room known as the 'Monks Prison' may have been used as a chapel and was described by Wm Cole.

Baitbite Lock

Baitsbite Lock is a forerunner of the increasingly large structures needed to ensure that boats can continue to reach Cambridge. Before the drainage of the fens in the 1600s the River Cam was tidal but after the construction of Denver Sluice the depth of water in the rivers decreased; they could no longer carry the weight of cargo as previously. So they needed more barges, adding to the costs.

By 1700 things were so bad that Cambridge, University and County combined to establish a body called the Conservators of the River Cam who were charged with maintaining the navigation from Clayhithe to Cambridge. They constructed four locks of which two survive, the one at Jesus Green and the other at Baitsbite. This was rebuilt in 1832 and tolls were

charged for the boats that passed through. These were finally abolished when the local was automated in 1989 and the cottages that previously were home to the lock-keepers are now let out. Beyond Baitsbite the Cam continues on its journey towards Horningsey, Clayhithe, Upware and Ely

Bumping Races

Racing side by side was not possible on the narrow River Cam so boats chased each other and attempted to "bump" the one in front.

The first race was rowed in 1827. Iron rings or bungs - are set out at regular intervals of 150 feet along the bank and to which the boats are attached. A starting cannon is fired four minutes before the start, another one minute before - when the boats are to be ready in the stream with the cox holding the bung. The third bang starts the race. After a bump is made the boats pull to the bank out of the way of following crews - allowing the one immediately behind to set off after the one originally three ahead. They swap position for the next race. If boats get to the finishing point without catching or being caught they have 'rowed over' and keep position for the next race

There are 11 races in Lent term and another seven in May, each raced over four days

The last boat in each division starts from just above this lock

Little Bridge - on outside of first bend (Chesterton Bank) - carries the tow path over a culvert draining the fields; traditionally used as the start of a 'grind' - a long set piece training row

Motorway Bridge - constructed 1975-76 to carry by-pass; has become a place for crews to paint graffiti on

First Post reach - stretch of water between Little Bridge and First Post Corner - first 11-12 starting positions in this reach

Gun Shed - 20 yards above Road Bridge - next to place where guns traditionally fired; now guns often moved under the bridge which keeps them dry

The Ditch - small ditch leading into the Ditton Bank just before First Post Corner

First Post Corner - immediately above the starting position for first boats in each division. Originally the first starting post was here - it was moved back when the length of the course was shortened by the building of the first railway bridge - too narrow to allow boats to row through. This was site of fatal accident in 1888 when Clare were rammed by Trinity Hall 3 and the bows impaled an oarsman through the heart

The Gut - the narrowest part of the river above First Post Corner - two boats barely able to pass each other and this the scene of some of the worst pile-ups

Conservatory - owners often hand out drinks to any crews successfully bumping at this point

Grassy Corner - more difficult to get round and has hazard of barges and house boats moored round the inside. In most years at least one crew hits one, or the Chesterton bank. One of the best areas for spectators - many bumps here

Plough Reach – stretch between Grassy Corner and Ditton Corner

Pitt Club lawn – was part of a meadow hired by the Pitt Club and run as enclosure; more recently the club has held an enclosure by The Railings and taken to throwing strawberries at the crew

Plough – pub

Red Grind ferry – scene of drowning; But in 1905 came tragedy. At the end of the races those people who had watched from the grounds of the Plough Inn boarded the Red Grind ferry to the opposite bank and the towpath that would lead them back to Cambridge. Two journeys were completed safely but as the chain ferry made its third, packed with some twenty people, two undergraduates leapt on at the last moment. The ferry gave a lurch and turned turtle, pitching the screaming passengers into six feet of water. Onlookers were quick to appreciate the danger, some plunged into the river to help rescue those floundering, others flung chairs which they hoped would act as rafts and all but three women were saved. One was to have been married within a day or so, her fiancé watched her corpse carried lifeless from the water. Crowds packed Mill Road to see her body taken for burial to the church in which she was to have been married.

Morley's Cottage – one of the thatched cottages, belonged to a Mr Morley which had prolific garden with beans and cabbages. He gave his name to Morley's Holt where horses were transferred across the river because the towpath changes side at Chesterton

Ditton corner – above the Plough, fields called Ditton Paddocks

Black Cottage – used as landmark, opposite The Stump

The Stump – stump of a large tree on Ditton Bank beside ditch

The Railings – half-way up Long reach – remnants of an iron fence which went round the field

Long Reach extends from Ditton Corner to the Railway Bridge – the longest straight section of the river - along it are the Pink and White and Black Houses

Pink & White Houses just before railway bridge

Railway Bridge – the original wooden bridge was too narrow to allow boat to row through so start of the races moved; when bridge replaced the original finish could be reused

Roy Meldrum Memorial Shelter – Latin inscription - coach of the Lady Margaret and Boat Race Crews, opened in Feb 1957 used by Senior Umpire to brief juniors before a race; gives shelter for coaches from snow and rain A new shelter has appeared on the towpath near the Pike and Eel.

Peter's Posts – line concrete posts to prevent motorists getting onto towpath

Pike and Eel – now Penny Ferry

Stourbridge Common

Top Finish for men's race is marked by concrete post embedded into Common

Chesterton Footbridge – replaced the horse ferry

Green Dragon

Jesus college boathouse built in 1883 but destroyed by fire in 1932, the weathervane and clock tower were transferred to the new building opened in 1933; clock tower has numbers in the bottom half of the face upside down

Goldie Boathouse – oldest remaining – built 1882 and named after J.H.D. Goldie who stroked the University crew four times. Interior refurbished in 1995 and no longer used as a boathouse

The original First Trinity Boathouse was the first privately-owned boathouse on the river in 1896; new building opened 1935 is structurally almost identical

Lady Margaret boathouse opened in early 1900s; commandeered during war and rumoured to be used as ammunition dump

Christ's boathouse beyond Victorian Bridge, first erected 1887

Our Time 2005 08

Sidney Street by Mike Petty

Central Cambridge seems always to be being knocked down and rebuilt; we lament the loss of the 'Old Petty Cury' and its replacement with the Lion Yard shops, now St Andrew's Street is the scene of more change as work continues on the 'Grand Arcade'.

But at least Sidney Street is as we remember it. Or is it?

In the 1860s Arthur Nicholls stood his camera in the street to record a view that seems to have changed little over the centuries. But that of course is an illusion; behind the frontages there has been massive change hidden from the street; with a new Sainsbury's supermarket and a modern accommodation block for Trinity College students. These have replaced Wray's Court, an enclosed yard containing old houses with no back doors, no water, no light except gas, a basement full of cobwebs like upside down umbrellas and just two toilets for all the residents. It is remembered by some as a frightening, dark, dingy, eerie place inhabited by witches but for others it provided a welcome home in the heart of Cambridge during the immediate post-war days. [SCAN 102.45 – ARTHUR NICHOLLS' PHOTO OF SIDNEY STREET C1860 – FIND MODERN EQUIVALENT]

Across the road Sidney Sussex college still stands as it has for centuries since it took over the site of a friary swept away by the Reformation. Like other colleges it is protected behind its high walls; but these walls were breached in the 1830s, not by rioters but by the roots of a row of poplar trees which caused the wall to lean out to such an extent that people were afraid to walk past. The trees were cut down when the present entrance was constructed about 1835. [SCAN 2009 SIDNEY SUSSEX COLLEGE SHOWING THE TREES]

Holy Trinity Church on the corner of Market Street dates back to the 12th-century but owes much of its present appearance to works commissioned by Charles Simeon who was appointed vicar in 1782. At first he was unwelcome to the parishioners who stayed away and locked the doors of their pews, so that anybody who did come had to stand in the aisles. But Simeon was not to be beaten; he started a Sunday evening lecture and attracted a good congregation but the churchwardens locked the church doors and carried off the keys leaving everybody standing out in the street. So he hired a room and carried on his preaching there.

He was a great evangelist and people came round to him. Soon the church was so packed that he built a gallery to hold them and then pulled down the old chancel and replaced it with this new extension built of brick and plaster which he designed himself. [SCAN 7124 HOLY TRINITY CHURCH AND MARKET STREET 1814]

But there was another problem facing the church in the 1830s. Its churchyard was a valuable open space in the cramped town centre and women hung their washing out there, the sheets flapping over the gravestones. Veterinary surgeons conducted examinations right outside the church forcing the Minister to suspend funeral services since his words were drowned by the noise of the animals. Owners of houses which opened on to the back of the churchyard claimed a right of way through to the road, one man built a shed to garage his chaise whilst other people rode their horses through the graveyard, damaging the footpath. The Churchwardens stopped up the cartway leaving just a footpath on the south side – now used by shoppers crossing from one Marks and Spencer store to the other

A major change in Sidney Street came with the building of Foster's Bank at the junction with Hobson Street in 1894. It was founded by Ebenezer Foster, a miller who started his banking by simply issuing receipts to farmers who would exchange them amongst themselves instead of cash, trusting the Foster name as a guarantee that the bill would be honoured. The bank began trading in Bridge Street but in 1836 moved to the Turks Head Coffee House in Trinity Street where security was provided by three junior staff who were obliged to sleep in the bank, one in front of the strong room with his sword by his side. The bank prospered and the business passed down to his sons. By 1890 the premises were too small and the decision was taken to move. The London architect Waterhouse was employed to design the new buildings and authorised to spare no expense. The construction was undertaken by William Sindall. It was to have a clock tower 100 feet high that would dominate the town centre from its position opposite the entrance to Petty Cury. In November 1893 the new bank opened with a flourish and although in 1903 it amalgamated with Capital and Counties Bank and in 1919 was absorbed into Lloyds the Foster name is still carved into the stonework. In 1935 a considerable extension was built on the corner site. [SCAN 86.207 FOSTER'S BANK EXTENSION BEING CONSTRUCTED; SCAN 86.204 DEMOLITION IN PROGRESS IN SIDNEY STREET 1934]

Next to the bank in 1898 was the organ-builders and musical warehouse of Miller and Son, beside them the Cambridge Steam Power Soda Water Works, Blott's milliners and draper's shop and the coachbuilders premises of Messrs Hunnybun. This block of property came under the auctioneer's hammer in January 1903 in a major sale. There was a large attendance and the bidding was spirited; Blott's shop was sold for £3,600 but Hunnybun's carriage showroom and harness-maker's shop were withdrawn only to be sold later at a considerably enhanced price.

Cambridge was then a town whose shops existed to serve the University and many closed down when the students left for their long holidays. But by the 1920s the introduction of motor bus services had greatly enhanced its role as a county shopping centre. The council was keen to widen the streets and provide easier access for traffic. They introduced policies to encourage people to demolish old buildings and erect replacements further back to provide a 'thoroughfare of handsome dimension from what was once a narrow cobbled lane in which carts could be left unattended by horse or man'.

In 1929 Messrs Boots the Chemist announced the time was ripe for a major redevelopment to create 'an emporium to provide an attractive shopping centre for patrons of all classes'. The external appearance would harmonise with Cambridge's noble architectural traditions and raise the standard of commercial architecture, they promised. Amongst the premises demolished for the fine new shop was Caxton Court and a range of quaint old buildings, now

long forgotten. [SCAN 1523 – 1880 VIEW SHOWING THE OLD BUILDINGS
DEMOLISHED FOR BOOTS AND THE FOSTERS BANK]

Similar change was taking place across the street: “There never was a time surely when there were so many works of destruction going on as at present. Little bits of old Cambridge are going one by one and elaborate new buildings are rising up in their place. No wonder that those who come back to the town after a few years’ absence express amazement at the changes they see. When we think of the great business changes effected in the heart of the town we may well gasp”, the Cambridge Daily News commented in March 1930

The east side of Sidney Street was knocked down and rebuilt. A number of old-established enterprises such as Thompson’s gentleman’s outfitters, Eaden Spearing and Raynes solicitors, the Leeds and Leicester Boot Company and the Lord Nelson, True Blue inn disappeared. In their place came major new stores for Sainsbury’s and Woolworths to be joined by Marks and Spencer and Heffer’s stationary shop and art gallery. [SCAN 10268 – VIEW FROM HOLY TRINITY CHURCH 1905 SHOWING BUILDINGS ON EAST SIDE; SCAN 8899 THE REPLACEMENT BUILDINGS C1944] [SCAN 10235 YARD OF THE TRUE BLUE INN c1930]

But it was not just shops: a new Dorothy Café-restaurant and dancehall was launched which was to remain the entertainment centre of Cambridge for over 30 years. It included the Oak room on the ground floor where luncheons were served, the Venetian room for coffee and teas and a ballroom with one of the finest Maple sprung floors in East Anglia. It had a resident band and became very popular for its tea dances. Upstairs were small rooms for private parties and weddings and many local organisations held their annual dinners and balls at ‘The Dot’. [SCAN 5518 ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE DOROTHY 1965]

Changes continued into the 1950s; Coad’s haberdashery was absorbed into Woolworths and with planners still seeking to widen the street Boot’s frontage was set back. Millers Music transformed their shop with a new window giving a glimpse down into the basement before moving to Sussex Street. Here reconstruction had seen first one and then the other side demolished and rebuilt for an imposing block of shops and offices connected to Hobson Street by an artistically-designed crescent and colonnade of twelve shops. [SCAN 7473 COAD’S SHOP 1950]

Whilst much of the physical rebuilding was now completed the actual traders have changed tremendously since Erica Dimock surveyed Sidney Street in 1963 for her ‘Down Your Street’ column in the Cambridge Daily News. Amongst those who have been consigned to history are Bodgers bespoke tailors, Thrussell’s who specialised in high-class ready-made shoes and Gallyon’s the gunsmith which closed in 1982 after 198 years. More recently has come the closure of Joshua Taylor whose store on the corner with Market Street had been a Cambridge institution since 1860. [SCAN 100.78 JOSHUA TAYLOR’S SHOP CORNER MARKET STREET 1930S]

Yet new shops open and with pedestrianisation finally replacing the bustle of buses and cars Sidney Street remains one of the city’s principal trading areas. [SCAN 7925 SHOPPERS OUTSIDE THE OLD SAINSBURY’S, 1961 SCAN 6880 SIDNEY STREET LOOKING TO PETTY CURY 1964]

Do you have memories of Sidney Street; share them other Our Time readers.

SCAN 7414 LOOKING TO CORNER OF SUSSEX STREET BEFORE 1900

Our Time 2005 08

River Cam Baits Bite to the Old West, by Mike Petty

Once beyond Baits Bite lock the Cam continues its journey towards Ely. On the left is Milton, an ancient village now greatly expanded with new houses but containing some architectural gems including the building once home to William Cole, a famous antiquarian who travelled extensively, filling notebooks with details of what he saw. [SCAN 9526 – PICTURESQUE MILTON c1905]

In October 1779 he visited Horningsea church which he found: “a very large building and in a deplorable nasty and shattered condition and except the parish lays out an 100 or 2 pounds in repairing it, will soon fall down” Fortunately the building still survives. Horningsea was the site of a major Roman pottery industry evidence of which is still regularly unearthed by rabbits who tunnel into the soil of the churchyard. [SCAN 9523 – HORNINGSEA FROM THE RIVER c1905]

River trade became important during the Middle Ages with wharves along the banks being linked by Dock Lane to the village high street. Men and women made a living by peeling willows to make baskets and eel-traps but life was not always peaceable. In July 1819 the women who worked for Mr Wheeler had ‘their annual frolic’ and soon not one lady of the party was sober. They began to fight amongst themselves, pulling off caps, and pulling hair until a pitched battle ensued. Samuel Beales’ wife was one of those involved in the melee and he decided it was time for her to come home, but Alice Green set about him for breaking up the fun. He did not retaliate, but his wife did, taking advantage of her husband’s intervention to black her adversary’s eye. [SCAN DOCK LANE – COTTAGE IN DOCK LANE]

The opening of a major industry in the form of coprolite works transformed the community and brought dozens of additional workers in each morning. Many came from Waterbeach, which meant they had to cross the Cam. Tragedy struck in March 1872; the small ferry boat was packed with eight men when another man jumped on board causing it to capsize, throwing everybody into the water. James Beasley, who worked for the Conservators of the River Cam launched his boat to rescue them. He pulled out two, but one of them had been in the water for ten minutes by then. He took the man to the stable where the doctor rubbed his chest with salt and brandy, but to no avail and the 38-year-old worker was pronounced dead.

This added to pressure for a proper bridge. There had been various incidents when threshing machines or loaded farm carts got stuck while being ferried across. An Act of Parliament was obtained for a new bridge which opened at Clayhithe in September 1875, charging a toll on all who crossed. The tolls continued until 1938 when the County Council bought the bridge, erecting a new one the following year.

The Clayhithe Bridge Company also invested in the adjoining public house which had been known for 100 years as the Pike and Eel. It was renamed ‘The House of Lords’ and then became the ‘Bridge Inn’. They improved the grounds making it one of the prettiest places in the county. A new dancing saloon was created and the field alongside made suitable for enjoyment. By 1876 Alfred Mason was choosing it as a suitable venue to give his 50 labourers a celebration feast on the occasion of his marriage. By 1912 it sported a small zoo though this ended in 1916 when the bear was roasted on a spit and sold in sandwiches in aid of soldiers’ comforts. It became a free house in 1918 since when it has enjoyed mixed fortune until now it is again a most popular riverside rendezvous. [SCAN 86.313 – THE BRIDGE HOTEL CLAYHITHE c1920]

The house across the river was erected by the Conservators of the River Cam in 1842 and included a large room inn which they held banquets. They built a sluice together with a toll-keepers house and stables for six horses. In 1922 their responsibility was formally extended to Bottisham Lock. [SCAN 105.35 – CONSERVATOR’S HOUSE 1890S]

Nearby a small tributary ran into Waterbeach down which barges were towed to the Star Inn where the horses were stabled and men slept in the hayloft before continuing their journey. It declined with the arrival of the railway in August 1845; the first train from London was pulled by the engine ‘Wildfire’ and carried 200 gentleman and the band of the Coldstream Guards who rode in a third-class carriage.

The famous preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon was appointed minister of Waterbeach Baptist Chapel in 1851, when only 17 years old. He had been baptised in the River Lark at Isleham and soon others were flocking to be baptised in the Cam. In September 1886, Mr G. Williams, baptised five women and one youth in the river near Bottisham sluice. “The greatest decorum was manifested on the occasion, and many hundreds on the river banks were witnesses”, the Cambridge Chronicle reported. Such events became common. [SCAN 10278 BAPTISM IN THE CAM AT WATERBEACH]

Sadly not everybody who entered the water came out alive. In July 1860 a 70-year-old Outwell lighterman, Henry Jefferson brought his boats up the Cam with a load of deals and slate. While opening the lock gates at Bottisham Henry staggered and collapsed. By chance Mr Patterson, a surgeon from Waterbeach, was close by but the man never recovered.

The locks were born at a period of unrest in the 1650s. By then the civil war between Cavaliers and Roundheads was over and by then too the major drainage works such as the New Bedford River and Denver Sluice were completed. But the drainers were still at work on the fens around Swaffham Bulbeck, Reach, Burwell and Wicken. The rivers that link these villages with the Cam are called lodes and were probably constructed or improved by the Romans. But residents resisted the new improvements. The sluice at Bottisham was damaged and other works thrown down by protestors. Things got so desperate that mounted troops galloped into the area to disperse mutinous persons and soldiers sent to stand guard at night. But they were overpowered by an armed mob and made to help destroy the new banks. The works were finally completed, but at great cost. [SCAN 100.07 BOTTISHAM LOCK 1879]

Barges plied along the lodes carrying fenland reeds and rushes or stone from pits at Reach and Burwell and bringing in a variety of goods to offload at warehouses in the Commercial End of Swaffham Bulbeck. [SCAN 8737 – A BARGE ON BURWELL LODE]

Small chapels were built to serve the isolated communities in these lonely fens. One was demolished after the floor gave way during a service but another survives and is still used once a year for a harvest festival. They drew their congregation from homes on both sides of the river, some of whom crossed on ferries or a floating bridge that also conveyed tradesmen’s horses and carts. [SCAN 86.1461 THE SWAFFHAM FEN CHAPEL]

The ferries were operated by the landlords of riverside pubs such as the Green Man, Jolly Waterman and the most famous of all the Five Miles from Anywhere, No Hurry, at Upware. [SCAN 9644 THE JOLLY WATERMAN 1879]

Upware has gone down in the folklore as the home of a Republic and a King. The Republic was established by undergraduates at the No Hurry in the 1850s to which they rowed for an escape from the rigours of University learning in shooting, fishing and drinking. The landlord John Appleby and his wife built up a reputation for their meals of eels – fried, stewed, boiled or poached – followed by roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, duck, green peas and potatoes

followed down with currant and raspberry tart. They were also famed for their egg-flip.
[SCAN 105.36 – THE FERRY ACROSS TO THE NO HURRY]

But this was not the only pub; alongside the lode stood the Anchor Inn, much frequented by bargees. The proprietor at one time was Mark Parr whose forceful adjectives and his tendency to enjoy the ale that he sold testified to his own fenland background. His second wife was very thrifty which she proved by wearing the voluminous garments that had belonged to his first who had died some fifteen years previously.

Into this potent environment arrived Richard Ramsay Fielder, an MA of Jesus College who proclaimed himself ‘King of Upware’ and fought anybody who disputed that title. He lodged at the No Hurry, a great muscular fellow in a red waistcoat and corduroy breeches who carried with him a brown jug containing six gallons of punch which he would share with the friends who flocked to his rural retreat. [SCAN 103.29 – THE ANCHOR, UPWARE]

King and Republic, the Anchor and the old No Hurry have all now gone, though a modern riverside pub continues the old name and boatmen still stop for refreshment. But Upware remains a unique place where you stand on the ground and look up to boats floating on the water of the Lode high above you. A short stroll along the bank brings you to a wooden ‘Cock-up’ bridge, its steep approach containing slats to enable the horses to grip as they towed the barges up to Burwell. To the left is Wicken Fen, a haven for butterflies, bugs and beetles which naturalists plan to extend south towards Quy and Cambridge, surrendering back to nature the rich black fertile soil that was brought into cultivation during the ‘Dig for Victory’ campaigns of the Second World War. It was then that the concrete roads that run straight as arrows were constructed through to Reach and Swaffham Prior, past houses that are themselves subsiding back into the soil on which they were built.

In the meantime the water from the fen needs to be gathered up into great ditches and pumped up into the Cam. Upware has been home to windpumps, steam engines, diesel and now electric pumps. The remains of some of the buildings which housed the engines still stand, testimony to the constant work needed to keep the land free from flood. But such technology can fail, as in February 1897 when the steam engine broke down; it took five weeks to repair by which time the area was under water. In 1937 the battle to fight the floods returned.
[SCAN 5631 STEAM PUMPING STATION UPWARE c1890]

The story of the landscape is explained to children at the Upware Field Study Centre, housed in the old village school. From here one can follow a footpath to the Commissioners’ Pit, a deep tree-filled hole from which clay was extracted to maintain the river bank and in which you can see remains of a coral reef, demonstrating just how great the climate change has been over the centuries.

This stretch of the river has been a favourite spot as a correspondent to the Cambridge Daily News recalled in August 1898: “Two miles from the Five Miles from Anywhere there is a place called “Dimock’s Cote” to which spot one of Messrs Bolton Bros. large furniture vans proceeded on Saturday last. Arriving without accidents a very busy time was experienced in rigging up accommodation for living and stores. It is very advisable for anyone intending to camp by the river side to take a large filter, and even then to drink as little water as possible. Fishing was very poor. The bullocks which are grazed on the washes were attracted by the unusual lights and gave some little trouble, but owing to a good watch dog, due notice of their visits was early given, so we were always ready for the enemy”

Ahead the river is spanned by a great half-moon concrete bridge which carries the A1123 Stretham to Wicken road. It was a gravel track until 1914 when, fearing invasion, the army constructed a Military Road to allow transport of men and materials towards the East Coast. However there was a dispute over who should pay for the erection of the bridges over the Old

West and the Cam so they not built until 1928. The bridge was strengthened in 1994. [SCAN 196 – TRAFFIC POURS OVER THE BRIDGE AFTER ITS OPENING]

Beyond the bridge the river continues between the high banks towards another riverside pub, the Fish and Duck far from any village, which was described in 1852 as a newly-built house with seven rooms and stabling for 12 horses. A new road down to the pub was constructed in 1968 and it was extended and modernised in 1968 with a marina providing mooring for pleasure craft. [SCAN 89.200 – THE FISH AND DUCK IN JUNE 1965]

Ahead in the distance stands Ely Cathedral, tempting us onward. But to the left lies another stream, the Old West which is surely worth a diversion to explore.

The exploration continues in next month's Our Time

Our Time, September 2005
Trinity Street, by Mike Petty –

When I first started work in Cambridge in 1964 I knew even less of the city than I do today.

One bit I did get to explore was Trinity Street with its bookshops and the Turks Head. But when looking back to what Erica Dimock found when she compiled her 'Down Your Street' article in September that year there were many shops I never visited, many of which have now disappeared.

In those days you could drive down Trinity Street which had been made one-way in 1948. What's more you could park beside the road while you shopped or toured the colleges. Parking meters had recently been introduced, causing concern to some shopkeepers who feared it would have a detrimental effect on their trade. But others said it was only the locals who would be inconvenienced and they seldom shopped there anyway: the tourists and university people would continue to come.

The importance of the University clientele was reflected in the shops. There were numerous tailors including Arthur Shepherd whose premises had one been home to John Bowtell the bookbinder and antiquarian. [SCAN 1 – SHEPHERD'S TAILORS, 1930S] A.A. Roper had arrived in 1919 though their shop had been almost entirely reconstructed by Trinity College for their Angel Court built in 1957-8 whilst W & G Taylor men's outfitters had started in 1909.. They specialised in academic robes which still a requirement for undergraduates in those days. I remember being stopped one night by a Proctor who asked politely why I was not wearing a gown after dusk, only to gather from my fen accent that I was not University material. Taylor's were to close in 1989 after blaming a three-fold increase in rent. [SCAN 2 – LOOKING SOUTH FROM TRINITY COLLEGE, 1890s SHOWING SHOPS BEFORE DEVELOPMENT OF ANGEL COURT]

But change was an issue in 1964, especially the increasing numbers of banks. With the arrival of William Deacons', which had moved into premises formerly occupied by Pratt, Manning and Company bespoke tailors, there were now four, the others being Lloyds, the District and the National Provincial. Another, Lombard's, was to follow in 1968.

Across the street stands the fine timber-framed building that had once been home to Foster's Bank. In the 1960s it was occupied by the Berni Inn's Turks Head which had just been completely redesigned to provide a steak bar and a chicken, ham and fish restaurant together with stable and cellar bars. A visit here became a regular treat, usually for a schooner of

sherry, apparently straight from the barrel, and a gammon steak with pineapple. [SCAN 4 – TURKS HEAD STABLE BAR 1963]

In the 1920s it had been Matthews Café home to ‘True Blue’ and ‘Beefsteak’ Clubs whose members were mostly titled undergraduates. In 1927 came alterations as reported in the Cambridge Daily News recorded: “The fascinating experience of lunching in Cambridge in the atmosphere of our Elizabethan forefathers is made possible by the opening of new rooms at Messrs Matthew’s Café in Trinity Street. They have acquired the two upper storeys of the building & turned rooms which were formerly part of a lodging house into a charming medieval retreat. The original beams and window frames remain as well as some beautiful old carvings and the rooms have been furnished in the style of the period, pains having been taken to secure faithful reproductions even down to lamps and pewter pots. [SCAN 3 – MATTHEW’S CAFÉ, LATER THE TURKS HEAD]

Another restaurant was The Whim on the corner of Green Street; it boasted a world-wide reputation due to the number of undergraduates who dined there and had recently expanded to cater for lunches and suppers on an upper floor. Its cakes and pastries were well known, as was its sometimes strangely-dressed customers; the owner, Miss E.H. Thornber telling Erica that some regulars had on occasions arrived for breakfast in their dressing gowns!

Undergraduates remain an important part of the street, but they are of a somewhat different breed to those once lodged at 20 Trinity Street, above the present Post Office.

Towards close of Edwardian era young gentlemen reclined in their rooms consuming larks on toast using silver cutlery brought with them at the beginning of term. Their accommodation consisted of a sitting room and bedroom, of which there were nine sets in the building that had been converted from two houses into one boarding establishment. Each had a laden coal scuttle each day and their baths were run at predetermined times. Nine suits of clothes, carefully cleaned & pressed the day before, were placed at ready, anything other than suits being seldom worn. Nine fires were lit & nine breakfasts served in their own room. A typical breakfast include fish, fruit or a mixed grill featuring devilled kidneys. In the kitchen a large wickerwork basket housed each man’s silver cutlery, a large wardrobe contained individual sets of linen brought up at beginning of term while the large cellar contained nine racks for each man’s stock of wine or the occasional maturing pheasant. Lunch was often served in the house though it was cooked in the college kitchen. Turtle soup, fish, snipe and saddle of lamb involved four separate journeys and an average of 18 to 20 such meals left the college kitchens each day. There were no portions: if man ordered chicken he got the whole bird to do with as he liked. When the meal was finished an enormous basket on wheels collected the dirty crockery & returned it to college. Tea was usually served just after four in the afternoon and at right time of year crumpet and muffins, still hot from Matthew’s bakery were consumed in front of blazing fire. [SCAN 5 – TRINITY UNDERGRADUATES DINED OF THE BEST THE COLLEGE COULD PROVIDE]

When I started to develop the City Library’s Cambridgeshire Collection I would make a habit of visiting Trinity Street bookshops looking for additional items, often visiting Deighton Bell who specialised in antiquarian volumes. Heffers were still in Petty Cury until 1970 and for more recent Cambridge books I visited Bowes and Bowes on the corner of St Mary’s Street who claimed to be the oldest bookshop in Britain, tracing their history back to 1571. It is now home to the Cambridge University Bookshop and during renovations much of the ancient fabric of the building that had previously been hidden was revealed. [SCAN 6 – BOWES AND BOWES BOOKSHOP ON THE CORNER OF TRINITY STREET SEEN ABOVE CROWDS OF UNDERGRADUATES AWAITING THE RESULT OF A VOTE TO ADMIT WOMEN TO THE UNIVERSITY, 1897]

Frank Reeve was the manager at Bowes, an enthusiastic local historian who I was privileged to assist as he compiled various books. His 'Victorian and Edwardian Cambridge from Old Photographs' was published by Batsford in 1971 and included my name amongst the acknowledgements alongside luminaries such as Enid Porter of the Folk Museum, Arthur Halcrow of Trinity College and County Archivist Michael Farrar. It was the first of the numerous volumes of pictures that have been published ever since and included the classic views by Arthur Nichols of All Saints Church opposite Trinity College which was demolished in 1865 [SCAN 7 – ALL SAINT'S CHURCH BEFORE 1865]

But my favourite book of Frank's is the one entitled just 'Cambridge' that came out five years later and summarised the history of the town and university from earliest times up to 1975. He built up an extensive private collection of local information building on indexes and scrapbooks started by his father. These surround me as I work today, indeed Erica's article is filed away in one of his albums.

The future of St Michael's Church was causing concern back in 1964; it had fallen into disrepair and was little used. Plans had been drawn up to convert it into a parish hall and youth club with a small adjoining chapel. Now it has been remodelled and incorporates the Michaelhouse café, recalling how in the 1320s it had been the home to a new college, Michaelhouse, later merged into Trinity College. For years afterwards Trinity used the south aisle as their college chapel, whilst Gonville Hall used the north. The church was badly damaged by fire in November 1849; five fire engines rushed to the scene and buckets passed hand-to-hand to the pump at Trinity College then down to the river for water. It took two hours hard work before the flames were checked. [SCAN 8 – FIRE AT ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH 1849]

Fire is an ever-present hazard in such historic streets. In February 1929 A serious blaze broke out at Caius College where two rooms in Tree Court were completely gutted. Policemen got a hydrant in the courtyard to work and the Fire Brigade was quickly on the scene but the inside of the building was almost a furnace. The fire was quickly got under control though not before considerable damage had been done. The firemen experienced bad conditions owing to the intense cold: the water froze on their clothing and icicles were left hanging from the ledges.

Nearby was the Blue Boar Hotel, once an important coaching inn. Frank Reeve's card index records it was the terminus for the 'Union' and 'Beehive' stagecoaches which were amongst the slowest on the London route, taking at least nine hours on the journey. The entrance to the inn yard was notoriously low and many a passenger who forgot to duck was knocked from the roof of the coach. The yard was covered in 1900 and became the hotel dining room. The hotel itself closed in 1986 and has become more student rooms. [SCAN 9 – LOUNGE OF BLUE BOAR c1900]

In 1964 the major grocery store of Matthews and Son's had just closed. It had been established in 1821 and sold china, glass, candles and oil lamps as well as quality provisions to customers who included Austen Chamberlain. Now they had found it impossible to operate profitably under the existing trading conditions and rather than lower their standards had decided to cease trading. [SCAN 10 MATTHEW'S ADVERTISEMENT CHRISTMAS 1922] [SCAN 11 INSIDE MATTHEW'S SHOP 1950s]

When their tenancy came to an end Trinity College demolished the premises, clearing a great swathe between Trinity Street, Green Street and Whewell's Court for a new Heffer's Bookshop and the Sainsbury Supermarket with its entrance in Sidney Street. They also inserted student accommodation and a theatre before recreating the frontages so skilfully that few people appreciate the transformation that has taken place within the last 40 years.

Trinity Street has so much of interest that it is amazing anybody has time to consider its two colleges, Gonville and Caius and Trinity itself. But their story is told in countless histories and guidebooks – including a number written by Frank Reeve.

OTHER SCANS

12 – LOOKING SOUTH TO GREAT ST MARY’S CHURCH, c1905

13 – GATE OF TRINITY COLLEGE 1814

OTHER PIX FROM CEN FILES

Our Time 2005 09

The Old West, by Mike Petty – Our Time, September 2005

Mike Petty continues his exploration of some of the history of the River Cam

At Pope’s Corner, beside the Fish and Duck, the Cam is joined by a river called the Old West that runs East through open countryside along its entire length. Nowhere is there a village alongside the river and once the Fish and Duck has disappeared there is just one other hostelry along its route.

Two bridges cross in quick succession; the first carries walkers on the Fen Rivers Way long-distance footpath, the second is a railway bridge carrying travellers on the main line from Cambridge to Ely which opened in 1845. But then there is little to see but the banks on either side, coots, moorhens and the occasional swan.

Stretham Mere

The junction of the Cam and the Old West encloses a triangular shaped piece of low-lying ground. Here water accumulated which could not easily get away again forming a large shallow lake called Stretham Mere, which is shown on the earliest county maps of the 1500s. [SCAN 1 – THE OLD WEST FROM SAXTON’S MAP OF 1576]

William Daniels remembered it in 1807 as a vast tract of morass, covered with reeds which properly harvested and stacked would be worth three hundred pounds to the farmer. They were used as thatch on good houses as well as cottages, being much more durable than straw. But in the winter the reed beds were full of starlings whose weight broke the reeds down and caused a hundred pounds of damage in one night. Boys were employed to drive them away, the sound of gunshots regularly being heard.

Not all the shots were aimed at starlings: there were pochards, shovelers, teals, garganics, lapwings and other wildfowl. They provided a living for wildfowlers like William Merry who went out in his punt. Laying flat in the bottom with his legs stretched out behind on each side to steady it and a small stalking stick in each hand he’d propel himself out to where the duck were. He could get nearly up to them before they realised. Then he’d cock his punt gun, wait for the duck to rise and fire. The force of the explosion would push the punt back several yards. Then it would just be a case of collecting the dead duck. Quite how many he’d bring down with one shot it would be hard to say – you always had to take what he claimed with a bit of salt

There was no doubt that as a marksman he was extraordinarily expert. His gun with its six feet long barrel was so heavy that only a powerful man could raise it. With it Merry could kill a snipe flying.

But he made more money by taking gentlemen out with him. Frequently while shooting parties with other guides were being towed in their punts all over the area, Old Merry was steering his punt silently to the scene of the action. In thick fogs or even in the dark he knew how to proceed in the morning and return at night. His eye and ear were keen at the approach of wildfowl in flight, and his caution to look out at the coming of the birds was so exact that no person could ever complain of want of shots if they obeyed his direction. "His knowledge in seeing the wildfowl fly and knowing to what particular spot they would direct their course was accurate, and his punt was certain to be either in a direction to intercept them in flight, or to be concealed among the reeds close to where they assemble to feed at eve or morning", Daniels reported. [SCAN 2 – FENLAND WILDFOWLING not Stretham)]

Today Stretham Mere is just a memory though some of the area is still covered by water. For a large reservoir has been dug by the farmer to collect rain during winter months that he can use to irrigate his crops during the growing season. There are now more acres covered with deeper water than ever before attracting wildfowl and sportsmen just as it did in the past.

But still the constant struggle continues to ensure the land can be kept dry.

Stretham Old Engine

Until the great drainage schemes of the 1630s and 1640s the Old West was a major river carrying the Great Ouse from Huntingdon and St Ives towards Ely and the sea. Even today at times of exceptional rain the stream will overflow its central channel and spread until water stretches to the high banks on either side. [SCAN 22 – HIGH WATER IN THE OLD WEST AT STRETHAM, FEB 2001

However the rain that falls on the fields is trapped on the wrong side of the banks and cannot get away. It needs to be pumped up into the river.

In 1741 landowners obtained an Act of Parliament to drain the Waterbeach Level, to the south of the Old West. They erected windpumps working scoopwheels to push the water up into the river. But these would only work when the wind blew and as the land dried out could not raise the water high enough. So in 1831 they erected a steam pumping engine, a heavy structure calling for very firm foundations driven down on a bed of hard gravel 10 feet below the peat surface. [SCAN 12 – A PAINTING OF A DRAINAGE MILL BY J.M. HEATHCOTE]

The steam was generated in boilers that ran on coal transported by barge. They required regular maintenance: twice a year a man had to go inside the gloomy, cramped and dripping space working by the light of a foul-smelling tallow candle to chip away the scale. Consumption varied but was always around 5 tons for 24 hours running with 10-12 cwt to get up steam.

It powered a beam engine that turned a giant scoop wheel raising water four feet from the land drains to the level of the rivers. But as drainage continued and the fen shrank further the scoop wheel had to be replaced. It proved a very wet autumn and while the engine was out of action water rose steadily in the drains as engineers worked long into the night. By 1892 parts of the machinery had become seriously worn and needed replacement. During the flood of 1919 it operated for 40 days and nights but the boilers were almost worn out and a diesel engine was installed, retaining the beam engine just for emergencies. During the 1937 floods

the diesel worked for 1,853 hours and ten years later ran continuously from 14th to 19th March.

By then however continued peat shrinkage meant water no longer flowed freely towards the pump standing high on its gravel base. A completely new pumping station was installed to pump water into the Cam and the complex of engines at Stretham have become museum pieces attracting visitors from around the world. [SCAN 3 – THE GIANT STRETHAM ENGINE] [SCAN 23 VIEW TO STRETHAM ENGINE]

Military and Wooden Bridges

Today the work of the old wind drainage miles is done by small electric pumps like the one housed in a brick building alongside the bridge that carries the ‘Military Road’ towards Wicken. The road was built by the army in 1914 during fears of a German invasion on the east coast but nobody could decide who should pay for the bridge which was not constructed until 1928, replacing a ferry. Beyond the engine a wooden bridge erected by George Gould, Lord of the Manor near the site of a ford was by 1976 so rotten that it was closed to motor vehicles for two years. It was repaired and then rebuilt completely. [SCAN 4 – OLD FERRY ON THE ‘MILITARY ROAD’] [SCAN 5 –A RIVER BOARD TUG TOWING BARGES UNDER THE BRIDGE ACROSS THE OLD WEST] [SCAN 6 – THE OLD ‘WOODEN BRIDGE’ FROM STRETHAM ENGINE]

Stretham Ferry

Beyond lies Stretham Ferry Bridge. Although the A10 to Cambridge follows the line of the Roman Akeman Street there was no hard road from Stretham to Chittering and Waterbeach until in the 1750s. A turnpike act was obtained in 1763 and the road completed some 20 years later at cost of upwards of £7,000.

The first bridge erected was too steep: farmers had to put an additional horse on to their cart to drag loads over it. It was also too narrow for motor traffic so in 1925 a new concrete bridge was erected and tested by four traction engines being driven over it. The remains of the old bridge can still be seen alongside the replacement, itself now superseded by a realigned main road. [SCAN 7 – THE ORIGINAL FERRY BRIDGE] [SCAN 8 – THE 1925 REPLACEMENT FROM THE SAME ANGLE] [SCAN 9 – TRACTION ENGINES TESTING THE STRENGTH OF THE BRIDGE 1925]

The ‘Lazy Otter’ pub with its riverside tables is a 1987 successor to the ‘Royal Oak’. In 1797 the pub, then known as ‘The Charles in the Oak’ was described as “old & well established”. It was destroyed by fire in 1844; suspicion rested on a travelling salesman of lucifer matches who had been turned away by the landlord. By 1906 the replacement contained two bedrooms for lodgers or travellers with stabling for 6 horses & 3 vehicles.

Cottages opposite were demolished after being damaged by a bus in December 1962. They stood alongside a brickworks, now a boat repair yard and a series of fishing lakes as the river winds its way between the old and new A10 crossings. [SCAN 14 – THE BUS ACCIDENT OF 1962]

Soon a cluster of buildings on the left-hand side marks the Chear Fen Pumping Station which opened in 1842 with a steam beam engine driving a paddle wheel. A new diesel engine was installed in 1926 now replaced by electric pumps like other stations along the river.

Twentypence

Twentypence Bridge carries the road between Wilburton and Cottenham. The origin of the name is uncertain but until about 1907 the river was crossed by a drawbridge almost long enough to span the stream. Perhaps one-shilling and eight-pence may have been the price of its construction or an annual charge for crossing. After this was removed travellers had to shout for the ferryman who lived in the cottage across the road from the public house. As motor traffic increased between Cambridge and Ely councillors debated the construction of a new road to relieve the traffic from A10. Eventually the fen drove from Wilburton was made up and a bridge constructed in 1931

It brought trade to the Bridge Inn where in 1929 the landlord, Mr Savidge had been licensee for over 60 years, having lived in the pub for 80 of his 86 years. It was renamed the Twentypence Inn and extensively remodelled in the 1970s with the addition of a restaurant with a balcony giving a view across the high river bank but has been flattened to make way for houses [SCAN 10 – COMPOSITE VIEW OF THE OLD TWENTYPENCE DROVE AND FERRY, 1929] [SCAN 11 – WORK ON THE NEW TWENTYPENCE BRIDGE 1931]

1937 Floods

There are times however when the boatman has a good view over the banks – and when that happens it is time to worry, for it means that the amount of water in the river has risen to flood levels. One such occasion was Wednesday 17th March 1937 when a combination of rains and tides caused the bank to collapse. Gangs of men rushed to reinforce it with clay and mud but the strength of the current was so great that the first sandbags dropped in the water were tossed about like corks before a foundation was made. Then in the evening wireless calls were broadcast for more volunteers & 200 men responded. The army of workmen filled thousands of sacks and carried them to the top of the bank. This soon became treacherously slippery while the bottom was a veritable quagmire through which men were wading knee deep. Their work proved successful and disaster was averted.

Such incidents are part of the problem of fenland and throughout the centuries various plans have been brought forward to remedy them. [SCAN 24 – THE OLD WEST RIVER NEAR TWENTYPENCE]

Lockspit Hall

The site of ‘Lockspit Hall’ stands on the northern bank. In the 1830s it was a beerhouse kept by William Furbank who operated a ferry across to Smithy Fen, Cottenham. The house did a good trade since baptisms were frequently held in the river. His son Thomas took over the pub when William moved to the Wheatsheaf in Cottenham in 1855. Tragically Thomas’ wife, Alice, was accidentally drowned in December 1883. Nearby are earthworks recording the site of one of the four windpumps that lined the bank from Twentypence, their work superseded by another steam engine further west. [SCAN 13 – THE RIVER AT LOCKSPIT HALL]

Car Dyke

It is here on the southern bank that the Roman-made Car Dyke joined the river. The River system the Romans inherited comprised two great rivers. One was the Cam that ran to Ely and north to March and the sea at Wisbech. But deep in the fens this channel silted up and boats could not get through with the grain so urgently needed for their armies.

There was a second river, the Ouse, which ran through Huntingdon and St Ives to Earith. Here it turned north and continued via Chatteris to join up with the Cam near Wisbech. This section was known as the West Water and continued to run free. So the Romans dug a canal leaving the Cam near Waterbeach and continuing across country to join up with the West Water at Lockspit where a tributary ran towards Earith. But within a century the bank burst at the new

junction. The waters of the Ouse, finding an easier channel open to them, ran east down the Old West through the breach and around the Island of Ely till it joined up with the Cam at Little Thetford. At least that is my theory to explain why the Old West runs East.

But the Romans were not the only people to propose grandiose schemes for this section of the river.

Sir Myles Sandys

In the early 1600s when plans for fen drainage were being considered Sir Myles Sandys was a power in the area. King James I was keen to create fertile fields from marshy fenland but faced opposition from the Bishop of Ely and the University of Cambridge. However Sir Myles saw the possibilities of drainage and came up with a scheme for straightening the Old West River by cutting off bends between Lockspit & Twentypence. His plans met with opposition from local folk who claimed the work was impossible and could only be done by witchcraft. But the King backed the one man who was prepared to be positive. Then when visiting the area the James was asked by courtiers to go to a stable where he would hear a cow speak. Inside he found a cow completely wrapped up with only its horn exposed. On it was a large parchment exposing Sandys' scheme as a fraud: he would have benefited by 100 acres of common land and provoked mob violence. The King denounced Sir Myles who like many others were endeavouring to put their own profit before the public good. [SCAN 15 – MAP OF THE OLD WEST SHOWING SIR MYLES SANDY'S PROPOSALS]

Yet these isolated fields have seen more than their share of violent struggle

Soon the river passes beneath one of the most important bridges in the county carrying what for centuries was the main road from Cambridge to Ely.

Aldreth Causeway

Before the fens were drained the Isle of Ely was indeed an island, standing high above the surrounding marsh. It was here that Saint Etheldreda founded a religious community of monks and nuns to worship God in the safety of their inaccessible stronghold. It became a holy site and place of pilgrimage.

There were three main tracks leading to this isolated place, one from Stuntney, one from Earith and this one to Aldreth. Its approach from the south was guarded by an Iron Age fort called Belsar's Hill which featured in various battles, the most famous of which was the struggle between William the Conqueror and Hereward the Wake

Following 1066 William subdued all England, apart from the fens. Various disaffected and dispossessed remnants of the English sought refuge on the island of Ely. They were joined by a troublesome youth named Hereward who had been banished by his family and gained himself a reputation as a fighting man before returning to find his own estates held by Normans..

The Isle of Ely was hard to capture, being completely surrounded by stagnant meres and marshes. William attempted an attack in 1069 but found it impossible to force a passage through the fens, so he left it alone while he sorted out other troublespots. In 1070 he returned to Cambridge where he built a castle while he considered what to do; he constructed forts and tried an assault by constructing a causeway to carry his heavily-armed soldiers over the marshy ground, but failed again.

However if he could not get onto the Island he could get his lands on monastic land, which he divided amongst his own supporters. This upset the monks who were also finding their

warlike guests something of a handicap and the siege restricting supplies. They decided to negotiate with the King and their Abbot briefed him on the secret passageways onto the Island. But William was in no hurry. Then in 1071 one of Hereward's leaders was killed in a mutiny and news came that the Scots were coming to add their support. William decided this was time to act. Once more he forced an approach – this time he knew the way and was successful. The defenders were slaughtered in great numbers, many were taken prisoner, their eyes were put out, their hands and feet cut off though Hereward escaped. William fortified the approach with a castle at Aldreth.

Later there were other battles during the civil wars between King Stephen and Queen Matilda when the Bishop's knights were defeated and brought into Ely tied across the backs of their horses. Others followed and from time to time ancient swords and pieces of armour are discovered, reminders of these conflicts. [SCAN 15 and 15A – YOU CHOOSE - THE ALDRETH CAUSEWAY AND THE ISLE OF ELY AS SEEN BY CHARLES HARPER 1901] [SCAN 20 HEReward THWARTS AN ATTACK AS SEEN BY VICTORIAN ARTIST JOHN TITTERTON]

But there was another battle that continued much longer – the battle to maintain a crossing over the river.

Aldreth High Bridge

There is mention of a bridge here in 1279 when it was in bad condition. But this was profitable for the Bishop of Ely who put in a ferry and charged travellers a toll for crossing. It was such an important route that he levied a tax on his tenants throughout the region to raise money for its repair. By 1614 it had fallen down and the ferry was back in action for about 50 years. It was a dangerous crossing, six or seven people lost their lives and cattle dealers stopped selling their animals at Aldreth market. During the Civil War Cromwell fortified the newly rebuilt bridge but by 1765 it had fallen down once more. By then the new road at Stretham had been constructed and traffic along the Aldreth Causeway declined.

But it was not the end. In 1901 Haddenham Parish Council urged the newly-formed County Council to replace the bridge. Their appeal was successful and during rebuilding work an ancient square oak beam some thirty feet long was found in good preservation. But the approaching track was still in poor condition. Some wanted it to be made into a proper road carrying traffic along the traditional route to Cambridge but the Twentypence route was preferred. [SCAN 16 ALDRETH HIGH BRIDGE 2005]

Queenholme

The Old West continues past Queenholme where a part of Willingham parish is now isolated on the north side of the river, proof that its route must have changed. Queenholme Farm was once home to Fred Norman the first fenman to win the Amateur Skating Championship. One of his achievements was to skate around the Isle of Ely in a day. Starting down the Old West River and the Ouse to Denver Sluice and returning on the New Bedford River to Earith and back home.

Beyond Flat Bridge Farm is the land known as the 'Delphs', subject of a bitter dispute in the early 1600s. There is another small drainage engine erected about 1848 and now preserved by a private trust before the river runs alongside the road from Willingham to Earith.

1947 Floods

This was the scene of another battle in 1947 when deep winter snow and a quick thaw saw the Old West River rise to the top of its banks. Lines of sandbags were placed on either side to try

and stop it overflowing. But the bank of the Great Ouse burst beyond Earith flooding the fenland on the other side of the Willingham road. Now sandbags had to be placed on that side of the road as well in an attempt to keep the water in the Over fen. All efforts proved ineffective and floods swept across the road, across the Old West which was full from bank to bank and dropped down into the Hillrow fen. As the water rushed across so it wore down the bank which had to be rebuilt once the resulting devastation was over. [SCAN 19 – THE OLD WEST RIVER ALONGSIDE THE WILLINGHAM ROAD] [SCAN 21 – WATER RUSHES ACROSS THE WILLINGHAM ROAD IN MARCH 1947]

Ahead lies the Hermitage Lock first built by Cornelius Vermuyden to stem the waters of the Great Ouse and send them instead down his New Bedford River. It is hard to appreciate that for centuries the wide river beyond ran along our narrow Old West to meet the Cam where we left it at the Fish and Duck. [SCAN 17 – HERMITAGE LOCK. SCAN. SCAN 18 THE LOCK-KEEPER AT HERMITAGE c1965]

Next month Mike Petty continues the journey towards Ely, Littleport and Denver Sluice.

Our Time, October 2005
Peas Hill by Mike Petty –

Peas Hill links Cambridge's Market Hill to Bene't Street. It has seen remarkable changes within the last century, some through fire buy more through the rebuilding of the inter-war period. The 1930s was a decade of tremendous transformation in central Cambridge, never before had there been so much pulling down and building up again. Whole areas of Sidney Street and Bridge Street had been razed and replaced and Peas Hill was to be no exception.

It was also a period of intense inter-council rivalry. The County Council had erected a fine new Shire Hall on Castle Hill and the Corporation wanted to catch up. Back in the 1890s councillors had wanted a new Guildhall which would include a police station and even swimming baths. But the scheme was rejected by ratepayers.

In the 1920s they determined to try again. Their new headquarters would be far larger than the old and extend round into Union Street, a now forgotten name for the northern end of Peas Hill. They set about acquiring adjoining properties and by 1927 had agreed terms with shop owners including Mr Sennitt the butcher, who wanted £3,500 for his site. It was agreed that the tenants would be allowed to continue to use the premises until they were needed for demolition. By 1935 it was really going ahead. The plans were approved and demolition men moved in to remove the nondescript buildings, including the old butcher's shop with living accommodation above. It really was not much of a place.

But as they started to pull it down a remarkable history was revealed. They found huge rats nests with fragments of broken glass, old bottles, large bones and a phial of vermin killer; while in roof the mummified body of a kitten, dry and leathery, was discovered. And there was more: its timbers had once been part of a ship that had sailed the North Sea in the 1400s. Then it had been broken up and the wood passed into the hands of a builder who shaped it into the upper storey of a house, numbering each timber to show where it fitted. They were transported down the Ouse and Cam for sale at Stourbridge Fair where they had been bought, carried to Peas Hill and assembled.

When complete it had a high pitched roof with overhanging upper storeys and was panelled within and plastered without. It was a fine, fashionable half-timbered dwelling. When fashions changed the old house was modernised inside and out. The lower section was

brought forward to disguise the fact that the rooms above had juttied out, the old timbers were hidden behind plaster and red tiles nailed to the front, disguised to look like bricks with imitation pointing in black paint. Soon people forgot what the old place had looked like.

More improvements were made inside: a fireplace with Dutch tiles painted in floral designs, some fine Queen Anne woodwork, sliding windows with bottle glass lights. Layers of paint had been applied to ancient oak, panelling gradually covered with wallpaper, the first being a hand-blocked design of the late eighteenth century printed on waste sheets of a Bible.

All this was revealed as work progressed, but it was no longer demolition. It was a careful dismantling with the ancient timbers carefully taken apart and laid aside ready for a new home elsewhere. Reginald Lambeth, who supervised the demolition of the adjacent premises, produced a drawing showing the buildings in Tudor times before these too were removed. Some of the timbers found their way to Long Road, to a home first owned by Councillor E. Savill Peck, an antiquarian and photographer well aware of the need to conserve Cambridge's past, even if it meant taking it piece by piece to Trumpington for safe keeping.

But not all the premises along that side of Peas Hill were that old. One night in November 1836 fire broke out in Marshall and Bell's corn warehouse on the corner of Wheeler Street and some feared the whole of the area would be destroyed. But thanks to the exertions of the Norwich Union fire engine and numerous university students the flames were checked within two hours. There was talk of removing the buildings and replacing them with a Corn Market or Assize Court, but nothing came of it.

Then in May 1904 fire raged again through the corn merchants premises. A patrolling policeman, PC Winter, noticed smoke coming from a small window above the main door at about half-past four in the morning. He aroused the occupants of neighbouring buildings – including Sennitt the butcher – and called for the fire brigade. They faced a formidable fight. The lower floor of the lathe-and-plaster building was occupied by a shop and offices but the two floors above were full of corn, hay, straw and chaff and were quickly blazing fiercely while the street was alive with rats fleeing for their lives.

But there was plenty of water and they managed to save the ground floor and adjacent buildings. These included the domed Cambridge Free Library with its valuable collection of local books and prints, though its windows were bowed by the heat.

Next morning people gathered to stand and stare at the blackened shell and ponder the preservation of the Bell Inn alongside. It had a parrot that used to hang in a cage outside and became quite expert at getting horses to wander off up the street by imitating their drivers' voices.

The old buildings were cleared and replaced by council offices in 1915. Between the stalls and the Bell was a cobbled space used by cheap-jacks and conmen; in 1927 it was turned into a car parking space for council officers, attracting adverse comments from other motorists. It continues to be used by the Mayor. But car parking was a big issue and Peas Hill an obvious place for them to park.

The only problem was that on Saturdays it reeked of the smell of fish and the pump that had played so great a part in fighting the fires was in continuous use to wash out the smelly boxes.

The Fish Market had been moved from Market Hill in 1500s. It dealt in a great variety of salmon, Colchester oysters, mackerel, herrings, sprats, eels, jacks and other fresh-water varieties. It was a lively scene with every stallholder declaring as loudly as possible the merits of his wares. Canny buyers knew that Saturday afternoon was the best time to come shopping for bloaters and kippers were sold off cheap as they could not be kept over the weekend.

But with more and more cars needing parking spaces so the stalls were forced off the street, until even David the bookseller abandoned his Saturday stall in Peas Hill in 1959, moving to his weekday pitch on Market Hill. A one-way system was introduced in 1936 with waiting restrictions of fifteen minutes imposed and in 1973 the entrance to Market Hill was blocked off, drastically reducing traffic.

More changes took place along the west side. Following the Great War King's College decided to build a hostel on the corner of Peas Hill and St Edward's Passage. Once the plans had been drawn up an irregular piece of land occupied by old sheds and wine cellars remained and Lord Keynes, the bursar, realised that by careful planning a theatre could be dropped into the vacant space. Building started 1935 and the theatre plus restaurant opened in 1936. When it came to a name the suggestion of the 'Fishmarket Theatre' was canvassed, but rejected and 'The Arts' became part of Cambridge life.

Not all dramas are acted out on a stage. John Saltmarsh, an eminent Fellow of King's College, recalled that on part of the Arts and hidden behind a more modern front was a tall old house with a curious cruciform tiled roof and a picturesque gable with carved wooden ornaments. It had been the scene of tragedy. Frances the daughter of Samuel Spalding, town-clerk of Cambridge, wandered into a garret in a remote part of what was then the family's home. The door slammed behind her and she could not escape. Her parents searched frantically but failed to find her and she starved to death. "One of the attics in No.6 has an evil reputation still, and ghostly fingers are sometimes heard to tap on the window", he recorded in 1935

Nearby stands a reminder of the ancient buildings that have been lost. Now home to the Cheltenham and Gloucester Building Society it had in 1935 been The Sugar and Spice coffee house and was formerly two separate cottages. The Cambridge Antiquarian Society's photographic survey includes a photograph taken in 1935 as demolition removed the adjoining premises, a roomy rambling building built around a massive chimneystack, that was once home to Shrivess basketmakers, where clothesbaskets and wicker children's' chairs used to hang outside their shop.

Next door was Fletcher's the butcher's, a building on three floors with low mean rooms above the shop, arranged round a central winding staircase. By 1935 it has been derelict for many years; the condition had to be seen to be believed, and the seeing was attended with some personal risk, Saltmarsh commented. After rebuilding it became the new home to F.O. Sennitt, the butcher, egg and poultry dealer who had supplied butter in yard-long strips to the colleges who sold it on to undergraduates at a penny an inch. They added a fish side to the business and in April 1951 invested in one of the new refrigerated display cabinets avoiding the swarms of flies that had been so much a feature of the area in previous years.

The building on the corner of St Edward's Passage had been Coulson's draper's shop which was badly damaged by fire in December 1900. Despite the efforts of Captain Greef and the Fire Brigade the flames were not extinguished until the entire stock of goods in the shop had been completely destroyed & the front of the shop badly damaged. The cause of the fire was blamed on the overturning of one of the incandescent burners in the shop window. Later, after rebuilding, it was occupied by G.P. Reece a sports shop with a wide range of Automodels equipment on ground floor. It was established mid 1950s to serve children from age of 10 to manhood with a wide range of creative toys, fishing rods and air rifles.

St Edward's church has stood on the site since about 1200. Two side aisles projecting out into the churchyard belong to two colleges & are reminders of two other churches, long removed. One dedicated to St John the Baptist had been demolished for King's College chapel. Clare & Trinity Halls had used it before their own chapels were completed, and they'd buried their dead in the graveyard. They didn't actually have much use for it by then, but on the other

hand felt they deserved some compensation for its loss. So Trinity Hall negotiated with the King and was granted the living of St Edward's church, with which the old parish was amalgamated, and both colleges built their own aisles.

But by the 1850s it was in a dangerous state. The north pier of the Chancel arch had started to sink many years before and despite attempts to tie it together with iron bars and buttresses it was continuing to fracture. The walls, columns and piers were so much out of upright, and dragging different ways, that the roof itself seemed about ready to collapse. Inside it was dark, the windows small and partially blocked by a reredos. The Chancel was filled with box pews that were dilapidated and discreditable, uncouth and lumbering, all heights and sizes, some old and some new, all disgraceful. The whole impression was one of damp and cold, ruin and decay. One of the columns supporting the Organ Gallery had gone and it was resting on a coffin which had crumbled into dust. The flooring was very old and as the floorboards creaked apart one became aware of the vaults and old graves beneath. Conditions were so bad that it was felt the whole church might collapse.

Instead it was restored and continues to welcome worshippers; an unusual feature are its two pulpits from the older of which preached Hugh Latimer, Thomas Bilney and Robert Barnes, all of whom were burnt at the stake for their beliefs. The pulpit had been removed in 1858 and stood in a side chapel of King's College until restored to the church in 1949.

Below Peas Hill run an extensive range of tunnels once used at wine vaults. During the war they were wired for electricity and fitted out as air raid shelters. On one afternoon 250 people took shelter there. One lady recalled that you entered through double wooden doors that were overhung by the fig tree in St Edward's churchyard. When a bomb exploded over Jordan's Yard all the hard figs off the tree showered down like machine-gun bullets

But redevelopment in Peas Hill was not confined to the 1930s. Great controversy surrounded the redevelopment of the Central Hotel on the other side of St Edward's church.

It was a listed building with the date 1729 visible on rainwater heads, but was much older. It boasted some large picturesque oak doors and beams and three big old fireplaces bearing carved Tudor roses together with tiles, some of which had been removed as souvenirs by visitors. Oliver Cromwell was said to have visited and Samuel Pepys knew it as the Three Tuns where he drank pretty hard. It was later bought by the Cambridge University & Town Coffee Palace Company set up on temperance lines to supply the needs of workmen, cabmen, market gardeners, artisans and others in an effort to attract custom from the gin palaces and public houses.

Despite protests it was demolished in 1959 to be replaced by another hostel for King's College, its modern architecture contrasting with that of the 1930s buildings around it. As the old inn was pulled down more mysteries were revealed. One room could only be reached by climbing through a small window and going along the roof. It was thought to have been the hiding place of a priest. Another may have been a concert chamber for adjoining it on a higher level was another room where the minstrels played. There was another bizarre discovery: half way up a chimney was discovered a lady's crinoline. What caused her to leave such a garment behind?

Our Time 2005 10

The Great Ouse to Ely, by Mike Petty; Our Time October 2005

Mike Petty continues his exploration of the River Great Ouse

The Cam joins the Old West beside the isolated Fish and Duck public house and together they flow towards Ely. Here in this lonely spot there was once a lake, Harrimere, that attracted wildfowl, a chapel to pray for a safe crossing and later a tollhouse to extract money from barges to maintain the banks keeping the fens safe from flood. [SCAN 100.05 VIEW TOWARDS ELY FROM THE JUNCTION OF THE OLD WEST AND THE CAM]

Two hamlets face each other on opposite sides of the river. One is Little Thetford, the other Barway. Both are off the beaten track.

Little Thetford is approached from the main A10 Cambridge to Ely Road. Previously a small farming community it has seen major housing growth within the last decade. In its centre is a curious round house that in 1901 consisted of two tenements lived in by two separate families. It may have once been the base of a windmill or a dovecote but during the Second World War it became the village's designated First Aid centre. The church of St George still attracts its Sunday congregations. [SCAN 5662 THE ROUND HOUSE AT LT THETFORD c1900]

Barway is a yet more isolated community reached down a minor turning off the Ely to Soham road. Its church no longer welcomes worshippers. It has suffered over the centuries; in 1602 it was 'ruined for want of tiling and glazing and the churchyard walls down' and the village itself 'a verie fowell countre and waterye and especialye in the winter season'. By the early 1800s the church was roofless and the pulpit swimming in a pond. It reopened in 1819 after being completely repaired but in 1972, having stood unused for ten years, came plans to convert it into a house in which capacity it still stands. [SCAN 8681 BARWAY 1930's]

A ferry used to ply across the Ouse, linking the two hamlets. But several centuries before there had been another connection. In 1932 a Barway farmer noticed that his plough kept hitting some buried posts. He investigated and found a forest of stakes embedded in the clay forming an ancient causeway crossing the fen from his Fordy Farm towards Little Thetford. Historians wondered whether it might have been constructed by William the Conqueror while attempting to force his way onto the Island of Ely defended by Hereward the Wake. But when archaeologists investigated they found that the causeway was far earlier and dated back to the Bronze Age.

Within the last few weeks a new route has been opened to Barway in the form of a cyclepath from Ely along the top of the riverbank and alongside Soham Lode. This now little-used stream was once a major trading route carrying barges to Soham. It has been the site of various battles.

Until 1917 the waters of the lode were lifted into the Great Ouse by a giant windpump. Its replacement was put to the test two years later when in February 1919 a rapid thaw of snow & rain caused problems throughout the area. Farmers began to remove their stock to safety while men worked all night to try and prevent disaster. At Barway they sank a barge to try and strengthen the bank but without success and it collapsed causing major flooding.

It was a situation repeated during the terrible floods of March 1937 when Soham Lode once more burst its banks 50 yards from Barway. The danger had been foreseen: all stock had been moved to safety and families in the fen were evacuated into the village. Loads of clay were rushed to the scene and once more workmen laboured for hours by the light of hurricane lamps to try and rebuilt the top of the bank. Their labours came to nothing when the bottom of the bank burst. By morning over 1,000 acres were under water and Barway was almost completely cut off. There were fears that the sluice gates at the Ouse end of the Soham Lode would collapse so men from RAF Mildenhall constructed a temporary dam. Then in February

1939 it happened all over again; the bank burst once more and 400 acres were flooded. Now the outfall is regulated by new structure containing a large electric pump. [SCAN 10184 THE BARWAY WINDPUMP CONTRASTED WITH THE MODERN REPLACEMENT – PETTY1]

Opposite, on the Little Thetford side, a much smaller electric pump house incorporates the foundation stone of its predecessor, a steam engine originally erected in 1845. From it there is a fine prospect of Ely Cathedral as the river makes its way north [SCAN PETTY 2 – VIEW TO ELY FROM BANK NEAR LITTLE THETFORD SEPT 2005]

The footpath along the riverbank suddenly takes a diversion to run alongside a reedy ditch. A narrow-boat nestling alongside its bank gives a hint of its importance. For this stream leads to Braham Dock. Today it is a tranquil area of trees and water but the fields contain a defensive earthwork, hinting of a turbulent past. This was once a port where goods would be unloaded from sea-going boats swept into the fens on the tide. This was as near as boats could get to Ely from the south for the natural channel of the River Ouse swung away run under the slopes of Stuntney Hill. In the middle of the 1100's an artificial cut was made to take the river into Ely and Braham's period of importance faded away. [SCAN PETTY 3 – THE APPROACH TO BRAHAM DOCK, 2005]

Soon river is crossed by the railway track to Bury St Edmunds, it was this line that carried the ill-fated ammunition train that was to explode at Soham station in June 1944. The opening of the main line from Cambridge to Ely and beyond in 1845 meant goods could be transported far quicker and in greater quantity than before. A dock was constructed between rail and river so that coal could be transferred from train to barge for delivery to pumping stations.

Today it is the road that carries the essentials of life with numerous articulated lorries queuing at the busy railway crossing near Ely station, often preventing smaller vehicles from using the underpass beneath the track. This itself is often blocked when too-high vehicles think they can get under, only to become wedged. The solution must be a bypass but this presents technical problems.

Not only must it cross the railway track and the river but it must also traverse the area of fenland between Ely and Stuntney, soil which provides very little support for roads. It has always been a difficult area to cross. King Canute managed to pick his way over the partially-frozen flooded fenland by employing a fat fenman named Pudden to act as his guide; if the ice bore him, it would bear the king! Later a causeway was constructed about 1200 and maintained by the monastery who charged a toll on those who used it.

Despite constant repair it was never an easy route. Celia Fiennes who crossed in 1698 lamented; "In winter this Causey is over flowed and they have no way but boates to pass in". By the 19th century the road was worn down to the black earth and there were dangerous ruts and holes. It has remained a challenge to generations of road engineers who used new technology to ensure a long-lasting surface when the present Stuntney bypass was completed in December 1986. [SCAN 7602 VIEW FROM STUNTNEY ALONG THE CAUSEWAY TO ELY 1920's]

The traveller still has to cross the Ouse. There was a bridge by 1250 but it was in poor condition; in 1681 a visitor complained of crossing a 'rotten bridge with our horses, being glad to alight for fear they should break through and stick in the rotten bogs under then'. There were a series of wooden bridges until a handsome stone structure was opened in 1833; it was replaced by an steel bridge in 1910 that in turn gave way to the present one in 1982 [SCAN 6540 – THE 1833 BRIDGE]

The railway bridge beyond was the scene of excitement in May 1922 when a large number of wooden sleepers caught fire after hot cinders fell from a passing locomotive. Soon flames were rising seven feet into the air and showering sparks down on to boats passing beneath. Realising that a train was due a young man attacked the blaze with pails of water. [SCAN 9850 ELY FROM THE RAILWAY BRIDGE, 1880's]

Now the Ouse reaches Annesdale and the old commercial heartland of the city. It is an area that has undergone dramatic transformation within the last 40 years with many of the old commercial buildings consigned to history & replaced by new houses. Yet history shows that houses here have frequently been flooded in the past. [SCAN 86.469 FLOODING NEAR THE CUTTER]

One old building to have survived is the former Maltings built in 1868. It was badly damaged by fire & sold for £100 to Ely council on condition it be turned into a public hall. The proposal proved controversial but it was finally opened in its new role by the Secretary of State for the Environment Mr Peter Walker in October 1971. The nearby Ely brewery of Hall, Cutlack and Harlock had their workshops on Waterside but closed suddenly in January 1969 when some 300 employees found their jobs in Ely had gone. Other old buildings have been converted into an antiques warehouse and an arts centre.

It used to be said that on a damp November morning the Ely riverside area had an atmosphere of its own. When stink of the river mingled with the pong from the brewery, Sugar Beet Factory and Gas Works and then combined with the reek from the sewage works it produced a cocktail that was far from pleasant. No wonder the maggots from the nearby rag-and-bone works would crawl out holding their noses!

Now the area has been transformed by the creation of a park complete with bandstand. This site was excavated in a televised 'Time Team' dig which identified inlets in which barges would have offloaded their cargo. This would not have been news to John Titterton, an Ely artist of a century ago, for he depicted them in the background of a painting of the construction of the Cathedral which dominates the city.

Today tourists saunter where men and women once sat making baskets and eel traps. In the 1870s there were about 40 basketmakers living in Ely, The trade had largely died out by 1938 though Sam Cox and Jack Hills continued until the 1960s. The willow was grown on Babylon, on the other side of the river. [SCAN 7520 UNLOADING WILLOWS AT ELY, 1880's] Here there were a number of quaint cottages, their picturesque appearance belying the damp conditions inside that became much worse when flooding forced residents to move upstairs. This was the boat-building area for centuries and home to Appleyard-Lincoln's 'Elysian' craft, now it is a marina [SCAN 327 AERIAL PHOTO SHOWING RIVERSIDE AREA OF ELY 1983]

The Cutter is the sole survivor of the inns that served the area. It was licenced in the 1830s to cater for the increasing river trade but by 1841 was dilapidated and put up for sale. The new owners added a skittle alley and trade revived. After modernisation in 1964 it was reopened by Stewart Morris, a former Olympic sailing gold medallist who had known it since the 1930s when he practised on the Ouse as a member of the Cambridge University Sailing Club. University rowers also use the river for practising and in 1944 an unofficial Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race was contested near Queen Adelaide, an event recreated 50 years later.

From here groups continue to enjoy river excursions as they have for generations. One of the popular boats was the Pattie which in 1916 had a more unusual role: that of aircraft carrier. A military plane came down between the Bedford Rivers and she was sent to bring it back to Ely. Now pleasure craft moor alongside the quay and large crowds flock for the Aquafest water carnival in July. [SCAN 332 THE ELY AQUAFEST 1986]

The river wends its way under another railway bridge and on towards Roswell pits where for centuries a particularly type of sticky clay known as gault has been extracted to maintain the river banks so essential to the survival of the fenland. At its entrance stood the old Cuckoo Bridge across which ran the track to Turbutsey, the northern port area in medieval times. Nearby the Overfall Mill pumped water from the Middle Fen into the river until it was demolished in 1917. [SCAN 10306 – CUCKOO BRIDGE 1899]

Once windpumps had been superseded by more powerful steam and diesel pumps the fen land was able to grow remarkable quantities of food. One new crop introduced in the 1920s was sugar beet. It needed factories to process it and one of the first was at Ely. It made a major impact on the local economy providing comparatively well-paid work for local people at a time of hardship. The new factory had a riverside frontage with unloading berths for 30 factory-owned barges that would collect the beet from riverside fields and be towed by tug to the quayside where electric overhead cranes would empty them. Coal was brought by rail which took away the resultant sugar, molasses and pulp used as animal feed. [SCAN 8906 ELY SUGAR BEET FACTORY BARGES]

A challenge to both rail and river came from lorries which frequently found themselves held up by the numerous railway crossings at Queen Adelaide.

There was another problem: during the processing mud from the beet was washed into the river. By December 1928 it was clogging up the river so badly that tugs had difficulty getting through. The water was being held up causing a serious danger of flooding while the whole of the river between Ely and Denver Sluice had a thin coating of slime all over it and was the consistency of a mud-pie.

As sugar beet became established so the 50,000 tons of the first campaign grew more than fivefold in 25 years. During the campaign season, from September to January the factory worked round-the-clock, seven days a week until it closed in 1981. Now it is just a memory and farmers are concerned that the crop itself may pass into history.

Ahead lies the ruler-straight river towards Littleport – which will be explored in next month's Our Time

OTHER SCANS

10301A – PROSPECT OF ELY FROM ACROSS THE RIVER c.1790

10212 – ELY FROM THE RIVER – PRINT BY HARRADEN, 1830]

